

THE TORCH

CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

February/March 2007

Newsletter Editor: Amy Homans



MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

March is the month on the civil rights calendar during which Women's History takes the forefront and we celebrate the accomplishments of the women who came before us and those who are making history today.

In the United States, in the past month alone, a woman became the first female president of Harvard University since that institution's founding in 1636 and a female candidate in serious contention for the 2008 Democratic nomination announced her campaign for president. (Currently 13 countries around the world are led by a female president, prime minister or chancellor, including Germany, Ireland, Finland, Switzerland, South Korea, Liberia, Chile and New Zealand.) American women can be found in the board rooms of the nation's largest corporations, on the bench in state and federal courtrooms, as astronauts and engineers at NASA, and as researchers at the National Institutes of Health. Check out this month's issue of *The Torch* for information and ideas on how to honor the women who have opened doors that hopefully the current

generation of girls will open even wider for those who will follow them.

THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

The National Women's History Project, founded for the express purpose of insuring that the achievements of women would be promoted in our schools and other institutions, is an excellent resource for materials and resources for Women's History Month. This year, NWHP's theme is "Generations of Women Moving History Forward." NWHP's website, found at www.nwhp.org, is host to a number of great resources that might be of interest to you. For example:



No time or energy to research a selection of questions for a Women's History Month Quiz? Then go to www.nwhp.org/whm/test.php for lengthy list of questions under the apt heading "Test Your Knowledge of Women's History." Need more? Then go to www.nwhp.org/whm/2007_whm_brochure.pdf for another great list of questions (and answers) prepared for you by the National Women's History Project. Next, get some fact posters up around your school about these women and you will be well on your way to your 2007 Women's History Month Bee.



If you are interested in obtaining books, posters, videos, and/or other women's history celebration materials for your school community, go to www.nwhp.org/ and click on 2007 Women's History Resource Catalog.

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Enter the 2007 NWHP's contest by designing a project that celebrates this year's theme (Generations of Women Moving History Forward). There are five categories of entrants: elementary, middle and high school; community and workplace.

To view the winners of the 2006 contest, go to www.nwhp.org/whm/contest.php. There is no information currently posted on the website about the rules or details governing the 2007 contest, but check future issues of *The Torch* for updated information on the contest.



WHAT'S NEW WITH HARDY GIRLS HEALTHY WOMEN?

The Women's History Month issue of *The Torch* would not be complete without a look at what is going on these days at Hardy Girls Healthy Women. As usual, there is a lot going on. For those of you unfamiliar with this terrific organization, Maine is incredibly fortunate to be home to Hardy Girls Healthy Women, a non-profit organization located in Waterville that is "dedicated to creating strong and healthy girls by developing safe places to explore life and push the limits." Hardy Girls Healthy Women was recently honored by the American Psychological Association Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls. Hardy Girls Healthy Women's

efforts to empower girls to challenge norms earned it recognition as a national resource.



Among the resources offered by Hardy Girls Healthy Women are **speakers** who can address a wide range of highly relevant topics that directly impact young girls and boys today. The list of topics includes:

- Eating Disorders
- Girl Fighting
- Cliques
- Coalition Building
- Sexuality
- Healthy Relationships
- Sexual Harassment
- Creating Positive Girl Spaces
- Boys to Men
- Media Literacy
- Adolescence
- The Culture of Girls
- Packaging Girlhood - the Commodification of Girl Power

The speakers available through HGHW and the topics on which they each present are:

***Lyn Mikel Brown Ed.D.** Lyn is a co-creator of Hardy Girls Healthy Women. She is also a Professor of Education and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Colby College, Waterville, Maine. She received her Ed.D. from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, and was a founding member of the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development. She is the author of four books on girls' social and psychological development. Presentation topics include: Girlfighting and Media Literacy, How to Use Adversaries to Allies: A Curriculum for Change and Starting Your Own Girl-

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friendly Organization co-presented with Karen Heck. Lyn also just released her fourth book, *Packaging Girlhood* (St Martin's Press.)

***Mark Tappan Ed.D.** Mark is a Professor and Chair of Education at Colby College, Waterville, Maine. He received his Ed.D. from Harvard University's Graduate School of Education and has written several articles and co-authored two books on human and moral development and has taught classes on masculinity and gender specific development for adolescents. Presentation topics include: boys and men's development, moral development and moral education, children and adolescents, developmental and educational issues, service learning in higher education, public education, including secondary, elementary, and early-childhood education.

***Karen Heck.** Karen is co-creator of Hardy Girls Healthy Women and has over 20 years of experience in developing and running non-profit organizations. She has experience in management, organizational sustainability and fundraising and helped create 4 non-profits before starting Hardy Girls, all of which are still in operation today. Presentation topics include: Starting Your Own Girl-Friendly Organization co-presented with Lyn Mikel Brown.

***Mary Madden.** Mary is the Research Associate for the Center for Research and Education at the University of Maine in Orono. She has a Ph.D. in Education and Human Development with a concentration in Women's Studies. Presentation topics include: How to Use Adversaries to Allies: A Curriculum for Change, girls' sexuality, ally building and gender issues in education.

To schedule a presenter, contact Hardy Girls Healthy Women at info@hardygirlshealthywomen.org or call 207.861.8131



Also currently available through Hardy Girls Healthy Women are **free Ugly Ducklings Community Action Kits**. As some of you may recall from the October 2006 issue of *The Torch*, HGHW initiated a national campaign to reduce bullying and harassment of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth and to raise awareness of the issues faced by LGBTQ youth. In furtherance of that goal, HGHW and its partners produced the award winning documentary film, *Ugly Ducklings*, and created an accompanying community action kit.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Bingham Program, Hardy Girls and Greater Waterville C4CY are offering **free Ugly Ducklings Community Action Kits** to every school district in Maine! This is a tremendous resource for every school district at any price and to have it made available for free is an opportunity not to be passed by. [Click here to download an application for the free Kit](#) (PDF: 54K). For more information on the *Ugly Ducklings* project, visit www.uglyducklings.org.



Hardy Girls Healthy Women has joined with the organization Boys To Men to challenge Kmart to prevent domestic violence by removing [this shirt](#) from their shelves across the nation. The children's t-shirt, captioned "Problem Solved," depicts two panels of stick figures, with a male stick figure shoving a female stick figure out of

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the second panel. As Kennebec County District Attorney Evert Fowle stated in the December 16, 2006 edition of the Journal, "I thought that shirt was very offensive, and I'm sure people who made that shirt thought it was cute... .But when you prosecute 728 domestic violence cases a year, it's not cute."


Specifically, HGHW and Boys to Men have asked Kmart to do three things:

To pull every shirt off the shelves of every store in the country;

To publicly take a stand against domestic violence, and to work with domestic violence and sexual assault prevention programs in towns where Kmart's are located; and


To provide in-service staff prevention training.


You can assist HGHW and Boys to Men in this effort by downloading their [PETITION LETTER](#) and by contacting Kmart by telephone at (847) 286-2500 or by email at general@customerservice.sears.com.

 Be sure and check out Hardy Girls Healthy Women's web site for a full listing of its many resources, programs and special events. Be sure to sign up for its quarterly snail mail newsletter by going to info@hghw.org.



TEACHING TOLERANCE CELEBRATES WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

 As always, Teaching Tolerance provides an excellent resource for Women's History Month. This year's offerings include an interactive online game for grades 3-5 that teaches about women's struggle for the vote, an activity for grades 7-9 to explore gender stereotyping in career fields, and a lesson plan for older students on sexism. There are also very good articles on gender oppression and on Women and Political Power, which discusses why a gender gap still exists for women in the field of politics, despite Nancy Pelosi's recent rise to become the first female Speaker of the House in the nation's history. Go to www.tolerance.org for these articles and activities.

 Need some more sources of information for Women's History Month? Check out www.factmonster.com/spot/womenshistory1.html for a huge selection of resources on the history of women, including: a history of women's rights; top female American chief executive officers; a guide to female goddesses around the world; a quiz on famous female world rulers; a

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short animated video on women's suffrage; a lengthy list of ingenious devices invented by women; and female Nobel Prize winners.



Go to www.iwaswondering.com, a web site experience from the National Academy of Sciences, to learn about ten contemporary women scientists and the work they are doing, including Cynthia Breazel and her "feeling" robot Kismet, and Amy Vedder, the mountain gorilla's best friend. (A good site for elementary and middle school teams.)



Be sure and check out the February 2006 issue of *The Torch* for more speakers, resources and activity ideas to celebrate Women's History Month.



Update on the Emmett Till Murder Case

On February 27th, a Mississippi state grand jury declined to bring charges against Carolyn Bryant, a white woman Emmett Till either spoke to or whistled at three days before the day the 14-year-old black boy was

abducted and brutally murdered by Ms. Bryant's husband and a group that some say included Ms. Bryant as well.

The August 1955 murder of Emmett Till and an all white jury's refusal to convict the men responsible for his death helped to galvanize the civil rights movement in the U.S. (After a five day trial, the jury deliberated for only 67 minutes and only then because they claimed to have taken time out to drink a soda.) One hundred days later, Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back of a Montgomery, Alabama bus.

On February 26th, the FBI announced a partnership with the NAACP, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and the National Urban League to try and bring closure to more than 70 suspected murders of black Americans in the South during the civil rights era of the 1950s and 60s. The hope is that some of these cases will be brought to justice before the last remaining witnesses in those cases die of old age and natural causes.

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ARE YOU LOOKING FOR MULTICULTURAL MUSICIANS WHO WILL ROCK YOUR SCHOOL?

If you have been seeking a band of talented musicians to bring a high quality multicultural music experience to your school community, look no further. Portland based *African Gospel Rhythms*, led by Pezzy Kudakwashe (“Koo-da-wah’-shee”) is a group of wonderful musicians who make you want to get up and move to their music. *African Gospel Rhythms* is comprised of Pezzy and Maria Kudakwashe and their daughters Natasha and Natalie who immigrated to America from Namibia approximately seven years ago. They are also joined by two musician friends, one from the United States and one who emigrated from South Africa to the U.S.

African Gospel Rhythms recently brought the house down at Portland’s Nathan Clifford School’s 100th year celebration. Even the most reluctant dancers in the crowd could not restrain tapping toes and clapping hands. The group uses traditional African instruments as well as conventional instruments. In addition to their music, Pezzy Kudakwashe will also share with audiences the events that brought his family to America from Namibia.

In order to accommodate schools that are uncomfortable with the religious themes of gospel music, the group will sing in its native language upon request.

If you are interested in rocking your school with *African Gospel Rhythms*, contact Pezzy Kudakwashe at (207) 773-6926 or on his cell phone at 408-1016. (*Editors note: I heard this group play at Nathan Clifford School on February 9th for a crowd of several hundred people and they were just awesome. It was the talk of the school for days.*)

Portland Press Herald Newspaper Apologizes For Two Controversial Ads



A recent ad in the Portland Press Herald for the People's Choice Credit Union was

a wanted poster for what it captioned "The Fee Bandit". It featured a photo of what appeared to many readers to be a Hassidic Jew and a negative stereotype of 19th century Jewish money lenders who were vilified when they attempted to collect on debts. Outcries from the Jewish Community Alliance and the Anti-Defamation League caused the credit union and the newspaper to withdraw the ad and issue apologies.

Following a meeting with staffers from the newspaper and the credit union, Benjamin Marcus of the Jewish Community Alliance

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stated: *"The emphasis of the meeting today was on everyone recognizing how pervasive these stereotypes are, of any group. Whether it's Jews or African Americans or gays and lesbians, the stereotypes are out there and we get desensitized to them and then they pop up like in this terrible Fee Bandit ad."* Marcus added that both the newspaper and the credit union did not intend to publish a negative stereotype, were mortified by the incident and pledged not to repeat the mistake in the future.

Ironically, barely a week earlier, the Portland Press Herald had published an advertisement in its Religion and Values section for a sermon entitled, "The Only Way to Destroy the Jewish Race." The title of the sermon, which was in actuality a positive sermon that cast a negative light on anti-Semitism, was intended to draw to the service people who are anti-Semitic in their beliefs. However, the misleading title of the sermon, as printed in the paper, raised the ire of Press Herald readers, the Jewish Community Alliance and the Anti-Defamation League and the paper pledged not to make a similar error in the future. Enter, "The Fee Bandit...."

Lend Your Support to Mt. Blue High School's Effort to Form A Gay Straight Alliance

Mt. Blue High School in Farmington is in the process of trying to form a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) for its students. For those of you unfamiliar with a GSA, it is a student organization for gay and straight students who are interested in creating safe environments in schools for students to support each other and learn about homophobia and other oppressions; educating the school

community about homophobia, gender identity, and sexual orientation issues; and fighting discrimination, harassment, and violence in schools resulting from bias against gay and lesbian students.

News of Mt. Blue's desire to form a GSA has been met with some community opposition. Far more negative comments than positive have been posted at Mainetoday.com, the online edition of the Waterville Sentinel, the Kennebec Journal and the Portland Press Herald. If you would like to voice your support for Mt. Blue and its efforts to make its community a safer place for every student, please consider posting your own comments at Mainetoday.com or by writing to: the KJ; Principal Joseph Moore (jmoore@msad9.org); SAD 9 Superintendent Michael Cormier (mcormier@msad9.org); or to the chair of the School Board, Dr. Jonathan Cohen (jcohen@maine.edu).

On a legal note, the federal Equal Access Act (20 U.S.C. §§ 4071-74) provides that if a public school allows *any* student-initiated, non-curricular clubs to meet, it must allow *all* student-initiated, non-curricular groups. The Supreme Court has broadly interpreted a "non-curricular" group to mean "any student group that does not directly relate to the body of courses offered by the school." As long as a GSA follows all of the same processes and regulations in place for the formation of any other non-curricular club at a school, it is protected by the Equal Access Act. Accordingly, a school cannot prohibit the formation of a GSA or otherwise treat it differently than any other student non-curricular group, so long as the GSA abides by the rules that

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govern each student non-curricular group.



TOOL BOX TIP OF THE MONTH: *Shoe Pile*

Your Tool Box contains a Team Building Activity entitled “Shoe Pile.” The object of this activity is for group members to build trust and communication skills. The only material you will need is a bandana or strip of cloth.

Ask everyone in the group to take off his/her shoes and put them into a big pile. Ask for a volunteer and blindfold that person. Mix up the shoes in the pile and ask the rest of the group members to verbally direct this person to his/her shoes. The directions must be verbal only without any touching or guiding and no moving of the shoes. Once the person finds his/her own shoes, he or she must put them on while still blindfolded.

If your group is large enough, split into teams and time each group as they guide their members through the shoes.

Use the following discussion prompts after the activity is completed:

1. How did you feel when you were blindfolded?
2. Could a person easily find his/her own shoes without any help from the group when blindfolded?
3. How was teamwork a factor?
4. How does this activity relate to your own life, if at all?

The Tool Box has many team building and ice breaker activities that might prove useful in helping your team

member work together in a cooperative manner. Dig into the Tool Box to find activities that you think your group would especially like.

START GETTING READY FOR THE CIVIL RIGHTS TEAM PROJECT (CRTP) STATEWIDE CONFERENCE MAY 7TH

The annual statewide conference will soon be upon us. Preparations have been underway for several months and in a couple of weeks you will receive a memo from Thom Harnett with conference information and some highlights.

Teams who are planning on attending the conference must have their registration materials in no later than Friday, April 13th. Registration materials will be mailed out at the end of March.

Please schedule time to meet with your team members in early April so they can review and select the workshops that they would like to attend on May 7th. The earlier you register, the better the chance your team members will have of getting the workshops of their choice.

As always, this conference will celebrate the hard work done by civil rights team members around the state and will run from 8:30 –1:30. The conference will offer a mix of educational opportunities and workshops that explore the diversity around us. The multicultural entertainment portion of the day will run from 12:30–1:30. Please plan on staying for the entire day as students have

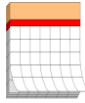
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consistently told us how much they enjoy the closing sessions.



UPCOMING EVENTS AND SIGNIFICANT DATES

March 17-25: Maine Jewish Film Festival, Portland. For information about the films that will be shown during the festival as well as show times and dates, go to www.mjff.org

March 27th: York County CRT High School Regional Gathering, from 4-7 p.m. in the York High School cafeteria. Contact FA Jeff Barry for more information @ jbarry@yorkschoools.org.

April 11th: York County Middle Schools Regional Gathering; Middle School of the Kennebunks. Contact FA Ward Willis for more info @ wwillis@msad71.net.

May 7th: CRTP Statewide Conference, Augusta Civic Center. See article for more information.



“Extra, Extra, Read All About It!”

Has your team just completed a successful project, read a great book, had a good fundraiser, listened to an inspiring speaker, seen a compelling video, or done something that was just plain fun that you would like to share with other teams? Send in a blurb to The Torch and we will include it in a future issue in a column dedicated to what’s happening around the State. Send your news to amy@maine.rr.com with the subject heading: Newsletter item.

This newsletter is written and distributed by the Civil Rights Team Project, a state-wide program under the auspices of the Maine Office of the Attorney General. The mission of the Civil Rights Team Project is to increase the safety of high school, middle school and elementary school students and to reduce the incidence of bias-motivated harassment and violence in schools.

*G. Steven Rowe --- Attorney General
Thomas A. Harnett—Director, Civil Rights
Education & Enforcement Unit
Debi Gray, Civil Rights Project Administrator*