

BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW NEWS



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P.O.Box 350-746
Brooklyn, NY 11235
(718) 951-7441
bklynqnsnow@yahoo.com
www.brooklynqueensnow.org



Chapter Happenings

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We are pleased to announce the publication of the long-awaited reference book, *Feminists Who Changed America, 1963-1975*, edited by Barbara Love, available from U. of Illinois Press (800-621-2736). Included are members of BQ NOW, including our chapter Vice President **Sherry Rogers** and long time activist **Marie Shear**.

This has been a highly charged year politically. BQNOW has been right out there in front of the pack identifying issues and candidates for our members. We've had major success on several fronts: New York State eliminated the 5 year statute of limitations for rape cases; nationally and statewide we now have legal access to non-prescription emergency contraception – but only if you're over 18.

We've brought shameful prison conditions to light and made our state senators take note – the Anti-Shackling Bill (S6895/A3804). We've worked in coalition to raise awareness of and penalties for the sex trafficking industry (A 1898), and of the dangers inherent in switching to electronic voting machines (Resolution 131 - more on this later). We're working to continue pressure for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (H Res 155, SJ Res 7 and HJ Res 37). We've mourned the loss of Brooklyn's Shirley Chisholm (CD11) and Betty Friedan. We've worked hard to keep Wal-Mart out of New York City.

We identified a key Congressional race – the 11th CD in Brooklyn. Major Owens decided not to run. We sent questionnaires and interviewed the 4 Democrats running in the primary. Our pick: Major's son Chris Owens. Yvette Clark won the primary and the general election. Through our efforts, we know where she stands on our issues. We look forward to working with her during her 2 year term. We recommended state NOW endorsement for re-election for 2 successful state legislators – Velmanette Montgomery (SD18) and Joan Millman (AD52) and for an up-and-coming state senate candidate, Nora Marino (SD11). We continue to meet with Brooklyn and Queens state legislators so they'll know and support our issues.

We met with State Senator Malcolm Smith, of Senate District 14 in Queens, slated to take over as Senate minority leader from Senator David Patterson. We discussed his position on reproductive rights, as well as other legislation pertinent to women. He assured us that he supports reproductive choice.

There are new faces in Washington, new leaders to watch closely. Changing the leadership of Congressional committees doesn't necessarily mean anything will be accomplished. We still don't have legislation protecting our right to obtain legal prescriptions. Pharmacists can and do refuse to dispense birth control or emergency contraception if their "consciences" tell them otherwise. We have no federal legislation preventing "drive thru" mastectomies. Congress refuses to pass the Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act (S910/ HR 1849).

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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.



- Jan 8** Chapter Meeting, Sheepshead Bay. Call 347-515-1410 or 718-891-8590.
Jan 27-28 NOW-NYS Council, Albany, NY For info: www.nownys.org
Feb 5 Chapter Meeting, Midwood. Call 718 951-7441.
Mar 5 Chapter Meeting, Forest Hills. Call 718-263-7638.
Apr 9 Chapter Meeting, Sheepshead Bay Call 718 769-8901.



This Week in History

Presented by the Jewish Women's Archive.

On December 21, 1919, **Emma Goldman**, along with 248 other radical "aliens," was deported to the Soviet Union on the S.S. Buford under the 1918 Alien Act, which allowed for the expulsion of any alien found to be an anarchist.

Emma Goldman, born in Kovno, Lithuania (then Russia) in 1869, came to the United States in 1885 at age 16. By the time of her deportation, she had made a name for herself as a leading anarchist, public speaker, and crusader for free speech, birth control, and workers' rights.

Goldman first became interested in radical politics in Russia, where she came into contact with populists and political organizers. In the U.S., she was disappointed to learn that instead of streets paved in gold, workers were subject to gross economic inequality and inhumane working conditions. A defining moment for Goldman came in 1886, when eight anarchist radicals were convicted and condemned to death, on flimsy evidence, for setting off a bomb at Chicago's Haymarket rally that caused a riot in which several police officers were killed. Convinced of the defendants' innocence, Goldman resolved to learn all she could about anarchism, and soon became active in the anarchist movement.

Unfortunately for Goldman, the decades of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were difficult ones in which to be an anarchist in America. Federal anti-anarchist laws restricted Goldman's ability to give public speeches and subjected her to frequent harassment and arrests. Still, she had a profound influence on American political activism. Giving hundreds of talks across the country, she became renowned as an inspiring and controversial orator. *Mother Earth*, the journal she founded in 1906 and ran until 1917, provided an outlet for the writings of radical thinkers. Roger Baldwin, who heard Goldman speak on free speech in 1908, went on to found the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Margaret Sanger, a prominent birth control activist, looked on Goldman as her mentor.

Although Goldman was not a pacifist, she believed that governments had no right to wage war, and actively opposed U.S. involvement in World War I. She argued that the war was an imperialist venture that aided capitalists at the expense of workers. When the U.S. entered the war in 1917, her anti-draft activism was considered a threat to national security, and she spent 18 months in federal prison. On her release, she was immediately re-arrested and sentenced to deportation under the 1918 Alien Act, which authorized the deportation of any alien found to be an anarchist.

At first excited by the chance to see the workers' republic of Soviet Russia, Goldman was soon disillusioned by the Bolshevik regime. Barred from returning to the U.S., she spent the last two decades of her life wandering through Europe and Canada, giving speeches on radical politics. When she died in Toronto in May 1940, her body was returned to Chicago, where Goldman was buried near the Haymarket anarchists who had first inspired her.

Sources: Jewish Women's Archive, <http://www.jwa.org/exhibits/wov/goldman/>; Emma Goldman Papers, <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/>; *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, pp. 526-530;.

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Chapter Happenings

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Doctors who perform abortions are still targets; medical schools do not mandate teaching the procedure. We have a supreme court considering overturning Roe v Wade and no clear NY State or federal acceptance of same sex marriages. We have a president who appoints anti-choice, anti-humanrights activists to head key committees.

Our city council has been moving toward protecting our voting rights, but more needs to be done to assure passage of Res. 131 (selecting paper ballots instead of electronic voting). Check out Wheresthepaper.org, link to "New York", and "Announcements" for updates. Call Sherry for more info 718 263-7638.

What else have we been doing? We've updated our signature banner, brochure, and T-shirts to reflect our merger with the Queens chapter. The redesigned T-shirts, with their great new color and design, are available online or at meetings. We've spoken at schools, conventions, and college campuses on women's history, on rape, and for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and marched in demonstrations for peace, for same-sex marriage equality, for our reproductive rights, and against Supreme Court appointees Roberts and Alito.

What's in store for 2007? That's up to you! Come to our chapter meetings. Renew your dues promptly so we have money to carry out our programs! Email or phone us with issues you care about. Pressure your elected officials to pass legislation we tell you about. Tell your friends and family about our chapter and grow our membership. The movement can't *move* without your support.

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contact Shirley Ranz at 718-769-8901 or
email: shranz@earthlink.net

NOW-NYS CONVENTION REPORT

This year's NOW-NYS Convention took place once again in Albany, the setting of the NOW National Conference this past summer. The two-day convention on October 21-22 featured numerous guest speakers, a New Activist Training Institute, exciting workshops, and the reelection of our incumbent NOW-NYS president, Marcia Pappas, who ran for office unopposed.

A luncheon and evening reception honoring women were the highlights of the first day. The Woman to Woman Award went to Lillian Kozak and Gloria Jacobs, long-time opponents of "no-fault" divorce. Unfortunately, due to illness, Ms. Kozak was unable to attend, but Ms. Jacobs strongly renewed their commitment to supporting women's rights in the courts. Speakers at the luncheon included Able Mabel Thomas, a current member of the Georgia House of Representatives.

Later in the evening, a reception was held to honor NOW's Legislator of the Year, the Hon. State Assembly member Amy Paulin of Westchester, who was instrumental in eliminating the statute of limitations on rape cases earlier this year. Her moving, personal speech helped to push through the stalled legislation, which was bogged down by competing bills in the State Senate and the Assembly.

Rounding out the speakers list on the convention's first day was Bill Baird, a contraception and abortion rights advocate whose work has spanned an incredible five decades. Baird related to his audience his long history fighting for reproductive health, sometimes even in the face of opposition on the pro-choice side. Apparently, some activist women were distrustful of having a man work on behalf of women's rights, and Mr. Baird ending up stepping on some toes. But his efforts in the 60's led to the Supreme Court case Baird v. Eisenstadt, which held that the right to privacy allowed an individual to have access to birth control, regardless of marital status. Privacy rights would later be instrumental in the landmark decision Roe v. Wade.

Twelve workshops were offered as well, running the gamut from women's health to lesbian rights to family court and divorce. The New Activist Training Institute concentrated on workshops designed with the newer and/or younger feminist in mind, such as Media and You and Love Your Body, not that long-time activists might not be interested as well. One notable workshop called Run and Win.

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NOW-NYS CONVENTION REPORT

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gave detailed instructions on running a campaign and working to obtain political office. Considering that the average percentage of seats held by women in the Congress seems to consistently be in the 15% range (in January the Senate will be 16% female) this workshop offered solid, grass-roots ideas on how to place more women in all areas of government, whether local or national.

Workshops and speeches aside, there was business to be conducted and a vote to be counted. But voting this time proved to be anti-climatic since the existing slate ran unopposed. Not even all of the 47 eligible voters chose to vote. In addition, the location of the next Convention was decided. It will take place somewhere on Long Island, but surprisingly, no LI Chapter stepped up to host said convention, so the exact location on LI is anyone's guess.

More importantly, several changes in NOW-NYS bylaws were debated and decided, and it was concluded that in the future, NOW-NYS' official permanent office would be in Albany. Opponents were concerned that a permanent Albany office would discourage members from outside the Albany area from running for the office of President.

All in all, the NOW-NYS Convention is always a rewarding experience and attending is a great way to make your voice heard as well as to enjoy the company of like-minded feminists. The Convention is open to all NOW-NYS members. Consider putting it on your calendar next year. Exact dates will be found in a future newsletter.

Julie Kirshner

Chair, Legislative and Political Committee

PICTURE THE HOMELESS

Picture the Homeless is a grassroots organization founded and run by homeless people organizing for social change. We consider homelessness to be a housing problem--not a "homeless problem."

Our housing campaign focuses on the thousands of abandoned buildings that remain in NYC while rents skyrocket and the homeless population grows. The city spends \$700 million a year on a shelter system, instead of permanent housing, and Mayor Bloomberg maintains that there are no more abandoned buildings.

Now we're developing legislation to render the warehousing of buildings illegal, implemented by fines levied against noncompliant landlords equal to the cost of bringing properties online. We are proposing that 50% of properties be set aside as housing for people making less than \$13,000 annually.

Homelessness dramatically impacts women! Single moms comprise the fastest-rising segment of the homeless population--currently, the majority of the 8,194 families in NYC shelters are headed by women. Women, with no safety net, are unable to find housing they can afford, and they stay in abusive relationships because if they leave they will become trapped in the shelter system.

We need your help. Please visit our website, www.picturethehomeless.org, and contact us for further information about this campaign, and what you can do to help create safe housing that's truly affordable for all New Yorkers. We welcome your support in any form.

ACTION ALERT: SACK KEROUAC!

Please write to your representatives in Congress, asking them to press Secretary Leavitt to find a qualified candidate to serve as deputy assistant secretary for population affairs and to drop his appointment of Eric Keroack.

Why Keroack is wrong for this job:

- The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Population Affairs oversees \$238 million "designed to provide access to contraceptive supplies and information to all who want and need them with priority given to low-income persons."
- Eric Keroack has a long history of opposing contraceptive use, supporting ineffective abstinence-only educational programs, and working against a woman's right to abortion .
- He is the medical director of A Woman's Concern, an anti-contraception, anti-abortion network of so-called pregnancy counseling centers based in Boston. Their website states that "A Woman's Concern is persuaded that the crass commercialization and distribution of birth control is demeaning to women, degrading of human sexuality and adverse to human health and happiness.

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P.O. Box 350-746
Brooklyn, NY 11235
Phone: 718-951-7441
Fax: 718-263-7638

E-Mail:
bklynqnsnow@yahoo.com
shranz@earthlink.net

**BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW
LEADERSHIP CONTACT NUMBERS**

(718)-

President: Shirley Ranz 769-8901
Vice President/Secretary: Sherry Rogers 263-7638
Treasurer: Constance Pigozzi 331-1137
Membership: Judith Ebert 951-7441
Legislative: Julie Kirshner 769-9607
Young Feminists: Rachele Suissa rs8333on@pace.edu

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

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

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

visit our web site: www.brooklynqueensnow.org

Support the Family and Workplace Balancing Act

H.R. 1589, is a package of proposals to "improve the lives of working families by providing family and medical need assistance, child care assistance, in-school and afterschool assistance, family care assistance, and encouraging the establishment of family-friendly workplaces."

Take action now! Contact your Representative , and encourage other members of Congress to sign on as a co-sponsor of the Balancing Act.

Bill Summary: The bill provides assistance for working families through family and medical care leave, expanded child care for young children and incentives for child care providers, preschool, in-school, and afterschool nutrition and education, temporary and part-time workers pension and health plan benefits, and encouragement of business use of employee telecommuting.

In a nutshell, the Balancing Act would provide:

- 1 paid leave for caring for young children and elderly relatives;
- 2 increased child care options for working families;
- 3 funding for afterschool programs and universal pre-k;
- 4 free school breakfast; and
- 5 more friendly and flexible workplaces.

For more info go to: <http://www.now.org/issues/mothers/honorwithaction.html>

National Organization for Women
Brooklyn-Queens Chapter
P.O.Box 350-746
Brooklyn, NY 11235

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