

Minnesota
Women's Press
Changing the Universe through Women's Stories

Changemakers 2009

MWP's annual issue to honor Minnesota individuals, groups and organizations whose action promoted greater self-determination, equality and justice for women and girls.



PATRICIA OLSON

DECEMBER 2009

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www.womenspress.com



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WELCOMEWORDS

Ripples

"I want to believe that the pebbles tossed are creating bigger and bigger circles," said Marlene Jezierski, one of this year's Minnesota Women's Press Changemakers.

Each December we take a look back for the ripples—stories of changemaking. When we asked you, our readers, earlier this year for recommendations, we were flooded with names of women who are making a difference in the lives of women and girls in Minnesota. You told us about your sheroes, role models and inspirations—teachers, money managers, doctors, writers, artists, real estate agents and more. You told us about your friends, neighbors and those you admired from afar.

In this issue we share seven stories of women and organizations whose actions have created ripples and are changing and improving women's and girls' lives.

Jezierski wrote a slim volume of poetry about the enormous, but hidden, problem of emotional abuse. She gives away her book in hopes that the words will help illuminate the issue of violence in the home. Bukola Oriola uses her voice to speak out about another hidden issue—trafficking. She has written a book and

speaks publicly about her own experience of being trafficked in Minnesota.

Poet and spoken-word artist, Shá Cage, encourages girls to think of themselves as leaders and to find their voices through the Teen Summit. Kristine Holmgren founded the Dead Feminists Society to create a dialogue, tossing around feminist philosophy at their monthly salons.

Elizabeth Erickson and Patricia Olson create a learning community each summer in the Women's Art Institute. Their goal is to help individual women artists go deeper on their paths within a supportive, safe and feminist environment. Audrey Thayer carts sewing machines, fabric and an ironing board in her car to homes in northern Minnesota, where Native American women gather to create quilts, jingle dresses and community.

Kathleen Murphy carries the torch to get the ERA amendment passed in Minnesota. The organization she leads, MN C.A.F.E., is working to get the equal rights amendment on the ballot ... and in our state's constitution.

As you read these changemakers' stories, we think you'll find hope, inspiration and appreciation for the ripples and waves they have created to improve the lives of women and girls.

What do women want? Each issue we invite you to send us your thoughts on a theme of a future issue (see upcoming themes on the right) as well as your personal essays up to 500 words on a topic of your choosing. In addition, this month we are inviting you to vote! As one girlfriend to another, tell us *What Women Want*. Fill out our annual online readers' survey and tell us what you think. Who knows? You might even win a luxury weekend at Hotel Sofitel. Go to www.womenspress.com and click on the What Women Want button. We can't wait to hear from you!

NORMASMITHOLSON KATHYMAGNUSON



Coming Up:

In **January** we'll be writing about women and humor.

Tell us something funny.

What makes you laugh?

Send us a paragraph or two.

Deadline: Dec. 10. Send to editor@womenspress.com.

January targeted guides:

Education Guide

Camp and Activity Guide

Advertising deadline: Dec. 10.

In **February** it's all about love!

How has love surprised you?

Tell us. Send us a paragraph or two. Deadline: Jan. 10.

Send to editor@womenspress.com.

February targeted guides:

Health Guide

Women & Pets Guide

Advertising deadline: Jan. 10.

“We helped everyone remember that we are ALL living and breathing changemakers. We all possess the potential to be a leader.”
— Shá Cage

Norma and Kathy
Co-Publishers

YOURTHOUGHTS

Dreams of change

Each month in the Women's Press we ask for your thoughts on a topic. For December we asked the question: What do you dream of changing for women or girls? Here are thoughts from two MWP readers:

Dreams for girls

"A change in the world"... this just takes a spark from within each of us to get things going!

To remember ... what was it like to be a girl? How can we tap into this by asking questions?

To play more often ... how much fun that was! How can we revisit that feeling daily?

To be present ... how important those moments were to us! How can we honor them now by closing our laptops and turning off our phones?

To be yourself ... how amazing and confident our girls are when supported!

How can we best shine the light on the choices they make that support who they are?

Juli Okal, River Falls, Wis.

YOU SAID

Autumn ritual

Tami Mohamed Brown's column [SheSaid, MWP, 11/09] was a beautifully written, moving piece on a slice of life. I have a similar ritual here in sunny Southern California. Although I don't have to contend with snow, we do have our frost and freeze warnings.

Thanks for that expressive article on an annual activity that is as truly a part of the autumn season as is raking leaves.

Linda Stoner, Westlake Village, Calif.

I love the way Tami puts a light on the moments in life and the transitions of the season. Good piece on "paying attention" to the life that is all around us.

Robin Sauerwein, Minneapolis

Older, wiser

Anne Noonan's essay [Laughing Matters, MWP, 11/09] is oh, so true. It is the smaller things that make us wiser with age. Too bad for me, at 40, that while I appreciate a seamless bra, I don't always manage to carry cash. Maybe I will turn over a new leaf by 50?

Kersten Terry, Midland, Mich.

Anne's insights, while extremely funny, are also very practical and so true. Her writing is wonderfully precise yet lighthearted and inspirational.

Debbie Kuehn, Minneapolis

GOTANOPINION?

Write to editor@womenspress.com or send to 771 Raymond Ave., St. Paul, MN 55114. Include your name, address and phone number for verification. Letters are assumed to be for publication and may be edited for length and clarity.

Permission to 'be' for a Gen-Xer

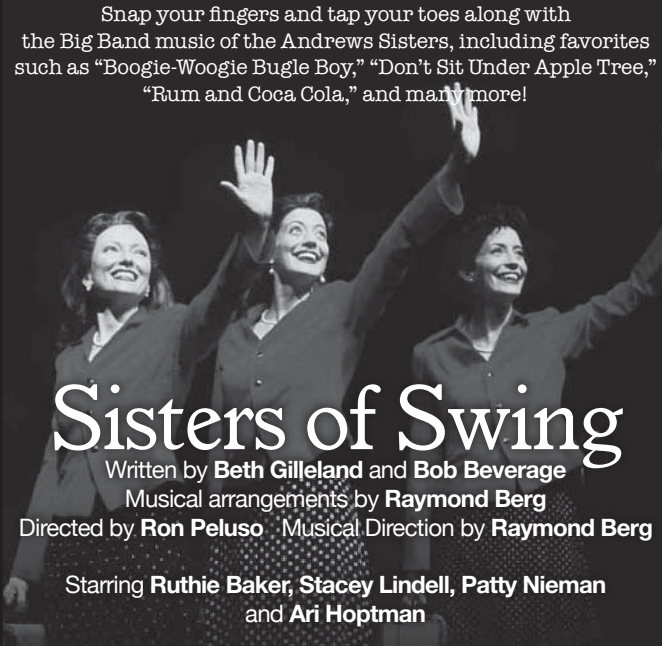
I'm a 30-something, married, professional woman who knows that despite my best efforts, I'm falling more and more behind on laundry, time for friends, a desire to cook healthful meals and regular exercise. While I deeply respect and value the contributions of women before me, I'm not always sure how to integrate everything in this modern life.

What do I dream of changing for women and girls? To know and believe the following: 1) you don't have to do it all, 2) you don't have to do it all perfectly the first or even third time around, 3) you don't have to do everything at the same time, and 4) you don't have to do it all by the time you're 30.

I want women and girls to appreciate and value the fact that because of generations of women before us, we have choices and options that weren't available to us previously. The fact, however, is that we do have choices and can choose to do some things and not others. We owe it to ourselves to make our choices and own our lives without any guilt or second-guessing, because with or without a crock pot, a mortgage, a month's supply of diapers or a company-issued Blackberry, you are you, and you alone have the right to determine what that is, independent of any influences or momentary obstacles you may face.

Kristina Ralston, St. Paul

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THINKABOUTIT

“I have inherited a belief in community, the promise that a gathering of the spirit can both create and change culture.”

– Terry Tempest Williams, environmentalist and author, from her 2001 book, “Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert”



Invest in women

Naissance Capital, a Swiss investment company, intends to put its money in companies whose boards include women. Naissance created the Women’s Leadership Fund after several studies showed a positive correlation between the number of female directors and a company’s performance.

The company also plans to take minority stakes in companies without women on their boards and to use its ownership to encourage changes. The effort is intended to raise awareness about the shortage of women on corporate boards, as well as to make money for the investors.

Source: www.nytimes.com

Boy named Sue?

If you’re seeking a legal career, a U.S. study finds that women with masculine-sounding names are more successful lawyers and judges than those with more traditional, feminine names.

The study, led by economist Bentley Coffey of Clemson University, looked at the relationship between people’s success in the legal profession—and their ultimately becoming a judge—and how masculine their name is.

The study found that a female “Cameron” is about three times more likely to become a judge than a “Sue,” while a female “Bruce” is five times more likely.

“Despite the fact that women made up half of the students graduating from law school in the past 15 years, the legal profession remains a male-dominated world,” Coffey wrote.

Source: <http://in.reuters.com/>

MAYO CLINIC

Do you have type 2 diabetes?

Mayo Clinic is seeking men and women with type 2 diabetes, between the ages of 40 and 70, for a clinical research study. The purpose of this study is to learn about the effect of Liraglutide (an investigational drug for diabetes) on blood flow.

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This study will last for about four months. You will have five visits to the Clinical Research Unit at Saint Marys Hospital. Remuneration is offered.

For more information, please contact Jasmin McCabe at (507) 255-6940 or mccabe.jasmin@mayo.edu or Dr. Andy Basu at (507) 255-6752.

More clinical trials information can be found at <http://clinicaltrials.mayo.edu>

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THINKABOUTITMORE

A million acts of change

On Nov. 6, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) renewed a global initiative to count and showcase actions to end violence against women. The target is to reach 1 million actions in one year. Actions can range from reaching out to students at schools, to volunteering at local shelters, or advocating for legislation or donating money toward programs that protect women and girls from violence.

The effort was jump-started in Kenya by UNIFEM Executive Director Inés Alberdi and Kenyan Minister of Gender, Children and Social Development Esther Murugi Mathenge. "I call upon all segments of society, including the private sector, NGOs, academics, and in particular men to get involved with this issue so as to usher in lasting change," Mathenge said.

At press time, 7,700 actions had been recorded. To start your own action or join one already counted go to www.saynotoviolence.org.

Source: www.unifem.org/campaigns/sayno/



Half a flu shot, please

Two medical researchers say more study is needed on how vaccines work in women, compared to how they work in men.

Sabra L. Klein of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Phyllis Greenberger of the Society for Women's Health Research, propose that women may need only half a dose of the H1N1 vaccine to get the same amount of protection men get from a full dose. Studies have demonstrated that men and women differ in their responses to viral vaccines, not only for H1N1, but also for yellow fever virus, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis A and B and herpes simplex. This difference does not have anything to do with body weight, but, instead, how women's bodies generate a higher antibody response to vaccines than men's do.

If women received a smaller dose there would be more vaccine to go around, the researchers propose, including to vulnerable populations in poorer countries. And women might also be spared the mild side effects that vaccines can cause, such as pain at the injection site, inflammation and fever. All of these are more common in women than in men.

Source: www.nytimes.com



Green Party co-chair

Farheen Hakeem, a community organizer in Minneapolis, is one of four newly elected co-chairs (the only woman) of the national Green Party. She ran for mayor of Minneapolis

on the Green Party ticket in 2005, and ran for a state House seat in 2008.

She said in a press release: "Among the Ten Key Values [of the Green Party], nonviolence, respect for diversity and feminism are what draws a lot of Muslims to the Green Party."

Party officials say Hakeem is now the highest-ranking Muslim woman in any U.S. political party.

Source: www.minnpost.com

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BOOKSHELF

Books for change

GLEND
MARTIN



Books we read can change our lives, sometimes in surprising ways. In one of the early book groups at Minnesota Women's Press we read "Gift from the Sea" by Anne Morrow Lindberg. Recently one of the participants told me how important this book has been in her life; it is the book she most often gives as a gift.

One morning recently I met with several women who shared memories of being in a Women's Press book group 20 years ago. Their eyes rolled as they remembered the challenge of reading Leslie Marmon Silko's novel "Almanac of the Dead." It is difficult, seemingly unbelievable, and yet an absolutely current story based on ancient tales. A book you don't forget.

When you can't forget a book, that book has become part of who you are and has changed you, perhaps even in unrecognized ways.

When you can't forget a book, that book has become part of who you are and has changed you, perhaps even in unrecognized ways.

In October a question for three of our book groups was, "What is a book from your growing-up years that you've never forgotten?"

I could have predicted many of the responses: "Nancy Drew," "The Bobbsey Twins," "Pippi Longstocking," "Anne of Green Gables," "Little House on the Prairie," "The Diary of Anne Frank," "The Secret Garden," "A Wrinkle in Time," "Old Yeller," "Jane

Eyre," "To Kill a Mockingbird" and "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings."

Some of the responses surprised me: "Atlas Shrugged" by Ayn Rand, "Gone with the Wind" by Margaret Mitchell and even "Peyton Place" by Grace Metalious.

Whatever our age, the books that engaged us and have stayed with us are books that changed us, expanding and enriching what we know, how we understand the world. I wonder how these "growing-up books" would change us if we read them now?

Sometimes it's the totality of an author's work, more than a single title, that will change a reader. In the Reading Across a Lifetime book group, a former group at the Women's Press, we read the work of several authors chronologically; the one most of us still remember is May Sarton. She wrote more than 50 journals, novels, and books of poetry, and we read them all.

We didn't like them all, but the value of that experience continues. We found that when you immerse yourself in an author's work you become intimate with her and she becomes part of your own life.

Two recent books have added to my contemplation of change. One is Margaret Atwood's latest novel, "The Year of the Flood," which contemplates possible changing of life on this earth in ways we've probably not considered. It is the second in a series beginning with "Oryx and Crake." Neither are simple reads, but they are provocative and they have changed the way I view the world.

The second book, "Finding Beauty in a Broken World" by Terry Tempest Williams, evoked amazing discussions at three recent Women's Press Salons. Williams writes about mosaics, prairie dogs and building a memorial to the victims of genocide in Rwanda. In each Williams honors the value of finding beauty.

Change occurs within ourselves as we read.

Glenda Martin is a co-founder of the Minnesota Women's Press.

BOOKSHELF:

Glenda Martin recommends these five books. Who knows, they may change your life.

The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox by Maggie O'Farrell

The Help by Kathryn Stockett

Olive Kitteridge by Elizabeth Strout

People of the Book by Geraldine Brooks

The Elegance of the Hedgehog by Muriel Barbery

What's on your bookshelf?

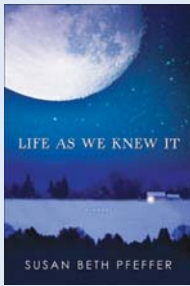
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BOOKTALK



Grace and Emily Scribner-O'Pray's mother/daughter book group recommends "Life as We Knew It" by Susan Beth Pfeffer.

What would your book group recommend?

Grace and Emily Scribner-O'Pray's book group began four years ago by a mom who wanted to start a group for her daughter. The members are six girls in eighth and ninth grades who love to read and talk ... and their mothers.

Q. What book are you currently reading?

A. "Luna" by Julie Anne Peters. It's about a girl whose brother is transgender.

Q. What book(s) by a female author has your group read that you would most recommend to other readers? Why?

A. "Life As We Knew It" by Susan Beth Pfeffer. Because it's suspenseful and a really good book about survival.

Grace: It's about staying together and being a family, and working together with your neighbors to survive.

Emily: I think it's also about being grateful for what you have and sacrificing for others you care about.

Q. What book by a female author recently sparked a great discussion? Why?

A. "Life As We Knew It" was the best recent discussion. We talked about how we would react when suddenly the things you take for granted like grocery stores, school, cars, phones, computers, etc., were no longer available. It's a book that brings up a lot of "what if...?" questions.

Q. How do you decide what to read? Do you read a particular genre or type of book?

A. We don't limit what kinds of books we read—anything goes—although we have never read any nonfiction. The girl who hosts the book club presents three or four options for books. Then all the girls vote (eyes closed) and

the book with the most votes wins. This way each girl gets a turn at picking books, but the group gets a say, too.

Q. What rituals or traditions does your group have?

A. Eating! We always have snacks. We take turns hosting. Sometimes when a movie has been made of the book, we watch it after discussing it.

Q. What makes your group work?

A. Everybody is respectful of each others' opinions.

Q. What book and what dessert would you bring to a deserted island?

A. Grace: The Maximum Ride books (series) and gluten-free cupcakes.

– Jeanne Bain

Tell us about your book group!
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CHANGEMAKER



Kathleen Murphy Got women's equality?

by Tami Mohamed Brown

The presumed answer might be an incredulous: Of course! Followed up by the tentative question: But wasn't the campaign for women's rights fought a long time ago?

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was written and introduced into Congress in 1923. It was reintroduced each session until 1972 when it finally passed the Senate and the House, and was then sent to the states for ratification. A seven-year time limit was extended by U.S. Congress to June of 1982, but was left short with 35 of the necessary 38 states ratifying the amendment. It is not yet included in the U.S. Constitution.

Kathleen Murphy encountered this piece of women's history while working on a college paper, realizing that she had mistakenly taken equality for granted but that the work was not done.

A longtime professional in the public-policy arena, Murphy works on the ERA campaign without fanfare, or even without pay in most instances; she's in it for the bigger picture.

"Although Minnesota did its part nationally by ratifying the federal effort, our own state has never been able to get an amendment on the ballot," Murphy explained.

For nearly 10 years, Murphy has been working on a Minnesota Equal Rights Amendment campaign, to get an amendment to our state constitution put on the ballot.

When the Federal Equal Rights Amendment was reintroduced in the U.S.

House in July 2009, Murphy was one of the uniting forces behind the formation of the Minnesota Constitutional Amendment for Equality (MN C.A.F.E.) Coalition, a group that held its kickoff event, quite aptly, on Aug. 26, Women's Equality Day.

Spearheaded initially by members of the Minnesota Chapter of the National Organization for Women, the Coalition is working to build a grassroots lobbying effort and develop a plan of action to place the Minnesota ERA on the ballot statewide in November 2010.

"We're keeping it focused," Murphy said. "This is not linked to other issues. We're talking, very simply, about women being equal to men under our constitution, so that it would finally read:

Equality of rights under the law shall not be abridged or denied by the state of Minnesota or any of its political subdivision on account of gender.

"It's not enough to assume equality. This is truly about cementing the rights of half of our population into our state law," Murphy said.

"We've been told in the past that until people were knocking on the doors about this initiative, it just wouldn't get a lot of attention," Murphy said. "We need to be able to knock down their doors."

“ We're talking, very simply, about women being equal to men under our constitution.”

-Kathleen Murphy

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BEACHANGEMAKER

The ERA won't pass itself! The MN C.A.F.E. Coalition is seeking diverse members—individuals, organizations, unions, businesses and other groups—to encourage public awareness and strategize development. Both contributions of time and money are welcome.

Action teams include: fundraising, coalition recruitment, communication, education and outreach, and legislative strategy.

For additional information or to get involved:

Go to the website www.MnCafeCoalition.org

Read the blog at: <http://mncafecoalition.wordpress.com>

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Shá Cage and Teen Summit *Youth event links art, activism, leadership*

by Michele St. Martin

It was girl-powered leadership that revolutionized the annual Teen Summit, said organizer Shá Cage. This noted local poet, actor and spoken-word artist is also the artistic director of the Minnesota Spoken Word Association (MNSWA), which sponsors the annual one-day event in partnership with a number of organizations. For the first two years of the four-year-old Teen Summit, attendance had been between 35 and 50.

The event, which links art, activism and leadership, mixed it up a bit last year. Working with MNSWA's Youth Liberation Poets Ensemble (a youth board), Cage made a concerted effort to attract girls. The result? There were 160 participants. And, Cage said, "Usually, we have about one-third female attendees. [In 2008] 80 percent of our participants were female." Participants attend at no cost.

Cage particularly wanted to focus on young women because of her experience working on issues of domestic violence and abuse of girls. The goal of the day

is to help participants see themselves as leaders and to link art and activism in the budding leaders' consciousness.

The day consists of games, listening exercises, presentations and performance. There are frequent check-ins and small-group discussions. "We start with the art," Cage said, explaining that a self-affirming performance by the Youth Liberation Poets gets participants going; it's key that they see youth artist/activists in action.

One of the day's exercises: having all participants declare their own beauty. Cage explained, "We asked, for example:

'How many of you can say you are beautiful?'" With the help of Cage and other adult and youth mentors, all attendees were able to claim their beauty.

About the 2008 and 2009 Summits, Cage said, "I believe we helped the youth to think about the world ... not just through a new lens but through multiple ones. We were incredibly successful in cross-pollinating communities—those from the metro inner city with those from rural areas who don't ordinarily have a lot of access [to each other]."

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"We helped everyone remember that we are ALL living and breathing changemakers," Cage continued. "We all possess the potential to be a leader. The real difference is made in the nitty-gritty work ... allow[ing] them to sit in a circle and encourag[ing] them to lead and drive the conversation. [We] nurture them to go ... beyond identifying what's wrong in the world ... to designing corrective strategies.

"We communicated that young voices matter ... that strong young women are important and that young men and boys are also part of the conversation."

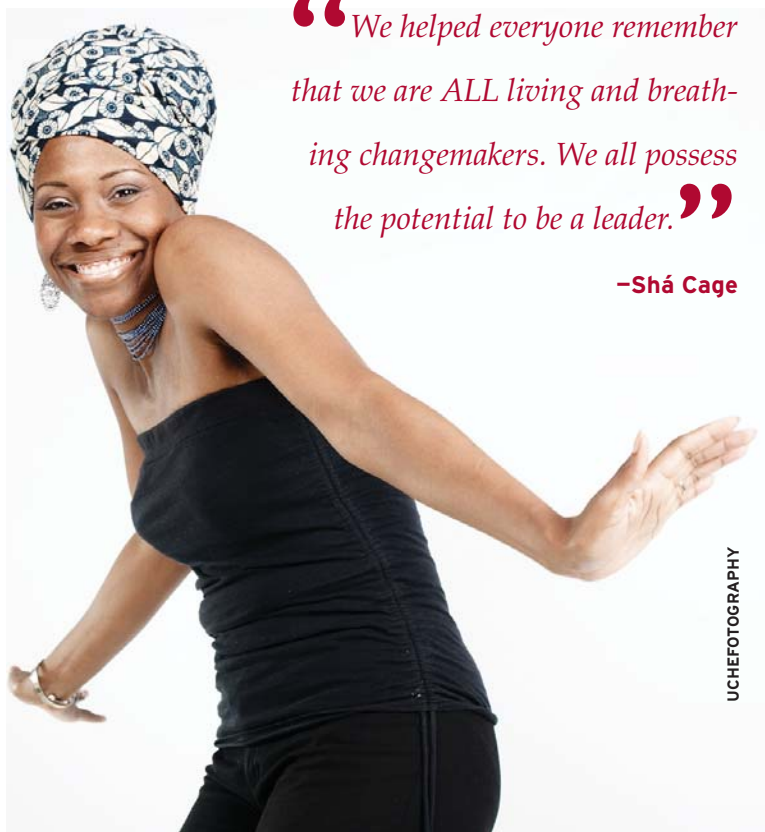
Partnerships are key in putting together the event and in pulling it off, Cage said. One key partner has been the girl-led positive body-image group, Girls in Motion-Minnesota. Partners mainly contribute in-kind; the major challenge is financial. There's been lots of planning and interest; the only thing lacking for the 2010 Summit is the money. Cage hopes to make it happen.

BETHECHANGE!

Come to a MNSWA "Literally Speaking" evening, a one-hour workshop led by leading spoken word artists, followed by a one-hour open mic for participants. First Thursday of each month from 5-7 p.m., MNSWA Youth Zone/offices at 1224 Quincy St. N.E., Suite 140, Minneapolis. There is no charge.

Drop a check in the mail: Donations are needed to make the 2010 Teen Summit a reality. Checks less than \$50 should be made out to MNSWA; over \$50 to Springboard. Put Teen Summit on the memo line. Send to MNSWA at the address shown above.

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"We helped everyone remember that we are ALL living and breathing changemakers. We all possess the potential to be a leader."

-Shá Cage

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CHANGEMAKER



Kristine Holmgren and the Dead Feminists Society

Salons are "funny, respectful and provocative"

by Kathy Magnuson

In October 2008 Kristine Holmgren was unemployed for the first time in a long time and wondering what to do as the economy was crashing. She asked herself what she still wanted to do with her life. One idea in particular intrigued her: Organizing a salon of feminists. The name for it just popped into her head: the Dead Feminists Society.

Holmgren started the group with the intent of "knowledge sharing, networking and growing our developing feminist community in the Twin Cities." She created a Meetup page online and started spreading the word.

The first gathering was held in February and by June the membership was at 100. The number has been growing each month and by October had reached 170. Typically 25 to 30 attend each month. Attendees are "self-identified feminists," Holmgren said. They are married or single, straight, lesbian or transgendered, women and men.

The Dead Feminists Society meets the third Wednesday of most months from 7-9 p.m. in a space provided by Common Good Books in St. Paul. The meeting's format is usually a speaker on a designated topic followed by discussion. When Common Good Books closes for the evening, the group often moves across the street to W.A. Frost to continue the conversation for another hour or two.

The guest speaker at the first salon was Adrienne Christiansen, an associate professor in the political science department at Macalester College. She spoke about her research on women and the media. Other salons have included discussions of books, movies, generational differences of feminists and gender bias in theater.

The conversations are "deep, revealing and satisfying" according to Holmgren.

The salon atmosphere is "funny, respectful and provocative," she said. "We come away with broader knowledge each time we gather. We are making a difference by opening up conversations about equality, fairness and expectations of how women are treated and how we treat others."

"When I get the topic and phone potential speakers who have been recommended, the response has always been 'yes,'" Holmgren said. "It is gratifying to learn that women are still eager to share their knowledge and experience."

Salon attendees agree. "This is the only place I can come and talk about things that I think are critical to me and are not seen as controversial. Things like how my employer is treating me, my opinions about the war and the economy," commented one attendee.

"I didn't know this conversation [about feminism] was still going on," said another. And, "I did not know you could explore these ideas with other women."

The salons will continue into 2010 along with the idea for a new program called Raising the Bar, which will focus on connecting younger women and older feminists in mentorship relationships. The name for this new program comes from "expecting more from ourselves and each other," according to Holmgren.

And, as she said of the Dead Feminists Society, "Especially in times like this we need each other more than ever."

“We are making a difference by opening up conversations about equality, fairness and expectations of how women are treated and how we treat others.”

—Kristine Holmgren

BEACHANGEMAKER:

You are welcome to join the Dead Feminists Society. Sign up, find out when the next meeting date is, register and RSVP on the website: www.meetup.com/Dead-Feminist-Society-of-Minnesota

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Members of the Jawaahir Dance Company performed.



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CHANGEMAKERS

Women's Art Institute Elizabeth Erickson and Patricia Olson

Teachers create community for artists

by Norma Smith Olson



Questions are at the heart of the Women's Art Institute, even on the first day of the Summer Studio Intensive, when participants ponder the theme of the course: "Contemporary Artists—What are the questions? What are the answers?"

Held each June for the past 11 years, the students are asked to bring seven questions about themselves and their artist path. On the first day of class the 100-plus questions are posted and then distilled down by the group to seven questions that become the curriculum for the three-week artist intensive program held at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) and co-sponsored by St. Catherine University.

The Women's Art Institute (WAI) was the idea of Elizabeth Erickson, a painter, poet and art professor in fine arts at MCAD. In 1996, she approached MCAD with a program to give instruction specifically for women art students. She wanted to create a women-centered environment and a safe community for women to explore lives as artists.

Launched in 1999, Erickson, as the Institute's director, invited Patricia Olson to join her as a co-instructor. Olson was

a natural choice. Their friendship began in the 1970s as founding members of the Women's Art Registry of Minnesota (WARM), a collective of feminist women artists. Olson is a painter, designer and associate professor in the art and art history department at St. Catherine University.

"The dialogue [for the art intensive] is formed by not only the questions the students bring, but also by their wide-ranging experience about 'What is feminism?' All of the questions are tossed around in a very lively way," Erickson said. The questions cover a wide range from practical and personal daily things to larger philosophical, theoretical ideas. What are studio practices? What's my relationship to history? How do I make a supportive community? How can I be supportive to others?

Each day starts with a writing workshop to focus on one of the questions. Students share what they've written, "from eloquent and deep, to things people are thinking about for the first time," Olson said.

"That's what's radical," Olson said. "That's what's feminist about this particular way of teaching. People are engaged in a very rigorous, intellectual, critical thinking mode, and at the same time they are bringing their personal experiences to it and trying to figure out how that impacts their life."

While they engage the questions, students produce artwork using studio space and facilities at MCAD. In addition to Erickson and Olson, 12 local and national artists, some of whom are internationally known, lecture and critique.

Mother Prairie, (below) by Elizabeth Erickson and
Feminist Revisionary (right) and above portraits by Patricia Olson





Patricia Olson and Elizabeth Erickson

During its 11 years, approximately 200 students, ages 19 to 73, have attended the Institute. Erickson and Olson think it's the only program of its kind in the U.S. WAI is fully accredited for undergraduate and graduate credit.

Students of WAI have said that it's life changing. Said one student: "I've been going down a dark cave throughout my artist training and someone handed me a flashlight."

For Erickson, these results are directly connected to their feminist approach. "People say the feminist movement is over. Or, the need for this feminist experience is over," said Erickson. "It's immediately clear, as they write these questions and become vulnerable to what they are really experiencing of the life of art, that it's not over. It's so useful in opening a door that offers them the possibility of entering and being a part of something very big."

BEACHANGEMAKER

The 2010 Summer Studio Intensive of the Women's Art Institute (WAI) will be held June 7-25. The brochure and application will be posted at www.mcad.edu/wai in Spring 2010. For more information call 612-874-3765.

Donations for scholarships are critical. If you are interested in supporting WAI contact Elizabeth Erickson at elizabeth_erickson@mcad.edu

“That’s what’s feminist about this particular way of teaching. People are engaged in a very rigorous, intellectual, critical thinking mode, and at the same time they are bringing their personal experiences to it and trying to figure out how that impacts their life.”

-Patricia Olson

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CHANGEMAKER

Bukola Oriola

Advocate for trafficking victims

by Kathy Magnuson

"I am going to stand up for these people and begin to make a change. If I keep talking and talking and talking gradually people will begin to listen and victims will begin to come out." That determination led Bukola Oriola to speak publicly and to write the book "Imprisoned, The travails of a trafficked victim," telling her own experience.

Oriola, 33 years old, came to Minnesota from her native Nigeria in 2005. She expected to continue her journalism career and pursue a new life here, but her days quickly became filled with emotional abuse, control and rape. As a victim of trafficking, she was threatened not to speak to anyone. She did not know how to drive, and mass transit was not readily available. She had limited food and clothing for herself and her son. She worked long hours, being able to hide only some of her earnings for herself. Because her immigration paperwork had not been filed, she was

threatened with being deported and having to leave her son behind. She fell into depression. Oriola eventually escaped her situation with the help of a public health nurse. She went to a battered women's shelter and received counseling and legal advice.

Now Oriola raises awareness about trafficking. She speaks to groups and has published her book to assist others. "I am speaking out to help other victims of human trafficking and domestic abuse because I did not know that there was help," she said. "I don't want to see a woman or child die. The



“There is help out there and all they need to do is to make a phone call to be free from slavery and torture.” —Bukola Oriola

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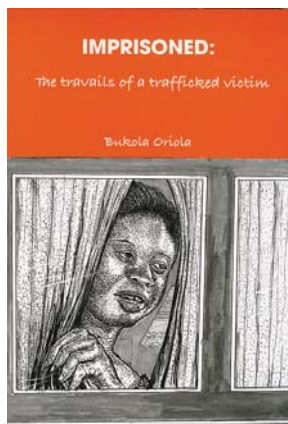
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same message goes to men who have been trafficked into the U.S. and suffering in the hands of their traffickers. There is help out there and all they need to do is to make a phone call to be free from slavery and torture."

Oriola is deliberate in using her real and full name. "You can know it is real. It is not fiction or a movie. I am not telling someone else's story. This is my own story," she said. "Those who are suffering can know that this is true and get help. If I got help, they can get help."

In "Imprisoned," she wrote, "Don't be a statistic ... Make a phone call to the police, shelters or any organizations that provides help. Those people at the receiving end of the phone are there for you and not against you. ... [I am] glad to let the world, especially immigrant women, know that there is help. I made it and any woman can make it, too."

MAKECHANGE:

Are you a trafficking victim? Or, do you see suspected trafficking? Call Minnesota's Human Trafficking Hotline 1-888-7-SAFE-24 (1-888-772-3324) or 651-291-8810.

For information about Oriola's speaking schedule, contact 651-291-0713 or office@civilsocietyhelps.org. "Imprisoned: The travails of a trafficked victim" by Bukola Oriola is available at www.lulu.com and www.bukolabraiding.com

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CHANGEMAKER



Marlene Jezierski 'Beyond the Mirror'

Abuse into poetry

by Norma Smith Olson

Marlene Jezierski gives away books. On Sept. 26 she gave away nearly 500 copies at a book launch celebration for "Beyond the Mirror," her poems that tell the stories and consequences of emotional domestic abuse. More typically, though, her book is distributed copy by copy, here and there, maybe appearing on a coffee shop table or handed from one friend to another.

At the book launch that was held at Christ Lutheran Church in Blaine, nearly 260 people came to hear her moving poems and to leave with one or two copies to pass along.

While there were a lot of friendly faces in her audience, many came who had been personally touched in some way by domestic violence. "Certainly a lot of friends came, but you know, I don't have that many friends," Jezierski said.

but it was about the issue, ... about the victims/survivors."

The book launch was an emotional experience. "Most moving of all, people flooded to the podium, to tell me their stories," she said. "I have experienced this when teaching classes about domestic violence, but this was exponentially more powerful. People kept coming, telling their stories and expressing their gratitude. I was deeply moved by the stories and the pain, but also by the faith that there is hope."

Jezierski said, "So many times when you go to hear a speaker, everybody gets fired up and then they go home." But this event was intended to have a ripple effect as organizations also provided information, resources and opportunities for volunteering. Among the organizations were a battered women's shelter, child abuse agencies, counseling centers, community outreach groups and Partners in Faith for Peace, of which Jezierski is member.

Her commitment to peace permeates her poems. "Peace begins in the home," Jezierski said in a Minnesota Women's Press article in September 2009. "If people understand how behaviors are harmful in the home and change that, then they do that in other places in their life as well."

Her hope is that through public speaking and poetry readings and giving the book away one copy at a time her poems will contribute to understanding and ending emotional abuse.

"This is bigger than all of us," Jezierski said. "I want to believe that the pebbles tossed are creating bigger and bigger circles."

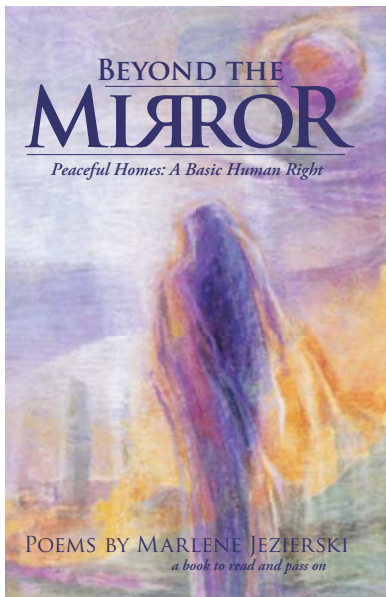
"I was deeply moved by the stories and the pain, but also by the faith that there is hope."

— Marlene Jezierski

The room fell silent when Jezierski read her poems. "I am so aware that I'm not a Shakespeare or Keats or a Blake or even Mary Oliver or anybody, but I think it's the message," she said.

The message in her poetry comes from stories she had heard in her 30 years as an emergency-room nurse in Anoka County and her 10 years as an activist and educator against domestic violence. The poetry in "Beyond the Mirror" focuses on the murky and often misunderstood dimensions of emotional abuse.

The stories in Jezierski's poems illuminate scenes of verbal abuse, often invisible, but recognizable to a reader. "I have said from the beginning that this was not about me,



Read "Beyond the Mirror" online at www.womenspress.com

So she stayed and baked
chocolate chip cookies, prayed,
and slipped quarters to her children.

*How are they, the social worker asked—
really—how are the children doing?
Are you sure they're all right?*

*Oh my yes, the mother's words
flowed in a rush—she had no doubt—
the children knew nothing
of the beatings or her tears.*

...

Later, the social worker
showed the mother a truth:
in a daughter's drawing,
the father and the boys
had thick black hair. They had eyes,
noses and mouths.

The heads of the mother and the girls
were bald. They had no noses,
no eyes, no mouths.

Excerpt from "Silent Witness"
by Marlene Jezierski

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CHANGEMAKER



Audrey Thayer and the Native Women Together Sewing Project

Threads bind a community

by Michele St. Martin

“You just don’t do a work of art in a frame of hateful feelings. When you touch the thread, material, there’s a flowing of good feelings, and you pass that on.”

— Audrey Thayer

“This may be the women’s only joy: getting together one to two nights a week, with kind hearts and laughter. Sadness and grief is a way of life [for Native American women],” Audrey Thayer said, recounting the purpose of the Native Women Together Sewing Project. “Many of our families, we don’t have a lot [of money]. We never know what’s going to happen tomorrow. This is a place of peace and serenity. Many poor people don’t have that serenity. ... I wanted to help other Native women build community in a peaceful space.” While women on reservations have plenty of opportunities to connect, she said, “One thing poor Native women don’t have off-reservation is community.”

So she built one. Thayer founded the Native Women Together Sewing Project in 2005 with a handful of women. Then in 2007 Thayer got a \$5,000 grant that helped buy used sewing machines, fabric and pay for rental space. The women make quilts and also dancing outfits for powwows (social events that honor Native culture). They teach each other what they know. Thayer estimates they have made around 50 quilts and many dance outfits.

Thayer is Anishinaabe and enrolled with the White Earth Band of Ojibwe. She is the coordinator of the Minnesota Racial Justice Project (Minnesota ACLU) and travels throughout northern Minnesota to work with Native Americans who have been mistreated by local law enforcement. In a number of Minnesota’s counties, there is a shocking disparity between the arrest rates of whites and Native Americans.

“When you get calls about child custody cases, police stops, being treated inappropriately by the police, police not answering rape calls in one county—those are the easy ones,” Thayer said; those are problems she can help with. It’s the grinding poverty and high death rates that are beyond Thayer’s reach. The average life expectancy of a Native American is just 55; Native teenagers commit suicide at 3.3 times higher rate than white teens. “In Indian country, attending two, three funerals a week is not uncommon,” Thayer said.

“We weave our lives into that material, our heart and soul in a positive spirit. You just don’t do a work of art in a frame of hateful feelings. When you touch the thread, material, there’s a flowing of good feelings, and you pass that on,” Thayer said.

The sewing project’s funding has run out, and the number of women who can participate is limited by the number of sewing machines. During the fall and winter months, the women meet once or twice weekly, and Thayer travels to participants’ homes. She brings along the five used sewing machines and fabric stored in the back of her car, “plus don’t forget the ironing board,” she said with a chuckle.

Thayer thinks that if there were more sewing machines and a permanent space so the women would always know where to go, more would attend. (She’d also like to get the equipment out of her car.)

MAKECHANGE

The Native Women Together Sewing Project needs donations of fabric, money and good used sewing machines. Checks can be sent to: Native Women Together Sewing Project, c/o Audrey Thayer, P.O. Box 133, Bemidji, MN 56619. Donations are tax deductible. To donate fabric or a sewing machine, email Thayer at athayer@paulbunyan.net or call her, 218-556-6239.

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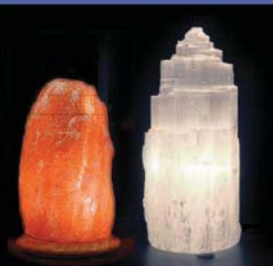


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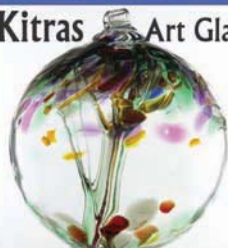
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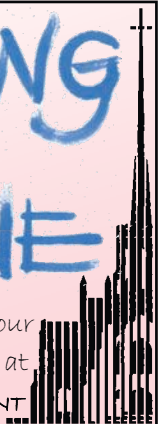
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Book art by Deborah Ramos

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it's time to talk forums on race

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