March on Washington

More than 300,000 women marched on Washington April 9, 1989 to support women's rights and reproductive choice. Estimates ranged as high as 600,000 or more. Either way, the crowd was one of the largest ever to demonstrate in Washington. The ALA contingent of 75 to 100 people included two winners of the ALA Equality Award and members from as far as South Carolina, Wisconsin and Los Angeles. Many people photographed the ALA banner because mothers or daughters were librarians. The march was notable in its inclusion of two or more generations of
women, as girls carried signs beside their mothers. The crowd assembled at the Washington Monument and walked to the Capitol where several celebrities and leading activists spoke, including Faye Wattleton of Planned Parenthood, Molly Yard, NOW president, Jesse Jackson, and Eleanor Smeal, President of the Fund for the Feminist Majority.

The march was not originally intended to be solely about abortion but had as its original purpose the support of much broader rights and equality for women. The march's emphasis shifted, however, because of the Supreme Court's recent decision to hear a case about a law in Missouri which restricts women's access to abortion. Pro-choice supporters believe it is the woman involved whose choice it must be, and that the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in Roe v. Wade, that abortion is a "fundamental right," must not be limited. The Missouri law declares in its preamble that "the life of each human being begins at conception"; it bans abortion in public hospitals; and public employees may not counsel women about abortion. Though there is only one public hospital in Missouri that performs abortions and only a fraction of Missouri abortions take place there, the hospital performs nearly all the second-trimester procedures in the state, and these take place usually because of serious medical problems in the pregnant women or the fetuses. The Court will hear oral arguments in the case on April 26 and is expected to rule in late June.

Though Congress and the courts are the targets of political action exemplified by the march and the abortion controversy has received most of the publicity, Faye Wattleton, in her address to the crowd, said the march was not about abortion but about choice. She said women do not want abortion, that the decision to have an abortion is a difficult one.

Abortion rates and the law

Other means than law exist to lower abortion rates. In Mary Ann Glendon's book, *Abortion and Divorce in Western Law*, among western, developed countries including the United States laws against abortion do not stop abortion but only make it unsafe. Mortality from both abortion and childbirth dropped significantly in the United States after the 1973 court ruling, yet the abortion rate did not greatly increase. Anti-abortion laws function about as well as Prohibition did. Romania, for example, a country with very restrictive abortion laws, has an abortion rate among the highest in Europe. The Netherlands, conversely, has abortion laws nearly as liberal as any country in the world yet has an abortion rate among the lowest. The Netherlands lowered the abortion rate by teaching and making safe and reliable birth control methods readily available. By means like the march women remind politicians that banning abortion is not an acceptable solution.

Several other prominent feminists spoke before the march and during the rally at the Capitol and in interviews and lectures held in conjunction with the march.

"If a woman can't control when she has children, she controls very few aspects of her life," Loretta Ross, director of the Women of Color program, NOW, said in an interview in *People's Daily World*. Women who have children very early become "locked into a cycle of poverty," she said, and are unlikely to increase their earning potential. Ross also said, "You cannot be a narrow nationalist and be a feminist. You have to be as concerned about the women of Guatemala as you are about the women of North Dakota."

Sarah Weddington, attorney for Jane Roe in 1973's Supreme Court case, Roe v. Wade, spoke at the assembly area beside the Washington Monument. She asked whether, if life began at conception, would a pregnant woman who went skiing, fell, and had a miscarriage be guilty of negligent homicide? She pointed out that when George Bush was asked during a presidential debate whether women who had abortions would be treated as criminals, he answered that he had not really thought about that. She said many people who are against abortion have not really thought about what the legal terminology should be, about who should be punished nor to what extent. Bush gave a paternistic response the following day, that only those performing abortions would be penalized and women, like children, would not be held responsible for their actions.

Dianne Trumpet, of the National Black Women's Health Project in Atlanta, said, in Ms., "we can't sit back and accept anymore that the policy-makers know what we think."

To let the policy-makers know what people think, people can write or call members of Congress or call the White House hotline to protest Bush's statements, 202-456-7839, and say that a "kinder, gentler nation" begins with family planning. The Planned Parenthood Federation is circulating a national petition to keep abortion safe and legal; local branches can provide copies.

NOW has produced a documentary videotape of the march, *A Call to Action*, for $19.95 plus $2 shipping. It may be ordered from March for Women's Equality/Women's Lives, NOW, PO Box 7813, Washington, D.C. 20044.

The *New York Times* supported the march in an editorial April 9 which said, "Today's demonstrators do not proclaim abortion for abortion's sake; they proclaim choice and freedom. They hope to preserve a hard-won liberty. The Court's proper choice is fidelity to its own honorable precedent." — MT
Women in the News

The Cities of Brazil

Women in developing countries may tend to have more power within the household, according to Kevin Neuhouser, a sociologist at Indiana University. Lower-class women in Brazilian cities have greater job opportunities than men, and as women become wage-earners they achieve greater financial independence, including controlling the household budget. Because the urban poor in Brazil rely on extended social networks for shelter, financial assistance, and child care, and women with paid jobs become part of larger networks, they depend less on those of their husbands. "Thus," he writes, "Brazilian cities apparently provide a context in which women may improve their position vis-à-vis men at the same time that they experience no improvement in their economic position." —The Chronicle of Higher Education, April 19, 1989

Single mothers and courtship

The Rhode Island Supreme Court has ruled that a divorced woman may not have an unrelated man stay overnight with her in her home when her children are present. If Carha J. Parrillo violates the court's decree, she risks one year in jail and a $500 fine. "I'm going to go on living my life in my own home according to my moral judgment," Parrillo said after the ruling. Her lawyer, Patricia A. Hurst of the American Civil Liberties Union, argued that there was no evidence of "an identifiable adverse effect upon her minor children." The judge said that marriage would make the situation acceptable. Parrillo and her attorney plan to appeal to the U. S. Supreme Court. —The New York Times, March 12, 1989

Bush and child care

President Bush has proposed that Congress provide tax credits for low-income families needing child care. The proposal would allow up to $1,000 in tax credits for each child under the age of 4 and would benefit about 2.5 million families. The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee concurrently approved a major child care package at odds with the administration's. This package, the Act for Better Child Care Services, would provide funds to subsidize day-care centers serving families with low and moderate incomes. Though proponents of some children's welfare groups said Bush's proposal was "paltry," they lauded him for at least making an attempt to deal with the child care crisis. Senator Christopher J. Dodd, a Connecticut Democrat, said of the President's program, "To propose a $1,000 Federal tax credit and call it child care is to be misleading. Twenty dollars a week to a struggling family that needs child care is not what I call help." —The New York Times, March 16, 1989

Conferences

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom will kick off its 75th anniversary at its national congress June 21-25, 1989 in Madison, Wisconsin. The league is pledged to confront racism, realize disarmament and empower women to create change. For information write to the league at 1213 Race Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107-1691.

The Anti-Nuclear Pacific Policy Congress, organized in partnership with the National Women's Council of Papua New Guinea, will meet July 23-25, 1989, in Papua New Guinea. The Congress plans to launch the "Women's Pacific Global Network" project whose purpose is to inform women of the status and effects of nuclear experimentation around the Pacific islands, to link women's anti-nuclear support networks around the world with their counterparts in the Pacific, and to create new links among activists concerned with the environment, indigenous peoples, women and peace. For information or to help, write Women for a Meaningful Summit, 2401 Virginia Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20037, or call 202-785-8497.

Women in Libraries

Women in Libraries, the Newsletter of the American Library Association's Feminist Task Force, is published five times a year, from September to June.

Madeleine Tainton, Editor
Hamilton College

Dorothy Granger, Contributing Editor
Pacific Oaks College

Diedre Conkling, Managing Editor
Southwest Branch, Weber County Library

Send articles, comments, or books for review to Madeleine Tainton, Editor, Audiovisual Services, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY 13323.

To subscribe, write to American Library Association, Office for Library Outreach Services, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611. Subscriptions are $5 for individuals, $8 for institutions prepaid, or $10 for invoiced subscriptions. Make check payable to ALA/SLRT/FTF and note "For Women in Libraries."

Contributors: Marshall Hollander, Richfield Springs, NY; Terry McMaster, Utica College, Utica, NY; Laura Purdy, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY; Madeleine Tainton, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY; Polly Thistlethwaite, New York University, New York, NY.
A new Nestlé boycott

Nestlé Foods Corporation is the subject of a new boycott campaign because of union conflict in the Philippines and baby formula marketing strategies which are regarded as unethical.

The Geneva-based International Union of Foodworkers has called for a new international boycott of Nestlé products to support workers in the Philippines. Workers’ strikes since September 1987 have demanded that the average $190 annual salary be increased to $390 and that the $120 average Mindanao annual salary be made equal to wages paid elsewhere in the Philippines by Nestlé’s. Nestlé products include powdered milk and infant formula.

Instant drinks, coffee and creamer, and brands including Carnation, Alpine, Nestea, Maggi, Coffeemate, Taster’s Choice, Nescafe and Sunrise.

Nestlé was the target of a boycott a few years ago because of its promotion of powdered milk and commercial infant formula in lieu of breastfeeding in the third world. A rise in infant mortality in some countries was attributed to Nestlé’s marketing strategies. The International Nestlé Boycott Committee for Europe launched a new international boycott on March 15, 1989 in response to a renewal of these strategies. The boycotting groups include members in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Norway and Sweden. For more information, write to Action for Corporate Accountability, 3255 Hennepin Avenue South, Suite 230, Minneapolis, MN 55408, or call 612-823-1571.

Acquisitions Notes

Directory of children’s presses

Horning, Kathleen T., ed. *Alternative Press Publishers of Children’s Books: A Directory*. Madison, Wisconsin: Cooperative Children’s Book Center, University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1988. Paper $12.00. The third edition of this directory, the book lists 139 small presses currently publishing in the United States and Canada. Each entry includes name, address, and phone, the press’s ISBN and a contact person, the number of books in print and the number of children’s titles, ordering information and distributors, and some description of the type of works published. Entries also indicate whether publishers are accepting manuscripts or responding to inquiries. The book also includes a list of distributors’ addresses and geographic and subject indexes. The guide is a meticulously edited and useful resource for little known materials in print.

Women in academic publishing


From the same publisher comes *Black American Women in Literature: A Bibliography, 1976 through 1987* by Ronda Olin, 1989. Cloth $35.00. Arranged alphabetically by author, the books provides bibliographic coverage of the literary achievements of black women. Appendices provide reference by genre and list works about black women writers including literary criticism, reviews, interviews, biographies and bibliographies.

Parental leave in Europe

Stoiber, Susanne A. *Parental Leave and “Woman’s lace”: The Implications and Impact of Three European Approaches to Family Leave Policy*. Washington: The Women’s Research and Education Institute, 1989. Paper $11.50. Stoiber describes family leave provisions in West Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom and evaluates them using four criteria: protection for maternal and child health, promotion of economic security for women, support for women’s occupational mobility and advancement, and economic burdens placed on employers or the public.

Stoiber’s work is the sixth in WREI’s series on women’s employment issues, the second to address parental leave.

Women and humor in America

As feminist humor gains prominence due to the success of cartoonists like Nicole Hollander, Sylvia’s creator, and comedienne like Roseanne Barr, studies on the subject have begun to appear. Regina Barreca has edited a book called *Last Laughs: Perspectives on Women and Comedy*, volume two of Studies in Gender and Culture from Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, New York, 1988. For $29.00 cloth and $14.00 paper, the work contains 19 articles including discussions of irony and satire in the works of Apha Behn and Jane Austen, a cross-class analysis of status and humor, interviews, and a critical article on *The Handmaid’s Tale*.
A second book on humor is "A Very Serious Thing": Women’s Humor and American Culture, by Nancy Walker. Published by the University of Minnesota Press in Minneapolis, 1986, for $39.50 cloth and $14.95 paper, the book undertakes a study of American women’s humorous writing and draws on history, sociology, anthropology, literature, and psychology. Walker holds that the reasons that women’s humorous expression is neglected are rooted in a male-dominated culture that has officially denied women the freedom and self-confidence essential to the humorist. According to Walker, most of American women’s humorous writing has been a feminist critique of American culture and its attitudes towards women.

Reviews

Woman as generic


"... Though all women are women, no woman is only a woman." So ends Elizabeth Spelman’s examination of the proper roles of variables other than gender in feminist theory. Much feminist thought is predicated on the idea that we can best understand the oppression of women by investigating the situation of those who suffer no other oppression—namely white, middle-class women. But Spelman argues persuasively that characteristics like race and class are intertwined with gender in such a way that we cannot then go on to generalize about women or their oppression unless we always take them into account. Gender is socially constructed, and sex, and these socially-relevant factors combine to produce more than two genders; hence there is no substitute for separate consideration of the various permutations.

Spelman develops her case via intensive scrutiny of influential writers’ views on women, inequality, and difference. She devotes a chapter each to Plato and Aristotle, showing how Plato’s alleged "feminism" is bought at the expense of non-members of the upper, guardian class. Aristotle’s elitism is widely recognized, but Spelman shows us how class-bound our criticism of him has been, ignoring as it does the plight of women slaves. Spelman then goes on to consider the more promising but ultimately disappointing work of de Beauvoir and Chodorow. Both note the importance of factors other than gender, but fail to apply their own insights consistently.

This is an extremely valuable book. Many of us (white, middle-class women and men) have been struggling to live up to our belief that gender equity requires rethinking every aspect of our lives. This is exciting, scary work that takes most of us far beyond any training we ever got. We are rightly criticized for failing to perceive remaining pockets of what our commitment to equality must label "privilege." Yet the work we are already doing may be stretching us to our limits—limits of time and imagination. Spelman’s book lights the way and beckons us forward. It is also an elegant example of the power of philosophy. — LP

Downtrodden sopranos


This book, as the title implies, argues that opera, despite its beautiful and misleading music, is primarily concerned with the negative representation of women and upholding the patriarchy. Published in France in 1979, it makes its first appearance in English translation this past December. Though it purports to be scholarship one moment (armed with footnotes), it then slips into a free-wheeling stream of unconsciousness, which while confusing does have a charm of its own.

Clément’s presumptuous premise holds that the plots and most especially the text of the operas are ignored, that people attend simply for the music and don’t realize what is taking place. Yet opera is drama and serves as a medium for the creation of character and the interpretation of text. Though Clément correctly asserts that women are often not well portrayed in traditional opera, is opera any worse an offender than other art forms? Clément would argue that art is always an advocate for the "power structure." An alternate view would assert that artists, generally outsiders, reflect society. To depict an injustice does not imply endorsement: Could Puccini have given Butterfly such beautiful music if he thought she deserved to suffer? And could Verdi, who lavished poignant melodies on Violetta in La Traviata, have thought her fate fair? Clément makes much of the inevitable death of the female characters, but opera does not discriminate in its fatalities, and the soprano seldom dies alone.

As with all studies that proceed from an ideological perspective, Clément disregards operas that do not fit. Exceptions come readily to mind. Leonora from Fidelio and Cassandra from Les Troyens, or Medea, from the opera of the same name, a tragic figure, yes, but hardly powerless. Clément also neglects the many comic operas, e. g., Le Nozze di Figaro and Falstaff, where women are often clever and quick-witted at the expense of the plodding male characters.

The major problem, and terribly ironic given the subject, is
that she essentially overlooks the role of music. What is great opera but drama through music? The composer's response to the text, the vocal line and the accompanying music often signify much more, or even something different from the text. And coupled with this is the equality imposed upon the form by the inherent quality of women's voices. Opera is a setting virtually unique in that women can compete on equal physical terms with men and, because of the high musical line and the penetrating quality of the soprano voice, easily dominate. Thus a character like Desdemona, who is an embarrassment in Shakespeare and somewhat stronger in the libretto for Verdi's Otello, emerges as a much stronger and more sympathetic figure by virtue of her music.

As Clément's real concerns are politics and power, it is strange that she neglects the fact that success on the opera stage has been a way to independence and power for many great women artists in a world where there were limited options.

A shrill work, written by Susan McClary, does an injustice to the more complex, less purely ideological love/hate arguments of Clément.

If Clément's true mission in this book was to challenge us to think about a world noted for its conservatism, then her provocation has been valuable. But it does seem a pity that with her occasionally illuminating insights she doesn't probe more deeply into this strange and complex art that still retains such a hold on our affections. — MH

Women's history: daily lives


These books give us the kind of history women need to tell and read: individual accounts of heroism and survival on a small, personal scale, of working hard to live or living on the land without taking too much, stories that are omitted in the standardized histories which depend upon war and governments.

In Enduring Women, Gentry photographs and describes the daily lives of women like Harriet Johnston, Montana farmer, Marsha Stone, California weaver, and Teresa Camarillo, Texas gardener and former migrant laborer. In a fine journalistic style, Gentry documents her subjects thoroughly with black and white photographs, technically excellent and as warmly personal and sympathetic as her prose.

In Martin's book, each woman tells her story either in her own writing or through an interview. The book includes a selection of photographs of the women at work. Women who have left white-collar work, or other low-paid "women's work," and have found their way into blue-collar training programs, often attracted by the much higher wages, here describe that difficult path. The stories are redolent of pride, confidence and strength as police officer, engineer, carpenter and steelworker describe their achievements in their apprenticeships and daily work. Some use humor, as Laura Deane Mason, rural contractor, did. She thought of herself as an anthropologist. "When I go out on a job, I view it as alien territory—male territory. I make friendly gestures so they don't get frightened," she writes. Some speak of fatigue in the constant battle against sexism and racism, but few give up.
Each account is individual and unique, yet many share common experiences. Gentry places the women in a social context which includes men and describes their personal attachments and both the problems and support derived from their families. The women in Martin's book, however, see men as their opponents; they put heavy emphasis on men's prejudices and ill-treatment. There is no balance to show that men also are subject to hazing in the trades, though men are often given credit for providing unexpected support and encouragement. — MT

Equality on campus


Enough talk about how women are treated on college campuses. Now what do we do about it? In Get Smart! Montana Katz and Veronica Vieland describe the situation, and in a conversational style, organized in short sections, explain to women how they may both get fair treatment in classes and begin to organize to make changes in the campus environment.

Because of several recent studies on the dynamics in operation in the college classroom, notably the work of The Project on the Status and Education of Women, women are beginning to realize that feelings of inadequacy in the academic setting stem not necessarily from failure to achieve but from subtle differences in treatment of men and women students. In this book, Katz and Vieland declare that once the woman student becomes aware of the "hidden curriculum," she may use personal affirmations to ward off the sense of inferiority caused by subtle insults, interruption and disrespect. The authors point out subtle differences in communication: intonation, gestures and body language like eye contact and attitudes of attention. "The men are constantly encouraged and reinforced in their sense of themselves as competent students," they write. More go on to graduate school, have a firm belief in themselves, and believe they are doing well and can continue to do well, yet because women are excluded from discussion, independent projects, and anecdotal examples, it becomes more "difficult for women to see themselves as belonging to the professional or academic world."

Each chapter deals with a specific aspect of academic life, including the classroom itself, relations with professors, and getting fellowships and departmental awards. After describing the situation, the authors list steps for short-term self-protection, each of which is a useful tip for academic survival. The authors go beyond this, however, and offer guidelines for organizing and bringing understanding to classmates and faculty, without hostility or confrontation, in order to foster the beginnings of permanent change.

Every woman entering college should have this book to prepare her for the constant assaults on her self-esteem, in the chilly campus climate. — MT

Murder in New Zealand


Glory Day, artist, mother, and singer, a truly splendid individual, gets caught up in the nightmare underground of Auckland, New Zealand. After attempting to rescue a young heroin addict, murdered with an overdose of speed, suspicion falls on Day. With a terrain filled with strange people at the periphery of society, Day makes her way through a web of crime, hatred, insanity and drugs, for security only her toughness and vitality. Scott's plot is simple but her characters and settings complex, and Day and her milieu are fascinating and vivid enough to lure us on to the story's comic, turbulent climax. — MT

The unbearable problem of incest


After years of hiding, incest is becoming public. In these two books, courageous women with boundless strength tell their stories of incest survival and recovery.

Danica, the eldest daughter of a pimp and pornographer, was his only child to be a victim of his perversions. She tells her story in short, painful bursts like machine-gun fire, how she was subjected to incest beginning at age four and group sex at age 9.

Wisec hild tells her story as she analyzes the multifaceted trauma she has undergone; through therapy and relentless, painful self-examination she discovers the buried, agonizing memories of sexual abuse and hatred she endured from her father, her stepfather, and even a friend of her mother's. These stories of suffering show how these women were not only physically abused but were subjected to vengeful ridicule, scorn and hatred through verbal abuse as well.

Danica describes a visit to a toy store after the first rape; her father has promised her a wonderful toy. As she refuses the big toy bears and the beautiful dolls, he becomes more and more angry, and finally, as she is about to leave the store, she chooses a bag of marbles. With an adult's wisdom, "she knows she can lose every single one of them and she won't have to remember what he did to her." She is four years old.

Her father teaches her other siblings to disbelieve her and to blame her for all the strife in the family. When she is 40,
they still believe him and not her. The fright she felt, the violation of filial trust, and her father's hatred become almost palpable through her short, childlike descriptions. Her means of pulling herself out of the situation are less clear.

Wisecchild's story places less emphasis on the abuse and more on her personal survival techniques and the help she received. She visits a series of therapists, learns a trade, and through her work finds encouraging, supportive friends. She also faces disbelief and denial from her family, though her brother eventually comes to believe her.

It is hard to live with these stories, hard to deal with the disgust engendered by these men's behavior. When a father sells his nine-year-old daughter's sexual services to men in the parking lot of a race track, when a helpless mother turns her back, when a child's innocent questions and pleas are treated as lies, it is a miracle when the child, grown, finally begins to live again, finally begins to believe in herself. These stories must be told; they must be known. That doesn't make them easy to read. They must have been infinitely harder to live.

Both books would be useful for counsellors and for other survivors who need to know they are not alone and who may be able to use these women's examples to gain strength on their own paths of healing. — MT
Selected Bibliography

Women in the Contemporary Third World

Educational materials for teachers of women's history, grades eight to adult, have been developed by the Upper Midwest Women's History Center and Glenhurst Publications of St. Louis Park, Minnesota. The materials fill a significant need in a world where, all too often, women have no apparent history, at least as history is taught in schools. Materials emphasize women's perspectives internationally with special emphasis on the third world. Write to Central Community Center, 6300 Walker Street, St. Louis Park, MN 55416, or call 612-925-3632.

The following excerpt is from a bibliography included in Third World Women—Family, Work, and Empowerment: Contemporary Women in South Asia, Africa, and Latin America by Susan Hill Gross and Mary Hill Rojas. The teaching unit for adults includes a teacher's manual, student handouts, slide presentations, and a videocassette. Copyright Glenhurst Publications. Printed with permission.

General


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