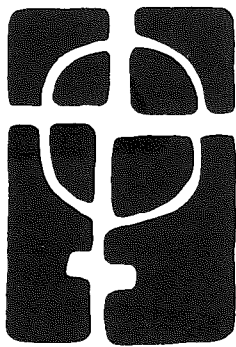


# Women's Theological Center



## Quarterly Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

*It's about time. It's about class. It's about time it's about class. Enjoy.*

## Class Notes on Collaboration and Resistance

by Mary Kelley

*Mary Kelley, 1991-92 Study/Action participant, wrote the following for a class discussion on "Collaboration and Resistance: how have I collaborated with the prevailing social system and how have I resisted injustice."*

Dad was a laborer in a paper mill. Mom stayed home with their eight children. By every measure I've encountered, we were lower middle class. Whenever possible, dad worked double shifts at very hard manual labor. His hourly wages were higher than many of the laborers in local factories without a union. We weren't the poorest of the poor. But there was never any extra. We bought clothes and furniture and cars second hand. When I was a teenager we were eligible for government assistance: medicaid and foodstamps, surplus food.

Ours was a relatively small town with two drug stores. My cousin Claire and I walked to the Pleasant Pharmacy about once a month to buy a candy bar with the quarter our grandfather gave us. It was a huge treat. Everyone at the pharmacy was always very nice to us. The man behind the counter teased us. Sometimes we'd get prescriptions filled.

When I began to use a medicaid card to pay for the prescriptions, the friendly upbeat atmosphere changed. One person behind the counter called to another, "A welfare card. Now what do I do?" People could hear! I was terribly embarrassed. The previously friendly visits turned into a chore. The people who had always been pleasant and friendly suddenly became angry and rude, I was no longer one of "us" but had become one of "them". My intent was to do a favor for my mother by filling a prescriptions for my sick brother. I was made out to be a burden. Somehow there was something wrong

with me because factory owners paid such small wages that the government chose to supplement the wages by paying for children's medication. In the interchange over the pharmacy counter, it was communicated to me that this was my fault.

At the time, I believed that there must be something wrong with me. But I didn't really think much about it. When I went to college (government grants were plentiful in the early 70's), I was appalled when my Sociology 101



Photo: Elizabeth Bettenhausen

Mary Kelley

teacher presented the notion of class stratification as it exists in the US. What about the Great American Dream? Didn't we all have equal opportunity in this country?

During Christmas break I went home to visit. Dad's shop had laid him off, so there was no money for gifts. There was little food in the house and the only hope for a real Christmas dinner was one of the holiday charity baskets I hated. I picked dad up at the mill and waited while he made a phone call. He was dressed in his usual warm but shabby clothes. In order to make the call he had to speak to a

boss to ask permission. Dad knocked on the window of the office and the tall, good looking, well dressed young man looked at us, chuckled and said in a patronizing tone, "Sure, Henry, come right in." Suddenly the inequalities and injustices of our class system as explained by my sociology teacher took on a new meaning. This young man in the suit with the well dressed, well fed children with toys under their tree was not laid off, and had the authority to make decisions about our life all the way down to whether my dad could use the telephone and up to who would or would not be laid off. It seemed to me that his expensive clothes were bought by keeping my father's wages low enough. We were "them"; this man was "us". And it was this system that was wrong, not us.

Our standard of life in this country requires the products of our factories. At what human cost do we keep wages low enough to make profit high enough to keep the businesses going? There is a prevalent myth that unions are driving companies away to other countries. In reality the ability of companies to employ people at slave wages invites and draws companies away. The problem is not that unions demand a living wage, but that companies are too willing to seek out the poorest of the poor who can be paid substandard wages and that we collude by buying products we don't

**... suddenly it came home to me that I too am a "factory brat". . .**

need. So we have rising unemployment here are impoverished workers elsewhere.

One other incident helped to make class status real to me. After my freshman year in college and the revolutionary change in my worldview, I landed a summer job in a factory. This was the best summer job in town (\$3.52 per hour in 1973). Here I learned firsthand about isolation at a work station, surrounded by mindnumbing noise and indescribable monotony. My job consisted of putting twelve metal pins into a piece of

plastic that was about 1/2 inch long and 1/16 of an inch wide. Then, by machine, to insert a tiny piece of plastic between the twelve pins. It had to be done accurately and quickly. There was no air conditioning or fresh air. When I complained about the stuffy atmosphere to my father, I got no sympathy. Then I remembered: where he worked, the liquid materials were heated to 200 degrees year round. The stuffy atmosphere at my job slipped into a different perspective.

But the incident that made me see my reality stemmed from a friendship that developed between me and Linda. Linda had worked at this factory since she turned 16. She knew everyone there, was pleased to have such a good job. She planned to work there for the rest of her life. Her older sister worked there, as did her mother and father. She referred to herself jokingly as a "factory brat". With my one year of college behind me and my burning ambition to escape from the working class existence of my folks, I felt sympathetic to her reality, yet vaguely superior. As I stood outside my factory waiting for my dad to come from his factory to pick me up, suddenly it came home to me that I too am a "factory brat", a factory worker who is a daughter and a granddaughter of factory workers, all of whom were fortunate to have such good jobs at such good wages.

This clarification was immediately coupled with the understanding that most of my fellow college students would, consciously or unconsciously, assume a vague superiority to me, and tend towards a variation of the patronizing and humiliating patterns of behavior towards me that the bosses had towards my dad. So the traps in class consciousness for me are dual: to be vigilant in the discernment of belittling/demeaning attitudes in myself to those of perceived or real lesser class status, and to be aware of the demeaning attitudes and behaviors in others towards me. These are not easy tasks. One of my criticisms towards the women's movement has been the sense in which there is a pressure towards affiliation with women as women, regardless of other social realities. It would be too easy, in my opinion, to dismiss my identification with my father's class status as a male

affiliation. The way I see it, the women who are reaping the benefits of their association with the men in suits at the paper mill are as complicit as their husbands in assuring the lack of food and toys at our family's house on Christmas. This is true, I think, even if they are extremely active in women's rights issues, have negotiated an egalitarian relationship with their partners, and have filled our charity basket with good stuff to eat.

For many years, once a woman had situated herself as coming from money (i.e., able to consistently afford store bought clothes and new furniture and cars), I cut off relationship. This was an isolating stance based on anger and fear, and unwillingness to be hurt by patronization coupled with an unwillingness to be complicit in the patronization of others.

In spite of this, there was a day when I rejoiced in the knowledge that I had joined the middle class. I'd had a recent promotion to a middle management position at a human service agency in my hometown. I drove a new car. I was wearing a gorgeous new warm winter coat. My boss and a co-worker, both good looking young men in suits and overcoats, and I stood on the street corner on the way to a local restaurant where they were treating me to a "getting to know you" breakfast. This was a long way from being one of the "factory brats", although in fact it was only a half mile and ten years separation from the factory. I was immersed in meaningful important work helping marginalized handicapped people become a part of their own and my hometown, after years of incarceration in state schools. And I was able to buy a new car, a new coat, and go out to eat with handsome young men in suits. For that moment, on that day, the conflicts were all resolved in my favor and I celebrated. I felt that I had arrived.

The conflicts were to recur. One way the problem re-asserts itself is in the way staff tend to relate to clients in ways that are belittling, demeaning, controlling. As a staff, despite my best intentions, I fell into this.

There is no easy solution for avoiding complicity with unjust social structures. Nor is there an easy way to avoid being oppressed by them.#

## WTC Conversation on Class

with Donna Bivens, Meck Groot, Jane S. and Renae Scott

*The following conversation is offered to you, as a very beginning discussion of issues of class. For an hour and a half, the four of us talked in and around the following questions:*

1. *What is your own class location? What positive things has life from this location given you?*
2. *What injuries have there been?*
3. *What key elements would you say mark a person's class location?*
4. *Do these look different across differences of race?*
5. *Are there specific ways in which classism plays itself out across differences of race?*
6. *Do you ever wish you were from another class? Explain the repulsion/attraction.*

*What follows is an edited version of that conversation. As you will note, we were not very strict about addressing all of these questions. We include them here as a way of inviting you, too, to think and talk about these things. As Renae says, "I don't think that there are definitive answers and I want that to be the preface. We're not talking about this from a Marxist or Leninist analysis, but just from experience."*

M: To start out with me, I think it's important for me to claim being a working class person. But maybe "class transition" is the closest thing to describe what I live. I have many of the trappings of a middle class life. I have no resources to back that up. But it's really based on the good faith of other people who really have the middle class things that I benefit from.

M: What would you describe as a middle class lifestyle?

R: Stuff like owning a home or having a college education and resources like you have six months or a year's savings in the bank. Or if you don't have it you can get it. That within your family the resources exist for you to live for x amount of time. If someone in your family were to die, you would inherit something from that in some way. And then there's just basic stuff like you have medical insurance. You have education. Education is not something

that you have to work and save for. It's a given that you're going to go to college or you're going to do certain things. It's just sort of the way of being and the difference is how we prepare ourselves and our kids for that. As a parent, dealing with college at this point [for my daughter], I understand now there are people who have the tuition, all the tuition, for their children in the bank. They're not filling out three financial aid forms. Their kids don't have to do work study. I mean those are differences between working class or poor kids and middle class kids: whether you have to do work study or work while you're in school or it's paid for and you just study.

M: I talk about myself as a working class person, but I have trouble doing that partly because there's a strong association in my mind between poverty and working class and I never felt we were poor. And today if I were in big trouble financially, I can always go home. There is a buffer there for me. It would cost a lot personally to take my family up on it, but it's there. At the same time, I don't know how else to describe where I come from.

**... being working class has to do with how little you are in control of. . .**

R: I think the thing that I left out of mine was what is it that people do for work? What is the profession? What is the job? So you can have a mail carrier that actually produces a certain level of income, whether that would put them into the middle class or not, I don't know.

M: Because it's about a whole lot more than money.

R: Which is the piece that I didn't really talk about.

M: To me a big chunk of it is a value system. It's about how you perceive the

### "Money and Class: how shall we deal?"

October 8, 1992  
7:00 to 9:00 pm

Join us for an evening of discussion.  
We want your input.  
More details in Program Calendar accompanying this newsletter.

world in terms of what's important. What I've always thought was important were things like integrity and working hard and being able to pay your own way to school or whatever, being independent enough to "take care of yourself". I always thought those were very valuable things. And I discovered that that's sort of beside the point for many people.

R: Let's sort of work through the point of going home. I think that's an interesting concept. I think that I was raised in a way that being independent, taking care of myself was really important also. And that going home wasn't my first choice. It would almost be my last choice. Which doesn't mean that I'm not welcome or that I couldn't go back there but it would be a defeat almost to go home. It would be a failure on my part if that's where I had to end up or had to come back to. Cause it would be economic reasons at that point.

J: When you were talking about whether or not you could buy a house, whether you would have an inheritance or not, I was thinking just how much the parameters of what is working class change. Not so long ago it was possible for stable working class people to buy a house. Now it's not even a given for the children of stable working class people.

R: It's not even a given for middle class people.

J: So some of the parameters of what

is working class can change. Class depends on the extent to which you're in control of the parameters that change. So that being working class has to do with how little you are in control of. And it's a possibility that some of those people who've always defined themselves as middle class and are now realizing, "Oh my goodness, my kids can't do this anymore, my kids can't buy a house, my kids won't be able to go to school," were never middle class to start with. In a society that denies class issues, it's about who controls the parameters of class division and how far away are you from controlling any aspects of class division. When you look at that it helps decide who's working class. But somebody was also talking about making it on your own. I wonder to what extent that comes out of a working class experience of having a family that for whatever reasons was able to support you either economically or emotionally or maybe both. But if you come from a family that was not able to do either or both of those things, maybe that leads to greater reliance on community.

R: Or more independence, it could go either way.

J: I'm not sure about that. I know it's been a struggle for me. There was a time in my life when I would have focussed very much on doing it all by myself -- whatever "it" was. But it was never true, because I never was doing it all by myself.

M: That's one of the illusions, that we can do it alone.

R: Right. The whole idea of building community goes against that other message of making it on your own or pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. So much of our lives is in response to what we think middle class values are, so that who we are is defined by somebody else. And then we aspire to something else and we don't always know what the something else is but there's this sense that something's missing or that something's not right with you because you don't look like this or your life doesn't look like this thing that you aspire to. And so many of the messages are outside of ourselves. And when we start to talk about how internalized class stuff has hurt us, I think that as a working class

person and a Black person I often lock myself into a box. I don't see that I belong anywhere in the world.

J: I don't think you *can* go anywhere. I think there are places you definitely cannot go.

D: That's the truth. And that's defined really tightly when you really get to upper class places. That's where it gets really tight. Increasingly tight.

R: But I think you can be able to say you belong anywhere in the world. There's a difference.

D: There are some places we do not belong.

R: But I guess I'm really trying to say something about the ways in which we restrict ourselves from those places. I don't think middle class white people wake up and say, "There are places that I cannot go in the world". I mean, money might be an obstacle. But they don't sit around and say, "I can't go to this country, I can't exist in this place because I'm white or middle class." And I think we make all kinds of choices as Black people in particular about what we can and cannot do and sometimes they're real and sometimes they're not.

D: For me, it's where they're real that really starts to talk about what class is. With race the realness gets a lot lower and clearer quicker. But class in this country really operates on making you think you can go any place, that everything is open to you. There's an illusion that you can have it all. I know that when I was at Gillette there were so many places where they would give you a taste of opulence. It was almost like you were play-acting. They'd put you in all these fancy places and you'd think you were experiencing this thing. But it was so clear that it was an act. It was almost like a performance. Because you were not in that place the way the people to whom that place belonged were in that place. But to the extent that you believed that you were, you were bought and paid for. Your allegiance to the ruling class was bought and paid for. There are so many subtleties that make us loyal to the ruling class in this society.

J: One of the most powerful points made in the movie *Roger and Me* was

the extent to which working class and middle class people did the bidding of the upper class guy and protected him and made it possible for him to do the stuff that he did and live the life that he lived. We did it.

D: And they make it almost blasphemous to single out upper class people and to see them as a force. It isn't even like you're being disloyal. When you see how much control and power they have that isn't yours, it's considered blasphemous. Even to say those words "ruling class", every kind of person would come down on you for naming that in this country.

J: It's okay to blame the middle class.

R: Owning class is the new term.

D: Yeah, but not ruling.

J: What does it mean, owning class? It's about how far up you're willing and able to look, because the power is a lot higher than someone that's just owning. Owning what?

M: Well, money that makes money. I think that's the point. That you have resources that give you money, like money invested in places and you don't even have to do anything in order for money to come back to you. It just piles up in the bank. That's how I understand owning class. Money making money. Without work. Which is the mystery of it. And so we shouldn't give money to poor people because they don't work for it....

R: They don't earn it....

M: Right, but rich people or owning class people do. At least that's the logic.

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J: I was thinking that for me a real benefit of being working class is a certain suspicion, a certain cynicism. I've had to dig hard and deep to get rid of a lot of internalized classism. And that's ongoing. I know I'll always have to do that. But the more I do that work, the more I uncover even greater depths of cynicism and suspicion and as long as they don't take me over, as long as they remain a chosen perspective, then I think I'm a healthier person.

R: So did people answer the question of where they think their class location

is? I want another language, another word. I don't think I could claim working class in totality. So I really want to talk about a class transition. I think there's the class that we were raised in and there may be the class that we're currently in. And they may not be the same. I mean, I grew up poor. So that there's a way that maybe in my life I went from poor to working class.

J: Why do you not see that the poor are part of the working class?

R: I sort of see them as a subset. That there's even less income and less options and less choices within that. Poverty locks you into another box that's real different. And there may be very similar kinds of things. Like the ability to dream. What is it that working class and poor kids even get to dream about? Do they? Do we encourage our kids to be creative, to dream, to think about the future without it being restricted by "Well, we can't do that," or "That's not what your life is going to be." I mean that we constantly put them into a box based on what we think they can or cannot do. So that they don't get hurt. I think there are some real reasons we do that. Partially it's protection. So I would say that just in terms of income, again resources -- the ability to provide for myself -- I know that I make more money than my mother who was a domestic. I have for a long time actually made more money.

J: I constantly find myself disagreeing with people who say what you say and I think a lot of that comes from being English and coming from a culture where in terms of class analysis at least in my experience the bottom of the class structure is the working class. And you may be on the street, you may be unemployed....

R: Okay, so you would lump that altogether.

J: Absolutely, because I think that for me it's about how much control you have over your life. My father worked all the time that I was kid and my mother worked most of the time that I was a kid, I mean worked out for money, but we were poor because neither of them earned much. She cleaned houses and he worked in a warehouse most of the time. So there

was never any doubt that we were working class. If he'd been unemployed, we'd have still been working class. And I think part of that came from an awareness that even if you had a job that seemed stable, all it took was the whim of your bosses and you were out there on the street. There was no difference between you and the poor.

R: I don't think I thought about myself as a poor person growing up. It didn't come up. You didn't talk about it. We didn't talk about class in my house.

M: So, you didn't grow up feeling that you were poor?

R: No. Because there were other poor people around me. And I would say they were mostly working class people really minimum wage earners at best. But it was in a time where they could with that have bought a home. So the whole community which I lived in they owned their own home.

D: My parents came from poor people and I think what I've learned more than anything is first hand how violent the process of assimilation of middle class values is. It was violent to my parents, to us as a family, for me as a child in it.

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R: Answers to me as a working class person are often very simple. They're straightforward. When I think about middle class, I think about convoluted work plans, planning for the plan, meeting after meeting and nothing gets done. I do think that working class people try to get the job done. Here's the problem, there's the answer. Let's do it. And sometimes even how we see the solutions causes some of those differences to manifest themselves in groups. How you process. Do you want to talk about feelings or not talk about feelings.

J: One of my frustrations with a middle class friend of mine for years and years and years is that she would do things like schedule time to feel. That's what therapy is to her. She had an hour a week which was the time to feel. In what other ways have we allowed ourselves, our bodies, two hours, three hours a week to work out. People do. I don't do therapy. But people do. I might do those things

some time. It's like allowing our bodies and minds and hearts to become bureaucratized. I say to people I don't need to work out. I work hard. Now, that's only partly true, because I know my body would benefit from some nice gentle stretching. But I understand why working class people look down upon those people who are going off to exercise in some artificial environment, while they're wiping the sweat off their brow.

R: To answer the question "Do you ever wish that you were from another class?", I don't think so. And I think that's why I resist (whether its internalized or something) claiming middle class. For me to say I'm working class is really important to me. Even though I feel like I struggle with that line. I don't want to be middle class. And there's something about being who I am that I don't want to lose and that I want to hold on to. And I think that the answer on the positive side is that it's the lens, the class definition, is the lens out of which you see everything.

M: But can you describe that?

R: I think that the positives for me are just in terms of what it is that I see. You get to the core of something quickly. That's not anything I think about doing, it's just who I am or how I think things should be done. I think that I've tried to take a little bit from a lot of places and tried to come up with something else. So I was saying working class didn't fit cause I think there probably are very much middle class values in my life as much as there are working class values in my life and somewhere between those two is me, those tapes, those messages, and there's me trying to create something from that because there's something in all of it. And I think that in both things there's some good and there's some bad. I wouldn't want to go back to a life that I didn't feel like I had choices and options in.

M: Except at the same time, Renae, there are lots of things that you can't make choices about and how you grew up and who you're connected to now are things that either get you access or don't. And that's not about your choice. That's a whole system that gives or denies access depending on what you know or who you're



connected to or what your blood is.

R: It really is more about world view more than it is access that's given to me. It's really how do you see the world? The world is not Boston. My world is not New Haven, Connecticut. I would not ever want it to be New Haven, Connecticut. That is not destined or controlled by my family necessarily. There's something about there's another state and it's New York and it's Florida and if you have a train ticket or plane ticket you can see it. You can go there.

D: I think that's one thing that I value about being with my people, my family. Because that was the thing with my family: my parents moved totally away from both families. Which is another whole thing about working class and poor people. Because so much of it is about being grounded somewhere. And that's a major strength and I guess somewhere on the flip side it's a major drawback. I know a lot of people had to move around. Like my mother. She's just beginning to talk about her growing up years where they'd go every place to do work. Wherever there was work, they did the work. That's how they lived. A bone of contention I have with middle class existence is that whole thing about you have to be somewhere else. There's an escape. It's not just about these people that you grew up with that you can't run away from and you don't stop liking them. This is it, folks. These are the people. And the thing that I realized when I went away was that I was never confused that my grandparents didn't know as much as anybody. Because they hadn't been here or there. I mean that never entered my mind. Because they were so grounded they knew. You don't have to go all over the place to know things.

R: And what you want to know is right here.

D: Right here. That whole way of being in this society is like you have to leave, you have to go someplace else. I do think perspective helps you clarify it. Because after I go and go and go, I feel like I'm coming more and more back to what I left in the first place.

R: You become more and more like

them in spite of everything that you've done.

D: And love it. But somebody tells you there's somebody else that you can be if you see more or have more. In a class society everything is quantified and hardly anyone cares about the depth of the experience. But the depth of working class people! And that's another thing that's put into the middle and upper classes, the idea that here are the complex people but over here are these poor common people. They're simple and they don't understand. And that's not true! It's so not true. In fact, there are so many shallow middle class people.

J: I had a new girlfriend one time and my father spent the evening with us in a pub and he took me aside -- and this is a man of few words -- and he just said, "Jane, she's not one of us." Of all the things you could imagine a person's father saying about a girlfriend. This was class. And my father was incredibly racist. And I guarantee that if the girlfriend had been a working class Black woman, that would have been okay. Better than an upper or upper middle class white person. When it came down to it, he would have felt at home. He didn't feel at home, so how could his daughter feel at home? With all the differences in the working class and the differences of experience in the working class, there is every answer we need for how to live ethically in the world. And as soon as you start moving up the class structure, there are all the distractions you need to take you away from finding amongst your people how to do that.

M: I think there's a difference between what your value system is and what you're allowed to live. There are a lot of working class people who, if they could, would rearrange things so that they'd have a different life than the life they have, but their lives would still be based on the values that they learned as working class people.

J: Absolutely. I have friends and community that afford me access to staying in my house and if I run out of money they're a buffer between me and starvation. They allow me more of a middle class life in the sense of a safer or less worried life. But I maintain the values that I attribute to

the working class.

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J: We started off with a question and we've been talking in it and around it and I think there's a whole lot more we can all say. And why don't we make this a series in the newsletter?

D: I think we went all around the thing, but maybe we need to write a brief thing about our class -- how we see ourselves in terms of class.

M: Can we say it quickly?

J: I'm working class.

R: I'm working class in transition.

M: What I feel comfortable with is "working class with educational privilege".

D: I feel like I've had a really mixed class. It's really mixed.

R: You can say that. I don't think that's problematic.

J: Katie Cannon says it takes three generations to change class. What does that mean for the person in the second generation? That's why I find it very helpful, Meck, when you say I'm working class with educational privilege because it's clear and I think it's helpful. Then it allows other people to say, "I'm working class and a millionaire." "I'm working class and a dentist." "I'm working class and...." instead of saying, "Well, I'm a dentist, therefore I can't be." "I have a masters degree, therefore I can't be." It helps unmask a lot of the illusions. #

Typed transcripts of the "Whose World? What Order?" conference will be available soon.

Included are speeches by *Rita Nakashima Brock, Emily Erwin Culpepper, Hayat Imam, Unzu Lee, Mother Bear, Drorah O'Donnell Setel and Dagmar Thorpe*. (A couple of others' permissions are still pending).

To order, complete form on page 7 and send \$3 plus \$1 postage and we'll send you a copy as soon as they're ready.

## A Touch of Class

by Carol Siemering

My madrigal group  
sits in Kathy's  
music room.  
The harpsichord her  
father built  
is standing ornately  
in the corner,  
its keys flashing  
me an ironic  
bony grin.

Ruth was a telephone  
operator  
and Frank  
a store clerk for the  
New York Central.

She draped the windows  
in acrylic pastels.  
"Now isn't that rich-lookin'"  
she'd say  
and even as a child  
I felt something sad  
and pulling when she  
used those words.

The Reader's Digest told  
us all we needed to know.  
We knew all of  
Joe's organs,

Increased our Word Power,  
and were provided novels  
in condensed form.  
That was our  
"culture".

WLNA played music in the  
background  
that even an elevator  
wouldn't stand for.

Yes, of shanty Irish  
descent we were and  
there was no turning  
the volume down

on the family exchanges.  
The television was  
our communion table  
and jugs of Gallo Port  
the therapists

for our tragedies.  
We did Polonius  
proud;  
were to our ourselves  
and each other  
real

knew nothing  
of posing nor posturing  
lived, loved, laughed,  
cried, hated hard.  
In the world in which

I now move  
I am asked to be polite  
and "appropriate",  
my passion controlled  
and carefully articulated.

I remember once  
when I was working  
with handicapped children  
strumming away

my own Ode to Joy  
the speech therapist  
sternly chiding "Don't  
sing so loud."

Me, who learned to sing leaning  
against the  
piano at Nino's,  
the wonderful musty  
smell of beer nudging  
my nostrils.  
(Still when I pass  
by a barroom my  
heart quickens at  
the scent.)

Ruth, Frank!  
(both dead in my  
20's)

I call on you from  
my bones!

Oh where is my bowling  
shirt with my  
name embroidered  
in cursive script?

This straddling of  
worlds exhausts me.  
I am no strong  
bridge.

I want to pay tribute to you.  
To your wit and wisdom,  
your sad short lives,  
unsung, unheralded.

I want to sing  
and talk loud!  
raise a ruckus!  
be you in me,  
have others value  
what we valued.  
And poor though  
we might have been,  
have others look  
and see the  
riches  
shining there.



### WOMEN'S THEOLOGICAL CENTER

P.O. Box 1200, Boston, MA 02117-1200

(617) 536-8782

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Please send me information on:

\_\_\_ *Study/Action 1993-94*: \_\_\_ general information; \_\_\_ detailed information; \_\_\_ application form

\_\_\_ *Resource Center* Program Information;

\_\_\_ general information about WTC

\_\_\_ Please send me \_\_\_ copies of the *Whose World? What Order?* conference transcripts. I'm enclosing \$4 (includes \$1 postage) for each copy.

\_\_\_ Please add the above and/or attached name(s) to your mailing list

\_\_\_ to receive updates on events and programs

\_\_\_ to receive newsletter (\$10 for individuals - more if you can, less if you can't.)

\_\_\_ My contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed. This represents

\_\_\_ a general donation; \_\_\_ fee for receiving the newsletter; \_\_\_ Annual Fund '92 contribution

\_\_\_ Please do not release my name and address to other groups.

## OFFICE UPDATE

by Meck Groot

As I write this in mid-July, Renae Scott (Resource Center Co-ordinator) is on the phone with Donna Bivens (Co-Director) discussing programs and fees for Fall, 1992. Donna is in North Carolina on vacation. I've been on the phone with Nancy Richardson (Co-Director) three times today talking about WTC-related things. Nancy is also on vacation.

All that to say that "getting away" from here is in some ways only possible physically. There is always far more to be done than the resources of time, money and energy realistically allow.

Some of the load, however, has been alleviated by the addition to our staff of Chris McGee who just began working part time as office assistant. We are enormously pleased to have Chris join us. Not only are we excited by her work, we are charmed by her person.

Relief has also been visited upon us by way of Jill Krueger, a student at Earlham College in Richmond,

To date we have received \$10,850 towards our Annual Fund 1992 goal of \$48,000. If you haven't already sent in your contribution, please do so soon.

Indiana. Jill is interning here for the summer and has taken on such projects as transcribing tapes of the "Whose World? What Order?" conference [to order, see ad page 6]; assisting with our Summer Anti-Racism Training Program; and sorting through our jumble of books, tapes, videos, games and other resources.

Our first-ever Summer Anti-Racism Training Program (June 22 to 25) was very successful. Thirty-five participants and facilitators hung in together for four full days in which we deepened our understandings of race, racism and internalized racism and developed strategies that work against the oppression. Because the program worked so well, we have decided to offer it again in 1993. Spread the word.

**Memorial Recognition Fund  
Contribution to WTC**  
from Northeast Feminist  
Ethics Consultation  
in memory of  
**Jane Cary Peck**  
from Elizabeth and Hans Wolf  
in celebration  
of the marriage of  
**Eleanor Scott Meyers  
and Bill Duke**  
from Diann Neu  
and Mary Hunt  
in memory of  
**Judith Mintier**

### WTC Wishlist:

armchairs and large pillows for  
our classroom; VCR and TV  
for anti-racism trainings; book-  
shelves; plants and plant  
stands or hangers; meditative  
music tapes; fax machine;  
refrigerator

**We're very happy with  
secondhand stuff.**



**WOMEN'S THEOLOGICAL CENTER**  
*P.O. Box 1200, Boston, MA 02117-1200*

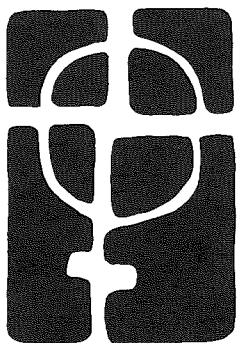
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# Women's Theological Center



## Quarterly Newsletter

**MARCH, 1993**  
Volume 11, No. 1

In this issue:

**Whistling Hope,  
Seeking Justice**  
by Elizabeth Bettenhausen

**Body/Image/Power:  
Study/Action Reflections**  
by Beth Wrenne,  
Kathy Brucker,  
Ok-Youn Kim,  
and Amy Wagner

**AND MORE**

Suggested fee for 4 issues:  
Individuals - \$10.00  
Libraries - \$35.00

## Whistling Hope, Seeking Justice

by Elizabeth Bettenhausen, Study/Action Faculty

*Hope is the thing with feathers/  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,*

*And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.*

*I've heard it in the chilliest land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.*

Emily Dickenson

Bill Clinton said, "I still believe in a place called Hope." The land has grown politically and economically chilly and strange, so hope was what many voters wanted.

While the majority found hope in the status quo or in Ross Perot, the winning minority saw it in Clinton/Gore. Not only is hope free: it is contagious and preferable to despair. So I am not surprised at how many confirmed pessimists have been saying, "Things will change now; he will make a difference." I hope so.

Those who voted for Clinton were hearing hope in quite a gale. African Americans, older people, urban dwellers, lesbians and gay men, poor people--the bone-chilling winds blew among them during Reagan and Bush's terms. How sweet to hear, "Together we can make America great again, and build a community of hope that will inspire the world." European-American suburbanite Democrats, fearing pink slips and foreclosures, whistled along to the tune of hope as well.

Some newly elected to Congress and state houses will change and amplify the tune. In Boston, for the first time ever, an African American woman, Diane Wilkerson, was elected to the state senate. Carol Moseley Braun, Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Jay Kim: late 20th century leaders going east to Washington. And half of the senators



photo by Elizabeth Bettenhausen  
*Elizabeth Bettenhausen*

from the West Coast are women. If the Senate of the United States finally needs a restroom for women, can justice be far behind?

Yet, I am uneasy with this contagious belief in hope, uneasy because "Yet never, in extremity/It asked a crumb of me." Getting something for nothing, or a lottery lot for a little, is very American. Will the record turnout at the polls endure in civic responsibility between elections? Can the enthusiastic tongues funded by Perot be translated to build the common welfare? Will hope endure when pragmatic idealism requires not only crumbs but sacrifice? Will hope endure when even sacrifice does not suffice?

Of course, I will be happy if January 20th brings a slew of executive orders reversing the sexually confused priorities of the Bush administration. And 100 appointments of the likes of Barbara Jordan to federal judgeships and the Supreme Court would warm my heart. Signatures in place of vetoes on legislation for family and medical leave and civil rights would be fine. But hope will be put to the test on tough questions of equitable distribution of burdens and benefits. Justice asks more than crumbs.