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January 2005

Note From the Director

January 2005

I pray that the holidays were a time of peace and reflection, even in the midst of tragedy and despair.

As I reflect on the past semester...as mentioned in an earlier newsletter, for the current year we are organizing our programming around the three primary themes of biblical equality, domestic violence, and healthy living. Each of our goals of awareness, education, and advocacy will be addressed within each theme. November brought two wonderful speakers to campus: Donna Wolfe from the Harrisburg YWCA and Lori Robinson. Donna discussed the psychology behind abuse throughout an individual's life while Lori spoke about gender, racism and sexual assault. Lori is the author of *"I will Survive: The African American Guide to Healing from Sexual Assault and Abuse"* and she shared excerpts from her book during her talk. Both talks were well attended by faculty, staff and students. Informal feedback for both speakers was positive.

Looking forward... We have a number of exciting events happening this spring. Our foremost event is the second annual Riegsecker Lecture during Women's History Month on March 15, 2005 from 7-8pm in Palmer Cinema. Catherine Kroeger, a board member of Christians for Biblical Equality, will be speaking on Biblical Equality. We will also be co-hosting a display and speaker on artist's books, a primarily feminine medium, during this month. Please plan to participate and encourage others to do so as well!!

Also looking forward...a GSP planning meeting will be held February 8, 2005 from 5:30-8pm in B102. Pizza and sodas will be provided; please come to share your thoughts, dreams, and desires related to gender here in campus!! We would like feedback related to our current programming as well as suggestions for future programming and projects here on campus and in the larger community. Students, faculty and staff are welcome. If you are unable to attend but interested in providing feedback, please email us at [genderstudies@messiah.edu](mailto:genderstudies@messiah.edu) with your comments.

This spring two new students are a part of the Gender Studies Project staff: Heather Breining, a senior history major, and Andrea Parker, a sophomore Human Development and Family Science major are sharing the assistant director responsibilities. Stephanie Craft, our former assistant director, has completed her coursework for her degree in International Business and is now gainfully employed!! We congratulate her and welcome our new faces!! Change is positive!!

Debra Berke  
Associate Professor of Family Science and Women's Studies  
Director, Messiah College's Gender Studies Project

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## Against All Odds to Get Even

### Part 1

By: Katherine Coates

"At present, our country needs women's idealism and determination, perhaps more in **politics** than anywhere else."

-Shirley Chisholm (Nov. 30, 1924 – Jan. 1, 2005)

#### Couldn't hold us there

The word *female politician* would have been an obvious oxymoron a century ago. As women have continued to demolish and to challenge their 'roles' within society, they have not only raised the bar for themselves, but have proven to be quite competent within the political arena among their male counterparts.

The ingrained stereotypes that our pioneers fought against still affect modern women. The battle is not just against history but is an upward battle against the degrading words and labels, close-minded gender expectations, and demeaning judgment of appearance that are targeted at women in politics. Stemming from an obvious fear of change and an inferiority issue, the social perspectives continue to destroy the opportunities for women to break the 'feminine mystique' and to enter the political realm.

#### Feisty and Feminine

Why is it that women who are outspoken, opinionated, and confident are commonly referred to as a 'bitch'? The double standard within our society embraces the males who exhibit such qualities and stigmatizes outspoken females. Even though it might be uncomfortable and intimidating for individuals who are not used to a powerful female, expanding a closed-mind is much healthier and more productive than reaching for such references.

It is also assumed that a strong woman within our society, primarily those who hold political titles, must be lesbians and are considered to be 'butch' and 'manly'. I am not quite sure when a person's status determined their sexual preference. Many of our political pioneers have had husbands and children and have been heterosexual women.

In one specific experience I can vividly recall when discussing the achievements of one female political figure, I was sardonically asked, 'I wonder what *she* did to get there?' After probing the reason behind the remark, I quickly learned that this question was implying that either the woman used her good looks to climb the political ladder or must have slept her way up there. The innocent, yet detrimental remark unfortunately illustrates a commonly held attitude toward women of power. Once again females were being objectified where the individual immediately assumed that she must have used her looks and or sex appeal in order to achieve success.

Women who hold powerful roles are also commonly categorized as 'man haters' who go against their male counterparts. After centuries of oppression, suffrage, and discrimination, women are armed with the motivation to rise above the low standards that were originally set. Through a peaceful protest, women have used their voices as weapons to set the foundation for future generations of women. The 'hatred' was directed more toward their status and mistreatment. Women chose to find their voice and to be instruments of a revolution for their neglected sex. A society fed by ignorance is under the impression that feminism is fueled by domination when it is defined by establishing an equality of the sexes.

Do you have a strong opinion about a Gender Issue?

Would you like to have your voice heard?

If so please contact The Gender Studies Project!!!

[GenderStudies@Messiah.edu](mailto:GenderStudies@Messiah.edu) –or- ext. 7214

## Women of Islam can nudge region toward progress, peace

Salt Lake City, Utah (The Seattle Times)-- As a troubled world moves into 2005, there are glimmers of hope.

One was tucked away in last week's news reports: the surprising success of women in local Palestinian elections. Despite traditional pressures discouraging women from political activity in Arab states, they won 51 seats in 26 localities in elections seen as a warm-up for Sunday's Palestinian presidential election to replace Yasser Arafat.

One cannot read too much into this. But it is a small step in the direction of a cultural revolution that must take place in critical countries of the Arab world if they are to shed their backwardness and poverty and move into modern society.

A 2002 United Nations report on human development in 22 Arab countries found that women there have the world's lowest rate of participation in the workforce and in politics. More than half of the

women in these countries could not read or write.

Women occupied only 3.5 percent of all seats in their parliaments. "Sadly," the report concluded, "the Arab world is largely depriving itself of the creativity and productivity of half its citizens."

I do not think I would be in danger of making a politically incorrect statement if I suggested the world might be a better place if more women occupied positions of political office and prominence. They can be as strong as any male in leadership positions. Take, for example, Golda Meir or Margaret Thatcher. They can, unfortunately, be as murderous as males — for example, the young women who have carried out suicide attacks against Israeli civilians.

But by and large, women have a sensitivity that offers hope of a gentler approach to politics and international affairs.

While some Arab countries, such as Jordan and Egypt, have made

progress in the advancement of women, many have not.

Women in such lands are relegated to inferior status, discriminated against legally, and barred from equal citizenship with men. In some countries with elected national assemblies, women are still denied the right to vote or hold office.

Let us hope that the modest triumph of Palestinian women in last week's local elections is the forerunner of progress and moderation in the coming Palestinian presidential elections. Mahmoud Abbas, the front-runner, is a moderate who has called for an end to the suicide attacks against Israel by extremist Palestinian elements. But he has also, in his election campaign, sought to induce these elements to support him, come in under his political umbrella, and pursue their goals for a Palestinian state by orthodox political means.

The Bush administration, which found Arafat impossible to work with, is cautiously optimistic about Abbas, but insists that the

new Palestinian regime must actively "develop the structures necessary for a democracy to emerge." Should Abbas become the new president of the Palestinian Authority, he will of course make similarly strenuous demands on President Bush to pressure Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for concessions that would move the peace process between Palestinians and Israelis forward.

Sharon, whose own conservative principles are fairly impeccable, nevertheless is under fire from his own hard-liners for his plan to remove Israeli settlements in Gaza and part of the West Bank.

The search for peace in the Middle East has been bedeviled by many false starts and disappointments. A dreadful legacy of violence must be put to rest. But a new moment of opportunity seems to have arrived with the departure of Arafat. Many on both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict seem exhausted by the killing. There are small signs of conciliation from both the likely new Palestinian leader and a conservative Israeli leader with

the credentials to carry Israeli public opinion. Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, and the ultimate emergence of a Palestinian state on the road to democracy and economic progress, would be a great fillip for freedom elsewhere. It is already on the march.

The Islamic state of Afghanistan has cast off the Taliban, is freeing its women from the imprisonment of the burqa, and is limping along the road to democracy. In Iraq, elections will apparently take place this month, despite a brutal campaign of murder by terrorists striving to halt the movement toward democracy.

The emancipation of women in the lands of Islam will not alone produce a democratic revolution throughout the Arab world. But it is a necessary part of the process, including education and economic development, that will bring that prospect nearer.

*John Hughes, a former editor of the Monitor, is editor and chief operating officer of the Deseret Morning News.*

## Woman For President

*Will the United States ever see a woman as president?*

By Nikki V Katz

Large majorities of Americans are personally comfortable with a woman president (76%) and with a woman as vice president (82%). And 68% of respondents believe their neighbors are ready for a woman as vice president and half (50%) believe they are ready for a woman president, according to a poll conducted for The White House Project by RoperASW, April 19-21, among 1,024 Americans 18 years of age and older.

But, will we ever see a woman as president? I certainly hope so, as women have served as president in many other countries outside of our own including Ireland, Latvia, Indonesia, Finland, Switzerland and San Marino.

In conducting some background research, I was amazed at the number of women (at least 38) who have been female presidential candidates. Some of the women stood as a candidate for their party, but withdrew before the convention. But, many of the women became candidates in the primaries in a number of states.

## THE GENDER STUDIES PROJECT

### Men, Women More Different

CHICAGO - Beyond the tired clichés and sperm-and-egg basics taught in grade school science class, researchers are discovering that men and women are even more different than anyone realized.

It turns out that major illnesses like heart disease and lung cancer are influenced by gender and that perhaps treatments for women ought to be slightly different from the approach used for men.

These discoveries are part of a quiet but revolutionary change infiltrating U.S. medicine as a growing number of scientists realize there's more to women's health than just the anatomy that makes them female, and that the same diseases often affect men and women in different ways.

Until the 1990s, scientists frequently excluded women from medical research, including drug studies. It was largely out of concern over effects on reproduction but also because of a long-standing belief that men and women "were biologically the same except for their reproductive organs," Marts said.

However, recent discoveries suggest that genes, hormones and lifestyle may be behind many of the differences. For example:

- \* Heart attacks in women frequently don't involve chest pain and may involve more vague, flu-like symptoms.
- \* Women who don't smoke appear to be more susceptible to lung cancer than nonsmoking men. Women also tend to get lung cancer at younger ages than men, and they appear to metabolize cancer-causing substances differently than men.
- \* Women are less likely than men to get oral cancer.
- \* Women are more prone to autoimmune diseases, including lupus, rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis,

in which disease-fighting mechanisms mistakenly attack the body's own tissues.

- \* Women's symptoms for ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease - debilitating intestinal diseases that affect men and women - vary considerably each month, requiring frequent medication adjustments.

*Source: The Associated Press  
Sunday, September 26, 2004 by Lindsey Tanner*

### Women and Breast Cancer

- \* an estimated 215,990 cases of breast cancer are expected to occur among women in 2004
- \* the earliest sign of breast cancer is an abnormality that shows up on a mammogram before it can be felt by a woman or her health care provider
- \* when diagnosed early, the 5-year relative survival rate for localized breast cancer is 97%
- \* 70% of breast cancer cases occur in women who have no identifiable risk factors
- \* White, Hawaiian, and Black women have the highest levels of breast cancer risk
- \* Black women have the highest mortality rate due to breast cancer. Relative to White women, a larger percentage of Black women with breast cancers are diagnosed at a later, less treatable stage.
- \* 30% of all women over the age of forty are NOT getting regular mammograms
- \* This year 1,450 American men will be diagnosed with breast cancer

In 2004, an estimated 215,990 new cases of breast cancer are expected to occur among U.S. women. For more information, see <<http://www.nbcam.org/index.cfm>>  
Source: American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute

#### Healthy Women and Men

##### Men's Health Network

P.O. Box 75972  
Washington, DC 20013  
(202) 543-MHN-1 (6461)  
[info@menshealthweek.org](mailto:info@menshealthweek.org)  
<http://www.menshealthweek.org/>

##### Minority Women's Health

<http://www.4woman.gov/minority/index.htm>

##### International Women's Health Coalition

<http://www.iwhc.org/>

## THE GENDER STUDIES PROJECT

### Events Calendar

**February 8: Plan-It! Boyer 102 5:30pm**  
Come to discuss our programs and give your input! We hope to meet you there.

**February: Movie Series—watch for more information soon!**

**Feb. TBD :** Bosnia Mass Rape as a Weapon of War

**Feb. 16 – 7:15-9:15pm:** Venezuela alt. chapel

**Feb. 18-19:** College Ministries Women's Retreat; please register by Feb 11<sup>th</sup>; Cost- \$20; contact Evie Telfer for more information.

**Feb. 28-Mar. 4:** Eating Disorder Awareness Week

**Mar. 15: 7-8pm Riegsecker Lecture in Palmer Cinema.** Catherine Kroeger, a board member of Christians for Biblical Equality, will be speaking on Biblical Equality. Students and faculty are welcome. If you would like to attend dinner before the lecture, please

contact the GSP. Alternate Chapel credit will begin to students who attend the lecture.

**Mar.:** Artist's Books: A Woman's Medium. Come and see Messiah's elite collection of Artist's Books on display in the library.

**Mar.:** Jan Rutker, an artist of artist's books will speak on her work and women in the field.

**Mar./Apr.:** Human Rights Fair

### Save the Date

**Apr 4-9:** South Complex Uplifting Women Week

**Apr. 11 and 13:** Holy Boldness Reflected in Work and Family. Frey 110, 7:30pm

**Apr. 21:** Service Day Project at the YWCA

**Apr. 26, 6-9pm:** Senior Women's Dinner at Grantham Church. If you are interested in helping to plan the dinner, please contact Campus Ministries, ext. 6017.

### Quote of the Month:

"The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us?"

-Dorothy Day, social reformer, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement

We would love to hear from you! If you have ideas or submissions for *Who I Am* please contact Andrea Parker or Heather Breining ext. 7214 or email [GenderStudies@messiah.edu](mailto:GenderStudies@messiah.edu).

# LUZ Y LIBERTAD

By Stephanie Craft

Feminists in Western society have a false inclination to dismiss the church as a restrictive, oppressive institution. They do not realize that this idea is only a western idea. Within other cultures the church is the fundamental source of change and freedom for all, but particularly for women. Within the evangelical tradition of Christianity the Catholic Church is often framed as the more restrictive and “dead” Christian environment. I am here to say that both the mainstream feminists and the evangelicals are wrong in this area. In no place have I seen freedom for women more clearly than sitting in a Catholic church with an all female bible study group called Luz y Libertad (Light and Liberty in English) in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

While studying the scriptures a bible study of 5 women reached a day when they felt they could not just study they had to act on what they were reading. What resulted from this call to action was a program that mimics something we would find at any women’s center. Luz y Libertad runs many different programs for the women in their church and surrounding community. Their most well attended program is one on self confidence that encourages women to be confident in themselves; often this is manifested in not allowing their husbands to abuse them. The women surprisingly understand quickly and take this lesson seriously on completion of the two day course. According to the programmers most of the husbands and families have been supportive of the changes in their wives or mothers. Another program is teaching the women how to provide a healthy diet to their families based on a very meager budget. This includes different recipes and simple ways of cooking. They also teach the women different crafts that they can make for things to sell in the market establishing some measure of economic independence. These classes take many different forms from knitting to tortilla making. They also offer classes for husband and wife couples on running a business together. The classes are offered at a cost but if a woman cannot pay the group will cover their tuition.

I found it fascinating how quickly the women in the classes understood the programming and made permanent changes to their lives. Western women have heard these ideas all their lives for the most part and still struggle to implement real change in their lives. Also, western women often give up the opportunity to better themselves or provide for themselves whereas these Mexican women were eager to learn new things and help not only themselves but saw it as an opportunity to help their families as well. The difference in programming struck me as well. The self-confidence class paralleled many western programs but the healthy cooking and working couples classes may even seem nonfeminist to some. In reality these classes reach the women where they are and empower them with a positive way to see themselves, provide for themselves and their families, and help others.

During our entire time in Cuernavaca, we met many couples and women who had been impacted by the Luz y Libertad group, my host family being one of them. “It is what the Bible says” my host father Miguel told me about his equalitarian marriage with his wife, Maria Elena. Other women have stood up to abusive husbands and stopped the abuse. The stories of how God was working through this group to help couples and women in the church community were numerous. All due to a small group of four older, uneducated women who felt moved by God to act on what they read and what they read empowered women and therefore families and the community. Now, when I think of Mexico I think of those four women humbly telling us about their programs and I don’t think they are the exception, I think there are probably many examples like this around the world that we as Christians and feminists can learn from.