

# Socialist Women

## Mujeres Socialistas



Publication of the Socialist Party Women's Commission Fall/Winter 2006



*Pictured Left to Right. Front Row Seated: Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott; Front Row Standing: Madame CJ Walker, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Katherine Dexter McCormick, Harriet Tubman, Emma Goldman, Margaret Sanger; Second Row: Jane Addams, Dolores Huerta, Gloria Steinem, Rosa Parks, Carrie Chapman Catt Third Row: Oprah Winfrey, Wilma Mankiller, Fannie Lou Hamer, Betty Friedan*

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# Socialist Women Mujeres Socialistas

Publication of the Socialist Party  
Women's Commission

## EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

Susan Dorazio • Ruth Greenberg-  
Edelstein • Teresa Murphy • Tina  
Phillips • Viji Sargis • Breck Guise

## LAYOUT

Diane Brand

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*Socialist Women* welcomes articles,  
reviews, poetry, graphics, and letters.  
Submissions should be no more than  
750 words.

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The views expressed herein are those  
of the authors and do not necessarily  
reflect those of the Socialist Party USA,  
the SP Women's Commission, or *So-  
cialist Women Magazine*.

## Cover Art: Illustration by Breck Guise.

B. Guise has written several articles for vari-  
ous socialist publications. She lives in Tex-  
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Printed by Saltus Press, a unionized printer.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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I am writing about Ron Patenaude's  
article, "Myths of the Nonprofits,"  
that appeared in the Summer 2006  
issue of *Socialist Women*. As an exec-  
utive director of a nonprofit organi-  
zation, I feel compelled to respond  
to his generalizations and to defend  
those of us that truly serve in the  
best interest of the community.

Mr. Patenaude makes a valid point  
about the nonprofit sector: there is  
sometimes enormous pay disparity  
between management and direct  
service staff. After reading his article,  
one might assume that this is ram-  
pant throughout the industry. This is  
not necessarily the case. Many orga-  
nizations, such as the one I work for,  
have equitable pay ratios and offer  
employees as much support as is  
possible within the constraint of a  
tight budget. Furthermore, he does  
not address some of the most criti-  
cal issues facing the sector: increased  
corporate control and imposed  
bureaucratization; a growing num-  
ber of nonprofit organizations which  
indicates increased personal control  
along with a lack of cooperation and  
coordination of resources; and lack  
of knowledge about lobbying rules  
among nonprofit leadership that  
leads many organizations to abstain  
from advocacy altogether.

I thank Mr. Patenaude for bring-  
ing attention to the nonprofit sector  
and for pointing out that nonprof-  
its are not arbitrarily exempt from  
corporate tricks. I would also like  
to remind SW readers that detailed  
financial information about IRS-  
recognized nonprofit organizations,  
including executive salaries, is avail-  
able online at [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)  
at no cost. Please check there before  
making a donation.

**Jessica R. Dreistadt**  
Allentown, Pennsylvania

## Ron Patenaude responds:

I don't believe ALL nonprofits are  
I corrupt or abuse the system, so  
there is no need to "defend" those  
that "truly serve in the best interest  
of the community." I commend those  
individuals and those agencies.

That said, I do believe a large num-  
ber of nonprofits abuse the system,  
as evidenced by Congressional hear-  
ings on the issue and my own experi-  
ences. I agree with Ms Dreistadt  
that increased corporate control,  
and the proliferation, of nonprofits  
contribute to abuse. But I disagree  
with her contention that many non-  
profits don't engage in advocacy due  
to lack of knowledge of lobbying  
rules. The problem is that the state  
doesn't monitor or enforce its own  
legislation. Many nonprofits fla-  
grantly violate lobbying laws, and  
yet are not penalized.

On the other hand, the activi-  
ties of unions are constantly being  
attacked, restricted, or scrutinized  
by the government. This anti-union  
stance ends up pervading all work-  
places, often resulting in nonprofit  
organizations using the same model  
(and the same union-busting attor-  
neys) as the for-profits for fighting  
their workers' right to unionize.

As for Guidestar, it is yet another  
"nonprofit" reaping profits off the  
system. While it succeeds as a busi-  
ness, the scope of what it actually  
provides for "free" is extremely lim-  
ited, and often outdated. This points  
to the fact that the nonprofit report-  
ing system itself is riddled with  
problems, thus contributing to the  
lack of accountability on the part of  
nonprofit agencies.

**Ron Patenaude**  
Holyoke, Massachusetts

# Speaking Out on Socialist Feminism

by Stephanie Cholensky

If being a woman is not easy, being a radical woman is even harder. With all the things in the world holding us back and shutting us up, the least we can do is stick together and make our message clear.

If you wish to be a radical woman, and I cannot stress this enough, you must remember that what makes you radical is your thoughts, ideas, and way of looking at things. It's not about the kind of music you listen to, or what words are on the T-shirts that you wear. It doesn't matter who you hang out with, what color your hair is, how you dress, or how many body modifications you have. To tell you the truth, the most radical women I have been lucky enough to know don't have enough time on their hands to worry about a radical 'look' beyond where their own eccentricities and the selection at the local second hand stores.

More importantly, and the fact that it's even necessary to say this pains me: pornography and exploitation are far from, if not the very opposite of, radical. There is nothing radical about women being acclaimed as voiceless sex objects, or about the use of a woman's body for profit, or as a marketing tool, if not the object for sale itself. It concerns me when websites like *www.suicidegirls.com* make claims of being a mouthpiece for radical women, when these women are required to do erotic photo shoots in order to be considered one of the "suicide girls." There is nothing original about women gaining attention because of their bodies and not their minds; in fact, this is something that radical women have been fighting against for centuries. A radical notion would be as follows: women should be treated just as successful and powerful men are, that is, regardless of how they look.

What makes a person a radical has nothing to do with whether they are male or female, because a radical believes in the immeasurable value of all human life. A radical is dedicated to humankind itself, all of

it, regardless of age, sex, race, or any other labels that are used to divide those who should most be united. We know that a better way is possible and is our destiny, and that we will fight for this world with every breath and every action we take fully knowing that we will not live long enough to see the fruits of our labor. Our struggle is selfless and grueling, and our glory comes not in commemorative coins or monuments of stone: true radicals are seldom remembered this way. Our memorials lie in the future.

The world has always has been and will continue to be changed by men and woman like us: those who cannot be placated by material gain or glamorous leisure and security, unwilling to barter the things we care about for temporary gains or a lesser cause. The generations after us will look back and wonder how humankind survived through times of such ignorance, oppression, and slavery; we look ahead and wonder what their lives will be like without it.

To be a radical is to see through the clutter of deception those in power use to justify their wars, poverty, hunger, unemployment, and other needless vices of capitalism.

To love your country yet to know the truth of its viciousness and corrupt authority: this is patriotism. To try to change these things for the better, this is radical.

I will not allow my mind to be beaten into submission by fear or hatred. Though I may lose all that I have, everything I care about, and while they may shatter my body and mind, my spirit will not be broken. It is only in an unjust society that standing up to a status quo of tyranny, violence, and oppression is considered radical. To me, it is simply human. ●

*Stephanie Cholensky is a student of chemistry at the University of Minnesota. She has been a member of the Socialist Party and the Young People's Socialist League since 2001.*

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The articles and poetry in this issue are personal. It takes conviction and courage to write this way: to allow opinions and analysis to flow from experience, and to face the vulnerability of this process. Thus, we thank these writers not only for their feminist perspective on a range of social, interpersonal, and organizational issues, but also for their willingness and ability to show us the deep, personal impulse behind their world view. This is what it will take for each of us to find security and meaning as individuals within a collective movement for radical social change: to find our way as socialist feminists, encountering daily the devastating effects of patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism on our own lives and on those with whom we share our communities and this planet.

## ABOUT THE COVER



In this drawing, a group of women from different eras and different backgrounds have come together. If you will notice, many of them are touching, either by proximity, by holding hands or by resting their hand on someone else's shoulder. This is a reminder of two things. One, the Socialist Feminist that you are today would be impossible without these women and two, whatever your struggle is, you are not alone. This is just a tiny representation of those who came before you. Those who fought your fight and those you can learn from. These women flew in the face of challenge and they count on you to do the same. -B. Guise

# Feminist Values at Work in a Fourth Grade Classroom

by Susan L. Triolo

There's no end to the challenges presented in a 4th grade classroom. Among these are a variety of behaviors that limit the abilities of the children to relate to each other in positive ways, and that undermine the interests of the group as a whole. Over the 25 years that I've been teaching, I've found that one of my best resources for helping the children establish and maintain a sense of community, caring, and support for everyone in the classroom is my feminist perspective.

As a feminist, I believe in the importance of peace, equality and cooperation. I try to manifest these concepts in my personal life, and build them into all aspects of the curriculum. I begin each year with games, songs and stories that start us on the path of getting to know each other. "We're all a Family under one Sky" is one of the banners the children see when they enter my classroom. It's a phrase that captures the concept that "As a class, we rise or fall together." (It's also the title of a great song by Ruth Pelham.)

In the first week of school, we develop our Class Constitution. This is the set of rules the children think are important to have, so that everyone feels safe and able to do their best work. It is signed by everyone, including me, and then displayed on the wall. These rules are stated positively as "Do's", such as, ALWAYS WALK IN SCHOOL instead of NO RUNNING. In this way, children always get the positive message of what they can do, instead of what they can't do.

Central to the way I incorporate feminist theory into maintaining peace and cooperation is teaching children how to resolve their conflicts. We cannot live in a peaceful world if we cannot learn to talk to each other reasonably and to listen with full attention. This process is learned, for children and for adults, through modeling and practice. When a child comes to me with a problem that involves another, the three of us talk together and I facilitate their discussion. I will often hold each one's hand to make a sort of triangle, and act as a go-between. Each child gets time

to state their side of the problem, while the other listens, and I try to clarify by re-stating, by asking questions.

As time goes by, my goal is for them to talk to each other without me. By mid-year, when a problem arises, my question to the child is: "Have you already talked to him/her about this?" If not, I say "OK, you try first. Then come and get me if you need help." For a solution to be of use, it must come from the children.

Teaching children to communicate with, and be kind to, each other forms the foundation of a community of learners. Children cannot learn when they are distracted by a hurtful comment or fear facing the bully at lunchtime. Once there are classroom systems in place, and we are learning how to use them, we then have a greater possibility for academic success.

My expectations for girls' academic success is always in the forefront of my thinking and planning. Generally speaking, girls have more highly developed social skills, but some need encouragement to reach for highly developed academic skills.

As a feminist and anti-racism advocate, equality of opportunity has been one of my motivations in becoming an educator. I do see education as the great equalizer. I try to focus on everyone's needs. I am always conscious to include all students, and to expect that each child play an important part in our classroom family. In my classroom, much of the children's learning time is spent working with a partner or in a small group. In this way, they learn to communicate and to problem solve with both genders and with all ethnicities, and to move toward greater independence and self-sufficiency.

Children need help to understand the world around them. I like to bring the real world into class as much as possible. We study political elections; we fundraised for Tsunami & Katrina victims; we have community guest speakers; we make connections between math and grocery shopping. African American history and Women's history come alive when they are integrated all year, rather than just in February and March. Education without meaning is dull and boring.

As a feminist educator, I have found my way of making the world a better place through my work with children. It has been amazing to me how young people struggle to understand their world, and to find their own way in it. I see my own role as a facilitator of their learning, and I get to have some fun while doing so. ●

*Susan L. Triolo is a long-time educator and community activist in Western Massachusetts.*

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## Yes, It's Fall by Elizabeth Shea

*I just hate to see the leaves fall.*

*It is as if they are once again a perennial call.*

*Yes it's Fall.*

*Leaves are now fluttering miserably, a-whirling, a-whistling as the winds that have been at play blowing and exercising their fearless power, hour by hour day by day.*

*Now, leaves lay all over the lands every which way. Some in heaps, some in hands, some crumpled or crumbling away, and some lie alone all flattened out on the Earth, be as it is, as Nature's way.*

*They are finished with their assigned task, as they worked hard for seasonal cleansing, the air for all Earth's creatures to share. Curled, splitting, flattened out to dust ready to return to the Earth again.*

*Yes they have left us with the nostalgic incense*

*a lingering smell for the year just bloomed  
Just fluttered away*

*Yes it is Fall.*

# Strong Enough To Be Ourselves

by Andrea Pason

Recently, I read two things in a bulletin on Myspace.com that made me start thinking: Are women willing to change their identity and ideas to suit a man? How much are women judged by their partners?

The first thing was a profile of a young woman who seemingly out of nowhere became White Power. When I looked at her friend's space she still had a lot of S.H.A.R.P (skinheads against racial prejudice) emblems from different groups here and abroad on her site. I began to wonder what would make someone change so drastically in a very short period of time.

Then in the same bulletin I saw there was a link to her new boyfriend, a WP skinhead. I thought "Wow. Is that what did it?" There were posts from surprised friends asking what happened. I wanted to send her a message, but I knew it would open me up to a million messages from all her new friends.

So many women change things about themselves, including their views, to fit in with their current relationship. I have also talked with women who are dating someone and allow themselves to be treated in a way they would never accept from anyone else. But when it came to their men, they made excuses, or just accepted the treatment as a given. In conversations with women, I would reverse what they were telling me and ask them "If a friend were treating me in the manner you were describing --someone who says they care-- would that be ok?" and the answer was always no. So the next question would be "If this is unacceptable if it happened to me, why is it acceptable for you to be treated that way? Do you think so little of yourself?" There seems to be a fear that if we are too smart, too opinionated, too inde-

pendent it will somehow threaten our relationships with men.

I believe society as a whole, crossing all class and race lines, has filled our heads with this. Men are taught through peer pressure from family, friends, every aspect of their life being, that if they are not the ones to have "control" of the relationship including the "behavior" of the women they are with, they are less of a man. Chances are if a woman does challenge them, the relationship will most likely not work out. It is a perpetuating cycle.

The second thing I thought about is how many times we as women are judged through our male partners. Even within progressive groups, people associate me with my husband. They assume his opinions and ideas speak for mine. People angered by a point of view he has, automatically attach my name to it. But if I have a separate point of view, it goes unnoticed, and certainly does not reflect on him.

Outside of progressive groups, when people know me without really knowing my husband, or for that matter if I even have one, the situation is different, but equally sexist. They tend to judge me as single. If I am seen with my son, they assume I am a single mom. That goes for both men and women. It is hard to question strangers as to why they would make that assumption, even more so if the woman is a single mom herself. I just nod my head and smile. What I do on rare occasions is to engage them in conversation. When I say I am married, the surprise on their face is priceless.

I have had a person question the fact of my being a mom because I did not look like one. I asked him what a mom was supposed to look like? What special requirements in his mind did I need? I explained I

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## You and I by Elizabeth Shea

*Do you! Remember the Hill?*

*I remember the Hill.*

*I can see it still, up there where one can view, miles of  
beauteous land and see down into the  
gigantic trees and  
craggy places where one finds, to see  
exotic wild flowers,  
and discarded wood pieces from the  
trees.*

*Yes! This is the Hill, and where we  
began.*

*Is it still not grand?*

---

thought loving and giving your child care, security, and all the necessities to prepare them for life qualified. Before you jump to judgment, this comment came from a black single dad.

When people hear that I'm married, information that often comes up at work, their reaction is always surprise. Then come the questions. Is he like you? What does he think of your tattoos? Does he like your hair? I usually respond with "I don't know. You can ask him when you meet him." I wonder what they are thinking? "Jesus, who she could be married to?" I am all those things women are silently taught not to be. ●

*Andrea Pason is a National Committee member of the SPUSA. She has a 12-year-old son named Trevor and has been married 18 years.*

# Caring in Socialist Groups

by Ruth Greenberg-Edelstein

The mutual helping and exchange that can take place between people has been used as a primary therapeutic tool in treatment groups. It also has been the chief ingredient in the women's groups that flourished during the 1980s when women came out of their isolation to share aspects of their oppression with each other. These groups formed the foundation of the second wave of the feminist revolution, the first wave having centered on the struggle for women to attain the vote.

In early civilizations and in the ancient world, the Mother Goddess symbolized the critical need for continued nurturance. This was often a way of countervailing the male dominance that prevailed. While female deities and oracles were important in Greece and Rome, the power structure remained in the hands of men most of whom had no patience with caring and supportive approaches. The ancient Hebrews emphasized an egalitarian exchange with the deity. Some Christians sought out the Mother Goddess in the cult of Mary, especially when religious practices were highly critical and punitive.

In the sixteenth century, Thomas More envisioned a commonwealth society in which goods were divided among everyone. The underlying and unifying motive was people working together helping and caring about each other. Kropotkin saw the economical and social brotherhoods and sisterhoods that existed in Europe during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries as attempts to reconstruct society on the basis of mutual aid and support.

In various parts of the modern world, communes (such as the kibbutzim in Israel) have been places where members have tried to put egalitarian socialism and self-management into practice by abolishing divisions between the rule and the ruled, establishing direct participation in decision making, and rotat-

ing all authority roles. People shared their lives at work and at home, and the concept of the self as caring evolved into a basic characteristic of those belonging to the collective. Indeed, such formats are operative today in creative socialist groups where a supportive environment is purposely created.

While mutual understanding can be the main force that holds a socialist group together, the emergence of a wide range of political ideas and beliefs can interfere with the development of a mutual reciprocity and understanding between members.

In fact, such developments can be sources of conflict and disharmony which can threaten the very existence of the group. Most often conflicts develop between the desire for uncon-

ditional acceptance and the wish to be in control. This is especially evident when personal needs and social pressures conflict.

History has shown that when a group becomes malfunctioning, for whatever reason, it is often the backup role of nurturant activities, usually carried out by women, that will hold it together and provide the continuity needed while adaptive forces work to mend the situation.

\*Based on selected portions of my book on *The Nurturance Phenomenon*, published 1986. ●

*Ruth Greenberg-Edelstein is a member of the Central New York Local of the Socialist Party USA and a member of the Editorial Collective of Socialist Women.*

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## I will believe if...

By Daniel R. Conn

In response to recent evangelistic tactics

I would like to simply let you know where I stand

You say if only I would believe

But I say to you, I will believe if...

I will believe when you have a god who is not sexist

Why does God have to be a man anyway?

I will believe when you tell me your god is love

Homophobia's not love, is what I say

I will believe when your god is not used as a marketing toy

How can giving you money relieve judgment day?

I will believe when your god promotes peace and never war

Your religious wars have made our earth decay

I have been promised a long life and good health

I have been promised material and blessed wealth

I have been promised children and a wife

I have even been promised an eternal life

But when you can promise me

A world of equality and equity

Only then will I have an open ear

For death is not something I fear

# Socialist-Feminist Candidate for Green Energy

by *Mary-Alice Herbert*

As a socialist candidate for Lieutenant Governor of Vermont on the Liberty Union Party/Socialist Party-USA ticket, I'm using every opportunity to speak out against the re-licensing of the state's aging Vermont-Yankee nuclear power plant. As a feminist, I'm passionate about working toward a sustainable green energy future for ourselves and our children.

Since January, members of the Brattleboro Local of the SP-USA have held a weekly Green Energy Vigil. Our signs are about VY becoming nuclear-free by 2012 and embracing conservation and renewable energy. The positive responses we've gotten far outnumber the negative ones. Now, as a candidate, I'm taking our message state-wide, countering industry claims that nuclear power plant emissions don't create green-house gasses. I talk about the environmental devastation caused by mining uranium, the pollution caused by refining and enriching it, and the uses our military make of depleted uranium. I let them know that an accident at VT-Yankee would not be just a local disaster but would ruin Vermont's entire economy by destroying our beautiful landscape and the purity of our agricultural products.

Vermont-Yankee came into being by a one-vote majority in the Vermont legislature. In 1972, it was built in Vernon, Vermont, beside the Connecticut River, directly across from New Hampshire and a few miles north of the border with Massachusetts. Activists who had struggled against it were somewhat comforted by the promise that it would be shut down in 2012.

*Green, continued on p. 24*

# Dyke for Choice

by *Tina Phillips*

Isn't it ironic  
That I am a dyke for choice?  
I'll never know the burden of an unplanned pregnancy  
Because I can have sex without fear.

"My body, my life, my right to decide."

I march none-the-less for the choice of others.  
Because my mom had to fly to Mexico to get her abortion  
Because maybe the teenager down the street won't have that choice  
And maybe she'll choose to self-induce  
Instead of a safe abortion she could have had.  
If she had the choice.

"Right-to-life, your name's a lie,  
You don't care if women die!"

I speak up for women's reproductive rights  
Because the government has no right to decide.  
These right-wing crypto-fascists want to demonize  
My choice of lover just as they want to control  
Women's bodies in a myriad of ways.

"Not the church, not the state,  
Women must decide their fate!"

I demonstrate because I love women.  
Because the feminine is sacred  
Because the power of women has been taken away  
And it's time to reclaim our power.

"If you don't want an abortion, then don't have one."  
I shout because coat hangers are for coats, not abortions.  
Because back alleys are for trash, not for abortions.  
Because butchers cut meat, not women.  
Where desperation no longer causes rash decision making.

"We won't go back."

I table because they want to force us back into our kitchens  
Because they want to force us back into our closets  
Because they want to force us back into bondage  
And they want to take away our human rights.

*Dyke, continued on p. 24*



# Socialist Women Mujeres Socialistas

Fall/Winter 2006

Green, continued from p. 23

Both Democrats and Republicans have capitulated shamelessly to the Entergy Corporation of Mississippi which was allowed to buy the plant from the state. Entergy made it clear from the beginning that it would apply for a 20% power up-rate and relicensing to the year 2032. Intense lobbying, political contributions, and corporate largesse have rewarded Entergy. The state and federal agencies which protect the public have also compromised shamefully.

In 2008, the Vermont legislature will vote on whether or not VT-Yankee should be relicensed for an additional 20 years. I'm working hard to convince voters to take the kind of collective action that will compel politicians to vote against relicensing. The fate of Vermont-Yankee, and the safety of much of New England, could well hinge on a single vote! ●

## Remembering Rosie Jimenez

Rosie Jiménez was one of the women who gave her life exercising her right to control her body. On October 3, 1977, this young woman from McAllen, Texas, died from complications arising from a back-alley abortion. Ms Jiménez was unwilling to divert the money she had saved to continue her college education to pay the costs of a clinic abortion. She was the first known victim of the Hyde Amendment.

Dyke, continued from p. 23

"Keep your laws off my body!"

I stand in solidarity with my sisters  
Because I believe that America should live up to its promises  
That we are free  
That we are a live and let live society.  
That we can all believe whatever we want  
As long as we do not force others to do what we believe.

"Free by birth, Woman by luck, Pro-choice by right."

Because abortions have gone up 25 percent under the Bush presidency.  
And our social safety net has been sent to Iraq and into rich people's pockets via tax cuts.  
Because women no longer have a choice because  
It is harder and harder to raise a child in our society.  
Poverty caused by greed.

"What do we want? Choice not war! When do we want it?  
Now even more. If you want justice raise up your fist.  
If you want choice, we must resist!"

I mobilize and organize because I have to.  
Through one struggle for justice.  
All women, will liberate, themselves.

We will have choices,  
We will have rights,  
We will be free.

For a future of no unplanned pregnancies  
For a future of sex without fear, guilt, or shame.  
To a future of our dawning revolution.  
Sisterhood is still powerful.

And this is what a feminist looks like.  
And this is what a dyke looks like.