

FROM MY SCRAPBOOK

Snapshots and Reflections
Women and Religion Movement
Unitarian Universalist Association



shared by Elizabeth Fisher

Author of *Rise Up and Call Her Name: A Woman-honoring Journey into Global Earth-based Spiritualities*, published by the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation in 1994

Co-author of *Gender Justice, Women's Rights are Human Rights*, published by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, 1996

Co-author of pamphlet *Shared Leadership*, published in 1986, revised 2001

Co-convenor of the **Women and Religion Task Force**, Pacific Central District, 1984-1988 (or something close to that....)

Lots else in-between and around...

This image which is encircled by a much longer poem excerpted on the back cover was given to me at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, 1995 by women from India who prepared the text and image and printed it on handmade paper.

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Scrapbooking is a rediscovered art of recording personal history...one usually practiced by women...to stimulate memories, make links in activities over time and yes, nurture sentimentality by honoring loved ones still cherished, times well spent.

Contained here are highlights I have chosen from all I have carefully saved over my nearly twenty years of dancing in this magic circle called women *and* religion....a circle of inquiry, suggestion, information and merriment. Creating this scrapbook has been, for me, an act of opening all over again to the possibilities called forth, in their broadest sense, by our Women and Religion movement within the Unitarian Universalist Association. What is contained here is not a linear story, though the presentation is somewhat date ordered. Rather, this collection is mostly circular and timeless....a feminist trait I revere.



Snapshots of important events are followed by



my personal reflections on these moments.

These tidbits of my own passionate involvement and summaries of influences I responded to joyfully supply only a part of the story of an historic movement. Each of us carries memories of a myriad of creative productions that shifted our own paradigms. May we each present our collection to one another in whatever ways call us. Let's keep the conversation alive.

To share is to remember...to remember is to value...to value is to re-create, again and again and again...birthing new realities out of the ashes of what has been thoroughly spent. For me, hierarchical living long ago served its usefulness. Achieving relationships within equal partnerships rather than within a hierarchy is one of my aspirations, supported and stimulated by my many hours engaged in the work of the UU Women and Religion movement. This little collection of events and my thoughts about them is offered as a testament to numerous moments of partnership...and with appreciation for so many wonderful, vibrant memories, as well as for the people who were there with me...giving me a sense of belonging to something truly grand.

As we move into this challenging time for our larger gender equality movement - both domestically and internationally - may we take courage from our advancements, knowing that despite our difficulties in finding common organizational structures we often do care about the same values. As we follow deeply personal paths let us know we are part of a larger whole seeking freedom within a compassionate framework - greater good for all within a robust, yet fragile ecosystem. May we remain alert, generous, courageous and able to respond to the joy and the need around us. And may we feel a part of the natural world, still so beautiful even in her wounded state - and join with those who all around the globe, feel at home within this place of earth, air, water and fire, perpetually recombining within us and all around us.



Vibrations in the Air...

When I first entered a UU Society in San Francisco in 1982, I joined partly because a vibration of truth about the oppression of sex-role stereotyping as a result of religious beliefs and practices was buzzing...bees were gathering round the honey that I was drawn to as well... women were seeking their place in religion....



1977 General Assembly

Women and some men in the denomination organizing an effort to challenge the structure of their religious organization by raising issues concerning the patriarchal structure of the group's Judeo-Christian roots and sex-role stereotypes in our families....a resolution passes unanimously.



In my mid-thirties, I had long known about the male bias of Christian monotheism but had not found others interested in challenging an organization to find new forms of religious expression that could reverse the far-reaching psychological effects of such bias...until now.



Following adoption of the Women and Religion

Resolution Continental Committee is appointed by the President of the denomination with this charge and purpose (abbreviated)

- **identify and name** sexist patterns of thought, belief, behavior, and practice which degrade the spirit, mind and body of women, men and children within the Unitarian Universalist Association;
- **create and promote** programs, materials, networks and other support services that will offer hope and direction toward liberating ways of thinking, being and becoming;
- **enable and inspire** groups and individuals to develop their own bold and courageous responses to sexist thought and practices;
- **challenge** the women, men and children of our denomination truly to affirm, defend and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person and thus change the structures and distribution of power.



I was overjoyed to discover a recent history that gave support for a shift in consciousness that encouraged women to pursue religious identity that was both self-actualizing and respectful of women, unlike most religious traditions I had encountered, especially in Western culture.



1980 General Assembly

Implementation of Women and Religion Resolution passed.

I discover this resolution in old files and relish its pointed language.

WHEREAS:new ways of perceiving the nature of women and men and of relationships between them must be developed.

BE IT RESOLVED: ... UUA urges all societies to provide opportunities for members to participate in activities that bring into focus the sexist nature of our religious heritage and also the emerging ideological understandings that value women and men as full beings;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:urge all societies to recognize and celebrate women's experience in the quest for religious identity.



This movement was serious and knew how to get its point on record.



Early 1980's - Getting up to speed

I am at a retreat of a dozen women to discuss the next steps for Women and Religion. Papers are being passed around to refresh our memories or to tell the early tales of a passionate undertaking. Among those I have held onto:

- **Women and Religion, Grailville 1979 and beyond** - the first UUA Continental Conference on Women and Religion, its program and concerns
- **Voice of the New Feminism** ed. by MaryLou Thompson, 1970 - a collection of essays that sought to foretell the future that has yet to be realized or in some cases turned out quite differently...very interesting.
- **Women and Religion Convocation on Feminist Theology, 1980, East Lansing Michigan** - this is where we began to use the word "thea" which is the feminine equivalent of the Greek theos meaning "God."
- **Sermons by Marjorie Leaming** - among these, a collection entitled *Feminism from the Pulpit: 13 Sermons on Sex, etc* published in 1973, and *The Women's Movement: Changing the Future of Religion* preached in 1985 stand out.



I felt I had missed something vital by arriving several years after this exciting period...though I soon learned there would be plenty of future opportunities.



Early 80's: Her Creations – A Feminist Book Table

I walk into a church social hall and spot a book table. I see if any titles interest me. They are all about women and their approaches to religion. The Rev. Emily Champagne is the proprietor. I think she called her enterprise Her Creations...if not, she should have.



Something new and exciting is happening. The 70's were the beginning of women finding their voice....and placing it between the covers of so many publications. It was like coming home to a circle of like-minded, lively and highly intelligent people....liberation!



1980's...

Newsletters Carried the Conversation before e-mail

I am reading newsletters that contain personal stories, position papers, poetry, and political analysis by women in this continental movement. Two are called:

- Reaching Sideways - edited by Sara Best with Jean Zoerhelde as consulting editor
- Matrix - prepared by varied W&R District Committees



Great mastheads in this “people publishing” that characterize our non-hierarchical efforts - the reach across and the web of communication.



Continental Gab Fest

I am attending in Boston a meeting of co-convenors throughout the denomination – 19 districts represented. So much is going on. The bee hive is buzzing again and again. I suggest we include info in the UUWF newsletter about district events and agree to edit and compile it for one year.



Grassroots efforts are dynamic and too often ignored.



Challenges to Sexist Language, 1980

I see a bright red glossy background printed with black ink in bold letters "Avoiding Sexist Language" and realize I am looking at a pamphlet published by the UUA.



This great collection of quick and easy ways to elegantly restate male gendered references to include both genders makes me feel I exist. I was able to admit how strange it had always felt to be called "he." No excuses for male bias now.



1989 Sexist Language aka Gender Exclusive Language

by Meg Bowman and Rosemary
Matson of the PCD W&RTF

I see this publication designed to raise consciousness and provide pragmatic suggestions and realize how long it takes to get a different perspective across.



The slow pace of change and the need to repeat the reasons for non-sexist language and the on-going implications of including the woman's point of view continues to be in my face.

"HE" IS NOT "SHE"

IN RECENT YEARS OBJECTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED TO USING THE WORDS MAN, MEN, AND MANKIND TO MEAN HUMAN BEINGS BOTH MALE AND FEMALE, AND TO USING THE PRONOUN "HE" TO MEAN BOTH "HE" AND "SHE." THE REASON FOR THESE OBJECTIONS IS THAT IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT MASCULINE FORMS ARE OFTEN CONSIDERED TO INCLUDE OR REFER TO BOTH SEXES, THEY IN FACT OPERATE TO EXCLUDE FEMALES FROM OUR ATTENTION.

WHEN WE CONSISTENTLY PERSONIFY THE HUMAN RACE AS MAN OR MANKIND, WE COME TO REGARD MALES AS THE REPRESENTATIVE AND TYPICAL FORM OF HUMAN BEING, AND TO VIEW FEMALES AS AN ABSENT OR ATYPICAL FORM.

EASTSIDE WOMEN'S COMMITTEE, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, 1972



Shared Leadership, 1984

I am in a group of women who ask me to be co-convenor of the Women & Religion Task Force. I am reluctant because I do not want to be a leader who knows all, does all and burns out. They assure me they use Shared Leadership. I am skeptical but hooked on this adventure and can see everyone in the circle has already taken her turn at the convenership. So now its my turn to be called to contribute. I receive lots of good information from various home grown booklets produced by local circles of the women's movement on this grass roots approach to getting things done holistically.



Shared Leadership becomes a belief system for me. It has ritual and theology and practical applicability. I am so charmed by it my partner Bob and I write a pamphlet summarizing its virtues. This little summary of key points is popular so it must have religious potential.



Feminist Values Save the World, January, 1987

I am standing at the podium in front of 300 people with Margaret Pearce. We are the co-conveners of the PCD W&R Task Force and we are introducing Bill Schulz the President of the UUA who is to keynote a district meeting by addressing "How Feminist Values May Save the World." From his speech:

Patriarchy conspires to keep us all in fear of one another, separate, competitive...Feminism calls us to reject the root metaphor of terror...



This was the largest district meeting to that date with 15+ workshops nestled in every nook and cranny of the San Francisco church. Vibrant energy all around. Bill united new physics with what seemed to me common sense but was considered radical by most of our country...that we can feel at home in the universe, accepting that diversity and equality can co-exist.

To me: His talk was like cool water after a scorcher.



Revising the Purposes and Principles 1982-1985

I felt like I was entering a movie after the first third had taken place. I realized a game of "catch-up" was at hand. I attended a meeting at my local society where I was given a bird's eye view of a group process designed to reach a mutually acceptable statement....composed by committees across a continent. The product, these purposes and principles work for me.



Big change was in the making. A participatory process of redefining modern Unitarian Universalism was underway. Women's efforts had provided much of the impetus for change. It was time to broaden our statement of what principles motivated our collective life and action, including celebrating the "interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part." The Sources were broadening also, acknowledging a more inclusive base of inspiration and support, while expressing gratitude for "our religious pluralism ..."



Position Papers

We told each other our well reasoned, dramatized views in monographs and spiral bound collections. I read them with relish, and even wrote a selection for one. Here are a few I saved:

- Transforming Thoughts - UUWF Vol. 1 and Vol. 2
- Collegium Occasional Papers:
The Edge of the Wave - The Great Goddess: Fact, Working Hypothesis, or Feminist Myth, 1993 (includes my essay *Weaving Strands into Whole Cloth*)
- Rosemary Matson - *UU Women & Religion Movement 1977-1981*
- Lucile S. Longview - *The Women and Religion Resolution: The First Decade*



We are a heady bunch thinking our way thorough the convoluted excuses for unequal opportunity and disrespect. The edges grow ever sharper.

The Flow of Water...

When researching religious practices, I come across this definition of ritual. The word ritual comes from the Latin *ritus* and the Greek *rheo*, and means to flow, run, rush, or stream.



Coming Home Like Rivers to the Sea: A Worship Service, created by Lucile Schuck Longview and Carolyn McDade featured at East Lansing Women's Convention, 1980

Reflections from Lucile and Carolyn:

Central to this service is the water ceremony - the bringing of water by women. Each brings a container of water that has special meaning to her. She shares with the group why this water is significant to her and what it symbolizes in her life. As she speaks she adds her water to a common bowl. When the water is mingled it is then experienced in some way by the women gathered together. We have found the meaning of the water grows with time and the opportunity to take a small portion during or after the service to be carried away is important. The collected water thus journeys on into individual lives and often flows into a common bowl at other water ceremonies.

The water ceremony names water as a symbol close to women, reflective of and enabling to our daily lives. The ceremony flows from what the participants bring to it, releasing an articulation of what is vital, rooted, and connected to us. In small gatherings each woman can bring water and speak of its meaning to her. In large groups, such as the one in East Lansing, a number of women participate in the name of all.

The ceremony is personal and transcendent. Women have celebrated these waters in many different ways - alone, in private rituals; with a friend, sometimes sharing the gathering of the water; with groups of women, large and small; with groups of women and men. We have been in small groups who circled the bowl, putting our hands in it; we have witnessed the water passed around the circle as women used it to heal one another. We have seen ceremonies spontaneously shaped in the moment or carefully planned, each portion reflected upon. The ritual, as it continues, deepens in meaning for us, just as water deepens after its long and winding journey to sea.

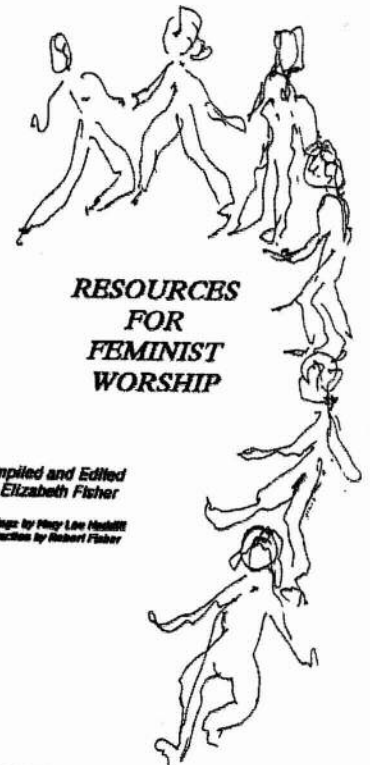


I recall hearing about this service some years after it was created. I met Lucile, author of the original Women and Religion resolution, in the early 80's and stayed in touch with her ever since. She reminded me recently the taking of the water from the collective bowl is as important as the bringing of the individual vials of water to contribute. Now that UU's have adopted this ceremony as their Fall gathering ritual, I wonder if they know about taking back from the collective. Lucile says its what makes the ritual work.



Creating Ritual

I remember gathering in a group at one of my first district retreats for the Sunday Service. There was an altar where we were invited to place our shared treasures. I had trouble orienting myself. Were altars benign in UU practice? I had thought they were played down. Here, however, it appeared to be a lovely group collage of beauty and emotion. The service followed the same eclectic agenda - song and chant, simple dance and a time for personal sharing. After numerous rituals, I wrote (with Sue Ayers - now a reverend) a resource guide to be used as a grab bag of ideas for creating worship. We included line drawings by Mary Lou Hadditt to give it the movement this form of celebration calls forth.



RESOURCES FOR FEMINIST WORSHIP

*Compiled and Edited
by Elizabeth Fisher*

*Drawings by Mary Lou Hadditt
Production by Robert Fisher*

WOMEN AND RELIGION TASK FORCE
Pacific Central District



I was caught up on the artistry and intimacy. This had to be worthwhile religion. This freedom to create artistic ritual forms was one of the most cherished gifts I received from my feminist spirituality gatherings.

WOMANCIRCLE RITUALS:

CELEBRATING LIFE, SPARKING CONNECTIONS



Women's Spirituality Group
First Unitarian Church
Austin, Texas

1988



I began discovering more and more ritual resources like the one created by the women's spirituality group at First Unitarian Church in Austin, Texas in 1988



Something liberating to those who participate is happening in these gatherings. I certainly feel it and its not about abstract belief...it has the quality of primal knowing.

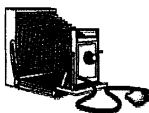


Cries of the Spirit: A Celebration of Women's Spirituality, edited by Marilyn Sewell

Gathering in a graduate student apartment, I serve on an advisory committee of less than ten women who pour over possible pieces for a forthcoming anthology.



This hands-on experience of the diversity of perspective and concern among educated, intelligent women fed my skepticism about biologically determined skills, preferences, and outlooks. Still, we all were passionate about promoting women's voices to enrich the cultural interchange. Marilyn's two volumes have made a major contribution to this cause. Her second is entitled *Claiming the Spirit Within: A Sourcebook of Women's Poetry*. Both labors of love I thank Marilyn for taking on.

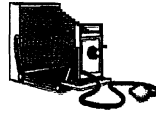


Skits

Dressed as Mary Wollstonecraft I'm involved in a skit to introduce this historical feminist to those attending a dinner and fundraiser.



Whenever I impersonate an historical feminist, I feel I am hanging out with an old friend (excuse the pun). No, better yet, a soul sister.



Hymnal Revision

Rev. Mark Bellitini, chair of the denominational committee undertaking this momentous work agrees to meet with members of the W&R task force to discuss inclusive language and liturgical and musical pieces that open up to a feminist perspective.



It's always good to ask. Mark and the Committee included in the final hymnal several beautiful songs which reflected our task force desires. It turned out Mark had already put considerable energy into defining "inclusive language" sharing his perspective in a position paper he had written. The open process and careful preparation as well as the Committee's follow-through on sensitive elements was for me a fine application of feminist process...even if some of the selections are not the easiest for we "Sunday only" singers to get in sync with...we so appreciate the words.





More fun than high school p.j. parties

Fifty women are nestled in a large house which hold that many beds in Mill Valley, California. Another PCD W&RTF retreat is underway. How did we get so lucky as to have these gatherings every year? And, go away with so much fun stuff – tee shirts, xeroxed tracks on social issues, visions from videos on pressing women's issue. Skits, songs, jokes, and dancing late into the night. Most of all the spontaneous exchanges of the "rarely happens" variety.



Retreats are popular with women interested in religion. Going into space where we can explore new options and connect despite our busy lives...taking a weekend off felt like entering a hobbit hole to a more pleasing, empowering and fulfilling universe.



There was always music and dancing...part of the woman's culture that celebrated our bodies and our being alive. As we continued our antics, we realized how revolutionary such self-appreciation actually is.

Another prize I find in the files....old copies of a great little publication entitled *Blessed Bee: A Newsletter for Feminist Spirituality*...created by Mary Heath in the early 1980's and revived in the early 1990's.



Telling Our Stories: Celebrating Ourselves

History of W&RTF
PCD-UUA, 1977-98

I peruse a copy of this priceless collection put together by Meg Bowman and Rosemary Matson with editing by Mary Heath. The cover by Jean Shiota is a wonderful collection of snapshots of women having great times, as are the tales inside.



What a gift to have been there and done that....

We are Dancing Sarah's Circle (first lines of each stanza)

We are dancing Sarah's circle....
We will all do our own naming...
Here we seek and find our history...
Every round a generation...
Birth to death and death to birth now...
On and on the circle's moving..
Sisters one and all.

Tune: Jacob's Ladder
Words: Carole Ann Etzler, 1975

Grounded in the Earthy Herstory....

Women's Herstory was not a topic taught in the 1960's at the University of Michigan where I attended. It was not taught at my high school. It was taught to me through the Women and Religion movement...and for this I now have a keen appreciation for our foremothers and forefathers who cleared a path through discrimination and kept alive the dream so we could carry it on....



Hot Flash Press, Meg Bowman, editor-in-chief

I finally get the nerve up to attend my first district Women and Religion meeting. Meg Bowman, a college prof and current co-convenor, was dispatching business so quickly I was swimming in deep flood water. I had no idea what she was talking about most of the time. I knew I would need remedial help. Meg had just the answer: read her many fine volumes she had compiled, edited, wrote for, marketed and distributed. Over the years, I did just that. Her latest, just hot off the press (see resources at the end of this booklet for ordering information) is *Women's Wisdom*. These books, often written as dramatic readings, continue to give me a great foundation as well as pride in women's accomplishments. And, Meg's friendship stays constant as well.



One of the reasons I am surviving this current gender morass is because of Meg's efforts and those of so many others. We slip the truth to one another in plays, poetry, curricula, songs and some good fun.



UU Women's Heritage Society

In 1989, I came across an impressive booklet entitled "Compendium of Resources" published by this organization claiming "The Flame of Our Heritage Lights the Way to Our Future." They predicted this would turn into published volumes of these foremothers' writing and they have in a wonderful volume entitled *Standing Before Us, UU Women and Social Reform, 1776-1936* edited by Dorothy May Emerson with help from June Edwards and Helene Knox. (See Resource list at back of this booklet for ordering information.)



Knowing the past is such a source of inspiration for my future.



Cakes For the Queen of Heaven, 1984

I met Rev. Shirley Ranck at a W&R meeting. She has developed a curriculum about Women & Religion yet to be published by the UUA because of editorial differences. We organize a group to take the fourteen sessions. It transforms those 25 women through seeing images museums have hidden away – women in positions of obvious honor thousands of years ago. We hear tales of persecution and perseverance. We retell old religious tales from the Bible...learning about sacred circles and the four directions. We write a letter asking the UUA to make this piece available. Later I teach the published version. Shirley became a mentor and friend over many long years of my own adventures into the Female Divine.



Change takes many hands and lots of persistence. In 1986 “Cakes in a Box” did become a published UUA religious program of immense popularity whose life goes on and on...though now out of print...



Rise Up and Call Her Name begins UUWF Panel at General Assembly, 1988, Palm Springs *Cakes Well Done or Half Baked*

I am a member of a panel to address this question. As we each tell why we appreciate this curriculum or criticize it, I am moved to advocate for this ground breaking course. *Cakes* had brought me so much more deeply into the personal and political issues and practices which have made organized religion so difficult for me and many women. We finish our formal presentations, pro and con. Then women from the audience began to testify about the impact of this course in their lives. No more arguments, but one lingering request – more multicultural material. I approached the UUWF leadership and suggest a new project...the seeds of *Rise Up* sprouted that G.A. from the harvest of *Cakes*.



Here were women with energy for spiritual communities formed to empower and appreciate the female...and to sit in circles and share through all forms of art as well as story.

Rise Up and Call Her Name – the development



- Where to begin 1989

After the initial grant had been secured by the UUWF from the UUA Grants Panel, I am sitting with Shirley Ranck and Carol Graywing pondering the next step...it was so overwhelming I am considering giving the grant back. That didn't happen.



Good projects don't get canceled.



Interviewing participants 1989-92

This simply goes on and on...it is so interesting and weblike...



Collaboration begins by having a conversation.



Milestones

UUWF Florida Biennial Workshop, 1991; Keynote at an Arlington Virginia Church Conference, 1992; Ferry Beach week long test run, Summer, 1992



It took me a long time and lots of feedback to get the storyline finalized. Maybe I am just a slow learner.

Rise Up and Call Her Name – the release



UUWF WomanSpace, 1993

A full blown experience of the material with facilitators and small groups as well as presentation of art and music. We are getting there.



Considering differences of perception made the process both richer and more than once a pain in the



1994...she is birthed, published by the UUWF.



Miracles happen...and this one happened to me...with help from too many to name them all here...my committee of Allyson Rickard, Sue Haskin, Caroline Finch, Carol Graywing, and Shirley Ranck I will always be grateful to...and of course my husband Bob Fisher who was with me every step of the way including doing the final production of the Sourcebook and Journal....and Carolyn McDade for the words that became the title, and her wonderful music over the years.



Her on-going life amazes me...

I now fulfill orders...hearing of more groups forming continually.
(See resources at the end of this booklet for ordering information.)



Word travels at different rates so keep the message going....

The Passion of Fire

The International Women's Movement was brought to my consciousness by my W&R friends who attended these gatherings. Among them are Rosemary Matson, Lucile Schuck Longview, Betty Ortezt and Meg Bowman. They taught me Sisterhood Is Global.



The Road to Beijing

I am approaching the turnstile to enter the grounds of the Fourth World Conference on Women which was also organized by women. This followed flying from California to China, traveling an hour by bus, and having our belongings searched in the middle of the night by teenage Chinese soldiers. Not having traveled with anyone I knew I began to wonder how I will figure this thing out. As soon as I press against the turnstile I hear "Hi, Liz," turn and there's my buddy Betty Ortezt, a veteran of Nairobi in '85. My worries were over.



Synchronicity became an orthodox belief of we women spirituality enthusiasts. Planning, we came to realize, was not what was making things happen...



Fourth World
Conference
on Women
Beijing, China
4-15 September 1995

Platform for Action

Summary

Obstacles

Strategies

Actions



Gender Justice - Women's Rights

After Beijing I researched and wrote furiously to weave together a plausible approach to world affairs. Linda MacKay of the UU Service Committee gave me lots of sources and she and I compared endless notes...



There are a whole lot more complicated issues about worldwide liberation of women then I had realized. Learning the situation has actually worsened worldwide for women over the last 20 years, was going to become mainstream, and unleash both repression and accelerated understanding. "What to do" is the inquiry...do what's possible just as women have always done...I hear in response. But, stretch the possible...

Sign Posts on the Road to Beijing

Mexico City, 1975: First World Conference on Women and International Women's Tribune.

Copenhagen, 1980: Second World Conference on Women and NGO Forum.

Nairobi, 1985: Third World Conference on Women and NGO Forum.

Rio de Janeiro, 1992: The Earth Summit and Planeta Femea at Global Forum '92.

Vienna, 1993: World Conference on Human Rights and Global Tribunal on Women's Rights.

Cairo, 1994: International Conference on Population & Development and NGO Forum.

Copenhagen, 1995: World Summit on Social Development and NGO Forum.

Beijing 1995- FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN and NGO-FORUM



I am sitting at a table in the chapel of the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley as part of a panel addressing the topic "Women, Poverty and Population: A Call to Engagement for People of Faith."



I chose the topic "The Local Response to Int'l Women's Issues." Central to any justice for women is acknowledgment of the invaluable work women do for no pay...falls under "ethic of care" but should be called "maintaining the fabric of society."



I gather names for a group called Beyond Beijing. A base community sponsored by the Center for Women and Religion at the GTU. We meet and talk about current affairs and religious responsibility to address social inequities, especially as they are faced daily by women. And ponder how to do this.



I begin to wonder if women of different social means and educational levels can empathize. Touchy question.

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST **WOMEN**





In Our Best Interest: How Defending Human Rights Benefits Us All by William F. Schulz, 2001

I see a review of a book by Bill Schulz, once president of the UUA and the author of a speech delivered in 1987 at the PCD District meeting entitled "Feminist Values May Save the World" has a new gig...Executive Director of Amnesty International. It seems he's been at it for nearly a decade already, if I remember correctly. The review of the book reads:

Schulz clearly delineates the connections between our prosperity in the U.S. and human rights violations throughout the globe. This book reveals the high cost of indifference not only in ethical and moral terms, but in terms of the political, economic, environmental, and public health consequences in our own backyards.



Feminist values, it seems, will have to save the world, Bill. Thanks for continuing to put them out there.



1996 View of the Canyon

Sitting at Rosemary Matson's work table which overlooks the pristine canyon she borders near Monterey California, I am preparing my final copy of *Gender Justice: Women's Rights are Human Rights*. Rosemary had generously offered her home to me while she was traveling so I could write in peace. Her presence is all around me in her organized home, her well-equipped work area and the array of current books and periodicals on human rights and women's issues. Rosemary has been a source of so much good stuff...especially her U. N. Work; her people-to-people diplomacy efforts all through the 80's in the Soviet Union; and her tireless work on behalf of Women and Religion.



Unitarian Universalist ethics have supported a lot of energetic folks but none in my experience compares to Rosemary's zest for life and fearless pursuit of the issues.

A Pocket Full of Resources Hot Books of the last five years

Prehistory

From the Realm of the Ancestors: An Anthology In Honor of Marija Gimbutus Edited by Joan Marler, published in 1997 by Knowledge, Ideas &

Trends, Inc., Manchester, CT

An international group of scholars, artists and writers articulate their deep respect for the archaeology and mythology of Gimbutus who explored the goddess-based, matrilineal society that preceded the patriarchal Indo-European culture. Gimbutus' expertise and her philosophical understanding challenges the traditional assumptions about the origins of Western civilization.

The Alphabet Versus the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image by Leonard Shlain, published in 1998 by Viking/Penguin Putnam, New York, NY

Thousands of years ago the Great Goddess (Creatrix) was the principal deity of all people. Then the Goddess lost power and male gods arose. Shlain says the change occurred not because of foreign invaders, or the invention of private property, but because of something much more startling: the rise of literacy. See how controlling the Word led to patriarchal domination.

When the Drummers Were Women: A Spiritual History of Rhythm by Layne Redmond, published in 1997 by Three Rivers Press, New York, NY

Throughout pre-Christian history drumming was used as a means of communication. Growing out of a goddess tradition these mystical practices flourished until they were forcibly suppressed by the advent of Christianity. This inspiring history of feminine power and spirituality shows that patriarchy is just a blip on the screen and that women in charge of our bodies and spirits is our natural state.

History

Why History Matters: Life and Thought by Gerda Lerner, published in 1997 by Oxford University Press, New York, NY

History shapes our self-definition and relationship to community; it locates us in time and place and helps to give meaning to our lives. Lerner combines personal reminiscences with innovative theory to illuminate the vital role women have played in history. Included is a fascinating essay on nonviolent resistance. A highlight is Lerner's bold look at issues of class and "race" as they relate to women. Also she addresses the growing importance of woman as a subject of history.

Not For Ourselves Alone: The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony - A Film by Ken Burns and Paul Barnes available from PBS Home Video; ***Not For Ourselves Alone - An Illustrated History*** by Geoffrey C. Ward, companion volume to the PBS documentary film, published in 1999 by Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY

Together, for more than half a century, they led the struggle to win the most basic civil rights for women. They determined early on that they should stand together. A compelling story that raises questions of principle and compromise, achievement and ends, and the meaning of independence itself.

Unitarian Universalist Riches

Standing Before Us: Unitarian Universalist Women and Social Reform, 1776-1936 edited by Dorothy May Emerson, published in 2000 by Skinner House Books, Boston, MA

This volume contains letters, essays, stories, poems, and speeches by Unitarian and Universalist women. The reformers and leaders represented in this book write and speak eloquently for social justice, equality in education, religious reform and an end to slavery and prejudice. Includes a biographical sketch of each woman.

Available from the UUA bookstore <http://www.uua.org/skinner> or via Tel: (617)742-2100

Rise Up and Call Her Name: A Woman-honoring Journey Into Global Earth-based Spiritualities by Elizabeth Fisher, published in 1994 by the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, Boston, MA

Learn about goddesses from a variety of traditions, create your own sacred art, and participate in storytelling, rituals and chanting throughout thirteen sessions. See a video filled with sacred art. Sing and dance along with music tapes. Strengthen your ability to build bridges cross-culturally. Pour over the Sourcebook for in-depth discoveries on the journey including commentary, discussion questions, and reading material.

Available from the author via Email: lizfisher@igc.org or Tel: 510-236-9131

Gender Justice: Woman's Rights Are Human Rights by Elizabeth Fisher and Linda Gray MacKay, published in 1996 by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, Cambridge, MA

A workshop series and comprehensive tool through which women in the U.S. can realize the promise of the Beijing Platform for Action. An outstanding resource for women who want to not only understand the barriers that keep women as second class citizens globally, but want to learn positive leadership skills to help eradicate those barriers.

Available from UUSC via Tel: 617-868-6600 or Email: postmaster@uusuc.org

Women's Wisdom; Women's History: Dramatic Readings; and Readings for Older Women Three of the many titles edited by Meg Bowman

The 1st book has readings about Margaret Fuller, Eve & Lilith and others. The 2nd book covers Sappho, Emma Goldman and others. The 3rd book is a compilation of Wit and Wisdom to help you feel good about aging. Meg is a retired sociologist and global feminist.

Available from Hot Flash Press, POB 21506, San Jose, CA 95151, (408)292-1172

Revitalizing UU Women's Groups: A How-to Manual written/edited by Mary Junge, sponsored by the Association of Universalist Women, supported by the Fund for Unitarian Universalism

For new and seasoned women's groups alike, this manual offers innovative programming ideas. The content is practical because it was shaped by sixty Minnesota UU women who attended a retreat together. For those starting new UU women's groups, it provides basic tools such as sample by-laws and budget. Sections include History, Retreats, Calling the Circle, Labyrinth as spiritual tool, and much more.

To order contact the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis, or Email mjunge@bpsl.net

The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy by Allan G. Johnson, published in 1997 by Temple University Press, Philadelphia, PA

This book on the oppressive gender legacy called patriarchy is to be used in a forthcoming course, *Unraveling the Gender Knot*, being developed by Women and Religion activists Barbara Schonborn, Rosemary Matson, and Alison Campbell. The course highlights benefits to women and men of challenging patriarchal assumptions and suggests ways to do so.

Women's Studies

Ecological Feminist Philosophies edited by Karen J. Warren, published in 1996 by Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN (A Hypatia Book)

A collection of essays on ecofeminism, the connections between feminism and environmentalism. Topics include the role of patriarchal concepts in perpetuating the domination of women and nature, the grassroots character of ecofeminism, the deep ecology debate, animal rights, and ways ecofeminism and the science of ecology are engaged in supportive projects.

Feminism Is For Everybody: Passionate Politics by bell hooks, published in 2000 by South End Press, Cambridge, MA

The acclaimed cultural critic offers an open-hearted vision of gender, sexuality, and society. bell hooks introduces a feminism rooted in common sense and the wisdom of experience. She appeals to those committed to equality, mutual respect and justice, and encourages us to demand alternatives to patriarchal, racist, and homophobic culture, imagining a future free from divisive barriers.

Woman: An Intimate Geography by Natalie Angier, published in 1999 by Houghton Mifflin, New York, NY

With clarity, insight and sheer exuberance of language, Pulitzer Prize winner Natalie Angier takes readers on a mesmerizing tour of the female anatomy and physiology, and explores everything from organs to orgasm. An essential read for anyone interested in how biology affects who we are.

The First Sex: The Natural Talents of Women and How They Are Changing the World by Helen Fisher, published in 1999 by Random House, New York
Drawing on anthropology, this book deals with the differences in male and female brain chemistry and how men and women differ in love and bonding. Fisher explores how women's special talents – superior verbal abilities, people savvy, acute senses, healing techniques, and more – are geared to success in key areas of society.

Art

Sacred Woman, Sacred Dance: Awakening Spirituality Through Movement and Ritual by Iris J. Stewart, published in 2000 by Inner Traditions, Rochester, VT

Women's sacred dance was most valued in goddess-worshipping cultures where women served as priests and healers. Dance is an integral part of religious ritual and ceremonial expression in cultures all over the world. Dance is a language that unites body, mind, and soul, and is part of our search for communion with the divine.

Women and Art: Contested Territory by Judy Chicago and Edward Lucie-Smith, published in 1999 by Watson-Guption Publications, New York, NY

Over the centuries, male artists have claimed a gender monopoly on artistic greatness, yet female artists have produced art of great power. The images selected for this book stimulate a wide ranging dialogue between the authors, a feminist artist and an art historian with a triumphant celebration of the feminine.

Afterword....

WHAT I TAKE WITH ME

- New Ways of Working - group process of non-hierarchical shared leadership
- Circle Consciousness – perfecting the fine art of conversation
- Direct Experience of our own unique expression of cosmic consciousness
- Knowledge of the divine imaged as female, not only male
- Passion for equal access for women to positions of social power
- Valuing unwaged work and the importance of the ethic of care (international feminism raised this issue loudly at the UN World Forums, especially the one in Beijing)
- Belief in the systems approach to life – each species integral to the whole
- Critiquing patriarchy or “finding our place in the picture by changing the frame”
- Joy in being a part of a community of seekers



“Feminism is a worldwide movement that has taken many forms and means different things to different people. I will define it as a comprehensive ideology, rooted in women’s experience of sexually-based oppression, that engages in the critique of patriarchy as an essentially dysfunctional system, embraces an alternative vision for humanity and the earth, and actively seeks to bring this vision to realization.” *as defined by Sandra Sneider, professor at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley Ca.*



PRACTICES RECOMMENDED

- identify and analyze male centered privilege supported involuntarily by female labor
- expose misinformation about female capabilities designed to disempower women
- value and encourage the capabilities of men for care and compassion
- appreciate other women rather than competing for male attention
- seek out men who interact with women rather than ignoring us – realizing women possess valuable insight and information
- encourage our daughters to pursue personal development rather than, out of fear for their being ostracized, conditioning them to fit a social norm they don’t want or need
- encourage our sons to experiment with a wide range of non-traditional activities and emotions to broaden their self-discovery rather than being limited by gender bias

Blessed Be....Elizabeth “Liz” Fisher

from the poem **Weaving Conversations Across Cultures**

Look at this circle
See us come from every direction
See us come from the different spheres of the earth
See the lines that stretch to the horizon
the procession, the gifts borne
see us fuel the fire
Feel the earth's fire renewed
And the circle is complete again

The circles turn,
each going into each, in to all

And we dance
the dance of the circling stars
to the music of the spheres
to the song of the wind

And so, a time will come
when women all over the world
will bring their gifts to the fire
and look into each others' faces
Unafraid.

Women traversing the world
entering a sacred space, a sacred time
to spin the wheel
to weave the cloth
to bring a healing
to care, to create, to celebrate
to reclaim the earth for us all