

BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW NEWS



FALL 2011
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P.O. Box 350-746
Brooklyn, NY 11235
718-769-0101
bklynqnsnow@yahoo.com
www.brooklynqueensnow.org



BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW CHAPTER CALENDAR-2011



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 to the number provided or call 718 769-0101. Call the numbers below for exact location and directions.

- Oct 1, Sat., 9-5 NOW-NYS Convention, *"The Power of Us"* at SUNY Purchase, Humanities Theatre
- Oct 3 **Chapter meeting** in Sheepshead Bay. Call 718-769-8901.
- Oct 17, 6:30-9PM **Open Meeting** at Queens Borough Hall, 120-55 Queens Blvd, Rm 213, E or F train to Union Turnpike
- Oct 21, Fri, 11:30-2PM Brooklyn College Job/internship Fair. 2 train to Brooklyn College (last stop).
- Nov 7 Chapter meeting in Rego Park. Call 718-896-9130.
- Nov 29. **Shirley Chisholm Day**- Speaker- **Anita Hill** at Brooklyn College, Gold Room, SUBO, see Page 5 for more details.
- Tue, 11:15AM
- Dec 5 **Chapter meeting** in Homecrest, Brooklyn. Call 718-891-2490.

CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

Fall is in the air. Earthquakes, floods, hurricanes are all behind us. And in the words of the song, "We're still here!" The results of the special election are in: Congressional District 9 has a new representative - Bob Turner. While he's not high on our list of desirable candidates, he's the one we've got. For those of us who like to keep our elected officials informed of our position on feminist matters, he currently has only a Kew Gardens office and a Washington, DC office. In Queens, call 718 520-9001. In DC: call 202 225-6616 or fax him at 202 225-5679.

The NYS legislature is gearing up for its new session. Senate Republicans, unsatisfied with their 1 member majority, seek to add an additional Senate seat. If you want to contact your Governor, State Assemblymember or State

Senator about an issue dear to your hearts, like **Pay Equity** or funding for social and job-training programs, now is the time. The legislature generally gets underway regarding legislation in January. If you're interested in lobbying at the local office, contact our PAC President, Shirley at shranz@optonline.net.

We've begun something new, theme-oriented Open Meetings. The brainchild of our membership committee, these meetings are held in a public place and scheduled for the commuting crowd who have an interest in NOW and/or the issue at hand. We invite guest speakers who are experts in their fields.

Check our website ,
www.brooklynqueensnow.org or our Facebook

-Continued on Page 2-

CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

-continued from Page 1-

page Brooklyn-Queens-NOW
<http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Brooklyn-Queens-NOW/250648731626503> for the next meeting and topic. If you or someone you know has been “itching” to know more about NOW and what we do locally, check out our website or call one of our membership chairs (see the Contacts section on the back page of the newsletter). At this time, the open meetings are not scheduled past this October 17th.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. At the last Open Meeting, our guest speakers from Queens Borough Pres. Helen Marshall’s office and the Task Force on DV, Sexual Assault, Child Maltreatment & Elder Abuse gave us some sobering statistics on Domestic Violence as well as great information on DV resources. They have also offered 4 workshops on these important issues. They are scheduled for each Wednesday in October (from 10AM until noon) at Queens Borough Hall Room 213. Come to the chapter meetings and we’ll make the written information available to you.

We proposed an amendment to the NOW-NYS bylaws that will allow phone or Internet participation by chapter council delegates. We’re hoping this will lead to greater involvement by chapters all over the state and will allow our members to listen in on NOW-NYS council meetings. This newsletter will reach you after the convention, so we’ll let you know how it all turns

The Gathering Storm

by Joyce Mizrachi

Violence erupts, war is declared, governments topple, civilizations fall; often these overwhelming events appear to be instantaneous. Actually the signs are there for months, for years, and sometimes for decades.

Winston Churchill, one of the leading historians of the 20th century, warned those who would listen and more often those who would not of the growing threat of Fascism. Unfortunately, most failed to heed the warning and millions

would lose their lives in a global conflict. When the war ended, he wrote a multi-volume history of the war. The first volume was aptly entitled *The Gathering Storm*.

At this very moment there are once again signs of a gathering storm. One that foreshadows another war against that which we hold most dear: our freedom. As in the period preceding World War II, the extreme right is using the tactics of exploitation and exaggeration. Under the banner of patriotism and the need to strengthen our security they are waging an intensive campaign to divide the nation along racial, ethnic, economic, and social lines.

They claim to be patriots, but the true patriot defends the rights of all and no right is more sacred than the right to vote. Originally, the franchise was not extended to all, but within a relatively short period of time property requirements were eliminated. The result; all white males had the right to vote. The next step in the extension of the franchise required far more drastic action. A civil war lasting four years and resulting in the deaths of 600,000 men finally abolished slavery. It also extended the right to vote to African-American males. However, it would take another 50 years for women to finally gain the same right.

Ironically, soon after the Civil War ended, a new campaign began to limit if not eliminate the franchise for the newly freed slave. Through a series of laws, commonly known as “Jim Crowe,” numerous regulations were enacted to obstruct African-American from voting, the most well known being literacy exams. With the birth of the Civil Rights movement most, if not all of these, were finally rescinded.

At this very moment in Wisconsin, the Republican Party headed by Governor Scott Walker passed a bill that would mandate new voter identification requirements. All voters are now required to present an approved photo ID. Wisconsin now joins 22 other states that have passed similar legislation. The purpose is obvious: it is a direct attack on those groups

-continued on Page 3-

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The Gathering Storm

-continued from Page 2-

that are considered an important part of the Democratic base: the elderly, African-Americans, the poor, and college students. In Wisconsin it is obvious that college students are being singled out since no college ID in Wisconsin is required to contain their address, date of birth, signature, or expiration date. In reality, there is an option the state does offer non-drivers ID free of charge but little if anything is being done to share this information with those who would most benefit. Last week a state employee who was attempting to share this information with other state works was fired. Legal action has begun to have him re-

instated. The League of Women Voters and other concerned citizens have begun legal action to overturn the Wisconsin Assembly's recent legislation.

It is time for each of us to work to ensure that the rights of all citizens will be protected without sacrificing the security of the nation. "Jim Crowe" has once again reared its ugly head, let it be permanently eradicated and replaced by laws which reflect this country's commitment to freedom.

Abortion Updates from Around the Country

By Rachelle J. Suissa, Chapter Vice-President

This year has witnessed an unprecedented number of attempts by state legislatures and pro-life groups to restrict access to abortion, either by making it harder for women to obtain it, for doctors to provide it, or by imposing costly regulations on abortion clinics. Here's the latest information about state laws and ballot initiatives that have been proposed or will be coming up for a vote in November as a referendum. I think the extent to which the radical right wing will go to curb women's access to abortion will shock you.

Mississippi, Ohio, and Montana have attempted to pass Personhood Amendments, which would grant the fetus at all stages of the pregnancy the right to personhood. In Mississippi, Measure 62 would outlaw many forms of birth control and assisted reproductive therapy. In Ohio and Montana, anti-abortion advocates are pushing for the Personhood Amendment to be introduced on the state ballot in November. By granting the fetus personhood rights, the state would essentially invalidate the right of the woman to choose to terminate her pregnancy. When the fetus is considered a person, the act of aborting it is considered murder.

In Virginia and Pennsylvania, anti-abortion advocates want to make it harder for abortion clinics to stay open by imposing new restrictions on the size of facility rooms, elevators and the staff. In Virginia, new regulations require abortion clinics to have rooms that measure specific sizes and lengths of hallways, which have absolutely nothing to do with patient care or safety. These regulations could remain in place from 18 months to 2 years. In Pennsylvania, the TRAP laws (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) mandate clinics providing abortion care to be treated like ambulatory surgical facilities. Anti-choice advocates believe by imposing costly requirements on the size of rooms, elevators, and staff, clinics will be unable to remain open.

In Arizona, Alaska, Alabama, Texas, Nebraska, and Wisconsin, anti-choicers seek to impose mandatory waiting periods, which would require minors to obtain parental consent and notarization prior to abortion procedures. They would also require women to view ultrasounds before proceeding with an abortion. In Arizona, the law would: require a woman seeking an abortion to meet in person with a doctor 24 hours before the scheduled abortion, specify that only physicians can perform first-trimester surgical abortions, require notarized parental consent for minors, allow healthcare workers to decline to provide abortion information and access to abortion, emergency contraception or birth control based on personal beliefs. A similar law in Alaska requires girls under the age of 18 alleging rape or abuse to have their

statements of abuse notarized and must obtain notarized third-party corroboration of the alleged abuse. Alaskan teens are required to notify parents as well as wait 48 hours before obtaining an abortion. Beginning August 31st, there is a ban on abortions after 20 weeks in Alabama, making it the 5th state in the nation to ban pre-viability abortions. In Nebraska, any girl 17 or younger must get written, notarized consent from a parent or guardian. Wisconsin has tightened regulations for clinics that perform abortions and requires women to undergo ultrasound before obtaining abortions. .

There was, however, a small victory for women in Texas. A Federal Judge recently ruled that a law requiring women who have chosen to abort fetuses to view their sonograms first and to listen to the fetal heartbeat violates the first amendment and blocked those provisions of the statutes.

Several other states have taken different approaches to restricting abortion rights. North Dakota proposed a law that restricts the use of Misoprostol in very early abortions. If this law passes, it would eliminate medication abortions in that state. Safe and effective means of early abortions would end, forcing women to either go to other states for early abortions or wait until the pregnancy is much further along, leading to increased complications and making it harder to obtain an abortion. In Michigan, HB 4799 would prohibit coercing a woman into having an abortion. It would impose fines on the husbands who threaten their wives with divorce unless they abort a pregnancy or on parents who threaten to withdraw financial support unless their minor child aborts a pregnancy. At first glance, this may seem like a good idea. But this is an instance of broad state intervention in private matters and is unconstitutional. If Republicans are such big advocates for small government, why are they advocating for states to play such a big role in the private matters of individuals and their families?

Finally, in Pennsylvania, Senator Bob Casey, a self-identified pro-life Democrat, has introduced S.1488, which seeks to codify the Hyde Amendment, and S.1489, which "prohibits the discrimination and retaliation against individuals and health care entities that refuse to recommend, refer for, provide coverage for, pay for, provide, perform, assist or participate in abortions." The first effort is a moot point, since the Hyde Amendment is already

-continued on back page-

SHIRLEY CHISOLM DAY At Brooklyn College

Barbara Winslow, director of the **Shirley Chisholm Project of Brooklyn Women's Activism** at Brooklyn College, has engaged Professor **Anita Hill**, to speak on Nov. 29 about: "*The Value of Belonging: Reimagining Equality in 21st Century*". (See Calendar on Page 1)

Professor Winslow is a historian teaching in the School of Education and the Women's Studies Program. Her research focuses on the intersection of gender, class, race and sexuality on women in social protest movements. Her first book, *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual Politics and Political Activism*, tells the story of an important suffragette, peace campaigner, anti-colonialist, anti-fascist, international socialist and feminist. In March 2010 she received the **Lucy Burns Award** at Brooklyn Borough Hall.

"It is a true honor to be given an award named after Lucy Burns, whose struggle and determination are as inspiring today as ever," Winslow said to the nearly all-women crowd. "I hope I can inspire other women to learn about her, Shirley Chisholm and other unsung heroes of the women's movement, including those being honored this morning."

Who was this unsung hero, born and raised in Brooklyn?

Lucy Burns was born in Brooklyn to an Irish Catholic family. She was a gifted student and first attended Packer Collegiate Institute, in 1890. Burns also attended Columbia University, Vassar College, and Yale University before becoming an English teacher.

Burns taught at Erasmus High School in Brooklyn for two years. In 1906, at age 27, she moved to Germany to resume her studies in language. In Germany, she studied at the Universities of Bonn and Berlin. Burns later moved to the UK where she enrolled at Oxford University to study English.

Burns' first major experiences with activism were with the Pankhursts in the UK from 1909 to 1912. She was so inspired by their activism and charisma that she dropped her graduate studies to stay with them and work in the Women's Social and Political Union. While Burns is not a widely known speaker from the woman's rights movement, she did make a variety of speeches in marketplaces and on street corners while in Europe. Her activism resulted in numerous court appearances and reports of "disorderly conduct" in the newspapers.

While working with the WSPU, Lucy Burns met Alice Paul at a London police station. Burns and Paul bonded over their frustration with the inactivity and ineffective leadership of the American suffrage movement. Both



women were passionate about activism, and the feminist struggle for equality in the UK inspired Burns and Paul to continue the fight in the United States in 1912. Suffrage historian Eleanor Clift compares the partnership of Paul and Burns to that of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. She notes that they "were opposites in appearance and temperament.... Paul was the militant; Burns, the diplomat."

In 1913 they formed the *Congressional Union for Women's Suffrage*, which organized a 5,000-woman march in Washington on the inaugural day of President Woodrow Wilson. By 1915 the women had branched off and formed their own group, the *National Women's Party*, and continued the fight for the vote. Her most famous stint in jail was that which occurred after picketing the White House in 1917 that got her and her party members (including Paul) locked up in the Occoquan Workhouse. Paul and Stone organized a 19-day hunger strike. Both women endured beatings and force feedings but stayed the course and served their sentence. With 6 arrests and numerous detainments, Lucy Burns spent more time in jail for the women's suffrage than any other woman at the time. Alice Paul described her friend as "a thousand times more valiant than I." Burns was considered the literary power behind the group and edited the *Suffragette* newspaper and along with Paul made speeches that forced even those who opposed them to listen.

After the women's right to vote was granted in 1920 Burns retired from the political activism scene and moved back to Brooklyn to live with her family and help care for her nieces and nephews. Brooklyn's "Lucy Burns Activist Award" is given annually in her honor to those who continue to make a difference in the world of Women's rights.

Dubbed along with Paul and several other members of the NWP as an "Iron Jawed Angel" her character was portrayed in the HBO production of the same name by actress Francis O'Connor.

(excerpted from Wikipedia and a bio by: R. Digati)

**BROOKLYN-QUEENS NOW LEADERSHIP
CONTACT NUMBERS**

President: Julie Kirshner 718-769-9607
Vice President: Rachelle Suissa 646-228-7570
Treasurer: Barbara Sheren 718-891-2490
Membership: Judy Barkoski 718-843-7978
PAC President: Shirley Ranz 718-769-8901
Editor: Sherry Rogers/Shirley Ranz

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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.

ABORTION UPDATES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

-Continued from page 4-

codified into Federal law and has been for the past 40 years. The second effort is an attempt to revive conscience clauses, which give pharmacists and those involved in the process of providing health care the right to abstain from providing abortions if it goes against their religious beliefs.

My point of view on this issue is simple: if your religious views are going to interfere with your ability to provide any kind of necessary medical assistance to anyone, then you should choose a different profession. Being a pharmacist or a nurse or a doctor requires you to serve the interests of the patients, and not your own religious interests. That's why there is a separation of Church and State in this country. Your right to impose your own religious views is not paramount to my well-being or the general welfare of the people of this country.

The attacks on women's reproductive rights at the state level are perhaps a response to having a pro-choice President serving in the Oval Office, even though that President has already compromised several times on women's health, particularly where abortion rights are

concerned. Or, perhaps it is an attempt to appease the ideological stance of the more conservative base within the Republican Party. Or, it could be solely a financial issue for some people—those who do not want their tax dollars going to pay for abortions, because that kills fetuses, but are perfectly fine with their money being spent to kill thousands and thousands of people in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, for example. Regardless of what the motive is to restrict the right to abortion, we can all agree that these restrictions are unconstitutional, an invasion of the right to privacy that has been guaranteed to women through numerous Supreme Court precedent cases, and in some cases, completely ridiculous attempts to restrict their right to access the services that they need. The right to reproductive choice is extremely important, and not one that our state legislators should be playing politics with. The discussion about men's health and reproductive choices is completely off the table. So why are women's health issues still there?

National Organization for Women

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

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