

in our own write

D.C. Women's Center DEC. 76

Winter Solstice Celebration

The quest for women's history has led many women into a realm of knowledge which has been hidden from us for centuries. We now know that civilization itself began in matriarchal societies (Davis, 1971).

Further evidence from our past shows that goddess worship was our first religion (Davis, 1971; Graves, 1948). The goddess was worshipped for her life-giving powers (she is the "Great Mother") and she was associated with nature's cycles. Religious holidays focused upon the cycles of the seasons and the moon's phases. The cyclical nature of woman, moon, seasons, life were key concepts in the "old religion".

With the advent of patriarchy, mythology was re-written to glorify gods, not goddesses. People were coerced into giving up worship of the goddess for the worship of new gods. They did not give up the old religion easily, however. Many times new gods were accepted only when their rituals were incorporated into goddess rituals.

One of the festivals associated with goddess worship was the Winter Solstice- the shortest day/longest night of the year- the beginning of winter, December 21st. The dark tide of night is at its deepest at this point in the earth's cycle, but from this point on, the day will lengthen and the goddess of light will grow in strength. The wheel of existence comes full circle once again. The death of winter is upon us, but not without the promise of the coming of life/spring. Winter Solstice was such an important holiday in the old religion that Hebraic tradition held Hanakuh celebrations and the Christian church fixed the nativity feast of Christ in the same season.

Many patriarchal traditions during this time of year were originally goddess-religion traditions. For example, mistletoe was originally a matriarchal symbol. It was a tree which was sacred to the Druids, Ireland's matriarchal forest and moon cult. The sticky juice of its berries was believed to give the gift of prophecy. Its branches were cut with a silver sickle by Druid priestesses in rituals beneath the moon (Graves, 1948).

The fir tree (possible predecessor to the Christmas tree) was sacred in Greece to Artemis the moon-goddess who presided over childbirth. "The silver fir has its station on the first day of the year... the day of the Winter Solstice" (Graves, 1948, p. 193).

These are two examples of the links which exist between present religious customs and goddess-worship. Today, many women are abandoning the oppression of patriarchal religion and are returning to the original nature-religion in an effort to symbolically re-link themselves with the life force of the feminine principle. With the resurgence of feminism has come the understanding that woman is a life-force in a culture that is heading for death and ecological destruction. Thus, feminist communities across the country are incorporating a new spirituality into their lives (Quest, spring, 1975). On Winter Solstice those women will re-enact old rituals and create new ones in celebration of the longest night. As Jean, a member of Aurora women's community said to me, "Solstice is the apex of cosmic forces" and the sharing of energy by women on that night has affected women throughout the year.

With our rediscovery of matriarchal religion perhaps we have found a symbolic representation of our spiritual lives which coincides with our political struggle for liberation. As we reject patriarchal modes of economic and social organization, so too, can we reject patriarchal definitions of our spirituality. Tapping into our shared well-springs of spiritual energy past and present, perhaps we can find renewed strength for feminism in our lifetime.

Toni White

(References: Davis, Elizabeth Gould, The First Sex, N.Y., 1971; Graves, Robert, The White Goddess, N.Y., 1948; Woman-spirit magazine, Wolf Creek, Oregon, 1974; Quest: A Feminist Quarterly, "Women and "Spirituality", Baltimore, 1975.)

Announcements !

FIRST THINGS FIRST, BOOKS FOR WOMEN will be selling "womanpresents" at the Christmas Craft Sale on Dec. 2-5 here at the Center (17th and M Sts., NW). See insert for more info..

ALEXANDRIA N.O.W. is sponsoring a free "Brunch" on Dec. 11th at 10:30 am. Call Jan Benham at 370-9815 for directions.

N.O.W. SEXUALITY TASK FORCE will meet on Dec. 12th from 2pm to 4pm in Annapolis and will discuss Lesbians and Alcoholism. Call Eda at 927-3275 for further information.

"REMEMBER THE LADIES" is the subject of the December showing at Corcoran Gallery. Lectures will be given all through the month. Call them for more details.

"EVENT" is coordinated by the Metropolitan Ministry With Women and will be bringing together women's groups to share information, resources and energy. Anyone is welcome to come and join in the activities... groups will display booths, films will be shown, and there will be speakers and music. Call Lee Kurtz at 338-7983 for details. (Dec. 3rd)

Anyone interested in joining an ongoing POETRY WORKSHOP?? If so, call the Women's Center (347-5078) and leave a message for Julie. There will be no charge involved.

The RISING WOMEN'S COFFEEHOUSE is closing to seek a more suitable space. In light of this, the Women's Center is tentatively planning an ongoing "Music Night" to be held here at the Center. But we need feedback!! Please call and let us know your thoughts...

"FEMINIST CONNECTIONS" needed! Women are beginning to call us for temporary housing referrals. They are usually travelling women who need a place to crash for a night or two. If you are willing to open your home to these women, please call the Center (347-5078) and give us the proper information.

LESBIAN OPEN HOUSE will be meeting every other Wed. from 8pm-11pm beginning on Dec. 1. For info. and directions, call Paula, 539-4513.

Rd., NW. Call 234-2722 for more info...

The GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIV. WOMEN'S CTR. will be opened weekdays at Marvin Center.

HANNAH HARRISON CAREER SCHOOL is sponsoring a free Learn to Earn program which will begin Jan. 17th. It will be a full-time, ten week program for women over 35 and newly single, preparing them for basic accounting positions. To apply call 333-3500, Mon.-Fri., 10am-4pm, Sophie Edelsberg. Also offered is Environmental Services Management beginning Jan. 18th. This will run for a year and will be designed for women who want better jobs or start a new career. It will prepare them for supervisory positions and deal with women applicants between 25-55. Call the # above for further information.

VOLUNTEERS!! There will be a general meeting for women who would like to donate some time to the Women's Center on Dec. 8th at 7:30 pm at the Center. We need many forms of help- working the phones, newsletter writing and mailing, project coordinating, setting up a library system, etc., etc., etc..... Give a little... WOMEN TOGETHER WILL BUILD A WORLD AS YET UNDREAMED!!

CLOSET TEACHERS!! Substitutes needed for Osh Gosh Day Care... \$15.00 a day. Call: 347-7079 if interested.

WOMEN'S CENTER USED BOOK SALE is now an on-going thing. Donations are gratefully accepted and are tax deductible. Please help support the Center and come down to buy some books. Our regular hours are 10am-2pm, Mon.-Thurs., and 10am-4pm on Friday, but we are usually here above and beyond those times.

The PRESSMEN TRIAL is scheduled for Dec. 6th. This trial is the cumulation of over a year of hardship which has worn on the strikers and their families. To take some of the load off the women, the strike support committee is organizing child care and community meals for the duration of the trial. If you want to help, or just want more information, call Fred Solowey at 737-2810.

announcements cont.

N.O.W. Chapter Contacts for monthly meetings:
NOW Action Ctr. - 347-2279
Capitol Hill NOW - 543-8525
DC NOW - 387-6895
NOW Sexuality Task Force - 927-3275, Eda
No. Va. NOW - 532-2095, Mary Ann Bridge
Alexandria NOW - 683-4458, Sandy Rangel
Arlington NOW - 532-6641, Cinda Caruso
Montgomery Co. NOW - 299-7640
Prince George's Co. NOW - (North) 779-2068
(South) 449-6560

SELF-DEFENSE - The Women's Ctr./Rape Crisis Ctr. sponsored self-defense class for Nov. was well received. There is indication that there may be enough interest for a second class in January. If you are interested, call the Center and say so! The class will run for six weeks, meet twice per week, cost \$25.00 and you must be a Center member. The class will meet only if enough women call.

LESBIANS... The DC Gay Switchboard needs lesbian volunteers. The Switchboard is the only hotline effort to reach gays in the DC community, but lesbians would prefer speaking to other lesbians as opposed to gay men. To donate some time, call Gay Switchboard at 387-3777 (Note: The Switchboard has moved to 10th and G Sts., NW so you will probably get a new number when you call.)

The SISTER CONNECTION is a newly opened women's coffeehouse in Columbia, Maryland. Shows will be held at Mrs. Z's Restaurant on Cedar Lane and are tentatively scheduled for Dec. 6th and 20th. Call Randee at 997-7296 or Jessy at 730-0148 in the evenings for details.

FIRST THINGS FIRST, BOOKS FOR WOMEN carries women's books, non-sexist children's literature, posters, etc.. They are having a SALE on Dec. 11th. There will be music, refreshments, prizes and a 10% discount on purchases over \$10.00. They are located at 2334 Ontario

A MOVEMENT WORKSHOP will be happening in early January. Explore your freedom to move at a 3 hour Saturday session at the Center. Date will be announced in next issue...

The WASHINGTON AREA WOMEN'S CENTER is trying out a stable schedule!! We will be open from 10am-2pm, Mon-Thurs, and 10am-4pm on Fridays.

poem

She floats through the mountain air
Independent
She knows where the river flows
And follows
The ripples as they glisten with
Silver patches of light
Shining, peeking through the trees
She looks to no guide to find who she is
For she knows, she feels and knows

She shares and she guards
She gives and she withholds
She listens to people and to her Self
When the voices conflict she leaves to
Sort out what she heard
And returns rich, filled with wisdom
She holds and lets go
And listens to her inner voices
To know when to do which

She dreams and dances
Writes and cries
Sings and walks
Swims and whispers

Oh woman of mystery
She, only she, can live with
Her aloneness

Pat Webbink

rising women presents

KAY GARDNER !

*Fri., dec. 10 at all souls
tickets at Lammas * 3*



IN OUR OWN WRITE is the monthly newsletter of the Washington Area Women's Center. Contributions for the next newsletter are due by Dec. 15th. Please send them to NEWSLETTER, c/o Washington Area Women's Center Sumner School, 17th and M Streets, NW, Washington, DC 20036. This newsletter is brought to you by: Beth Karbe, Toni White, Marcy Rein, Elaine Goodman, Angie Carrera, Sandy Black.

Working women:

making change

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cluded testifying at the City Council on the minimum wage and other subjects, having representatives on the DC Commission for Women to discuss occupational safety and health problems and organizing a series of educational programs. Although these are intended for union women, they are opened to the public. Among topics covered have been organizing drives, leadership, working women and the law, and the abc's of economics. Overall, CLUW sees union work as a way to not only better the economic status of women, but also to raise consciousness and overcome the feeling of powerlessness which is so often the first impediment to action.

Contact: Susan Holleran, c/o Greater Washington Central Labor Council; 659-8044.

Last month the N.O.W. Labor Task Force sent us an excellent statement of their purposes and point of view. It seemed appropriate to reprint a brief excerpt, as they are a key resource; "...we must ultimately depend on our own collective strength if our needs are to be met. For this reason one of our primary purposes is to encourage and assist women's organization into labor unions...Two other important functions: education of women about their role as workers as well as education of the labor movement about feminist goals; support work for labor struggles (boycotts, strikes) and for campaigns vital to our interests..." For more info., contact Sara Nelson, 882-5508 or Carol Haddad, 291-9036.

Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) is a national organization involved in combatting the many forms of economic discrimination against women. Specific campaigns have focused on discrimination in granting credit, in insurance policies, in tax and social security laws; the elimination of employment discrimination and the enforcement of affirmative action plans has been a continuing priority. The national WEAL office, located here in DC, acts as a women's lobby on the hill, helps draft legislation, and runs a legislative alert service for members all over the country. Local chapters are autonomous, implementing WEAL's basic strategy of "education, legislation and litigation", informing women of their rights, monitoring ongoing affirmative action programs and investigating possible cases of discrimination. Much of the educational and legal work is made possible by the WEAL Educational and

and Legal Defense Fund. Using contributions solicited from foundations, corporations and individuals, the Fund sponsors research on the educational and economic aspects of discrimination, publishes reports and provides financial assistance to women who are involved in selected legal cases.

Contact: Jessie Baum, WEAL - 638-4560

Building Jobs is a potential support organization for women in the construction trades. In December 1975, the League of Women Voters Education Fund and the Women's Legal Defense Fund sponsored a conference on the problems faced by women working in construction. It was attended by a variety of women from all over the country, among them construction workers, lawyers and women working with job training and placement programs. "Building Jobs" is envisioned as a coalition, a communication/support network which would facilitate exchange of progress reports and organizing strategies and prevent duplication of efforts. To date it has been impossible for them to raise the money to get started. If you can offer information or assistance, please contact Judy Lichtman at the WLDF.

The American Federation of Government Employees in the DC area represents around 125,000 federal workers from general service grade 1 and on up. Its Department of Women's Affairs coordinates information and activities with its National Women's Advisory Committee, which consists of one representative from each of the Union's fifteen districts. A six part resolution passed by AFGE in '74 provided the groundwork for the committee's program. The resolution called for: legal action to fight sex discrimination in the workplace; active union support of improved job opportunities for women and enforcement of affirmative action programs; inclusion of materials on women's rights as workers and their role in the history of the labor movement in the Union's educational program; leadership training for women; research into problems faced by women in the federal govt., such as difficulties in obtaining equitable retirement benefits; stronger support for women's rights in federal personnel policies, regulations and legislation. As established by this resolution, the department is engaged within the union as well as at the workplace. Along with the program outlined, it is making continuing efforts to increase participation in the Feder-

al Women's Program to improve the general employee interests represented. (Although AFGE's members are not on the Board.) Wherever tries to work and CLUW. It is a step. Women's awareness of from that, the commitment, Contact: Louis

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Women Working organization which half ago as a construction workers involved with them they focus on construction, informing women construction. Along with WIC they have sue Federal Distr on govt. jobs timetables for services are bei need of money will be consi WIC's activi al: talking to programs and bout possibl construction, apprenticeship present, ful aims is bei tremly high struction work. Contact: Mart Box

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"WORKING WOMEN" CONT'D

include a speaker's bureau, public seminars, and reference pamphlets (so far five have been published covering: legal name changes, employment and credit discrimination, domestic relations and resources for abused women). To handle requests for legal information and aid, the Fund has established "counseling committees" of trained laywomen. In cases of credit, employment discrimination and name change, the committees can represent women in the administrative procedures. In other cases, or at later stages, they either make referrals to private attorneys or submit the case to the Fund's screening committee. If the screening committee approves, the case will be handled by one of the lawyers who has volunteered to work with the Fund. Decisions to take cases are based on legal merits, with preference given to the woman who can least afford lawyers. Services provided through the Fund are free; clients only have to pay filing fees and xerocopying costs. General policy is made by a Board of Directors elected by the membership. The Board selects the screening committee and oversees the work of the volunteer attorneys. Contact: Nancy Owens-Cierley or Judy Lichtman, WLDF, 232-7072.

Next month, the newsletter will summarize the work of the National Committee on Household Employment, the Women's Rights Committee of the American Federation of Teachers, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, and the local chapter and national headquarters of Federally Employed Women.

Marcy Rein

F **I** **R** **S** BOOKS, POSTERS FOR WOMEN
2334 Ontario Rd., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
234-2722
11-6 M-F, 11-5 Sat.

THINGS FIRST ♀♀

SEX DISCRIMINATION

A sex discrimination complaint has been filed by a former employee against Lambda Rising, a gay bookstore in D.C.. The woman feels she was treated unfairly when her hours were severely cut as a result of a new managerial position (which she did not get) and she was subsequently fired upon lodging the complaint with the Human Rights Commission. A boycott is being organized.

ART ON THE WALL: DECEMBER ARTIST

During the month of December Shari McCoul will have a one woman show at the W.A.W.C.. Three wood sculptures and two bronze pieces will be displayed along with a selection of oils on canvas.

Shari, a graduate of Carlton College in Minnesota, has recently moved to the D.C. area. Like most young women artists, she was very anxious to have the opportunity to publicly show her work. Because established galleries will not take a chance on unknown artists and because young women artists rarely have enough money for a private showing, such artists rarely find a place to show.

In an informal interview, Shari talked about the process of exploring her potential as an artist. In an attempt to achieve her concept of "good art" she feels she must reconcile two schools of thought. One school emphasizes detailed, exact, perfection, working with a design that communicates a spartan perception of reality. The second school emphasizes the emotion, heart or sensuous feelings of the artist. Somehow, the two must be combined through individual ingenuity.

Two examples of Shari's pieces are "Little Box", a bronze sculpture, and "Where are you going, Where have you been?", a multi-media sculpture box. Shari sees the first piece as a grotesque shell of spikelike projections protecting a mischievous jewel box. The second piece has mirrors which reflect to infinity and transmit a fantasy, funhouse feeling.

While her work is displayed in December, Shari invites viewers to communicate their responses to her work. A log will be provided for comments and we hope you will have a chance to see this woman's art.

All this can happen and more when you take the time to come to the Center!

B. Elaine Goodman

music party with cassette
center sun. dec. 19 7-11

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Washington, D.C. 20003
(202) 546-7292

Handcrafted Silver
Gammes
WOMEN'S SHOP

Mary Lee Farmer

11-6 Tues-Fri
10-6 Sat