For over two hundred years American women have organized themselves into "voluntary associations" in order to fight battles both personal and political. The newly formed Memphis Area Women's Council, incorporated as a non-profit organization in October 2003, is drawing on this long tradition by creating a collective voice for women on the urgent topics of health, education and economic self sufficiency.

Begun from conversations following a community issues forum in the fall of 2000 on the Status of Women in Tennessee co-sponsored by the Center for Research on Women and over 20 other organizations, the Memphis Area Women's Council has spent two years focusing and defining its mission. In the last two months it has attracted more than 100 individuals and organizations as Charter Members, and a new website complete with an on-line advocacy center is in development.

While the Council's mission is local, its focus is on making changes at the top—at the policy level where every decision can affect hundreds or thousands of women and their families. "We are not organized to pursue or provide individual services or new programmatic solutions to the myriad of problems local women encounter every day," says Board member Ruby Bright, Executive Director of the Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis. "We are trying to change the rules so that some of those problems go away."

The Council's work is organized into three local policy areas: women's health and health care, educational equity and reform, and economic self sufficiency. The group has selected one issue in each policy area to address in the coming year. In Women's Health and Health Care the Council has targeted the issue of violence against women. Their goal is to convince the appropriate policymakers in Memphis and Shelby County government to adopt national standards for the investigation of domestic violence and

See COUNCIL on page 9

New Leader for Memphis Women's Political Caucus

Phillis Morgan doesn't think that one woman serving in an elected statewide position in Tennessee is enough. She finds it unacceptable that only 16 out of 99 State Representatives in Tennessee are women, and that only 5 out of 33 State Senators are women. And she's ready to do something about it.

The recently elected president of the Memphis Women's Political Caucus moved here three years ago after working for seven years with the Federal Bureau of Prisons at the U.S. Justice Department in Washington, D.C. "I believe that Memphis is on the verge of greatness but has some challenges ahead. I wanted to be a part of that."

How does she find the time to be involved at the leadership level? "The reason I wanted to be a lawyer in the first place was to meaningfully contribute to my community," she says. "My firm, Kiesewetter, Wise, Kaplan, Sch whimmer and Prather, which practices labor and employment law, gives me the opportunity to do this, and they have been incredibly supportive of my involvement in local issues."

One of the Caucus's main goals this year is to get the issue of electing more women legislators on the local radar screen. "If you look at the national statistics comparing women's well-being it seems that women in the South, more than in other regions, don't fully pursue the relationship between women's political involvement and everyday life," says Morgan. "In other words, the fewer women involved in political decision making, the worse off women are. And Tennessee is near the bottom when it comes to women's overall well-being. The bottom line is that we need more women running for office in Tennessee."

For more information on the Memphis Women's Political Caucus contact Phillis Morgan, 292-7033, 3725 Champion Hills Dr., Suite 3000, Memphis, TN 38125. Meetings are held at 6:00 p.m. the third Tuesday of each month at the main Public Library, 3030 Poplar.
Desperately Seeking Terrorists

When U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige called the National Education Association a "terrorist organization" in February, 2004, I was hardly alone among those who lost it. Enough, already. The NEA a terrorist organization??

Apparently we've gone to war in Iraq to protect the world from high school teachers.

Back in the day, everyone on the planet, except for the relatively few, rich, mostly white men who ran things, were called "special interests:" the Sierra Club, United Auto Workers, National Organization for Women, NAACP, National Council of Churches, La Raza, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, I could go on. Now we've been promoted to national security risks.

Fortunately, terrorism by this definition, i.e., organizing for change in the Powers That Be, seems to be proliferating these days.

We focus this newsletter on Memphis, and the new organizations and leadership that are emerging among women. These include the new Memphis Area Women's Council, as well as the revitalized Memphis Women's Political Caucus (see page 1). Women of Achievement, another local Memphis organization, marks its twentieth anniversary this year, and we celebrate that accomplishment with brief profiles of its current and selected past awardees. (See page 6.)

Other new efforts in Memphis are not explicitly focused on women, but they feature women's leadership and promise to have significant impact on women's wellbeing. These include a local living wage initiative, headed by a young Methodist minister, Rev. Rebekah Jordan, who has put together a coalition of faith-based organizations, labor unions and community groups the likes of which has not been seen in this city since the momentous sanitation workers' strike in 1968.

This local ferment is part of a much broader trend: women in locations across the globe are mobilizing around a host of problems, some conventionally identified as "women's issues," and many not. This organizing draws inspiration and strategies from earlier women's movements, but its goals are more encompassing.

That is in part because the widespread depletion of the public infrastructure and the often violent disruption of social life are falling disproportionately on women. Who rides the bus, or walks for miles to a health dispensary for a child to be immunized? Who takes care of the sick and elderly when they cannot afford to pay for the assistance they need? Who is being raped in sickening numbers in war zones from Congo to Iraq, as well as on the streets of Memphis?

In a world of manifold dislocations, women in diverse social contexts and geographic locations increasingly find themselves "holding the bag"—assuming responsibility for piecing back together themselves, their families, communities, and entire modes of survival. As a result, the disparity between the work that women do—paid and unpaid, recognized or not, in communities, families and "workplaces"—and the resources and authority that accrue to them has rarely been so stark.

For well over a decade, the Ford Foundation and many other influential transnational organizations have argued that women are key to the development of democracy around the world. Excluded from "old boys' networks" as well as the formal corridors of power, women's political participation promises to challenge corruption and cronyism. But there are other ways in which women are bearers of democracy: not simply as the numerical majority of most populations, but as the mainstays of family and community life, the concerns of women are indeed the concerns of "the people."

Ironically, Rod Paige & Co.'s insistence on ferreting out terrorists sheds indirect light on some of the gendered reasons for women's increasing activism. If terrorism is broadly defined as physical destruction for the purpose of illegitimate coercion, who are the real terrorists? Is it not that subgroup of the population called men who are stealing by force each other's resources (which they overwhelmingly own), wreaking gross destruction on the earth (which they disproportionately control), violently deposing and imposing political regimes (which they dominate), and generally killing each other off (when they aren't killing women)?

The ferment that is emerging among women around the world is not separatist, it is not grounded in identity politics, and it is not even necessarily feminist. Rather, it is about survival and, better yet, wellbeing—of ourselves, our children, the planet, and yes, men, too.

This ferment among women is about the invigoration of democracy in a world where teachers are denounced as terrorists, and where rule by fist is supplanting the possibility of justice. ➤
Training Them to Take It:
Research on Job Training for Low-Income Women in the U.S.
(See the list of works reviewed on page 9.)

Women in the U.S. disproportionately number among the nation’s poor and increasingly among its low-wage workers. Research indicates that job training and vocational education for low-income adults as they typically are structured and funded may reinforce this context of gendered disparity.

A review of the literature also suggests that job training might assist certain adults to become more employable only if specific conditions are met. More in-depth study is needed, both qualitative and quantitative, that combines multiple participants’ perspectives in order to consider differences among experiences and contexts.

In general, research on job training and education programs for low-income populations in the U.S. over the last 30 years concludes that these programs have shown only negligible success in terms of providing a step toward securing employment for participants. The programs show marginally more success for women participants than for men, particularly for women of racial and ethnic minorities and those who, if parenting, have children over 5 years old.

However, these observations have been repeatedly challenged as important but insufficient by researchers concerned with the quality of those results for poorer women. The problem is that these findings typically ignore gender, race, and ethnicity as well as parenting status (e.g., whether dependents are school-aged), and often use simplified human and social capital theories. Such analyses then serve to obscure the socioeconomic context of women as workers as well as to reinforce what one researcher calls “the job training charade.”

“. . .women . . . continue to earn less than men [and] tend to be channeled by both training programs and the labor market into lower paying jobs than are men. . . .”

While it is true that an education or skill training might help women more than men find employment, women nevertheless continue to earn less than men with the same preparation at the same work; tend to be channeled by both training programs and the labor market into lower paying jobs than are men; and because of gendered expectations with regard to parenting and other care-giving require a wider set of services than do men before program completion, much less employment, is possible. Studies that concentrate on results for women of racial and ethnic minorities additionally suggest that a need for K-12 education improvements could supercede adult training as a priority. Further, disabilities of all types appear among low-income women disproportionately and, while that seems to increase the potential for job training to help, it decreases women’s likelihood of finding training for and obtaining living wage jobs. If participants are unable to support themselves through wage employment following job training or vocational education then such programs are of questionable worth.

Researchers concerned about actual conditions in the U.S. argue that training and education for low-income adults should not be discarded, but that such programs need restructuring as well as intensive funding before becoming demonstrably useful. According to these analysts, training seems to succeed only where accompanied by long-term supplemental packaging that acknowledges but attempts to circumvent impeding work and family conditions as well as hiring discrimination practices.

Further, these exceptional programs direct participants into non-traditional as well as traditional training toward higher-paying work and careers. More longitudinal and multi-methodological examination of job training and education programs is needed that tracks diverse participants through training programs and afterward, and observes them in a range of contexts. Meanwhile, the texts
Crossing Over Into Blackness: Race Relations and Rock & Roll
~An Interview with Dr. Laura Helper-Ferris, CROW Visiting Scholar

Where have you studied?
I went to Northwestern and took lots of classes in American history and African studies but I always felt like the outsider. I was the only Americanist in cultural anthropology, the only anthropologist among the American historians, the only Americanist in the African studies program. It just wasn't the right fit. After I earned my master's at Northwestern, I transferred to Rice University in Houston in 1990. The program was new and there was a great community of scholars doing exciting work in cultural anthropology.

How did you wind up in Memphis?
I was thinking about mass media and segregation, and about where I should conduct fieldwork to learn more. I was also looking for funding, and I contacted curators at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History right when they were hatching a program that would ultimately become the Rock and Soul Museum here in Memphis, the Smithsonian's first museum located outside of Washington. I had written a paper about the Houston blues scene, and was interested in the historical relationship between black music and white audiences. Rock and roll was always cited as an important place where audiences became such an integral force—it was, by one definition, white kids listening to black music. I wanted to know how that worked in everyday life under segregation. I happened to come through Memphis and visited Sun Studios—strictly as a fan—and then, through a connection with Charlie McGovern who was at the Smithsonian at the time, decided to focus on Memphis. Here I could piggy-back on the Smithsonian's work—because they were interviewing the famous people like Sam Phillips, Rufus Thomas, Willie Mitchell, and so on, I could focus on the dancers and the listeners. How and where did they hear, and hear about, this music? And then I just fell in love with Memphis.

How was Memphis different from other cities during the 1950's?
What was unique about Memphis was that while it was a segregated place, unlike in Cleveland and Houston there were recording studios and locally and nationally innovative radio stations (like WDIA). Even before the disk jockeys played a recording on the radio, the jukebox operators and the record store owners were noticing that...continued on next page
Did you find people here eager to talk about their experiences with music and segregation?

One of my initial fieldwork rules was to use the phrase "I'm interested in rock and roll and race relations" in every conversation, and I never had to come up with any further strategies! There would always be someone who wanted to talk—about Elvis, often, and then after we got him out of the way, about where they went dancing, about how exciting Memphis was, about how strange but normal segregation was. My sense was that they were still very much trying to make sense of that period.

What most surprised you about your research in Memphis?

It was finding out that segregation was so much more complicated and contradictory than I had thought. I wanted to know where "my people"—those first white kids listening to black music—lived. Well, I found out that they lived in this interestingly mixed environment. Not integrated, but mixed. They lived on "white" streets but those intersected with "black" streets, and people walked right past each other, past each other's churches, stores, and schools.

At the beginning of the 1950s a white, working-class kid listening to black music in Memphis would have been living in a mixed but segregated neighborhood and having a range of encounters with ordinary black people and going to black clubs, or white clubs with black bands. By the end of the 1950s a white kid listening to black music was hearing it on the radio, on records, maybe going to the Plantation Inn where there was a black band playing, but living in a white neighborhood in suburbia. The only people actually meeting across racial lines any more would have been the musicians themselves. The everydayness of earlier crossover was just gone, because that part of the city was gone. On the other hand, there was a real confrontation of segregation by black citizens, and the beginnings of real black power in the music industry, so those white musicians were "crossing over into blackness," as songwriter David Porter puts it.

How do gender issues influence you and your work?

The idea that categories of power—like gender, race, class—are constructed, not natural, is central to my work. Both feminism and the civil rights movement showed me how ordinary people's experiences count, too, not only in the world but in the shaping of academic analysis. It's just so interesting, for example, that these working class white boys walked all over the city to go dancing. A girl couldn't have done that; a black Memphian couldn't have done that; a white middle-class boy probably would not have done it.™

“...these working-class white boys walked all over the city to go dancing. A girl couldn't have done that; a black Memphian couldn't have done that; a white middle-class boy probably would not have done it.”

The Center for Research on Women
Women's Studies
Women's Consciousness Raising Coalition
Student Activities Council

The Guerrilla Girls
Masked Avengers of the Art World

March 26, 2004
7:00 PM
Rose Theatre

For more information call 678-2770 or 678-3550.

Free and open to the public

Women, War and the Art of Resistance

LIVE AND ON STAGE
Philanthropists, an astronaut, and women who have fought for Holocaust awareness, civil rights and social justice will be honored March 28 at the 20th annual Women of Achievement awards. The seven awards, presented by a coalition of women’s organizations in a celebration of Women’s History Month, will be given at 6 p.m. at the Holiday Inn University of Memphis.

Award recipients for 2004 are:

Heritage—Eleanor Dicky Ehrlich who dedicated her life to telling the truth of the Holocaust to any who would listen.

Courage—Rev. Cheryl Cornish, pastor of First Congregational Church and activist for inclusion, diversity, peace and social justice.

Determination—Carol Prentiss, philanthropist and fundraiser who led the Memphis Child Advocacy Center to national recognition as a centralized investigation and advocacy haven for child victims.

Steadfastness—Mary Alice Hubbard McWilliams who shaped generations of leaders as she taught high school mathematics over 50 years, advocated for civil rights and was a national leader in her church.

Initiative—Deanie Parker, who grew from her first job as a shop clerk at Stax Records 35 years ago to become president and executive director of Soulsville and the Stax Museum of American Soul Music.

Vision—Mickey Babcock, entrepreneur and philanthropist whose quiet organizing and creativity helped launch the Women’s Foundation for a Greater Memphis and the RISE Foundation, which guides public housing residents toward buying their own homes.

Heroism—Dr. Rhea Seddon, physician and astronaut who logged 722 hours in space between 1978 and 1997, now assistant chief medical officer for the 800-physician Vanderbilt Medical Group.

For more information about Women of Achievement, go to www.womenofachievement.org, or call 901.274.8709.

In 20 years, Women of Achievement has honored and documented the work of 146 women and two groups. Their stories and portraits are collected in two volumes published by Women of Achievement. The following examples demonstrate the breadth and scope of these awards.

Bonnie Thornton Dill, 1985 Vision Award
Founding director of the Center for Research on Women, The University of Memphis

Alzada Clark, 1988 Courage Award
Labor organizer and first black woman organizer of Tennessee state employees

Patricia Howard, 1992 Vision Award
Executive director of Girls Inc. for over two decades and an organizer of the Women’s Funding Forum

Judith Schwarz Scharff, 1992 Heritage Award
Leader for establishment of Memphis Association for Planned Parenthood 1966-1975 and its director of information and education from 1975 until her death in 1976

Selma Lewis, 1993 Steadfastness Award
Historian, first female president of Jewish Family Service and co-founder of Mental Health Society of Memphis and Shelby County

Veronica Coleman-Davis, 1994 Initiative Award
First female Juvenile Court referee, first woman and African-American appointed U.S. Attorney for western district of Tennessee and founding president of the Coalition of 100 Black Women

Ruth Knight Allen, 1995 Determination Award
Advocate for Native American rights and heritage and member of the Tennessee Indian Affairs Council

Marion Griffin, 1996 Heritage Award
In 1907 the first woman allowed to practice law in Tennessee after lobbying legislators to stop barring women

JoeAnn Ballard, 2002 Determination Award
Founder of Neighborhood Christian Centers to fight poverty

Sharon Pollard, 2002 Heroism Award
Memphis peroxide plant worker who sued multinational DuPont for sexual harassment and won U.S. Supreme Court ruling that lifts limits on amounts victims can collect for back pay and damages

Faculty Affiliates in Action

Phyllis Betts coordinated and presented "Comprehensive Community Initiatives" at the Hickory Hill Community Summit in Memphis on February 12. The summit announced a public-private partnership strategy with the goal of stabilizing and enhancing urban housing and commercial markets in Hickory Hill.


Allison Graham, professor of communications and director of the Women's Studies Program, presented and discussed her documentary At the River I Stand at a weekend cinema series on global democracy in Nottingham, England, and at the University of Ulster in Belfast, Northern Ireland in December 2003.


Stephen J. Scanlan, assistant professor of sociology, will be presenting a paper at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association in Montreal, Quebec from March 18-21, 2004. The authors include two sociology graduate students, Laurie Cooper and Michael Grissom, and the paper is titled "Hunger Strikes, Contentious Politics, and Comparative Social Change: Theories, Typologies, and Trends." In 2003 Dr. Scanlan's article "Food Security and Comparative Sociology: Research, Theories, and Concepts" was published by the International Journal of Sociology 33:88-111.
Women's Health and Health Care


Economic Self-Sufficiency


See BIBLIOGRAPHY on page 10
below are recommended. For suggested additional readings in job training policy and legislation, history, and non-U.S.
approaches, please contact me at jhenrici@memphis.edu.

REFERENCES:
Company.
University Press.
and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Network on the Family and the Economy. Available at:
of Arizona Press.
Allison Graham, professor of communication, director of Women’s Studies and CROW affiliate, has been awarded a Leverhulme Trust Fellowship for the next academic year. The Leverhulme Trust, based in London, makes such awards “to outstandingly distinguished academics from overseas universities to spend time at universities in the United Kingdom.” She will be hosted by the School of American and Canadian Studies at the University of Nottingham, the top-rated American Studies program in the U.K., and will be delivering a series of lectures on her research at universities across the U.K. in the spring of 2005. Graham will also conduct research on her current project on cross-cultural racism in the mid-20th century.
Selected Titles on Women and Social Inequality in Memphis

What is a Living Wage for Memphis?
By David Ciscel
9 pages. 2002
$5.00 No. Copies ___

Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative: Memphis Sexual Assault Research Project-Data-Driven Interventions: Partnerships for Change
By Phyllis Betts
Powerpoint Presentation
Available on the CROW Website

Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative: Memphis Sexual Assault Research Project-Sexual Assault among Teenage Girls in Memphis
By Phyllis Betts
Powerpoint Presentation
Available on the CROW Website

Latino Immigrant Women in Memphis
by Marcela Mendoza
30 pages. 2003
$20.00 No. Copies ___

Advocates for Girls: Promoting Success in Early Adolescence
by Barbara Ellen Smith and Claire T. Porter
32 pages. 1998
$8.00 No. Copies ___

Profiles: A Report on the Women and Girls of Greater Memphis
by Martha Schmidt
40 pages. 1997
$10.00 No. Copies ___

NOW AVAILABLE

Organizational Resources for Latino Immigrants to the U.S. South

Produced by the collaborative project, Across Races and Nations: Building New Communities in the U.S. South, this directory provides contact information and brief descriptions of organizations that serve Spanish-speaking immigrants in the region.

41 pages, March 2004 $15.00
Also available on our web site at http://www.cas.memphis.edu/isc/crow Available in Spanish and English

COMING SOON . . .

Additional publications from Across Races and Nations: Building New Communities in the U.S. South

Reports from the collaborative project involving the Highlander Center, Southern Research Council and CROW

Look for announcements on the CROW website.

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For a complete list of available CROW publications, visit our website at:

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Rebecca L. Terrell, Editor
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