2017 Annual Conference

Once again we focused on activists working in Michigan so we could learn about the great work they are doing in our state. These activists serve as role models for social action. Michigan NOW provided 22 scholarships and a travel grant for one of our college chapters to attend the conference. It was great to see feminists of all ages connecting throughout the day. We had engaging speakers.

Unfortunately, our panel on immigration did not work out, so we will try it again at a future date. Some attendees wanted a feminist discussion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is something we will look at addressing in the future. We went with a less expensive lunch this year to save money, but like you, thought it could have been better. Overall, everyone liked the conference as you can see from the comments below.

General Comments:
Great to see more people and diversity.
Looking for not only stories but ways that I can live life while also being more aware, considerate and an advocate for those who need my voice.
Very enjoyable.
Thank you for all your work organizing this excellent convention.
Great speakers. I really liked this conference -- wasn't expecting it to be this good.
I would have liked more discussion/open groups, so we could learn from the other participants.
A good, diverse range of topics, made it very interesting.
Great conference! I will make a point to attend again.

Performance Artist Madelyn Porter:
She was great!
So outstanding and entertaining in an educational aspect.
Amazing speaker.
I would for sure go listen and see her presentation.
Incredible!
The performer was very interesting, kept my attention, and the stories were great!
Always include at least one artistic voice like this. Awesome!
Natasha Thomas Jackson
Excellent presentation!
Appreciate her hope
More time for questions (happy face).
Very happy to see young black women involved in social problems like she is and, more importantly, art.
Very knowledgeable speaker. The content and presentation kept me engaged.

Heidi Budaj
Painful, but so important -- I appreciated learning so much.
Hard topic first thing.
I appreciate the info presented but when the speaker addressed the Palestinian question seemed to go on her own agenda and was not as open as I would have hoped in the conference atmosphere.
Love the ADL and can't wait to get involved.
I know she is a representative of ADL, but there is no comparison of Israeli conditions and those of Palestinians. And, this situation only will increase violence and terrorism.
Opened my eyes more to hate crimes.
Very informational.

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY NOW
The Michigan NOW board approved a travel grant request submitted by the students of our Ferris chapter so they could afford to travel to Flint to attend our conference. Here is what they thought of our conference:

Toni- "I thought the conference was fun and informing. I'm glad I was able to go, I was able to meet some nice ladies, and learn some new things."

Lorna- "The conference was nothing like I was expecting; it was great. The speakers were amazing! Hearing them share their personal stories was interesting. I really enjoyed the conference."

Victoria- "I'm so glad I was able to go to this conference. I learned so much and heard stories from such amazing and strong people. It was great being surrounded by so many incredible activists and it inspired me to continue to strengthen the work I'm doing."

Indy- "The Women's Conference was extremely empowering and truly inspirational. I felt so lucky being able to be apart and discuss social problems with great minds. Not only was it informational but it was fun to talk about our beliefs and disbeliefs with older women who agree and disagree with you. I love debating and being able to have deep conversations without aggression. I felt very comfortable and excited. I honestly can not wait for another event like this. Thanks again for giving us the opportunity to experience our first Women's Conference."
MI NOW was at the 2017 Equal Pay Day Rally in Lansing. We will also be at the Mama’s March, the Skyline High School conference, and the Inter-faith Reproductive Justice Conferences (see articles regarding these events later in this newsletter).

Women’s March in Lansing
Nina Muckenthaler

Thank you for participating in the marches in DC and here in Michigan! Thanks to you, all of the marches were amazing! It was estimated that there was about half a million people in DC and about 8,000 in Lansing alone. Our MI NOW table was jumping all day long. We ran out of supplies and spent the last hour verbally telling people about MI NOW. Thanks to Terri Cross for helping to staff our table. She was photographed by a local newspaper reporter, and I was interviewed by 2 high school students making a documentary about the march. People were bringing young women and girls to our table to learn about NOW. This march was amazing. It was the perfect antidote to the recent swell of hatred and oppression. It showed the world that women will not go back!

COMING EVENTS

The Future Is Female!
Free conference organized by the Skyline High School Student Chapter of NOW and sponsored by Michigan NOW.
May 20th, 2017
10:00am-2:00pm
Skyline High School
2552 N Maple Rd
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
Get Tickets Here:
https://www.eventbrite.com/e/future-is-female-conference-tickets-33351279575

This is a conference where the next generation of feminists and notable speakers will discuss women's rights. This event will bring trailblazers and change makers together to showcase the underestimated potential that women have! Speakers include: Ashika Kumar (chapter president), State Rep. Yousef Rahbi, and State Rep. Donna Lasinski. For more info: https://skylinenowchapter.wixsite.com/fifc.
The Second Interfaith Reproductive Justice Conference will be held June 3-4 in Dearborn. The theme is “Arm Yourself for the Fight for Reproductive Rights.” Two half-day sessions are planned for both Saturday and Sunday with registration beginning at noon each day. Closing each day takes place at 4:30 PM. The organization sponsoring the conference is The Interfaith Reproductive Justice Coalition, a coalition created two years ago by the Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network. Michigan NOW is a sponsor. See www/uujustice.org/ for registration information and details of the conference program.

PUSH BACK! PUSH FORWARD!

Nina Muckenthaler, President

The female genital mutilation (FGM) case here in Michigan is garnering national attention. It seems these girls were not the first to have this done at the clinic. I am glad the clinic is closed! FGM is a form of patriarchal violence targeting women and girls. FGM defines women and girls as property and reduces them to their sex and reproductive organs. It is a violation of human rights. It is against the law. It is child abuse. It is medical malpractice. All practitioners should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law! FGM is akin to trying to control women's bodies by denying them access to contraception and abortion, intimate partner violence, and workplace assault.

What are we doing about this? We continue our efforts to fight for equality for women and girls in Michigan. We encourage our members to learn about legislation at www.legislature.mi.gov, to join MI NOW members at legislative hearings, to write/call your elected officials to let them know how you feel about proposed legislation, to attend feminist events, and to meet with your elected officials at their coffee hours this summer.

We had a change in board leadership at our recent conference. I am working with the board to develop a strategic plan for our state chapter. I am also actively working at grassroots organizing to strengthen our state and local chapters. Please help us by organizing in your local community, forming coalitions with other progressive groups, and by encouraging feminists to run for local offices. We must push back and push forward!

There is an existing federal law against FGM. Legislation has been introduced to make it against the law in Michigan and to impose a 15 year penalty. Our board will be discussing this case and this bill at our next meeting. I suspect that this case will also garner a lot of discussion at the upcoming Interfaith Reproductive Justice Conference (see Coming Events).

Legislative Session 2016-2017

Bobbie Walton, Legislative VP

Reproductive Justice and Women’s Freedom

There are several current legislative attempts to further chip-away at women’s un-impeded right to abortion and reproductive choices in Michigan. Three bills have the potential impact of establishing “personhood” for an embryo, making it more likely a woman’s body will be the property of the state for reproductive control. These are as follows:

HB 4522 – (Whiteford) – Allows taxpayers to claim a stillbirth as an additional dependent for an income tax exemption (introduced 4/25/2017, referred to Committee on Tax Policy);

HB 4467 – (Theis) – Requires doctors to determine if there is a detectable fetal heartbeat via ultrasound, before performing an abortion (introduced 3/30/2017, referred to Health Policy); and

HB 4500 – (Homberger) – Requires that an embryo or fetus must be scored as a victim in criminal procedure (introduced 4/20/2017 – referred to Judiciary).
Two bills have been brought back from the last legislative session to further impede the range of abortion services available for women, and to interfere with medical decisions. This interference places legislators, who have no medical expertise, in the position of overruling a doctor’s decision as to the best method for providing abortion services. These are:

HB 4552 – (Cox) – Bans a common abortion procedure (introduced 4/27/2017, referred to Law and Justice); and

HB 4552 – (Cox) – Implements criminal process in support of above abortion procedure ban, making the procedure subject to a charge of felony (introduced 4/27/2017, referred to Law and Justice).

One bill was introduced to support a woman’s right to contraceptives through prescription and covered by insurance. HB 4019, introduced 1/12/2017 by Rep. Faris, provides for one-time prescription for a full year’s supply of contraception with no additional cost, other than is normal for prescriptions. The bill was referred to Insurance; no action has been taken or scheduled.

2017 EQUAL PAY

Michigan NOW is a member of the Michigan Equal Pay Coalition.

From the Progressive Women’s Caucus:

Pay equity is a simple idea. It simply means that two people who have the same background, do the same or similar job and produce the same results should get the same pay. It’s a matter of fairness, but for too long, it hasn’t been a reality for working women.

Policies that protect equal pay are important for everyone, but wage discrimination disproportionality impacts women in Michigan. According to wage data released by the National Partnership for Women and Families, a typical Michigan woman earns 74 cents for every dollar earned by a typical Michigan man when both have a similar education and experience level. The difference equates to an annual earning deficit of $12,993 for full-time working women. The gap between men’s and women’s earnings is even greater for African-American and Hispanic women, who earn 64 cents and 57 cents to each dollar earned by a man, respectively.

In Michigan, nearly 476,000 family households are headed by women and about 33 percent of those families have incomes that fall below the poverty level. Lost income due to wage discrimination means less money for women and their families, less money to spend on goods and services, and less money to save and invest for the future. Pay equity matters not just to women, but to their families and our state’s economy as a whole.

To that end the Progressive Women’s Caucus has crafted a package of bills intended to combat wage discrimination in Michigan.
## 2017 Pay Equity Bills
**Introduced April 20, 2017, Michigan House of Representatives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BILL REQUEST NUMBER</th>
<th>SPONSOR</th>
<th>BILL DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HB4509 of 2017</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>This bill amends the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to create a commission on pay equity within the Department of Civil Rights. This is a reintroduction of HB 4486.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HB 4510 of 2017</td>
<td>Geiss</td>
<td>This bill amends the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to increase damages for unequal pay and specifies that the statute of limitations starts from the time an employee learns about the disparity in pay.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HB 4511 of 2017</td>
<td>Geiss</td>
<td>The bill amends the Payment of Wages and Fringe Benefits Act to require, upon request from an employee, for an employer to disclose wage information for similarly situated employees. It is a reintroduction of HB 4483.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB 4512 of 2017</td>
<td>Brinks</td>
<td>This bill amends the Workforce Opportunity Act to expand the prohibition of discriminations to include not only sex, but also religion, race, color, national origin, age, height, weight, or marital status and allows for remedies under the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. The bill is a reintroduction of HB 4491 and HB 4492 combined.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HB 4513 of 2017</td>
<td>Faris</td>
<td>The bill amends the Michigan Penal Code to establish penalties for equal pay non-compliance. It is a reintroduction of HB 4484.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HB 4514 of 2017</td>
<td>Pagan</td>
<td>This bill amends the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act to require employers to post and inform employees of equal pay laws as well as establishes a complaint tip line and website reporting and allows for anonymous reporting. This is a reintroduction of HB 4489 and HB 4525 combined.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HB 4515 of 2017</td>
<td>Greig</td>
<td>This bill amends the Bullard-Plawecki Employee Right to Know Act to require employers with more than 5 full-time employees to have job descriptions and include a pay scale, if applicable. It is a reintroduction of HB 4515.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB 4516 of 2017</td>
<td>Greig</td>
<td>This bill amends the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to prevent an employer from inquiring about past compensation during the application or hiring process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB 4517 of 2017</td>
<td>Guerra</td>
<td>This bill amends the Full Employment Planning Act to include an annual report of current and projected pay differentials for similarly employed individuals in both the public and private sectors. This is a reintroduction of HB 4490.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB 4518 of 2017</td>
<td>Lasinski</td>
<td>The bill creates a new act called the Pay Equity in the Workplace Award Program Act and establishes employer incentive awards programs for equal pay. It is a reintroduction on HB 4485.</td>
</tr>
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HB 4519 of 2017
K. Hertel
This bill amends the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to establish equal pay certificates for state contractors. It is a reintroduction of HB 4488.

HB 4520 of 2017
Love
This bill amends the Employee Protection Act to require an employer provide notice at least 1 pay period or 10 business days, whichever is greater, when an employer is required to deduct wages due to a default judgement. This is a reintroduction of HB 4723.

HR 55
Pagan
A resolution declaring April 4, 2017 as Equal Pay Day in Michigan.

**INCARCERATION AND EMANCIPATION**

At our annual conference we had an amazing panel that focused on incarceration and emancipation. If you do a quick search you will find many articles regarding overcrowding and understaffing at the Michigan Women’s prison. In the current budget negotiations legislators are proposing deep cuts to corrections, especially to the women’s prison. Please contact your elected officials and ask them to preserve current funding for the women’s prison.

**Michigan’s Invisible Women: Reflections on Teaching in a Women’s Prison**

By Georgina Hickey, Professor of History, University of Michigan-Dearborn and President, Washtenaw County NOW

Over the last 9 months, I’ve been going into a prison to teach a college-style course on American women’s history. Women’s Huron Valley Correctional Facility (WHV) is the only prison for women in the state of Michigan and it is crowded. My students tell me their cells are packed, common and administrative spaces have been filled with bunks to accommodate the growing population, classes and programs have long waiting lists for few openings, and the women spend significant portions of their day waiting in lines or stuck in their bunks.

I don’t see so much of that side of things because I am just a ‘volunteer’ who comes in on Thursday evenings every three weeks or so. Once I clear security, I go to a small classroom in the programs building where my students trickle in as best they can. Some are late, some need to leave early, some need to go get in line for meds in the middle of class (some are able to come back to class, some aren’t), some get a ‘ticket’ for a rule infraction or end up in segregation and can’t come to class, and some don’t get listed on the daily ‘call out’ sheet so they end up missing class because of a clerical error. In prison, these women don’t control their time or space.

Despite all of the obstacles there are for them in taking this class, I’ve found the majority of women to be deeply engaged in our work — curious, opinionated, inspired, angry, and appreciative of this opportunity not just to learn, but to spend a few hours every few weeks in a classroom where we use first names and they are asked what they think. They
are a diverse lot when it comes to age, personality, race, politics, and religion. I do not know why any of them are in WHV. I do not know how long their sentences are or how much time they have served. I find it very easy not to care about these things because we have the traditions of a classroom to structure our interactions. They get to be students when they are with me and, like any group of students, their skills and interests run the gamut -- some have done the reading better than others, some want to answer questions while others don’t, and most seem to care deeply about their grades and obsess about why they haven’t yet been able to get a “check plus” on one of the homework assignments.

My students are frustrated, however. One evening I stepped back to listen to the exchange as the students revealed the depth of their understanding of the systems and institutions that had brought them to prison. This wasn’t shared as an excuse (they definitely check each other on that if they feel someone is being defensive or making excuses). Rather, it came from their desire to not return to those circumstances once they leave prison. If nothing changes, and if they don’t change themselves, they believe they will find themselves in the same destructive places and relationships in which they had existed before prison. They feel invisible to the wider society. They want to act on their hard won self-awareness by getting an education, getting counseling, and gaining skills but there are not enough resources in our prison system for them to do these things. This dearth of opportunities is particularly acute at WHV, as far more men are incarcerated in our state and far more programming exists for them, both in and out of prison.

The women in my class do not object to being in prison; they talk openly about having screwed up. Where their frustration lies, however, is in the feeling that those actions, those mistakes, will forever define them in the eyes of society. Whatever growth they might achieve, whatever education and skills they might acquire, they feel, will never offset that they went to prison. They are also keenly aware, at least for those who are not serving life sentences, that there is very little opportunity for them to grow and learn other than whatever self-reflection and self-help they can muster. A few of the longtimers and older women do take on “motherly” roles with the younger women. These veteran women won’t have much opportunity to use what they have learned while in prison, so they hope their wisdom might help others do their time and leave better than they came in. None expect or want a handout or a freeride, but they do want a chance to change their life path, to show society that they have learned something and that they can do better. But they see no indication that they will be given that chance. Those who are incarcerated are not permitted to vote. Employers and many educational institutions require them to check a box and reveal their past. There are no publicly-sponsored institutional supports for prisoner re-entry and few private programs (even fewer that offer services to women), and without these, most return to the lives that lead them to prison in the first place.

The course I teach at WHV is equivalent to what I teach at state university, but the course in the prison gets them no credit at my institution. I am just a volunteer. To recognize my professional credentials would lead to the slippery slope of using public higher education resources for incarcerated people and Michigan, as a state, is apparently not ready to take that step. To change this, we would have to confront some thorny issues. We would have to decide on the purpose of prison -- is it to rehabilitate or is it just remove people who make us uncomfortable from society? If we want to punish, can we also offer people a way to redeem themselves?

For many of us, these are relatively easy questions to avoid. We aren’t in prison. Most of us are highly unlikely to go to prison. Maybe no one we know is in prison. And so avoid these topics we do. My students were exactly right. They are, for most of us, invisible. As someone who has had the opportunity to spend time with 28 of these women on the inside, and then has the privilege of going home, I welcome the opportunity to share their frustration -- and their hopes -- with broader audiences.
I can’t promise that none of these women will return to prison or otherwise run afoul of the law after their release, but I can tell you that they are far more frustrated by and scared of that prospect than we are.

If you want to get involved you can volunteer or donate funds to one of the following programs:

Staying in Closer Touch, which provides the opportunity for women inside to record stories for their children: http://www.childrensliteracynetwork.org/programs/#staying.

Prisoner Advocacy Project, (American Friends Service Committee) advocates for prisoners on a host of issues ranging from healthcare to parole hearings.: http://www.prisoneradvocacy.org/

Good Neighbor project (American Friends Service Committee) pairs long-term inside folks with outside folks who then build supportive relationships through correspondence: http://www.prisoneradvocacy.org/about-the-gnp/

The University of Michigan Dearborn, Women's Prison Project can always use funds to buy textbooks and course supplies for the 3-4 college-style classes we offer in the prison each year: https://leadersandbest.umich.edu/find/#!/give/basket/fund/999999 (write in “Women’s Prison Project” to ensure that your gift goes for this purpose).

Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration (MI-CEMI) works to end mass incarceration in Michigan. MI-CEMI partners with national movements to mobilize people and organizations to challenge the systemic inequality represented by mass incarceration: http://michigancollaborative.org

The Prison Creative Arts Project’s mission is to collaborate with incarcerated adults, incarcerated youth, urban youth and the formerly incarcerated to strengthen our community through creative expression: http://lsa.umich.edu/pcap/

The Michigan Women’s Justice and Clemency Project works to free women convicted for killing an abuser: http://umich.edu/~clemency/

If you want to better understand how women make meaning for their lives while serving long sentences, I highly recommend the book Women Doing Life: Gender, Punishment, and the Struggle for Identity by Lora Bex Lempert (New York University Press, 2016).

THE CLEMENCY PROJECT
At our conference Carol Jacobsen educated us about her work with the Clemency Project. This project advocates for clemency for domestic violence victims who have been sent to prison for acts committed defending themselves while being assaulted by their partners. Please read the short bios of these women. Consider sending them a note so they know they are not forgotten. And PLEASE write to the Governor and ask for clemency for them. We have been told that #4 Karen has an increased chance at clemency, but only if you support her!

MICHIGAN WOMEN’S JUSTICE & CLEMENCY PROJECT
1019 Maiden Lane, Ann Arbor, MI 48105 (734) 662 077 www.umich.edu/~clemency

PLEASE WRITE TO GOV. SNYDER, ASKING HIM TO GRANT CLEMENCY TO WOMEN PRISONERS REPRESENTED BY MICHIGAN WOMEN’S JUSTICE & CLEMENCY PROJECT WHO ACTED IN SELF DEFENSE AGAINST OR BECAUSE OF BATTERERS BUT DID NOT RECEIVE FAIR TRIALS BASED ON THE FACTS OF THEIR CASES:
GOV. RICK SNYDER, PO BOX 30013, LANSING, MI 48909, and cc: MICH PAROLE BOARD, PO BOX 30003, LANSING, MI 48909
1. **DELORES KAPUSCINSKI** 191704 Kent County, Murder I, Life, 1988. She shot her husband after severe sexual and emotional abuse. Expert witness testified, but no understanding of domestic violence by judge or jury in 1988. She is supported by MWJCP and UofM Law School.

2. **LUANNE SZENAY** 214992 Bay County, Murder I, Conspiracy, Life, 1990. She was beaten, threatened with death, and her daughter kidnapped by her violent, drug addicted husband. She conspired with a co-worker who killed her husband.

3. **NANCY SEAMAN** 520695, Oakland County, Murder I, Life, 2004. She killed her abusive husband in self-defense when he attacked her because she was leaving him. Her judge tried to change her conviction because the jury misunderstood the evidence. A federal judge also tried to overturn her case. Both judges support her clemency.

4. **KAREN KANTZLER**, Oakland County, Murder II, Life, 1987. She shot her violent husband. He had broken her bones, beat her, thrown her, threatened her life. Trial judge, Hon. Norman Lippitt, admits he “made a serious and tragic error” in her case.” Successor Judge Barry Howard also tried to free her, and supports her clemency.

5. **MELISSA SWINEY** 205346 Oakland County, Murder I, Life 1988. Abused, incested, mentally disturbed she became pregnant, gave birth and left the newborn in a field. She has the support of her arresting officers. She has been the only woman in Michigan to receive Life for neonaticide (another young woman just was sentenced to life this year)

6. **MELISSA CHAPMAN** 196612 Genesee County, Murder I, Life, 1988. Her violent boyfriend killed another man in her presence out of jealousy then forced her to help hide the body, threatening her life. She was 18.

7. **MACHELLE PEARSON** 176620 Washtenaw County, Murder I, Life, 1984. At age 17, she accidentally shot a woman. Incested and beaten as a child, she ran away to an abusive predator who forced her to try to rob someone. She was raped in prison by a guard and had a baby. She is seriously ill with Myasthenia Gravis, has served 33 years.


9. **MELANISE PATTERSON**, Washtenaw County, Murder I, Life, 1995. She went to pick up her things from her violent boyfriend after she left him. She took friends with her because she was afraid; one of them shot the boyfriend in self-defense.

10. **TOWANDA EPPENGER**, Wayne County, Murder I, Life. 1994. She accidentally shot a former boyfriend when he assaulted her friend. She is a veteran of the Gulf War, suffered from PTSD.

**How to address mail to prisoners:**

Inmate Name, ID Number
Women’s Huron Valley Correctional Facility
3201 Bemis Road
Ypsilanti, MI 48197-0911

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The intersection of criminal justice and our reproductive lives is real and something that we cannot ignore.

Now more than ever, women of color are standing up for the issues that matter to us and demanding change, and we are voting. Change in policies, change in the political discourse, and change in leadership are needed to ensure that our communities are no longer ignored. Like the platform as a whole, this is not a one-note plan. One of my sheroes, Audre Lorde, said we cannot have single-issue movements because we do not live single-issue lives. To ensure that all people and all families have the opportunity to thrive, our political platforms must be intersectional, so that the most marginalized are centered and that our whole lives are honored.

* - Monica Simpson before the Democratic National Convention Platform Drafting Committee on June 17, 2016
CHAPTERS IN ACTION

WASHTENAW NOW

Georgina Hickey, President

Washtenaw NOW held a well-attended general membership meeting in January where we processed experiences from the various women’s marches and spent some time considering intersectionality. At this meeting we also elected two new board members and shuffled offices among remaining board members. The newly configured board soon met to take stock and lay plans.

We’ve decided to revamp our monthly Feminist Happy Hour events so that we have both a social hour and an hour of action/education. Since January, our meetings have covered the meanings of wearing hijab, street harassment, and equal pay. We’ve also used these gatherings as an opportunity to engage in the "10 Actions in 100 Days," including postcard writing and discussions of readings around intersectionality. In April, we shifted to direct action. New board member Shannon Basalla led the planning on a street harassment ‘fashion show’.

Washtenaw NOW used the sidewalk at the Ypsilanti bus station as our 'runway' to show how people from a variety of backgrounds are harassed and infuse a bit of humor and spectacle into our message that harassment is not acceptable in our community. Shannon created a fun and informative zine that we passed out to spectators and everyone was invited to chalk anti-harassment and pro-diversity messages on the concrete around the bus station. This event was held on a beautiful spring evening in conjunction with the local First Friday art walk. We hope to do it again on some of the campuses in Washtenaw County.

Finally, we are proud to announce that one of our own, Kathy Stroud, was honored with the 2017 Starkweather Award from the Eastern Michigan University Women and Gender Studies Program for her role in helping to establish a network of safe houses in the 1970s for women seeking to escape domestic violence. Congratulations, Kathy! More on Kathy's story can be found here: Kathleen Fojtik Stroud (BS73) is recipient of the 2017 Starkweather Award. EMU Today article regarding Kathy: https://today.emich.edu/story/story/10325.

OAKLAND/MACOMB NOW

Kim Beebe, President

The Oakland/Macomb County chapter of NOW has not only seen its own member count reach record numbers, but the increase of activist events in our area has been positively overwhelming. Our utilization of our Facebook and Twitter pages has allowed us to help get the word out about not just our own events, but of events hosted by other local activist groups.

The Oakland/Macomb chapter proudly co-sponsored a March screening of the documentary Equal Means Equal, which featured a number of guest speakers including 2018 Democratic Candidate for Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Michigan’s 14th Congressional District Representative Brenda Lawrence, CEO Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality Jocelyn Benson and Oakland County Clerk Lisa Brown. Also in March, the Oakland/Macomb chapter co-sponsored a screening of the HBO documentary Abortion: Stories Women Tell with Reclaim, Northland Family Planning Centers, UniteWomen.org and Jill Farber-Bramson.

In April, we hosted our first huddle where chapter member and other activists gathered to discuss the Michigan Equal Pay Legislative Day/Rally and NOW's newly launched National Action Plan.

In May, along with Reclaim, we're hosting a free screening of the Michael Moore documentary Where to Invade Next.
GENESEE COUNTY NOW

Bobbie Walton, President

So much angst has driven women in Michigan since January 20 and the inauguration of our 45th president. Our NOW chapter in Genesee County is no exception. We have been meeting, marching and acting to do what Elizabeth Warren was accused of doing when she insisted on reading Coretta Scott King’s letter about Jeff Sessions into the record of the U.S. Senate, after Majority Leader McConnell tried to shut her down: “And, still she persisted.”

Much of our spring was devoted to putting together the hosting of the 2017 MINOW State Conference at the University of Michigan–Flint. The conference was filled with new faces, new experiences and new information. The facility at U of M–Flint was well suited to our needs. While we can always see a need to attract more people, we can always enjoy gathering together to support each other.

Our chapter meeting in February was held at the LGBTQ Center at U of M–Flint, and several new faces were in the group. The discussion of local elections, the series of women’s summits across Michigan, participation in Pay Equity Day, and better ways to bring together those of us working on similar issues were the focus.

We concluded with a discussion on the challenges of building coalitions and working in collaboration with other groups. It seems this is a common challenge when we have so much need to work for women as we push for equity in this economic, social, medical, political and educational environment. It is the same for most issue-oriented groups.

Members of our chapter are individually taking on challenges to add value to the lives of women and girls in our community. Our member, Colleen Pace, designed a program around working with a struggling mother of a young girl to redecorate her dreary bedroom. With her talents for painting, scavenging, putting together pleasing combinations, Colleen lights up the days of a young woman and her mom. Colleen is an activist who must be active.

A member’s granddaughter has been made homeless through domestic abuse. She has two children and will be relocating to her own apartment. Members are bringing together furniture and goods to help her get re-established. Our chapter also collected items for a young woman in our area who is struggling due to a chronic illness.

We have continued our work to help put together the Second Interfaith Reproductive Justice Conference, to be held June 3-4 in Dearborn, MI. The organization sponsoring the conference is The Interfaith Reproductive Justice Coalition, a coalition created two years ago by the Michigan Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Network. Our Genesee County NOW Chapter is represented on the steering committee.

END NOTES

E Newsletter available
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Mary Hardy
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