

BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW NEWS



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BQNOW ELECTIONS

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According to our bylaws, our election of officers will be held at our chapter meeting on July 2nd, 2007. Nominations were opened on April 1st with a notice to all our members. Nominations were closed 60 days later. Our elections are scheduled for July 2nd at the home of Shirley Ranz. Call Shirley (718 769-8901) or the chapter phone (718 951-7441) for address and directions. Our candidates are: President: Julie Kirshner, Vice-President: Rachele Suissa, Secretary: Sherry Rogers, Treasurer: E. Barbara Sheren. Please come to the chapter meeting to cast your vote, to meet our candidates, and to thank our outgoing officers for all their dedication to our chapter. We're celebrating with a pot-luck dinner, so come at 6, bring a dish or a beverage to share, and let's have some fun! If you are unable to attend the meeting due to disability, you may request a mail-in ballot no later than June 22nd. Call Sherry at 718 263-7638 for your mail-in ballot.

And NOW a "thank you" to our leadership. As elections approach on July 2nd, it's time we recognize the dedication and talent of the hard-working chapter leadership. Each officer and committee chair was asked to provide information about why she joined the chapter, what made her an activist, and her hopes for the future. Here are their

responses.

Shirley Ranz, current President

"I joined NOW in the late 1970s, and became active in the Brooklyn chapter in 1984. In 1971, at age 21, I became pregnant, despite having had an IUD implanted. Fortunately for me, a year earlier NY State had become the first state to legalize abortion, fully three years prior to Roe vs. Wade. Instead of going to some back alley abortionist, I was able to have the procedure done in a hospital. I knew abortion rights had been achieved by years of hard work on the part of many devoted and courageous women, and I decided to show my gratitude by participating in the never-ending struggle for women's rights. It should be clear to all in the light of recent events that however secure we may believe our rights are, they can be taken away by one Supreme Court decision. The forces of reactionary sexism will not disappear, and we must remain ever vigilant.

The past 13 years that I have served as President of the chapter have enabled me to work together with a wonderful group of women. We have educated, demonstrated, lobbied, worked on campaigns, and done whatever we could to improve the condition of our sisters. Despite our gains, so much remains to be done. I am confident that younger women are waking up and realizing that they must fight simply to maintain their rights, and to pursue that far-off goal of full equality. I look forward to working with them."

BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW CHAPTER CALENDAR-2007

Chapter meetings take place the first Monday of the month at 7pm, unless otherwise noted. Call the numbers below for exact location and directions.



- June 4 **Chapter Meeting** in Sheepshead Bay. Call 718-891-2490.
- July 2 **Chapter Meeting & Election of Officers** in Sheepshead Bay. Potluck dinner at 6PM
Call 718-769-8901. to discuss what dish you can bring.
- July 13-15 **National NOW Conference & Young Feminist Leadership Institute** in Detroit, MI.
(www.now.org for details) To become a voting delgate contact shranz@optonline.net
before June 13.
- August No chapter meeting. Celebrate Women's Suffrage (August 26th) by working for passage of
the ERA. Check out www.ERACampaign.net for details.
- Sept 10 **Chapter Meeting**, location TBD (check our web site or call 718-951-7441.)
- Oct 27 **NOW-NYS Convention**. Ronkonkoma, Long Island

Sherry Rogers, current Vice-President, candidate for Secretary

"1971 was a watershed year for me as well. That was when I heard Shirley Chisholm announce her candidacy for President of the United States! I was living in Albany, NY and immediately joined a consciousness-raising group. That experience opened my eyes to the inequities facing women and to the larger disservice such inequities pose for society as a whole. I joined our chapter when I moved to Brooklyn in 1974. By then I was well informed about the power of women's voices. I was already a member of political action groups and abortion rights groups, but none of these offered the personal activism I found within Brooklyn NOW. Over the years I've served as President, Treasurer, Secretary, Newsletter editor, and chaired several committees. I'm so honored to have served with our leadership over the years. I'm very excited to see our chapter embrace new faces and younger generations. Back in the 80s we considered disbanding the chapter. The Reagan years were full upon us. Thankfully, co-presidents Shirley Graber and Shirley Ranz stepped up and turned our chapter around. They galvanized us into action, taking our members into the streets for demonstrations and up to Albany for lobbying. Our chapter was revitalized. We merged with the Queens chapter in March, 2003. This brought in more new voices. We've become an activist chapter, often taking the lead on issues like Female Genital Mutilation, the Equal Rights Amendment and Human Trafficking. I continue to be excited by the energy and enthusiasm our newer members bring to us. They keep my feminist batteries charged. Welcome!"

Judith Ebert, current Membership Chair

"In 1965 I wrote about Title VII, which prohibits discrimination in employment based on gender. I realized then there was no organization like the NAACP for women. I contacted women in leadership positions presenting this idea to them. I was gratified when NOW began in the late 60s. For me and my life partner, Shirley Graber, abortion personally was not an overwhelming issue, but we recognized that Choice is fundamental to women's equal status in our society. We attended our first chapter meeting in 1987. By the time the 2nd annual NOW Lesbian Rights Conference in San Diego in 1988 came around, we were chapter delegates to the event! That wonderful experience fueled us to greater activism. Why did we love the chapter so much? There were lots of feminist meetings with lots of feminist laughs, something unavailable elsewhere. In February of 1992, I became chair of the Membership Committee, a position I still hold. Maintaining membership is very important especially when we lobby our elected representatives and are able to tell them we represent over 400 feminists. Unlike many organizations, NOW has

local chapters. This allows members the opportunity to attend meetings and actively participate in helping the organization attain its goals. Our chapter is not a single-issue organization and is concerned with all issues affecting women. When we marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to recognize same-sex marriage rights we marched as a chapter: lesbian and straight together. What concerns me is there's less awareness of the eggshell status of our rights. I fear that our rights have been taken for granted because women have gone so much further in work and pay experiences. But multiply the inequities by the number of work years and there's a substantial gap in earnings.

***Julie Kirshner, Legislative & Political Chair,
candidate for President***

I've been a member of NOW since the early 80's and have been an active member of our chapter for around 3 years. I participated in many actions and marches before that, but was not necessarily a serious member of one organization. I joined NOW because I hate for women to be offered less opportunity, and I have a strong desire for fairness in everything. I am very offended by the idea that "Life's not fair. Deal with it!" Life can be way more fair, and I guess that's the major reason I joined. As the mother of a 5 year old daughter, I'm naturally concerned for her well-being. I want her to grow up in a society where the status of women improves, not backslides, where educational opportunities expand, and hard-won rights are not continuously threatened. I want her to believe that a woman can be President. I want our chapter membership to grow and our chapter to join in coalition with other groups to accomplish our aims; I want us to be perceived as the "go-to" chapter, vitally involved at the forefront of issues.

***E. Barbara Sheren, Interim Treasurer, candidate for
Treasurer***

I grew up with feminist ideas in a world where I felt powerless and unable to accomplish much. In 1970, I marched down 5th Avenue in the first parade, but it wasn't until 1989 that I became an activist in the Brooklyn chapter. After attending a First Friday dinner, I joined BQNOW to be with like-minded individuals and to be part of an organization dedicated to working to make changes and correct the way women were viewed and treated. My first protest action was targeting Mitsubishi for their discriminatory practices. Since joining, I've served as chapter secretary and vice-president. I enjoy the sisterhood shared at our chapter

meetings and want to see others join with us to increase our numbers.

***Rachelle Suissa, Young Feminists Committee
Chair, candidate for Vice-President***

I have been a member of the chapter since January of 2005, right after I completed my internship with BQ-NOW. I became a member because I find women's issues to be essential to my life, primarily because of the experiences that my mother and grandmother have faced: child support and the court system and housing and health care. I decided to get in there and fight to help them (as well as myself) because I, too, have experienced discrimination and unfair treatment. I have always been interested in politics and legislation, even when I was in high school, and I definitely value all of the things I've learned since working with our chapter. As Vice-President, I hope to integrate the goals of our organization with those of other, like-minded organizations. I think we should collaborate with other groups to gain more experience in dealing with a variety of issues and marketing them to the public. I think that in coalitions, we would be stronger politically. I want to aid in the process of recruiting younger women to our cause, because they are part of the group that is most difficult to reach. Being one of them, I would be very effective in getting younger women to realize that women's issues should be a big priority, because all of these issues, whether reproductive rights, pay equity, marriage and divorce issues, or violence against women, will affect them in the future.

Constance Pigozzi, out-going Treasurer

Due to her recent illness, we were unable to interview Constance before going to press. We do want you to know that she has tirelessly worked on behalf of women's issues for many years. How could she not? Her birthday is Women's Suffrage Day, August 26th! Constance went back to school, at Brooklyn College, as part of their returning students program. She saw early on the need for educational opportunities for women and set up a scholarship fund in memory of her dear husband. Constance has been serving as treasurer for nearly 10 years. We thank her for all her support and guidance and especially for her bringing to our meetings her unique and sisterly viewpoint. We look forward to having her back stronger than ever!

SURVEY FOR WOMEN USING SUBWAYS

Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer is launching a new initiative addressing subway riders' sexual assault and harassment concerns while using New York City's subway system. The report hopes to demonstrate that in New York City's subway system, women's safety is under threat, and that the preventative and responsive management practices of the MTA-NYCTA and the NYPD are flawed and do not adequately address the harm women face from sexual assault and harassment in the subway system. Finally, the report will propose achievable best management practices for affected state and local agencies to improve women's safety in New York City's subway system.

To this end, Stringer's office is undertaking a citywide online survey designed to provide the Manhattan Borough President's Office with a deeper understanding of the safety concerns that female subway riders face in New York City's subway system. The survey results will shape their policy recommendations directed to various state and local government agencies. The survey will also shape how non-profit organizations and hospitals can develop particularized community outreach strategies to the general public and sexual assault and harassment survivors.

The survey takes only a few minutes to complete and the report it generates will make a difference in the anti-violence movement in New York City. The following is the link to the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=184263883136>.

BQNOW SPONSORS FILM EVENT

"What does the modern woman want? Where does she fit in today's world?"

In *FLYING: CONFESSIONS OF A FREE WOMAN*, filmmaker Jennifer Fox lays bare her own turbulent life to penetrate what it means to be a free woman today. Caught between two lovers and an emotional crisis, she travels to over 17 countries to understand how diverse women define their lives, when there is no map. The film is a cross-cultural story about common experiences of modern female life. Part delectable soap opera, sociopolitical inquiry, and narrative experiments, *FLYING* sweeps us up into an addictive international adventure chronicled with sincerity, innovation and elegance. [from the film's website]

Chapter members have screened excerpts from *Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman* and have voted to host a screening of the film on July 7 at Film Forum in Manhattan. The film's 6 episodes are shown in 2 parts, part 1 at 1:15PM and part 2 at 5:00PM.

Film Forum is located at 209 West Houston Street, New York, NY, between 6th Avenue and Varick (7th Avenue). Members who come to the screening will pay an admission price of \$10.50 per part and be part of a Q and A with the filmmaker. This film speaks to us as women in ways no "chick flick" or hollywoodsy film can. These are real women facing real life. Let's support this film.

Call Sherry at 718 263-7638 (leave a message with your name and phone number) before July 1st and tell us we can count on you to be there!



ACTION ALERTS

Use NOW's Capwiz interactive political page (<http://www.capwiz.com/now/dbq/officials/>) to send messages to your elected officials.



Freedom of Choice Act (S. 1173/HR1964):

Introduced in the Senate by Barbara Boxer (with Clinton and Schumer among the lead sponsors) and in the House by Jerry Nadler (with Ackerman, Lowey, Slaughter, Towns, and Weiner among the lead sponsors), the bill's intent is: "To protect, consistent with *Roe v. Wade*, a woman's freedom to choose to bear a child or terminate a pregnancy, and for other purposes." Each bill was referred to the Judiciary Committee. We ask you to send the following letter to your assemblymember:

As your constituent, I am writing to ask you to cosponsor the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA, H.R.1964). With the Supreme Court's recent decision on the Federal Abortion Ban, the Court moved in a direction that threatens women's freedom and privacy. FOCA will secure the right to choose by establishing a federal law that will guarantee reproductive freedom for future generations of American women. Since *Roe v. Wade*, a woman's right to choose has been systematically eroded by anti-choice legislators at all levels of government. More than 500 anti-choice measures have been enacted in the states since 1995, essentially rolling back this fundamental right for many women. We need the protection of FOCA now more than ever before.

I urge you to stand with the majority of the country, which does not want to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned, and cosponsor the Freedom of Choice Act.

Anti-Trafficking Bill (S5902)

"Eliot Spitzer, heed our pleas, strong trafficking laws

are what we need!" This was one of the chants at our Thursday vigils at Foley Square. It looks like Spitzer was listening. BQNOW joined with NOW-NYC and Equality NOW and others to outlaw human trafficking in NYS. On May 16th, NYS Governor Elliot Spitzer and the leadership of the NY State Assembly and Senate agreed to new legislation, which would criminalize trafficking and provide services for its victims. Known currently by its Senate bill number (S5902), the bill must still be passed by both houses of the state legislature. We see this proposed legislation as a step in the right direction. But until it is passed, we will remain vigilant. Contact your assembly-member and state senator and tell them you want to see this anti-trafficking bill become law. To contact your state representatives, go to:

www.cmap.info/webmapping/default.asp

Use of Voting Machines (A8425):

"An act to amend the education law, in relation to the use of voting machines during school board elections." Recently, several communities have used uncertified DREs in their School District elections AND prevented candidates from having observers in the poll sites AND a Superintendent of Schools accused the League of Women Voters of wanting to disrupt the election (because they held a press conference to say that observers should be allowed). The above bill would require school districts that use voting machines to record votes to use only voting machines which have been approved by the state board of elections. Without this bill, the door remains open to use

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SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT GARDASIL

FDA Approval Not Based On Actual Cancer Prevention: from *Cancer Monthly* 4/18/2007

The FDA-approved cervical cancer vaccine "Gardasil," has been debated for a number of reasons including its cost of \$360 (plus the cost of doctors visits to get the shots) and the fact that it is approved for young girls and the moral and sexual implications associated with this. Up until recently, however, no one challenged the vaccine on the grounds of its presumed safety and efficacy. The fact that it is FDA approved was considered prima facie evidence that the vaccine is both safe and effective. We must remember, however, that the FDA that approved Gardasil is an agency with countless conflicts of interest that has approved many vaccines and drugs that were later found to be dangerous or deadly.

When *Cancer Monthly* began looking at the research that enabled this "cervical cancer vaccine" to receive FDA approval we were astounded to find that this approval was not based on the vaccine's actual prevention of cervical cancer. Instead a surrogate was used - precancerous lesions. We were pleased to see a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) that echoed these same issues - "Questions on Efficacy Cloud a Cancer Vaccine" April 16, 2007; Page A1. The WSJ stated, "The Food and Drug Administration didn't ask its panel of experts advising on Gardasil to rule on whether the vaccine specifically prevented the cancer itself."

Cancer Not Measured

How effective is Gardasil in decreasing the incidence of cervical cancer? 100%? 50%? No one really knows because this question has not yet been answered. As of today, the Gardasil vaccine has never been proven to decrease the actual incidence of cervical cancer. In the studies that led to the vaccine's approval, the incidence of cervical cancer was not measured. Instead CIN (cervical intraepithelial neoplasia) 2/3 and AIS (adenocarcinoma in situ) were used as the surrogate markers for prevention of cervical cancer because according to the vaccine's insert "CIN 2/3 and AIS are the immediate and necessary precursors of squamous cell carcinoma and adenocarcinoma of the cervix, respectively." While this is true it is also true that CIN 2/3 and AIS usually do not lead to cancer. For example, according to published data, CIN2 only leads to invasive carcinoma 5% of the time and CIN3 only leads to invasive carcinoma 12% of the time.¹

HPV Alone Insufficient to Cause Cancer

In addition, Gardasil is targeted against Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) (types 6, 11, 16, and 18). However, during discussions at the FDA it was admitted that HPV alone is insufficient to cause cancer. Dr. Elizabeth Unger of the Centers for Disease Control stated, "So it is believed that infection alone is insufficient to cause cancer, and additional factors are required for neoplasia. There are certainly lots of questions about HPV infection..."² This point is echoed in the medical text book *Cancer: Principles & Practice of Oncology* whose editors include Dr. Vincent DeVita, Jr. who was President of the National Cancer Institute and Dr. Steven Rosenberg, Chief of Surgery at the National Cancer Institute. According to this text, "HPV infection is not sufficient for cervical carcinogenesis..."³

HPV the Correct Target?

This is of course quite rational. If HPV alone caused cervical cancer than the number of cases in the U.S. would be the same as the number of women with HPV infections. Since only a relatively small percentage of HPV infected women get cervical cancer this raises the question whether a vaccine against HPV is the right target at all? In fact, according to the text *Cancer: Principles & Practice of Oncology*, "In most studies, HPV status was not a strong independent prognosticator of outcome in cervical cancer patients; however there appears to be a trend for HPV-negative tumors to do worse ...those tumors containing HPV DNA tend to be of an early stage and low grade."⁴ This suggests that if the goal is to reduce deaths from cervical cancer the target should not be HPV at all because the tumors without HPV actually "do worse."

Concern at the FDA

Obviously a vaccine designed to prevent cervical cancer should have measured cervical cancer during testing, but it did not. During meetings at the FDA, Dr. Karen Goldenthal of the FDA discussed this very point. She said, "Now, here is some advantages of cervical cancer as an endpoint. Clearly the major concern is cervical cancer. This would be viewed as very, very definitive data, and it may be easier to

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NOW is the time.
Keep up the good work!

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DOUBTS ABOUT GARDSIL

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identify any unanticipated vaccine associated problems."5 Nonetheless, the FDA did not require that the actual number of cervical cancers be measured. As a result we now have an FDA approved "cervical cancer vaccine" that is yet unproven to reduce or prevent cervical cancer.

Leap of Faith

As quoted in the Wall Street Journal article, Scott Emerson, a professor of biostatistics at the University of Washington who sat on the FDA advisory committee, says he's not persuaded the vaccine is worth the billions of dollars likely to be spent on it in coming years. "I do believe that Gardasil protects against HPV 16 and 18, but the effect it will have on cervical-cancer rates in this country is another question entirely...There is a leap of faith involved," Dr. Emerson said.

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ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION

OUR CORE ISSUES:

- Reproductive Rights
- Passage of the ERA
- Equal Economic Opportunity
- Stopping Violence against Women
- Ending Discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation

visit our web site: www.brooklynqueensnow.org

Our activities focus on the political, legislative and educational arenas.

ACTION ALERTS

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corruptible voting machines. (Thanks to TeresaHommel for the information). What to do: Contact your state assemblymember and ask her/him to immediately co-sponsor bill A8425. Make sure you say that the bill does not require the use of voting machines (because many school district elections are conducted on paper ballots which are hand counted), but if machines are used, they must be certified.

Hate Crimes Bill Update (S1105)

After 15 years of determined advocacy on behalf of hate crimes prevention legislation, it appears we have a chance this year to pass an effective, inclusive bill. The House passed its version of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, H.R. 1592. Next, the Senate takes up the bill. The Senate will soon consider its version of the hate crimes legislation formally known as **The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007**. Introduced in the House as H.R. 1592 by Representative John Conyers (D-Mich.), and in the Senate as S. 1105 by Senators Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Gordon Smith (R-Ore.), this bipartisan proposal will expand current federal hate crimes protections for race, color, religion and national origin and include, for the first time, protections against violent bias crimes committed on the basis of disability, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. Note that Senators Schumer, Clinton, and Obama are all co-sponsors and McCain is not a co-sponsor.

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