

---

---

# REACHING SIDeways

*AN EXCHANGE OF IDEAS/VIEWS*

*of*

*THE UU WOMEN AND MEN*

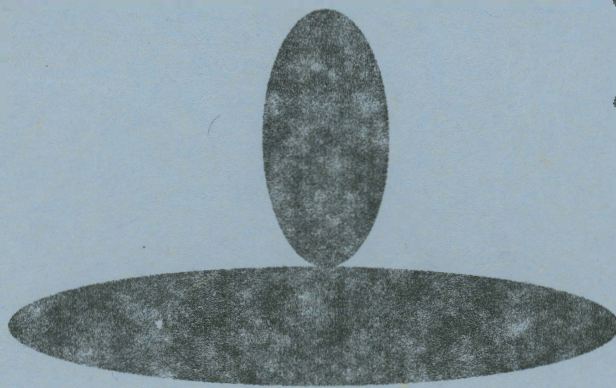
*OF*

*THIS CONTINENT*

*Vol. VIII, No. 1*

*SPRING*

*1989*



---

---

Edited and published by members of  
the Joseph Priestley District

---

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

About This Journal	3
Anna Garlin Spencer	4
Implementation of the Sexism Audit	7
Women Warriors	11
Survival in the Nineties: A Handbook for Women	12
1. Questioning Authority	14
2. Coming Together With Other Women	17
Channing's Sisters and Brothers	20
Inspiration from the Past	23

Editor: Sara Best  
Consulting Editor: Jean Zoerheide  
Production: Guy Best and Tom McHugh

---

Published in Chevy Chase, Maryland



# ABOUT THIS JOURNAL

This journal perseveres through the dedication and energy of a volunteer staff, supported by your contributions both of money and opinion. We began in Oct. 1, 1981 by stating our purpose in the following manner:

***REACHING SIDEWAYS** will challenge sexism because we seek, in the words of our UUA Bylaws, "to affirm, defend and promote the supreme worth and dignity of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships."*

*"Toward this end, **REACHING SIDEWAYS** welcomes contributions about how the women and men in our societies are helping to implement the Women and Religion Resolution passed unanimously by the 1977 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association. For example, contributions that call attention to articles, sermons, discussions, conferences, and other materials that explore the relationship between religious myths and sexism, between religious and cultural attitudes toward women, and the deleterious effects of sexist language."*

Eight years later, **REACHING SIDEWAYS** still seeks to challenge sexism - - - even though we may say that some of our efforts have achieved success. We have new Purposes and Principles developed by our feminist leaders, and incorporated into the bylaws of our denomination, feminist theology is now seriously considered as an important body of theology, and, as of last year, an implementation plan was approved by the UUA Board to "address the issues identified in the Sexism Audit of the UUA."

We have not, however, proceeded at the pace envisioned by those who first began the work on the Women & Religion Resolution of 1977, or by those who began the work on the implementation of that resolution shortly thereafter. I suppose that no movement can, or ever has, proceeded vigorously toward success without some faltering steps either backwards or in place.

It seems to me that the issues of and about women in our denomination are currently in that situation. The original excitement and impetus of many of the women in the pews is gone. Their attitudes are not aided by the current national attitude toward women. Old issues, (that of abortion, for example), must be fought for again.

On the other hand, I know that there is a hard core of women who will continue to fight for women, and address those issues which need correction. I count myself and all the readers of **REACHING SIDEWAYS** among that group.

What can we then do? I, for one, will continue publishing **REACHING SIDEWAYS**. I hope that many of you will help us continue by mailing your contributions, and by writing articles, reviewing books, sending us important sermons (with the permission of the authors, of course), telling us about your conferences and discussions, or writing poems or stories for us.

We have included a special sheet of paper for you if you wish to send a contribution. (We have learned that women refuse to tear up **REACHING SIDEWAYS**). The date beside your name notes the last time we had a contribution from you.

And please do not hesitate to write for us! We are eager to hear from all of you.

Sara Best, Chevy Chase, Md.



# ANNA GARLIN SPENCER

Jean Zoerheide writes the following as an introduction to her article: "The article was inspired by the fall issue of *Meadville Lombard NEWS*. (UUs need to keep their eyes on the places where incubation of professional leadership goes on.) Meadville Lombard is welcoming Spencer Lavan as its new Dean this fall. An ordained minister, Spencer has also taught Islamic studies, and more recently, ethics, related to medicine. For UU feminists he is important because he was a member of the First Parish church in Lexington at the inception of the Women and Religion Resolution and was most helpful in supporting its framing and passage at GA. Later he was interim minister at Lexington for one year, so he has experienced the birth of our organized lay effort to relate theology to the empowerment of women's spirits. Spencer writes: 'I come to Meadville (Lombard) with a vision for the future. . . it is first of all obvious that our school needs to provide more role models of ministry for women. While our present faculty are utilizing feminist literature as basic texts in their courses - John Godbey using Sally McFague's **METAPHYSICAL THEOLOGY**, and Neil Shadle, Lynn Rhoades' **A FEMINIST VISION OF MINISTRY**, that is not the same as having an experienced parish minister or minister of religious education who is also a woman participating on a regular basis in our educational experience.'

"To begin bringing the feminist perspective to the heart of our curriculum, Prof. Artel Salleh, an eco-feminist from Australia, will be a visiting lecturer and co-teacher. . . in our Environmental Ethics course during the Spring term. By Sept-

ember, 1989, it is my vision . . . to have an Associate Dean who will both teach and assist me in major ways . . . who also will be a woman UU minister. We also expect to appoint a half-time faculty member in Religious Education. . . .'

Jean adds "The Fall **NEWS** from Meadville Lombard Theological School also has a notice that 'a Women's Group has begun meeting weekly, with alternating weeks being devoted to 'woman-quest' sharing and support and action-oriented



issues related to increasing the feminist presence at Meadville Lombard. The group has worked with Dean Lavan to revise the proposal for enhanced feminist presence and perspective, and is working hard on a Vespers service honoring **ANNA GARLIN SPENCER** on Dec. 2, which will be followed by a dinner and a toast in honor of her installation, in portrait form on the hallowed walls of Meadville.' "

Jean concludes her introduction to her article by telling us, "I think I remember that no woman's face adorns the walls!"



Anna Garlin Spencer, a Unitarian woman insufficiently recognized by feminists of our day, was the first professor of ethics at Meadville Theological School from 1913 - 1925. At that time the school was located in the small town of Meadville, Pennsylvania. Spencer's chief concerns were, "Peace, Family and The Woman Question."

Spencer's hope lay in sociology as a way of understanding how things are and how they ought to be. Prior to her joining the Meadville faculty, she had been founding minister of the Bell Street Chapel in Providence, R. I. where church members were required to partake in social action, recommitting themselves annually to a cause in which they would work. The church provided a forum for study and radical understanding of the day's issues.

She read *PILGRIM'S PROGRESS* to her young daughter who was horrified that Christian was so selfish as to run away from the burning city - he should have stayed to help everyone. Spencer regarded this response as evidence of progress in one generation of church schools. To her the purpose of churches was to create people superior to their environment and to join others to bring about a just society.

Influential within the Unitarian denomination, Spencer also reached beyond to form a link with the great social movements of that time. It is said that every New Deal innovation adopted in the 30's had been seriously considered by sociologists before 1920. She was part of that group. In 1915 she wrote the preamble to the peace platform for the Women's Peace Party founded by Jane Addams. The next year she erected a

This material is taken from Jean's notes on a lecture given by Neil Shadle, Professor at Meadville Lombard, Theological School, for his preaching class, fall, 1985.

huge tent in Meadville and recruited the town's women to join the party.

She began negotiations with the University of Chicago so that from 1916 Meadville students spent summers in Chicago at "Meadville House" to study sociology in the city where they could join the great intellectual center and also have access to an industrial center as a laboratory for applying social theory in the work place.

Working women were included in Spencer's writing, for she believed they should share in support of families, in housework and in politics. Two of her titles are *WOMAN'S SHARE IN SOCIAL CULTURE*, and *THE FAMILY AND ITS MEMBERS*. (Her works are in the Meadville Lombard Library and available for UU ministers on loan.) She wrote that women's traditional roles had never been seen nor appreciated, and that among the creative possibilities of the commonplace were the "gentle breeding and orderly behavior" of women.

Meadville, Pennsylvania was a sleepy little town, not congenial to Anna Garlin Spencer. Students were required to take eight courses with her in three years and she became a dominant force at the school which became a lively place. Tedeo Cuomo, for instance, one of the students, became vice president of a labor union and was arrested. President Southworth expelled him from the school. In 1916 Southworth expelled the whole



student body for going on strike over their disagreements about the Germany-USA tensions. Later he readmitted all those on the anti-Germany side, except Cuomo.

Anna Garlin Spencer's work and vision were influential in the decision to move the theological school to the campus of the University of Chicago in 1926. She joined the New York School of Philanthropy in 1925, an ethical culture institution. \*\* Meadville, Pennsylvania remained a sleepy little town.

\* References to Unitarian and Meadville Theological School refer to a period before merger with the Universalists. UU and Meadville/Lombard indicate a situation existing since 1960.

\*\*Notes do not make this information very clear.

Jean Zoerheid, Baltimore, Md

## WHAT EXPERTS IN THE 19th CENTURY WROTE ABOUT EDUCATION FOR WOMEN

*"Women beware. You are on the brink of destruction. You have hitherto been engaged in crushing your waists; now you are attempting to cultivate your mind: You have been merely dancing all night in the foul air of the ball-room; now you are beginning to spend your mornings in study. You have been incessantly stimulating your emotions with concerts and operas, with French plays, and French novels; now you are exerting your understanding to learn Greek, and solve propositions in Euclid. Beware! Science pronounces that the woman who studies is lost."*

**Dr. R. R. COLEMAN**

*"In her evening dress she shows evidence of joints which had been adroitly hidden beneath tissues of soft flesh... and already her modesty has been put to the necessity of puffing and pleating, where Nature had planned the tenderst and most dainty of devices... Where before her beauty was suggestive and elusive, now it is defined... The haze, the elusiveness, the subtle suggestion of the face are gone... The mechanism of movement is no longer veiled by a certain mystery of motion... Her voice is louder, her tones are assertive. She says everything... leaves nothing to the imagination."*

**Dr. Arabella Kenealy**

Editor's footnote:

Both of these "warnings" are from *The PHYSICIAN AND SEXUALITY IN VICTORIAN AMERICAN*, by John S. Haller, Jr., and Robin M. Haller, published in Urbana, Illinois by the University of Illinois Press in 1974, as referenced in the footnotes of the book, *FOR HER OWN GOOD - 150 Years of the EXPERTS' ADVICE to WOMEN*, by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, published in Garden City, New York, by Anchor Books in 1979. This is, of course, one of a great many books researched, and/or written in the seventies when feminist scholarship began its growth. The authors were co-teaching a course on "Women and Health" at the College at Old Westbury (State University of New York), when they began to uncover the long trail which stretched from the "nineteenth-century epidemic of hysteria to the mid-twentieth century epidemic of 'frigidity'." The book is easy to read and full of the kind of information that helps explain women's more "modern" situation.



# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SEXISM AUDIT

*EDITOR'S NOTE: It is now almost a year since the UUA Board approved an implementation plan for the UUA Sexism Audit. In order to refresh the memories of our readers, we are publishing here the recommendations adopted by the UUA Board of Trustees at its April and June meetings in 1988. Of particular interest are the dates stipulated for various reports - - - or lack of specific dates. The memorandum which I am using for information is dated July 21, 1988, from the UUA Board of Trustees, and is addressed to the following: All UUA Districts, District Presidents, District Executives, Chair, Commission on Appraisal, President, UUMA, President, LREDA, Chair, Ministerial Settlement Task Force.*

1. That the Board of Trustees establish a committee to monitor the implementation of the Sexism Audit, said committee to be made up of five members and to include the following, to the extent possible:

- a. a senior manager from the UUA staff
- b. a representative of the non-exempt staff of the UUA
- c. a member of the Sexism Audit Committee
- d. a member of the Racism Monitoring and Assessment Team
- e. a UUA Board member
- f. a district president
- g. a religious educator
- h. a member of the Women and Religion Committee

The committee shall monitor the progress of work in implementing those recommendations from the Sexism Audit which have been approved by the Board and/or the Administration. The committee shall meet three times a year and shall report to the UUA Board at the

April 1989, 1990, and 1991 board meetings.

2. That the recommendations listed below be referred to the Administration for implementation, and that the Administration report annually to the Board on the implementations of said recommendations, beginning in October of 1988.

- a. Address the exempt/non-exempt at UUA headquarters
- b. Provide visible and concrete support for efforts to promote inclusive language by committees and organizations
- c. Revise Search Committee handbook to include information on legal requirements in the hiring process
- d. Add to the Congregational Handbook a section on sexism, sexual harassment and legal rights of employees. (See UUA Harassment Policy next page)
- e. Conduct workshops on self-empowerment and sexual harassment for all staff at 25 Beacon.
- f. Provide a series of management development seminars based on self-empowerment principles, topics to include supervisory skills, performance appraisal, managing conflict and goal setting
- g. Review and revise personnel policies, considering new policies in the areas of parental leaves, and flexible work arrangements
- h. Develop an orientation program for 25 Beacon with the goal of developing staff cohesion as well as providing information.
- i. Shorten and revise, for easier use, *Checking Our Balance: Auditing Concepts, Values and Language.*"



3. That the Panel on Theological Education be requested to encourage the theological schools to conduct sexism audits to look at their practice, curriculum and administration.

4. That the Ministerial Settlement Task Force be asked specifically to include in their study the issues raised in the sexism audit report.

5. That the Board ask the UUMA (in conjunction with LREDA, if mutually desired), to form a task force to study the issues of sexism as raised in the Sexism Audit, and in particular to review the present status of religious education in terms of gender, salaries and influence, as well as to explore ways to move towards gender balance.

6. That the Committee on Committees, in consultation with the Women and Religion Committee, review recommended changes regarding the composition and mandate of support for the Women and Religion Committee.

7. That a comprehensive report of the process, findings, and recommendations of the Sexism Audit be published in the **WORLD** in its July /August issue and that the UUA provide a copy of the report to all districts, Commission on Appraisal, the UUMA, LREDA, and the ministerial Settlement Task Force, and offer to provide copies to others upon request.

8. That the Board ask the Women and Religion Committee to develop, articulate and distribute throughout the UUA (and more broadly) shared visions of a gender inclusive Association, where women are assumed to be equal to men, and the feminist spirit and perspective are truly valued and celebrated; with the request that they report to the Board by April 1, 1989.

9. That the Board ask the Women and

Religion Committee, with the suggestion that they receive input from UUMA, LREDA, MSUU and lay leadership groups throughout the UUA, to review expectations for leadership groups throughout the UUA, to review expectations for ministers and ministers' roles, particularly focusing on: (a) supporting ministers with childcare/family responsibilities; and (b) examining ministerial authority in terms of such things as empowerment of the laity, participation and shared responsibility.

### EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

I sincerely wish I could be completely enthused after reading these recommendations. Perhaps I should just say that I would rather have these than no recommendations. At least I know that intentions were good. Much of my problem lies in the lack of any mention of money. I have served on enough Boards myself to be well aware that nothing can happen unless money is approved for the purpose of implementation. For example, recommendation #1 calls for a "committee to monitor the implementation of the Sexism Audit," and this committee is to meet three times a year and "shall report to the UUA Board at the April 1989, 1990 and 1991 board meetings." Take a look at the members included on this committee and ask yourself how they are going to travel to meet together. Can it be that all of them will live in the Boston area? Or will all of them be asked to pay for their own travel expenses? Then how will this committee meet?

I also have problems with some of the language used in the recommendations - - - the lack of specificity. Did you notice that #3 states that the Panel



on Theological Education be requested to "encourage the theological schools" to conduct sexism audits, etc. etc. Now "encourage" is a very kind, helpful word, but in this specific instance, something more than kindness or good will is demanded. I am well aware that the Panel on Theological Education cannot (and should not) order the theological schools to do anything, but couldn't we have had some commitment in the request? Why, for example, didn't the recommendation say something like, "ask the theological schools to conduct sexism audits to look at their practice, curriculum and administration," and report on the results of the audit to the Panel on Theological Education in April, 1989, (or whatever date might be suitable), and then make a future report at some specified date as to the steps taken to remedy the problems discovered by the sexism audit?

My question is rhetorical, of course. I am afraid there is an answer, but it is not one I can accept.

Recommendation #3 is not the only one to suffer from a lack of strong commitment reflected in the language. The recommendations numbered 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 all suffer from the same problem. Readers have only to look at recommendation #2, which does call for specific, easily verified and evaluated action. The policy on sexual harassment, as called for in recommendation #2.d., is a model for the kind of implementation that I would like to see for all the recommendations. I have included it so that we can all see that implementation of a recommendation

calls for strong commitment reflected in the language, and the possibility of some kind of evaluation. Otherwise, regardless of good intentions, our efforts are likely to be wasted.

I presume I sound a little harsh or perhaps overly critical to some of you. I ask you, therefore, to consider your own action, or lack of action, when you have been called upon to perform a task---something new and in addition to your regular job- - - and perhaps lacking in importance to you personally. Do you give the work your best effort and hasten to finish it even if no specific date has been set for completion and no report is requested?

Your answer to this question is the best reason I know for requiring specificity, and strong intent in the language in any recommendations to implement. We shall all have to watch carefully to see if anything happens in implementation as the recommendations are written.

## **HARASSMENT POLICY**

The UUA affirms its commitment to maintain a work environment free of discrimination and harassment based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender or affectional orientation or handicap. The association expects all employees to conduct themselves in a professional manner with concern and respect for their colleagues.

Any harassment regarding sex, race, ethnicity, religion, age, handicap, gender or affectional orientation will not be tolerated. Such harassment includes unsolicited





remarks, gestures or physical contact, display or circulation of written materials or derogatory pictures directed at any of these categories. In addition, unwelcome sexual advance, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. submission to such conduct or communication is made a term or condition either explicitly or implicitly to obtain employment; or
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct or communication by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting such individual's employment; or
3. such conduct or communications has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an

individual's employment or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive employment environment.

Any violations of this policy should be brought to the attention of the Executive Vice President or any other member of the administration, as soon as possible so that a thorough investigation may be conducted and appropriate action taken.



# SURVIVAL IN THE NINETIES

## A HANDBOOK FOR WOMEN



### WOMEN WARRIORS

*The women wait, but not less patiently,  
As men go forth, again and yet again,  
To spew their hate and death upon the land.*

*When all is done, the restive women come.  
They gather up the frightened innocents -  
The others who are left - to start anew.*

*Would women take soul courage to break free,  
End this sad tale of human misery,  
Be warriors for a better destiny,  
Make of this earth a bloodless battleground  
Where only love and tenderness contest,  
And be forgotten - - wars and weaponry!*

*But women first must rise up from her trance,  
The Sleeping Beauty kiss herself awake,  
Cut culture's cords that bind her to the past  
And warrior be for earth's and her own sake.*

**Dorothy Satir  
San Francisco, CA.**



# SURVIVAL IN THE NINETIES



## A HANDBOOK FOR WOMEN

SARA BEST, EDITOR

In January I knew for sure that we feminists were going to need help to survive the "nineties" when our brand new President, George Bush, went out to greet the marchers for "Right To Life." Actually, in retrospect, I knew long before that attempts are being made to push all women back into their traditional roles. I could read stories in the paper every day which indicated that those who are committed to patriarchy, are again reverting to their self-dealing standards of appropriate behavior for both women and men as if the "seventies," never happened. For example, did you read in the paper about the judge in Illinois who ruled that a fifteen year old girl must bear the child of the man who raped her? Apparently men's sperm is again so valuable compared to a women's body that there can be no interruption of a pregnancy, regardless of how it occurs. Or perhaps the young girl is considered to have brought this rape on herself by her own actions in a return to the blame-the-victim kind of thinking. This is what some feminists have noticed in the media reports of the trial of Joel Steinberg and his battered companion, Hedda Nussbaum, in the attention focussed on the "culpability" of the woman as though the victim were at fault.

As though these attacks on women were not enough, I am currently reading the current debate over Felice N. Schwartz's article in the January-February edition of the Harvard Business review which has engendered the use of the pejorative term, "the mommy track" as an answer to the problems that women with families face when they work

for corporations that demand their undivided attention. Although Schwartz, who is president and founder of a New York firm promoting the idea that women are as likely as men to succeed in business, never uses the term, "mommy track" in her article, she has proposed that companies sort out early what women are "career-primary and which are "career and family." Then those women who put their careers first can be recognized early and accepted as real contenders for the race to the top. Meanwhile, companies can provide plans for managing maternity, and enough flexibility to allow women who are career-family oriented to be "maximally productive."

Oh my! We are back to stereotyping again. Schwartz does not talk about the necessity for men to be categorized in terms of career-family, or career anything else. She focusses almost exclusively on women and ignores the fact that there are men who have keen senses of family responsibility, or have other goals in life than pushing their way to the top of a corporation - goals which they can pursue only as long as they are not the sole support of their families.

If the secret of retaining women, who are career-and-family, is flexibility, in terms of job-sharing and part time employment, then surely many men would also opt for such a model. It might just be that women working outside of their homes are providing the impetus for real change in the work place in the form of many options and the kind of individual treatment which could benefit all workers in places outside of their homes.



This public discussion will soon depart from the pages of the newspapers. What most concerns me is that the public's memory of the discussion will center around the term, "mommy track," a good catchy phrase for those who wish to continue patriarchy. And those who wish to return complete male dominance of the workplace will have a new argument against advancing the careers of women in business.

Meanwhile, our own UU World, the March/April edition, claims that their issue this month is devoted to women's history, "issues affecting women and the accomplishments of modern Unitarian Universalist women." That's needed. Two of the so-named feature articles give us the message that our organizations, our industries must change to provide more flexibility for women, and men too. One article gives us the profile of three generations of UU women. This is fine coverage for women.

Why, then, is the cover of the magazine dedicated to old advertisements of Lydia E. Pinkham's Medicine for menstrual problems? Wasn't the wonderful face of Helen Ansley a sufficient attraction to call attention to our UU magazine in the waiting room of doctor's offices? Why do we devote one of our feature articles to the story of Lydia Pinkham who was not a UU woman? And why do we have another article about a Doctor, wife of a UU minister, who claims to have "discovered that premenstrual syndrome (PMS) exists, is ghastly, and can be cured." That's two out of five feature articles on the subject of menstruation. Obviously menstruation continues to be a topic of paramount importance for the editors of our UU journal, or whoever makes the decisions about the content of the magazine. Their thinking hasn't moved much from that of doctors of the late 19th and early 20th century who wrote such drivel as the following:

*"We cannot too emphatically urge the importance of regarding these monthly returns as periods of ill health, as days when the ordinary occupations are to be suspended or modified . . . Long walks, dancing, shopping, riding and parties should be avoided at this time of month invariably and under all circumstances . . . . (1)"*



It is with such a background that I realized that all women are going to have a difficult time through the next few years, and particularly we feminists who see the results of the small progress we have made disappearing. We need, I think, some method of combatting our frustrations, and sharing with each other some methods which enable us to continue to struggle while avoiding depression. I propose, then to begin to write a **HANDBOOK FOR WOMEN: SURVIVAL IN THE "NINETIES."** I am well aware that I possess only a portion of the kind of knowledge that we feminists need to survive. I shall, therefore, merely begin this handbook in this issue of **REACHING SIDeways**. I invite those of you who have something to add to our handbook to continue writing on the topic of "How to Survive in the Nineties" in the next few issues of this journal. When we have gathered together enough material to represent the diversity of our points of view, I promise to publish our work in the form of a handbook and make it available to all of us. Please be generous in sharing your thoughts.

1EHRENREICH & ENGLISH, *OP. CIT.* P.111







our own self-knowledge, then we are showing a trust and confidence in ourselves.

These ideas are not created by me. I first read them in a book called, **POWERS OF THE WEAK**, by Elizabeth Janeway, (New York: Alfred A Knoff), 1980. This is not a new book, and not always easy to read, but I find that I return again and again to it as a book providing great insight into the way the powerful operate. Janeway calls the first power of the weak **disbelief** and writes about it as follows:

*Ordered use of the power to disbelieve, the first power of the weak, begins here, with the refusal to accept the definition of oneself that is put forward by the powerful- -By disbelieving, one will be led toward doubting prescribed codes of behavior, and as one begins to act in ways that deviate from the norm in any degree, it becomes clear that in fact there is not just one right way to handle or understand events. (P. 107)*

Actually this sounds so simple and ordinary that when I first read the statement, I could hardly believe that "disbelief" would have such an effect. But disbelief, of course, leads to dissent, and public dissent, or disbelief, is very frightening to those who only know one way, the "right" way, the way "things" have always been done. We can see examples of this on almost every occasion in which a group not in authority attempts to make changes. Remember the way ERA was categorized as a constitutional amendment calling for unisex bathrooms? How many times have you heard that what the "libbers" truly want is to take over the world so that men become the servants of women? The fact that women wanted changes in our society generated such fear in the minds of some men, (and some women too), that they saw any change at all as revolutionary, and had no qualms at all about spreading wild mistrusts

about actual events.

We cannot, therefore, underestimate the power of disbelief and public dissent. On the other hand, we should not underestimate the difficulty of disbelieving or mistrusting the powerful-----be it in the form of people or social myths. We seem to have a universal desire to quiescently live both according to the dictates of the powerful and according to the social *mores* we have learned as children. It is easier, requires less effort on our part, to play the expected part of a woman---- "expected" both by most men and some women. If we do not play this part, if, for example, on a social occasion, I join a group of men who are discussing the latest horror story about the poor repair work done on their cars instead of staying with the women who are discussing various efforts to lose weight, then I become a threat to most of the women, and probably to some of the men. If I choose to question or disbelieve some of the most favored stereotypical thinking of a group,---- if, for example, I call for a sexual audit of my own church when most members of the congregation pride themselves on the church's lack of sexism, then I become the enemy, or stigmatized as being an angry, unhappy person, or as a woman who hates men. How many of you, kind readers, have stopped speaking out for women because you have been categorized in some unflattering manner as an "angry" woman, or a one issue person? Unfortunately articulated disbelief in authority of the established powerful is unpopular because it indicates a challenge to the heart of our society and that is not comfortable for anyone involved. At heart, we all want to sink into the comfort of universal agreement and enjoy our unanimity with everyone else.

On the other hand, we cannot enjoy such luxury as unanimity and expect any changes for women to come about. We



must, then, dissent, when we are told that women are illogical, disbelieve the so-called authorities or experts who tell us that women are destined to be the "weaker" sex through biology, and mistrust authority, male or female, who claim to represent the thinking of all women.

Exactly what do I mean by my use of the word "authority?" I realize that the word, like many other abstract words, is used in several ways. I have had more than one disagreement with ministers of my acquaintance on the exact meaning of the "authority" of the ministry, and have been told that my insistence on questioning "authority" must come from some instances in my childhood, etc. etc. I must confess that I rather resent such amateur psychologizing, and that I still do not understand exactly why Unitarian Universalist ministers speak of their authority. For me, the word has to do with power, and the synonyms listed in Roget's *THESAURUS* indicate that the word is often used in that manner. For example, I note that some synonyms for the word "authority" are **power; powers that be, 'they', the Establishment, ruling classes.** It is in this sense that I am using the word. In suggesting the importance of questioning authority, I am saying that we must mistrust, disbelieve, and dissent when the powerful, the Establishment, the ruling classes, 'they,' attempt to control us through defining us in terms of what we are and what we should strive to be.

Women have been defined and categorized by so many "authorities in so many ways that it would be almost impossible for any of us to fully fit the descriptions made for us. We have, for example, been defined as passive, because we were taught by parents, schools and society that we should not make waves lest we frighten men away. We have been described as fragile in societies which dressed us in clothing guaranteed to keep us from any physical activity, including breathing. Is there any wonder, then, that we should disbelieve what the "authorities" have to say about us?

I suppose the acid test of any piece of counsel is whether or not the persons advising try to follow their own advice. I try very hard to do so although I am not always successful. Sometimes, when I do not expect to ever see the people again, when I am in a group in which I am absolutely expected to act the role of the stereotyped woman, I relax and simply play the role correctly. If I have to continue playing the role for too long, I hate myself afterwards because I am denying part of myself when I behave as though women were less than full human beings. I must not allow myself to be less than I am for very long if I am to keep my consciousness of my own value alive.

**CATHY CATHY GUISEWITE**





## 2. COMING TOGETHER WITH OTHER WOMEN

Those of us who have marched together to support E.R.A., or the Right to Choose, or demonstrated with others in favor of, or against, any other issue, understand very well what "coming together," or "connecting with others" can mean. All of a sudden we who distrust what the authorities have told us ----- that women don't need a constitutional amendment to give them more rights ----- or that life begins at the moment of conception ----- are with others who hold similar beliefs. The strength of each of us is multiplied a hundred fold as we joyfully move in solidarity to present our dissent to the world.

Coming together in this manner, then, is a powerful act, and provides the participants with a mutual trust and confidence in themselves and each other. They are taking the necessary steps on the path that moves from dissent, mistrust and disbelief, to confidence in themselves and to positive action. In concert with others they have the common goal of empowerment.

This "coming together" of women to achieve their own goals is a relatively new process from anything I have ever read in history or literature. Oh, there are such stories as Aristophanes' *LYSISTRATA* which is the fictional tale of a group of women who decide to keep their husbands and lovers from fighting a war by refusing to have sexual intercourse with them. The play was written as a comedy around the fourth century BC, and, in the manner of the Greek comedies, is filled with long descriptive choral passages which describe the suffering of the men because of the women's refusal to have sex with them. Perhaps this is the first recorded story of a group of women who distrust the opinions of the powerful, the men, and gather

together to take positive action. (We should note here that the play is a comedy, and, like women, is not to be taken seriously.)

In modern times I can think of no recorded examples in western civilization before the middle of the 19th century when women gathered together to express their dissent publicly. It may be that the examples I seek were not recorded because the power of women gathering together was (and still is) seen as especially threatening to men. Another reason may be that women simply have been utterly ignored, like Ralph Ellison, author of "*THE INVISIBLE MAN*."

For whatever reasons, I can recall no other examples of public dissent by women in this country, either in history or in literature, until the Seneca Convention in New York state in 1848 in which women, led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, undertook to write their own Bill of Rights. That event, although revolutionary for its time, did not immediately lead to a vast number of groups of women who were publicly dissenting. In fact, when I become too discouraged over the slow rate of progress for women in our own twentieth century, I have only to remember how long it took for women working in groups to achieve the vote after the 1848 Seneca Convention.

Unfortunately the several decades of the twentieth century which I have witnessed demonstrate that the lesson of seeking empowerment for women by joining groups to take positive action has never been learned by the majority of women in this country. Most of the heroines in literature, and certainly most of the heroines in the pop culture of magazine stories, strive for their goals on an individual basis-----without joining a group.



The same is true of the heroines of TV dramas and certainly the movies. (As an example, see "Working Girl" in which the heroine must depend on herself, and the chief villain is another woman). First and foremost of these goals, of course, is to "win a man." Not too surprisingly a woman "gets" her man by winning the competition against all the other young women who also are attempting to "get" a desirable man.

Do I sound old-fashioned? Are there any of us who believes that this kind of competition no longer exists for women, that the majority of women have become more understanding of the importance of women working together? I am afraid that every popular women's magazine negates any real change in the attitude of the majority of women. Behind all the articles for self-improvement for women in losing weight, changing their hair styles, make-up, and disposition is a sub-text which proclaims that we must look better than, or at least as good as, all other women so that we "win" or "hold" a man, or comply with what is thought to be male criteria. When I listen to my granddaughter talk about her friend's conversation in a coed college, I become aware that pop culture, in the year 1989, even among college educated women, calls for a woman to prove her desirability to a man-----not to prove her value to herself and others by working with other women to express her disbelief in the opinions of authorities and taking positive action to change her society.

Lest I be charged with stereotyping all women, I should add here that I am talking about a "majority" of women, and not all. Nor do I in any way consider myself somehow "above" these other women. But I refuse to be a member of the "silent majority" anymore. I am ready to admit that I am a believer in activism. I also know that as a UU woman,

with several college degrees, married for forty-four years, living on the east coast of the U. S. in the last decade of our century, I represent a particular point of view that is not necessarily the view of others who speak or write out of a different context. On the other hand, if our pop culture represents our society, and I believe it does, then the majority of women still are more likely to operate as individuals than to think of increasing their effectiveness by becoming members of a group, and we desperately need to associate with each other, to gather together, if we are to ever change our society. Still I believe that the vocal few make the difference.

**It is through connecting with each other as women, through coming together in a group, that we can save our sanity in the last decade of the twentieth century.**

The above statement is where I part company with others I have read on the subject of women achieving power. For one example, I can cite Elizabeth Janeway, whom I have already quoted in the previous section of this journal. In her book, **POWERS OF THE WEAK**, Janeway writes that coming together is a power of the weak only when the group is "*firmly rooted in the first power of the weak, mistrust of the powerful and their opinions, since the opinions of the powerful on the subject of the weak are both ignorant and self-serving-----*" (P. 171).

There was a time when I thought Janeway, as an authority, had to be correct, even though what she said did not particularly fit my own experience. As I have changed by reading other authorities, and connecting with other women, I have come to believe my own experience that gathering together with other women is valuable and necessary no matter what kind of group is joined. Whether the group is formed by church women and de-



signed for service or some other "useful" kind of committee for women doesn't matter. It doesn't even matter if these groups initially do very little in focusing the disbelief of their members into positive action. The fact is that we women as a sex have a great deal of catching up to do in getting to really know other women as friends and not as competitors.

Men do not seem to have this problem. I have not known any man who thought of himself in competition with all other men for a wife, and I also have not seen the same desire for self-improvement in terms of weight, hair styles, clothes and personality in the men's magazines. Can it be that what we have called "male bonding" occurs because most men have long years of learning to play on teams and therefore understand how to work with each other to achieve their ends.?

The fact is that when we do not gather together in groups of other women, we miss knowing what women are really doing and thinking - - - real women, not the stereotypical women written about by men.

Years ago I taught in a private girls' school in which the Headmistress was a woman. Many of the teachers, also women, constantly bewailed the fact that our boss was a woman. One of the teachers told me that she knew she couldn't get away with much when the boss was a woman. A female boss understood that women were hardly the frail delicate creatures imagined by most men and therefore was not as easily fooled. Another said much the same thing when she claimed that women bosses were harder on women than they would be on men. Still a third teacher said that she very much disliked accepting orders from another women.

I am convinced that we who have

worked with other women in groups of various kinds have at least learned to know each other as people, perhaps even as friends instead of competitors. In a society in which women are put down both by men and other women, we have learned that the stereotypical pictures painted of women are incorrect. We now know that "extraordinary" women like us are not as unique as we first thought. And we like other women and so ourselves

In time we may find areas of agreement among us, areas in which we, all of us, disbelieve, mistrust and dissent from the opinions of the powerful. Then, and then only, we can multiply our strength by the number of other women in the group, and joyfully move in solidarity to take positive action.

But - - - - we have to take the first step of gathering together with other women.

**Are you filled with ideas about how feminists can survive the nineties? Please share your ideas with the rest of us. Our handbook should be filled with the best ideas that each of us has.**

**Please mail your articles or poems to Sara Best, 5211 Saratoga Ave., Chevy Chase, Md. 20815 by June 15 so that our summer edition of *REACHING SIDEWAYS* can present your thinking on the subject. We all desperately need the the thinking of each one of us. Encouragement for feminists in the next ten years will be sparse, I fear, so let us fill the gap by encouraging each other.**



---

## CHANNING'S SISTERS AND BROTHERS

---

One of the most interesting aspects of reading W&R newsletters from other districts is to see the diversity of thought and action of the involved women. For example, I have in hand a flyer from the NH/VT W&R spring conference, to be held on April 21-22, 1989, at the Unitarian Church in Montpelier, Vt. The flyer announces that the theme of their last fall's conference was "turning inward and diving deep within each" of them, and that in their spring conference, they will focus upon "surfacing and connecting". . . . . exploring "the ways in which women shape and change the world around us." Those who have further questions about costs, and exact time should write or call Lesie Hutcherson, 25 Proctor Court, Keene, NH 0341.

The Spring Retreat of the W&RIF of the Pacific Central District, on the other hand, is interested in "EXAMINING OUR HERITAGE - ENVISIONING OUR FUTURE," which is very different. This retreat will be held April 14-16 at Westminster Retreat (about 4 miles south of Walnut Creek). I assume that the event will have occurred by the time most of you read this edition of **REACHING SIDEWAYS**, but, for the benefit of those of us who could not attend, let me list the books this group suggests for retreat discussion:

*CREATION OF PATRIARCHY* - Gerda Lerner  
*THE CHALICE AND THE BLADE* -

Riane Eisler

*ADAM & EVE AND THE SERPENT* -

Elaine Pagels

*MY MOTHER'S DAUGHTER* - Marilyn French  
*THE CRONE* - Barbara Walker

Of the books listed, I realize that I have read only two-----not a very good showing.

I do hope, however, that we can have book reviews soon from some of the readers of any one of these books. It's very difficult to keep up with all the new books on feminism (isn't that wonderful !) and I know that I, for one, along with many of the rest of you, I'm sure, would like to have some idea of what a book is about before settling down to read it.

Along with various districts, information is also out on two UU affairs for women. The UUWF's biennial convention will take place June 19-21 at Yale University just prior to General Assembly. The theme for the biennial is "HEALING CONNECTIONS: JOURNEY TOWARD WHOLENESS," which will focus on healing wounds caused by divisions of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, etc. UU women leaders Rosemary Bray McNatt, Kim Harvie, Lucile Longview, Judith Walker-Riggs, and Linda Harris May will participate in the keynote panel. For more information, write or call UUWF, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108; (617) 742-2100. Registration deadline is May 15.

Still one more gathering of women to seriously plan for is the UU WOMEN'S CONVOCATION, scheduled for April 20-25, 1990. The Rev. Holly Elaine Horn, for the WOMANQUEST Core Planning Committee, writes about the event in this manner"

*At the 1987 General Assembly in Little Rock, a conversation began among women who perceived a need and expressed a desire for great cooperation, involvement, and unity of purpose among UU women toward the growth and transformation of our movement. This conversation has become a continental Unitarian Universalist women's convocation:*

**WOMANQUEST: EMBRACING THE SACRED, EXPANDING THE CIRCLE**



*It is a large vision which has inspired a five-day conference with well-known theme speakers and performers, worship, workshops, and two new challenging dimensions: the daily practice of a spiritual discipline and participation in a consensual decision-making process to build an agenda which will impact our movement in years to come. It is the hope and intention of the Core Planning Committee that participants in this conference will represent a healthy cross-section of age, geography, organizational affiliation and ethnic diversity within our movement.*

*It began as a grass-roots conversation. UUWF, MSUU, LREDA, and the Women and Religion Committee have endorsed the concept. Planning continues with much enthusiasm and great commitment. We welcome your support.*

*The above material on the UU Women's Convocation came from MSUU **GLEANINGS**, which is the newsletter of MSUU, the MINISTERIAL SISTERHOOD UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST. In the Winter edition I found a brief history of the organization which I consider to be of interest to all of us because of the effect our women ministers have had and will continue to have on our denomination. The history is as follows:*

*The **MINISTERIAL SISTERHOOD UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST (MSUU)** evolved from the conversation of fifteen women in the UUWF hotel suite at the 1974 General Assembly in New York City. Now a formal organization, our purpose is to give care, support, and help to women in professional religious leadership.*

*MSUU had 148 members last year. Our annual meeting takes place at General Assembly. Among our activities are an exhibit at GA, presentation of continental conferences, the newsletter **GLEANINGS**, and an annual award for an outstanding sermon on a UU woman or group of women. This year we*

*suggest that sermons address the relationship between feminism and social justice, but this is not a requirement.*

*Recently we have raised issues involved with ministerial settlement and extension policy and process, which led to the formation of the UUA Task Force on Ministerial Settlement. "Care and help" for women ministers often consists of raising concerns unique to women - - non-issues for male ministers. For example, women ministers and maternity issues: the right to have children and minister rather than dropping out to raise a family. For older women ministers nearing retirement there are pressing financial issues: how to survive on inadequate pension and/or retirement plans.*

*Past presidents of the organization have been the Reverends Marjorie Newlin Leaming, Gertrude Lindener-Stawski, Carolyn Owen-Towle, Elinor Berke, Joan Kahn-Schneider, and Martha Munson.*

*We have gathered at Grailville in Loveland, Ohio, in Cleveland, Chicago, and Santa Barbara for conferences on women in parish ministry, feminist theology, balancing being both women and minister, and friendship and competition. Instead of our biennial conference in 1990, we will be participating in the 1990 UUA Women's Convocation at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. (Compiled by Bets Wienecke and Marjorie Leaming).*

*From THE NEARLY THERE newsletter of the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Chapter, UUWF, comes a statement from Marjorie Smith which speaks the kind of truth we all know---but nobody says. Aren't we fortunate that Marjorie found words to say:*

*In America as it is today we are taught to fear conflict. Women, especially, learn to be peacemakers, to back down when confronted, and to avoid challenging others. It isn't nice to say no. **Instead of fearing conflict, we can learn to welcome the freeing of energy it represents.***



# INSPIRATION FROM THE PAST

*Editor's Note: As I searched through particular issues of REACHING SIDeways to find a copy of our Winter edition of 1987 which had been requested by a reader, I re-discovered that many of our authors have given us such important ideas that we should re-read their articles at periodic intervals for inspiration. I am, therefore, beginning a new "regular column" which will cover portions of important writing of authors in past issues of this journal. If some of you who have been long-term readers of REACHING SIDeways would like to send me suggestions for this column, by all means do so.*

*The following article was adapted from a theme speech delivered at the Joseph Priestley District Women and Religion Conference of March 31, 1984 at Baltimore, Md. The limitations of space required that many lively anecdotes be eliminated. We regret this! The speaker, (and author) Dr. Kate Lindemann is Professor of Philosophy at Mount St. Mary College, Newburgh, N. Y. She has also addressed the UU Orange County Fellowship. A Roman Catholic, she is a member of the Dominican Order.*

## **THE COURAGE TO BE HUMAN: FEMINIST METHODOLOGY**

I'd like to begin by stating something clearly about feminists and feminist methodology. I believe a feminist is anyone, male, or female, who is committed to overcoming sexism. Within the world of feminists, there are very different views,

conceptual frameworks. One very large difference is between feminists who would take the current social pie and make a new division of it and those who believe a new social system (the whole pie) must be created. If one accepts the concepts of the current social system, a feminist must learn the current ways of playing the game and get good at them.

I would like to stand with the latter feminists; but that is not the way I see the world. Dialogue must be continued, but for those of us who believe that, for women, as for all men, to become **Subjects** - to be "I's" - and to be treated as decision-making "I's" within the social system, it follows that the social system itself must change. The social system now operates so people make decisions for other people, whether those latter are conscious of it or not.

For feminists such as I, whether male or female, a feminist methodology is not only something we will develop, but something we'd better develop because the way we do something determines to a large extent what in the end is done, e. g., the fact that western science counts, everything means western science comes up with certain explanations and certain sorts of things it can do. But other sciences that do not put the emphasis on counting do not have and cannot do.

I see new methodologies developing and I would like to celebrate those. I believe that the form of



feminism must accord with the content of feminists, or we wind up bringing about something opposite from what we intended.

-----  
I do not want to enter the debate about whether distinctive qualities of masculinity and femininity are socialized or biological. I simply don't know. I do see distinctive qualities common to the many forms of feminist methodology.

First is the communal. Descartes would go into his winter quarters and put together a whole explanation of the world. Like most oppressed people, feminists do not do that. They come to their view of themselves and society, and the world, in common reflection with others, and it has become one of the hallmarks of feminists. It is true that the second wave of feminism began with consciousness raising groups, but that is simply because it came out of the communal. From that framework, consciousness raising is done in a particular way.

In the '60's when dear Pope John XXIII opened the windows, we (referring to Roman Catholic religious orders in community) sat down and began talking about our reality and completely restructured not only our laws but the ways we do thing. Women who have done this together, reflected together and acted together, wind up saying anyone may have the brilliant new idea, anyone may have the critical statement about it, and anyone may recognize the worth of an idea. The process of all these people acting various leadership roles

and switching from one of those roles to another, very often in the same conversation, moves the group to the point when they say, yeah, that's what we're going to do. We call it consensus.

So, when I say feminist methodology is communal, I mean it is communal in a particular way . . . . . Within that communal is also the sense of the non-credentialed. Feminists always say listen to the truth of the person - -and it doesn't matter whether they have credentials or not.

That notion of not needing credentials, not needing status symbols to wear, but rather to come out of the truth, is connected with another notion other than communal, and that is that feminists always contextualize their work. . . . .

I hear women philosophers and theologians contextualizing. It is very important that you know the context out of which I speak, that I am a white woman, from a working class family, that I was educated for professional class people, that I came out of a family with extremely needy parents, and that for forty years I managed to forget what existed in my home, and that I have only had the courage because I have had the network of support in the last seven to nine months to remember! . . .

When I hear feminists talk, they start, "Let's hear who we are." Sometimes out of that we get a great sharedness, and sometimes we get a consciousness of great disparity. That is our attempt to prevent the notion of The Universal.



## BACK TO THE BEGINNING

*Editor's note: Just as I was getting ready to take this edition to the printer, I received the other half of a letter written to R.S. in January, 1989 by the Rev. Shirley Ann Ranck, one of our favorite contributors. I had received the first half some weeks ago, and had decided to write her about the missing half for our next edition when lo and behold it appeared--- courtesy of the U. S. Post Office ( who had also torn the letter in half in the first place. ) I believe the letter, written by Shirley to Denise Webster, District Newsletter Editor of the Mid-South District, speaks for itself.*

It is difficult to believe that all the space in the Winter issue of Mid-South NUUS was already allotted by October 26 when I wrote objecting to the sexist language in an article in the Fall issue. As a matter of fact you phoned me and asked whether or not I would like my letter published and I said I would.

As my letter was not published and you have now invited comments on the subject of sexist language, I enclose a copy of the letter I wrote on October 26. Please publish it in the Spring issue.

I would like at this time to pinpoint the specific language that I found objectionable. In the article POWER AND NON-POWER by Bill Sachs on page 4 of the Fall issue, the following sentences occur:

*"Ever since a cave man tried to shape the first useful axe man has sought to increase his power. The progress he made from that hand axe to nuclear power, and from his first efforts to grow wild plants for food to genetic engineering, is awesome. Sometimes more slowly, sometimes faster, the power of man increased in every generation. So did his knowledge of himself and of the universe around him. . . .*

*To deal with that which was beyond his limits, man created religion. Some of these limits spring from man's biological heritage. He is after all, an animal,*

*albeit a special, human animal. He inherited very powerful instincts, and it takes millions of years, rather than a few thousand, to change instincts. Man as a species may not survive his territorial instincts . . . .*

*Faith, our link with that which is beyond the power of man, may well be the greatest achievement of man." (Underlining is Shirley Ann's)*

I would also like to respond to your claim, made during our phone conversation, that **asking writers to use inclusive language amounts to censorship**. I disagree for the following reasons:

1. **Writers are still free to express their ideas; they are not free to use that freedom to diminish or abuse any particular persons or groups. Our freedoms are grounded in respect, not bigotry.**

2. **Exclusive language perpetuates the myth that women should be invisible, overlooked and undervalued. Such language molds our thinking and our assumptions in a direction that diminishes women, that denies them expression. Thus it is not in keeping with the very freedom you claim to defend.**

We have agreed, as an association of religious congregations, to affirm the worth and dignity of every person. Exclusive language prevents our doing so. We have also agreed in the Women and Religion Resolution of 1977 "to avoid sexist assumptions and language."

As a woman and as a Unitarian Universalist minister, I am deeply offended by the presence of sexist language in our district newsletter.

*Shirley A. Ranck*