

1993

## Safe Zone Article, URI Women

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# URI WOMEN

A monthly news service and idea exchange concerning Women's Issues and events.  
Published by the University of Rhode Island Women's Center and the Office of Student Life.

Editors: Krista Koontz & Stephanie Elliott

May 1993

"You men know that . . . when we get our rights we shall not have to come to you for money, for then we shall have enough money in our own pockets; and maybe you will ask us for money." Sojourner Truth, 1867

## Safe Zones address Homophobia at URI

The Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism recently launched the "URI Safe Zone" campaign. The program, which supplies stickers that have lesbian and gay pride symbols inside a green circle, signifies that the person displaying the sticker should be non-judgemental, understanding, trustworthy and welcoming to all members of the community, including lesbians, gays and bisexuals. The presence of a "URI Safe Zone" sticker is a symbol of openness for discussion around lesbigay issues.

This program is a concrete step in confronting the issue of homophobia and heterosexism at this university and in society as a whole. The presence of the bold pink and black triangles brings the reality of homophobia "out of the closet" and onto the doors and windows of people in our community.

I think it's of crucial importance for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals to see themselves, even if it's only symbolically in the safe zone campaign, permeating all parts of the university. Unlike race and sex, a person's sexual orientation is not identifiably self-evident. The long history of homosexuality as social taboo; and the harm that driving it underground has caused in the lives of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, makes it all the more important for this problem to be public. These symbols do not merely represent lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, they also represent the social struggle for acceptance and legitimacy which they have been denied. These stickers express the recognition of that struggle which needs to be addressed in order for this community to truly serve the legitimate needs of all its staff and students.

The other main purpose that the "URI Safe Zone" stickers serve are as testimony to the existence of homophobia and heterosexism. Not everyone will choose to display a URI Safe Zone sticker, and ethically should not if they do not support the meaning behind them. The absence of a sticker on a teacher or administrator's door should not automatically mean that the person is homophobic, but could indicate that some places at URI are safer than others for lesbians, gays,



and bisexuals. Since there has been a good deal of publicity and coverage on the program, anyone who is supportive of creating a socially accepting climate here at URI certainly should be able to get a hold of one. I doubt that those people who think heterosexuality is the only sexuality that is right and normal will properly label their space as a "URI Un-Safe Zone." Undeniably and inevitably, there are places on this campus that are not safe for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals to be open about their sexuality; nor for heterosexuals to express acceptance of it.

Just a few weeks since the stickers were put up, people at URI have taken them down. The vandalizing of the symbols of pride for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals is a larger symbol of the hatred and intolerance permeating the URI community; and the world community. Recently I noticed a poster in the display case outside the bank in the Union entitled "In Defense of a Little Virginity" or something with that theme produced by a religious organization. The copy started out conservatively, talking about the need for abstinence to be seen as a viable alternative to today's sex-obsessed society. It ended in a condemnation of homosexuality. This hatred, whether it is disguised in rhetoric about chastity, or is a blatant destruction of property, remains a dangerous and destructive contradiction to URI's "celebration of diversity." As a community, we must get beyond the notion that this issue is just part of the "Cult-of-Political-Correctness" and begin to recognize it for what it truly is: a fight for the protection of basic civil rights

Much of the hate towards gays stems from the religious right, who preach hatred in church and schools. What these pastors and priests and other seemingly harmless religious leaders are doing is contributing to the murder of thousands of truly innocent people. These killings occur in the context of an exploding incidence of hate crimes in our country, which are, not surprisingly, on the rise. When people's hate, whether it be for women, homosexuals, or blacks is legitimized by their parents, friends, TV set, or teacher; it makes it all the more excusable for them to let their hate materialize. And when a hated group like women, homosexuals, or blacks begin to reach out for any of the rights and power that is theirs, but which is not in their hands; they are beaten, lynched, or just made poor so that their arms become too weary to reach anymore. Individually and collectively, people's strengths help them manage to keep reaching for and reclaiming what is theirs. It's essential that people speak up about who they are and what they think, and replenishing the symbol of pride that some seek to destroy.

—Stephanie Elliott

Marching through Closets

The outside world stood still  
all of its problems

and hatred

floating

away

as we gathered  
as one-a community  
of new friends.

Free at last

from

self

denial...

and homophobic oppression.

The sun s p r i n k l e d

d

o

w

n

on our faces of compassion,

Relief,

and

*Exuberation!*

For once we could be ourselves;  
locked emotions **exploded**

through closed doors.

--Leigh-Ellen Torgan

Library More Usable

Our small, but growing Women's Center library will be much more "user friendly" by next semester. Paige Knowlton, one of our interns, has been creating a computer data base for our library. Next time you drop

in to use our Women's Center library, you will be able to find authors and titles on the computer.

Woman of the Year

Professor of English and Women's Studies Karen Stein has been chosen as Woman of the Year by the U.R.I. Association of Professional and Academic Women!

Abuse Survivors Meet

A Pro-Survivors Anonymous (PSA) support group for non-perpetrating partners, friends, significant others, and supporters of abuse survivors just started. The group meets Fridays at 7 pm at the Warwick Human Services Offices on 3308 Post Road in Warwick. The group is for Pro-survivors to help each other with issues surrounding abuse. There is no fee. For more information about the group or directions, call Stand Fast at 737-7505.

Women's Spirituality Group

The Unitarian-Universalist Church of South County meets the first and third Sundays of the month at 4 pm at St. Augustine's Episcopal Center, 35 Lower College Rd. The Women's Spirituality Group meets the second and fourth Monday evenings. For more information, call 783-2199.

Women in Herstory

The Women's Herstory Month project was an enormous success. It reached close to 250 students in 4 area schools, and I heard from about 15 other interested schools in RI and CT. The students were able to "meet" Rosa Parks, Mother Jones, and Nellie Bly and hear stories about their lives. The presentation was well received by teachers and students as indicated by evaluation sheets. According to their comments, the Women's Herstory Month Project was an interesting, informative and effective way to learn about women in history.

The Women's Center would like this program to continue. We need someone to coordinate it in the Spring of 1994. If anyone is considering doing a University Year for Action internship, think about the Women's Center and this project. I just want to thank a few people who were a tremendous help! Leah Furlong, Shenica King, Engrid Elso, Heather Reich, Professor Sharon Strom, Wynne Caldwell and Sally Dwyer.

-Eileen Kelly

Scary Quote of the Month

We're creating an addiction. It's a matter of getting involved. You get to know these characters better, at times, than you know members of your own family. You become deeply involved with these people.


—William J. Bell, creator of *The Young and the Restless*



# SUMMER CALENDAR

**May 1-28** The Hera Gallery presents "Personal Journeys," a juried competition with cash awards. This mixed media exhibit of two and three dimensional work of 20 artists chosen by juror, Marlene Malik, will focus on the artistic interpretation of travel and passage from one place in time to another. Exhibits are free, open to the public and accessible. The Hera Gallery is located on 327 Main Street in Wakefield. For May, the gallery is open Tuesdays through Friday, 12-3 pm and Saturdays 10-4. For more information, call 789-1488.

**May 10** Planned Parenthood of RI, as part of its Brown Bag Lunch Series, is sponsoring "Mothers and Daughters: Bonding and Intimacy" with speaker Jo Ann Putnam Scholes. To be held at Planned Parenthood in Providence at 12 noon. The series is free and open to the public; beverages will be provided. For more information and/or directions, call Planned Parenthood (Cathleen Blanchette) at 421-7820.

**May 14-16 Women's Wilderness Weekend.** Flower walks, canoeing, rock climbing, gardening and other workshops will be a part of this women's weekend at the Alton Jones Campus, URI. \$120.  Financial assistance is available, first come, first serve. Call 397-3304.

**May 15** Sojourner House is sponsoring "Women in Jazz Concert" featuring Carol Sloane with Cercie Miller and hosted by Ron Della Chiesa of Music America at 7:30 pm in the RISD auditorium on Water St. in Providence. Tickets are \$20, or \$35 with a champagne reception. Call 431-0335.

**May 17** The National Organization for Women (NOW) will meet in the Peacedale Library at 7 pm. New members always welcome. We will be planning a booth for the Women Sharing Strength Craft Show (to be held on July 18. For more information about NOW and its activities, call Josephine at 789-2251.

**May 30 Memorial Day**

**June 3-5** The 9th Annual Conference for College Women Student Leaders at George Washington University in Washington DC will meet to explore and examine leadership issues of critical importance. This conference provides an opportunity for women student leaders to strengthen their strategies for meeting challenges on their campuses, to increase understanding of factors affecting women's opportunities, and to encourage women student leaders to see their campus experiences as foundations for continuing leadership at community, state, and federal levels. The keynote speaker is Sarah Weddington, Author and Attorney, Roe v. Wade. The cost of the conference is \$240 before

May 11, \$280 after Lodging available in GWU dormitories. For registration materials, call (202)659-9330 or FAX (202)457-0946.

**June 4-5 Dorcas Place** is sponsoring "Literacy in Context: Integrating the teaching of adult literacy and employment skills." A two-day conference sponsored by WOW (National Network for Wider Opportunities for Women) and Dorcas Place Parent Literacy Center To be held at the Holiday Inn in Providence. For more information, call Dorcas Place at 273-8866.

**June 5-26** The Hera Gallery will be having their Associate Members Exhibition featuring a mixed media show by five associate members. Located on 327 Main Street in Wakefield. Gallery hours for June, July, and August are Tuesday through Friday, 10-1 pm and Saturdays 10-4 pm. For more information call 789-1488.

**June 6** The 6th Annual **Walk for Life** provides support for people with AIDS and HIV infection in Rhode Island. People to organize committees, volunteers, and walkers are all needed. For more information on getting involved, call Paul Mitchell at the Project, 831-5522.

**June 12 Anne Frank Day**

**June 14** Kathleen Fitzgerald, M.D. will talk about "Depo-Provera: The Injectable Birth Control Method" as part of Planned Parenthood's Brown Bag Lunch Series. To be held at Planned Parenthood in Providence at 12 noon. This series is free, open to the public, and provides beverages. For more information and/or directions, contact Cathleen Blanchette at Planned Parenthood at 421-7820.

**June 16-20** The National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference, "Reweaving Women's Colors: Scholarship, Curriculum and Our Lives," will be held at the Marriott Hotel in Washington DC.

**July 3-24** Hera Gallery's 19th Anniversary Show will feature a comucopia of works by all the current members of Hera. See June 5th for more info.

**July 18** A juried craft show, "Women Sharing Strength" will benefit the Women's Resource Center of South County in their 15th Anniversary Celebration. It is a women's networking event in recognizing the need for an environment for women to share resources and collaborate. Men interested in women's resources are invited to participate as well. For those interested in being part of the show, write to **Women Sharing Strength**, PO Box 3421, Peacedale, RI 02883 for an application.

The views expressed in **URI Women** do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Rhode Island. Send us a letter! Mail to: URI Women, 332 Memorial Union, Office of Student Life, Kingston, RI, 02881.

### Continuing Saga of the Miss America Debate

Dear Editors:

I would like to respond to Miss Rhode Island's letter in your last issue. I felt she made some excellent points about the Miss America Organization. However, I think there are some deeper issues that should be mentioned.

She expressed that the Miss America Organization should not be criticized for exploiting women and referred to the Organization as "a prestigious, non-profit scholarship organization." It is commendable that the Miss America Program awards 10 million dollars annually in scholarships, yet that is only one aspect of the organization. General Electric makes light bulbs. This is a good and useful product. General Electric also makes bombs. Because GE makes one good product must I disregard that they make other questionable products?

Miss Rhode Island also states that beauty alone, "will not win any title in the Miss America system." This again is commendable and represents progress. However, could a 200-pound woman who has done outstanding community work win the contest? Could a woman in good physical shape, with an excellent written platform, who has contributed hours of community service but with a huge nose, glasses and crooked teeth win? The largest source of scholarship money for women is only available to the physically fit, talented women who look good in swimsuits and evening wear. You would think that scholarships would be awarded based on academic merit.

What do men have to do to earn academic scholarships? Do men receive scholarships based on their academic records or on their talent and physique? Have you ever heard parents wish that their son will be crowned the most beautiful boy in America when he grows up?

I agree with Miss Snow that "pomographic publications and the increasing use of sex and violence on television," are far greater evils. However, let's be honest. It is called a beauty pageant and the definition of pageant is "a showy display". What is being displayed? Intelligence? Kindness? Community Service? When a woman is dressed in high heels and a swimsuit, she must be displaying her body. Miss America does set a standard for how women should look, and I feel we should ask ourselves, do we want to be known for how we look, or who we are?

— Gretchen Stock

Dear Editors:

In Lisa Snow's critique, published in the April 1993 issue of *URI Women*, she says, "(The Miss America Pageant) emphasizes the educational accomplishments and artistic talents of its contestants over their

physical attributes." The Miss America Pageant should be applauded for taking the first step in learning to value women for more than their physical appearance; however, it still devalues women's success

Naomi Wolf's address at Brown University (also detailed in the April '93 issue of *URI Women*), describes this devaluation. "The men who make it to the covers of magazines are usually in some position of power (in business or politics), but they meet no particular specifications in terms of height, weight, hair color or other bodily characteristics. Women are given an obvious message that they have to look a certain way; men are not." For example, it would be impossible to win the Miss America Pageant unless one met certain physical characteristics

Women are taught that to be truly successful, they must have a certain appearance (tall, fatless, big-breasted). In the case of the Miss America Pageant, this is determined by ones "physical fitness in swimsuits" and ability to fit into sleek "evening wear" This appearance is a male ideal of what women should look like. So, women must be physically appealing to men because it is not enough to be "deeply concerned with political and social issues facing our world" or "advocates for social change and women's issues..." to win the Miss America Pageant.

The Miss America Pageant needs to eliminate the swim wear and evening wear competitions; after all, a "positive role model for our youth" should not imply that women's success is limited by their ability to meet a male standard of physical appearance.

—Quentin Ireland, Peer Educator

### Congratulations!

Our own editor, Krista Koontz, was asked by the *Narragansett Times* to review plays at Theater by the Sea this summer. Her review of Trinity Repertory's production of "Twelfth Night," which was printed on April 15th, was so well received that they decided that they wanted more! She is currently defending her Master's Thesis, a feminist/absurdist play, and will be graduating with an M.A. in English this month. Krista has brought so many of her talents to the Women's Center over the past two years as grad assistant, and it shows. It has been truly a joy working with her.

—Stephanie

### More Congratulations!

Our other editor, Stephanie Elliott (with two t's in Elliott), is definitely too humble to tell anyone that she will be graduating from U.R.I. with the President's Award for Academic Excellence **and** the Eleanor M. Carlson Award for her involvement in the Women's Studies department. I would also like to give Stephanie an award that has never been given before: The Award for Writing the Most Letters to the Editor in a Single Year.

—Krista

### Literacy Volunteers of South County

Anyone who would like to be trained as a volunteer in teaching ESL is invited to attend either of two

workshops this June. (Tutors will begin teaching next September). On June 5 and June 12, the workshops will be held at the North Kingstown library and will run from 9 am to 4 pm with a lunch break. Call the North Kingstown to sign up, 294-3306

### Freshwomen to Look Out For

Though many first year students in college are merely trying to "fit in," there are a couple of women on this campus who have quickly become leaders in making social change. We at URI Women would like to recognize two women who have already become activists and leaders: Natalie West, President of S.O.A.R. (Society Organized Against Racism) and Leigh-Ellen Torgan, President of the G.L.B.A. (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Association). If these women are this active in their first years, we can only look forward to what they will do for U.R.I. as seniors.

### Recycling Not Being Taken Seriously

As last reported, U.R.I. is recycling only 3 percent of its waste. At the Women's Center, we take recycling seriously and separate all our recyclables. However, we have to doubt whether the University is as committed to a sustainable environment as we are with such a low percentage of recycling. We have to wonder whether the recyclables are later mixed in with trash.

Another enigma is the way heat is wasted during winter months. In U.R.I. classrooms, the windows are usually open in the winter because the buildings are so over-heated. If this U.R.I. is truly concerned about its budget cuts and limited resources, this university should begin to use its resources more sensibly. --  
Krista Koontz

### Workers Unite for Socio-Economic Justice

Two months ago we celebrated International Women's Day. The history of the Day is part of our heritage in which we should take pride but which we often take for granted. In the winter of 1908-1909 women garment workers in New York City struck for better working conditions, equal pay, the vote & childcare - and won. This is a victory song from the line. . .

*In the black of winter, nineteen-nine  
When we froze and bled on the picket line  
We showed the world that women could fight  
And we rose and won with women's might*

*Hail! the wastemakers of nineteen-nine  
making their stand on the picket line  
Breaking the powers of those who reign  
Pointing the way - smashing the chain!*

. . . This action stands as an inspiration to proletarian women and men around the world. This action is the first Women's Day. -- submitted by David Gundlach

### Knowledge is Power: Women's Studies Courses

URI's fabulous Women's Studies department has released its Summer and Fall course schedules. Here's what they have to offer:

#### SUMMER 1993:

**WMS 350D** Women's Studies Institute: Strategies for Sexual Equality, May 18-May 27, 9am-3:30pm. Providence (may register for WMS 350D or PSY 690R, contact Kathryn Quina at 272-3832.)

**WMS 310/ WMS 350V** Race, Class and Sexuality in Women's Lives, Session 1, Providence, M&W 6-9:45 pm, URIB, Dana Shugar.

**WMS 350U** The Civilization and Religion of the Goddess: Implications for Women Today, Session 2, Providence, TR 6-9:45 pm, URIB, Annie Milhaven  
Courses approved for Women's Studies majors and minors offered through other departments:

ENG 385: Women Writers, HCF 330: Marriage and Family Relationships, HCF 430: Family Interaction  
NUR 150: Human Sexuality, PSY 480: The Female Experience, SOC 242: Sex and Gender, SOC 420: Family Violence, SOC 430 Intimate Relationships.

#### FALL 1993

**WMS 150** Introduction to Women's Studies, Section 1, TR 9:30-10:45, RODM 226, Mary Ellen Reilly

**WMS 310** Race, Class, and Sexuality in Women's Lives, TR 2-3:15, TBA, Dana Shugar. This is a new course which is not listed in the pre-registration book. The selection #is 13332.

**WMS 450** Independent Studies in Women's Studies  
Courses Approved for Women's Studies majors and minors offered through other departments.

ECN 404 Political Economy of Class, Race, and Gender  
ENG 260 Women and Literature  
ENG 385 Women Writers  
ENG 580 Selected Topics in Women and Literature  
FSN 308 Nutrition in Growth and Pregnancy  
HCF 330 Marriage and Family Relationships  
HCF 505 Human Sexuality and Counseling  
HIS 145 Women in American History  
HIS 351 American Women in the 19th Century  
HIS 376 Women in Muslim Societies  
NUR 150 Human Sexuality  
PED 475 Women in Sport  
PHL 210 Women and Moral Rights  
SOC 212 The Family  
SOC 413 Social Inequality  
SOC 430 Intimate Relationships

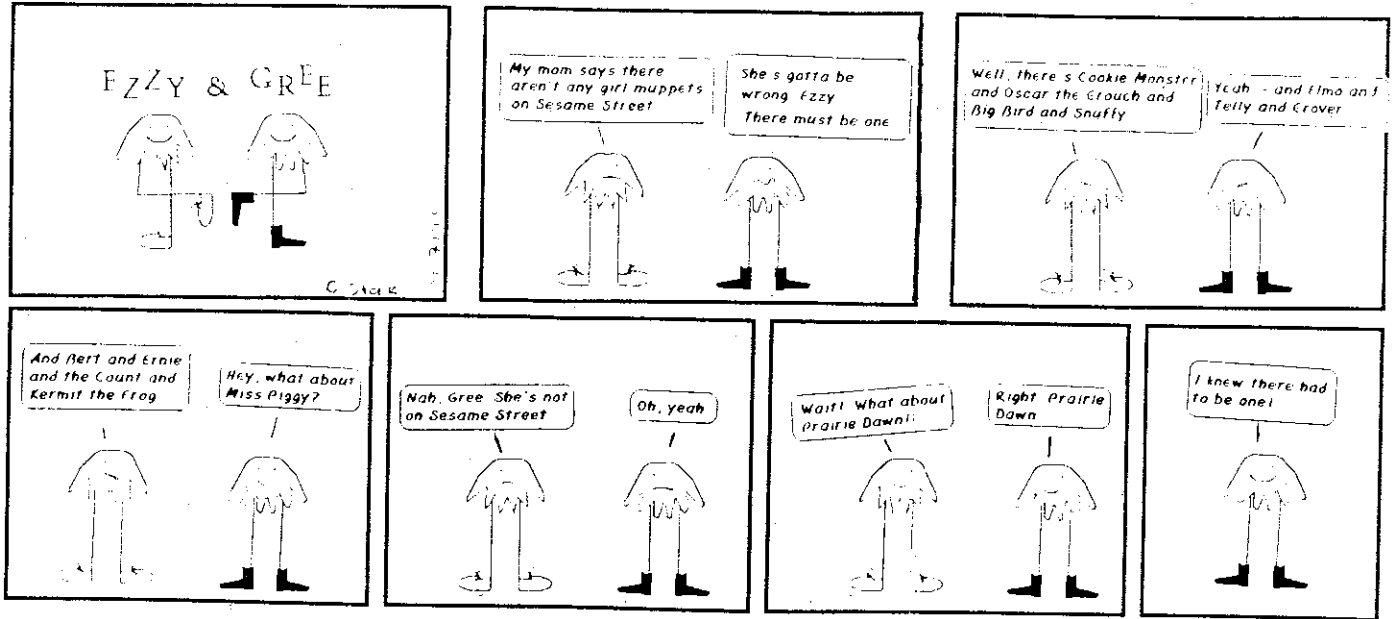
For more information on these courses and/or registration, see the pre-registration book available at The Registrar's Office in the Carlotti Building, or call Women's Studies at 792-5150.

A Big March, Give or Take a Million

The 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Equal Rights was possibly the biggest march ever. March organizers estimated 1.3 million participants. With an incredibly lower estimate, the government's National Park Service reported only 300,000 people at the march. How could such a giant discrepancy occur? Did the park officials fail

to notice an extra one million people? Or were they motivated to down play the size of the march for political reasons? As an eye witness, I can say without hesitation that the 300,000 estimate is incorrect. Everyone who was there knows that there were over a million people. The exact number is not the issue. However, the Park Service has given new meaning to the words "a conservative estimate" in their attempts to belittle the power in numbers that was achieved on April 25, 1993.

-- Krista Koontz



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