

# BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW NEWS



WINTER 2010  
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## HAPPY WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

There's one month out of the year that it's okay to celebrate our feminism! Our beloved "F" word is considered un-cool by too many during the 11 other months.

Here's the rant:

- We have no Equal Rights Amendment.
- We have no Fair Pay legislation.
- Our reproductive rights are not yet assured.
- Title IX, just like voting rights must be re-legislated every few years and depends upon the whim of Congress.
- Medical research has still not prioritized women's health problems.
- We remain under-represented in the US Congress, in the NY State Legislature, and among world leaders.
- Women globally are subject to patriarchal brutality and even slavery although it's through women's entrepreneurial leadership that families and villages survive.

Whew! Don't get us STARTED!

All right, you got us started. What remains is what do we do with all this energy and opportunity? Well, BQNOW will do what it does very well.....

We LOBBY for change!

What's that you say? You don't know how to lobby? It all sounds too overwhelming? Nonsense! It's a lot easier than you think. We're planning a Lobbying workshop on March 25. (See Calendar on Page 2) We'll identify proposed legislation that needs our support, legislators who

need to hear from us, and talking points to help us be effective. Our governor and state legislators will all be up for election, so it's an opportunity to tell them what we think. Join us!!!!

March 8<sup>th</sup> is International Women's Day. We suggest you check out some global feminist issues by going to the following websites: [www.girleffect.org](http://www.girleffect.org) (agree AND disagree links), [www.turningpoint-ny.org](http://www.turningpoint-ny.org), and <http://traffickingproject.blogspot.com> You'll see the powerful effect of supporting and educating girls and women here and in countries around the world.



BQ NOW members Julie Kirshner, Rachelle Suissa, Gloria Gibson & others from around the state protesting Senator Schumer's acceptance of the anti-choice Stupak Amendment to the Health Care Reform Bill.

## BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW CHAPTER CALENDAR-2010



Chapter meetings take place the first Monday of the month at 7pm, unless otherwise noted. Inclement weather may force the rescheduling of a chapter meeting, so be sure to RSVP the number provided or call 718 769-0101. Call the numbers below for exact location and directions.

- Mar 1                    **Chapter Meeting** in Sheepshead Bay. Call 718-891-2490.
- Mar 7, 1-3:30pm      **St Patrick's Day Parade** in Queens (Gays included) March with BQ NOW. Begins Skillman Ave & 43<sup>rd</sup> St., Woodside. See [www.stpatsforall.com](http://www.stpatsforall.com) or call 718-263-7638.
- Mar 16                 **Special election** of Senate District 13. **BQNOW endorsed Jose Peralta**. To get involved in helping his campaign, call 718-205-5855.
- Mar 25, 7pm          **Lobbying Workshop** in Sheepshead Bay. Call 718-769-8901. See front page for details.
- Apr 5                  **Chapter Meeting** in Sheepshead Bay. Call 718-769-8901.
- May 3                 **Chapter Meeting** in Midwood. Call 718-338-3520.
- Jun 7                  **Chapter Meeting** in Forest Hills. Call 718-263-7638.
- July 2-4               **National NOW Conference** in Boston, MA. Travel with us on Megabus ([www.megabus.com/us](http://www.megabus.com/us)) For details check. [www.now.org](http://www.now.org).

## Disappointing News from New York State NOW

For the past 20 years, New York State NOW has had an active **Trafficking, Pornography, and Prostitution** task force. It addressed the harm to women and girls from the Pornography industry, and the broader sex industry including the use of women and girls in Trafficking and Prostitution.

A tiny **pro-pornography** faction recently duped NOW-NYS' Council into dismantling the Task Force by calling for the removal of the word "pornography" from its title and replacing it with the phrase "media objectification." Task Force Co-chair Bob Brannon argued,

"...the word 'pornography' includes other issues, which go beyond objectification. The most problematic, and insidious, are the materials that *eroticize and glorify inequality, male domination, female submission, and sexual violence against women*. Scientific research clearly shows that this kind of material, e.g. showing women as enjoying being raped (after first resisting), clearly influences *some* men to be more likely to actually assault the women they know. And in general for many men, "*pornography makes... sexism... sexy*."...this is the term that most people know, and are familiar with, and that roughly identifies this important and continuing area of feminist concern. .... It would be a mistake, and would send out exactly the wrong message to the feminists we communicate with across America ... to drop "*Pornography*" from our title."

Incredible as it may seem this pro-pornography faction has made the following statement in favor of prostitution,

Marilyn Fitterman (2/23/10): "...I'd love to hear a discussion about legalizing prostitution ie: sex workers because many of my friends are sex workers, they are educated and intelligent adults who have made the choices in their lives without interference from us or the government .."

This troubling statement, which glorifies prostitution as "sex work," utterly fails to distinguish between *decriminalizing* prostituted women (which has helped women and reduced trafficking in countries like Sweden, where johns and pimps are prosecuted but prostituted women are not), and *legalizing* the entire industry of

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## **Disappointing News from New York State NOW**-continued from Page 2

selling women's bodies (which has badly harmed women and increased trafficking in countries like the Netherlands).

For the historical record, from Bob Brannon:

"I remember the day that we arrived at a State Council meeting, about 1993, with a brief anti-pornography report, only to find that Marilyn & Sandy had already filled up all the tables, with... reams of PRO-pornography literature! And they brought along a man, ..., who passed out long printed lists, of the XXX-pornography videos that he loved most to masturbate to. (Some of those were actually insulting and overtly abusive to women... speak of *objectification* !) Lee Reres and Ellen Rillo (chapter presidents) in Queens will remember him; they had to throw him out of their Chapter, later, for passing out his pornography lists."

The NYS NOW Council voted on 2/20/2010 that the Task Force should drop the word "*Pornography*" from its Title, and remove all reference to "*pornography*" from its work. In response, Task Force Leaders Phyllis Frank and Bob Brannon have resigned. The Task Force is now defunct.

Former NOW-NYC President Sonia Ossorio's reaction to Fitterman's statement;

"Her views in no way represent NOW policy or a even a representation of discussions by leaders. The vast majority of my colleagues in this organization are well aware of the harm of prostitution and pornography. It is difficult to read such misguided ideas. I apologize to all of you who work so hard to change minds, hearts and policies that maintain and promote the subjugation of women."

Current NOW-NYC President Jane Manning:

"I think it's incredibly important to emphasize that what the task force proposed to do is to *criticize* and *speak out* against and *raise awareness about* misogynist pornography, not to ban it or legislate against it. Lots of members who would not be comfortable with the idea of legislation against pornography are still very comfortable with using our own rights of free speech to fight back against stuff that degrades women. "Don't ban it, just speak out against it" has been the traditional position of free-speech feminists, including many in NOW. What Marilyn and Sandy have done is so much more extreme and radical than that - in their world, we have to muzzle ourselves about pornography, can't even use the word."

This decision on the part of the NOW-NYS Council, besides being terribly wrong, leaves the fight against pornography in the hands of religious fundamentalists whose reason for opposing it has little to do with the harm suffered by women.

Bringing a pro-pornography agenda into our organization is an extremely divisive tactic. If you believe that NOW should continue to deal with the issue of pornography then please contact the NOW-NYS Council and demand that they overturn their decision.

Email [bklynqnsnow@yahoo.com](mailto:bklynqnsnow@yahoo.com) and we will forward your letter to the members of the NOW-NYS Council.

Letters are the most effective. Write to NOW-NYS Council, or call/fax the NOW-NYS office (518-452-3944.)

Please send or email BQ NOW a copy of your letter. You may use all or part of the sample letter shown below.

NOW-NYS  
1500 Central Avenue  
Albany, New York 12205.

Dear NOW-NYS Council and President Marcia Pappas,

-continued on Page 4-

## Sample Letter-continued from Page 3

I am distressed that NOW-NYS has voted to remove the word “pornography” from its list of concerns. Claiming that you only wanted to focus more on “*objectification*” is a transparent *excuse*, which fools no one.

We all understand that the issues involved with pornography are very complex. The Task Force on Trafficking, Pornography, & Prostitution only asked that these issues be *discussed* within NOW. A huge majority of feminists believe strongly that the harm to women and girls by pornography and the whole ‘sex industry’ is a subject that should be studied and discussed. Only a few leaders of NOW-NYS seem to want the issue dropped and hidden.

NOW-NYS has had a Task Force addressing the harm of pornography to women and girls since 1990. Today, Internet ‘pornography addiction’ is becoming an epidemic that is harming many relationships, and costing jobs. Why was it such a great idea for NOW-NYS to suddenly drop the pornography issue in 2010?

The Task Force Leaders said in advance that they would have to leave if “pornography” was dropped from their mission. So when you voted to force a name change against their wishes, it was obvious you were intentionally voting to end the Task Force.

Marilyn Fitterman’s and Sandy Rapp’s positive endorsements of prostitution, coming just after they had eliminated the pornography issue from the agenda of NOW-NYS, clearly show the direction in which the state leadership is headed.

I urge the Council to restore the word Pornography to the title of the Task Force and to predominance in its agenda.

In sisterhood,

### WOMEN IN HISTORY-ROSE SCHNEIDERMAN (1882-1972)

Rose Schneiderman sought to improve the lives of working class women through the vote, education, and legislative protection such as the eight-hour day and minimum wage laws. A Polish immigrant who grew up impoverished in New York’s Lower East Side, Schneiderman was well acquainted with the life of an industrial worker. She quickly learned about trade unions and organized her shop into the first female local of the Jewish Socialist United Cloth and Cap Makers’ Union. Schneiderman actively worked for the Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL), an organization dedicated to unionizing working women and lobbying for protective legislation. She had a long career in the WTUL as well as in the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU), holding a variety of leadership positions in both.

Schneiderman saw the vote as a tool to get protective legislation passed for working women. As a member of NAWSA, she organized the Ohio referendum and the campaign in New York State. Schneiderman continued her devotion to working women’s rights throughout her esteemed career including holding positions on the labor advisory board under Roosevelt’s National Recovery Administration and as secretary of the New York State Department of Labor. Works Cited:

\* Reprinted from NWHM Cyber Exhibit "Rights For Women"

Author Kristina Gupta

\* PHOTO: Rose Schneiderman, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division (LC-USZ62-112772)



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for Women for all of the wonderful  
work you do.*



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National NOW is no longer able to remit a percentage of member dues to the chapters.

The printing and postage funds necessary to send out our newsletters to keep you informed, and the funds needed to maintain our office computers and supplies, just to name a few items, are dwindling. Please consider sending us a contribution at this time.

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

***ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION***

**OUR CORE ISSUES:**

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

Our activities focus on political, legislative and educational arenas.

***A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant, and A Prayer***

is a groundbreaking collection of monologues by world-renowned authors and playwrights,  
edited by **Eve Ensler** and Mollie Doyle.

***Writings To Stop Violence Against Women and Girls***

March 5, 6 & 13, at 8 PM  
The Directors Studio, 311 W 43rd St. #409  
Tickets \$15 (cash or check at the door)

To reserve tickets: <[http://thelosttheatre.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=77&Itemid=90](http://thelosttheatre.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=77&Itemid=90)>  
Special group ticket prices may be available for March 13. Contact us at 718-769-0101.

All proceeds will be donated to V-Day and Turning Point for Women and Families, a community based, non-profit organization addressing the needs of Muslim women and children through crisis intervention, individual and group counseling, advocacy, outreach, education and training.

**National Organization for Women**

Brooklyn-Queens Chapter  
P.O. Box 350-746  
Brooklyn, NY 11235

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