



NOW's Grand 50th Anniversary Celebration Launches a Second Half-Century of Activism

July 2016

A Brand New National Board

A highlight of the **2016 Forward Feminism Conference, Carrying the Torch Together** was the election of a new national board leadership. Filling the ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill, hundreds of NOW members and supporters applauded the election of a new slate of board members as the recently modernized National Organization for Women looked to a second half-century of making women's history.

Elected to a re-structured and streamlined 2016 - 2018 board representing six districts of the country were: Beth Corbin of Maryland and Audrey Muck of North Carolina representing the Eastern District; Bear Atwood of Mississippi and Meredith Ockman of Florida from the Southern District; Gilda Yazzi of Colorado, Cindy Drabek of Texas and Carla Josephson of New Mexico representing the Western District; Nancy Campbell Mead of Oregon, Sinoun Hem of Washington and Mona Lisa Wallace of California from the Pacific District; Michele Hamilton of Pennsylvania, Jacqueline Kozin of Connecticut and Judi Polson of New York from the Northern District; and, Jocelyn Morris of Missouri with Barbara Miller of Illinois from the Heartland District.

NOW President Terry O'Neill's welcoming letter to conference attendees called attention to the organization's many important accomplishments over the half century including promotion of such notable laws as Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act. She also noted that the last four years have brought about a structural modernization for NOW with a new set of bylaws and a revised Statement of Purpose. She wrote, "Acknowledging the success of NOW's original purpose to bring women *"into the mainstream of American society,"* our new purpose is *"to take action through intersectional grassroots organizing to promote feminist ideals and lead societal change."* With that mandate, NOW members and supporters look forward to challenges in re-shaping society to advance the rights, opportunities, safety and well-being of all women.

Successful Gala Launches NOW's 50th Anniversary Celebration

NOW members, friends, celebrities and special guests gathered at the conference hotel for our grand 50th anniversary celebration, June 24 - 26. And what a celebration it was! A sparkling Gala held on Thursday evening treated guests to an array of different buffet-served cuisines and opportunities to socialize with new and old acquaintances. Vice President Bonnie Grabenhofer kicked off the program by reminding us, with pride, of NOW's history of taking bold, uncompromising positions on issues. She introduced the emcee for the Gala program – award-winning local television anchor Maureen Bunyan, an advocate for women and minorities in journalism. A very special honored guest at the Gala was NOW co-founder Muriel Fox who was

“present at the beginning” as operations manager to NOW’s first president Betty Friedan. Fox facilitated many of the important gains that NOW as an emerging feminist power made in reforming government and corporate policies affecting women while elevating public awareness of the burgeoning women’s rights movement.

Honored Guests Stir Excitement - Fox introduced the first Intrepid Award honoree, the much respected sports commentator and champion of Title IX, Christine Brennan, who also drew an admiring crowd of NOW interns. Brennan was cited for an Intrepid Award for her “fearless reporting.” A commentator for ABC News, CNN and PBS NewsHour, Brennan is a best-selling author, named twice as a top sports columnist by Associated Press and has covered the last 16 Olympic Games.

A second Intrepid awardee was Elizabeth Shuler, secretary treasurer of AFL-CIO, the first woman to hold the second-highest position in the labor movement and a fierce champion for women, serving on a variety of boards of major women’s organizations. Shuler also represents the AFL-CIO on the Women’s Committee of the International Trade Union Confederation

Actor/director Chandra Wilson, otherwise known as Dr. Miranda Bailey on TV’s “Grey’s Anatomy,” was presented an Intrepid Award. Wilson has many credits to her acting career and received the Screen Actors Guild, People’s Choice, Prime and three NAACP Awards. At the Gala event, Wilson talked about the power of recognizing and embracing womanhood within oneself.

Also honored were the founders of AWARE (Assisting Women through Action, Resources and Education), a grassroots organization dedicated to promoting awareness and generating funds in order to make meaningful improvements in the lives of women and girls. The organization works in New York City and Connecticut communities by each year selecting one carefully-selected, under-resourced charity, and organizing fund-raising events and educational symposium for that charity. Rachel Justus, Amy Saperstein, Cassie Aviron, Kira Cooperman and Ellen Friedman accepted the award.

Candidate Clinton Sends a Message - A special surprise came at the end of the Gala with a video message from presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. Clinton thanked NOW for the important work it has carried out since its founding, expressing appreciation of the organization’s continuing support of her candidacy for president of the United States.

A short video presentation that encapsulated NOW’s 50 year history was shown at both the Gala and at the conference.

2014-2016 National Board Says Good-Bye

Earlier on Thursday, NOW’s 2014-2016 national board met for the last time. Election of members for a newly-structured national board was to take place during the two-day national conference. Each outgoing member was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for her/his work on the board. The schedule featured a break for members to attend a rally at the Capitol, sponsored by the Congressional Voting Rights Caucus, protesting widespread voter suppression

activities. Terry O'Neill and the Rev. Jessie Jackson spoke at the rally. (NOW's website features an Issue Advisory on the many methods of turning away voters – primarily persons of color, low-income individuals and women -- that Republican conservatives have engineered for this election, Voter Suppression on Steroids for 2016 Election, <http://now.org/resource/issue-advisory-voter-suppression-on-steroids-for-2016-elections/>).

2016 CONFERENCE – CARRYING THE TORCH TOGETHER

NOW President Terry O'Neill opened the first plenary, welcoming hundreds of attendees to this historic anniversary conference, held at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill. O'Neill signaled, "Our celebration will recognize NOW's history of cutting-edge activism on behalf of women, which includes some of the most significant victories of the 20th century but also the important work ahead as our organization pushes forward with its cutting-edge, intersectional, multi-issue, multi-tactical advocacy for the 21st century."

Former NOW President Patricia Ireland moderated this welcoming plenary session, which featured speakers Patricia Hill Collins, author and sociologist focusing on race, class and gender and Miriam W. Young, executive director of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. Honorees included Brittney Cooper, Assistant Professor of Women's and Gender Studies and Africana Studies at Rutgers University, who was given the Olga Vives Award. Dr. Cooper is a black feminist theorist who specializes in the study of Black women's intellectual history and is the author of a forthcoming book on the history of black women's thought leadership in the U.S.

NOW Co-Founder Muriel Fox Honored

A fitting Woman of Vision Award was presented to NOW co-founder Muriel Fox who helped to organize NOW's founding conference, served as NOW vice president (1967-70), national chairwoman (1971-73) and chair of the National Advisory Committee (1973-74), edited NOW's first national newsletter, "Do It Now," and wrote many important letters signed by NOW President Betty Friedan to government officials demanding quicker action to reduce discrimination. These letters resulted in the adoption of Executive Order 11246 which opened up millions of corporate jobs to women and contributed to the prohibition of sex-segregated Help Wanted ads. Fox, a public relations executive, has numerous awards and credits in a long career dedicated to advancing women's rights, women in media, women's economic well-being and political influence. She has served as chair of Veteran Feminists of America since 1994, is listed in *Who's Who of American Women* and many other distinguished listings.

Other NOW Officers and Leaders Present

In addition to former NOW President Patricia Ireland, we were fortunate to have three more former NOW presidents – Judy Goldsmith, Kim Gandy, and Ellie Smeal – speak at the conference. Goldsmith addressed the Friday afternoon plenary session. She served as president from 1982 to 1985 and under her leadership NOW made its second-ever presidential endorsement, voting to support former vice president and women's rights champion Walter

Mondale. NOW urged Mondale to select a woman as his running mate; he subsequently named Geraldine Ferraro, a congresswoman from Queens, NY, for his vice president. Goldsmith organized a Lesbian Rights Conference in 1984, led a nationwide picketing effort to protest President Reagan's anti-abortion rights advocacy, and demanded full-scale investigations into attacks by anti-abortion rights terrorists. Goldsmith most recently served as CEO/Dean of the University of Wisconsin-Fond du Lac.

Kim Gandy, longest continuous serving NOW officer (22 years) and president from 2001 – 2009, moderated Plenary II. Gandy is currently president and CEO of the National Network to End Domestic Violence. While at NOW, Kim served on the drafting committees of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 and the 1994 Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act (FACES), among many other notable accomplishments. Gandy introduced speaker Shireen Mitchell, founder of Digital Sisters/Digital, Inc. – the first organization to focus on women and girls of color in tech and online access. Mitchell spoke on the need to address online threats of violence against women and her helpful website, Stop Online Violence Against Women (<http://stoponlinevaw.com/>)

Honorees Candace Liger and Grace Franklin were presented with the Woman of Action Award citing their work to promote advocacy for the women of color who were victimized by Oklahoma City police officer and serial rapist Daniel Holtzclaw. Liger is an award-winning spoken word performer, expressive movement teacher, mentor of youth and fitness blogger. Franklin is a published poet, playwright and actress. In 2014, she co-founded with Candace Liger OKC Artists for Justice to ensure that women of color have an opportunity to receive justice and national attention as they struggle with disproportionate rates of violence and sexual assault.

A Woman of Courage Award was given to Emma Sulkowicz who as an art student at Columbia University protested the university's failure to adequately address her report of rape by another student at the university. To bring attention to the issue, Emma and colleagues carried mattresses on their backs around the campus as a performance work, *Mattress Performance – Carry That Weight* – which prompted widespread media coverage. In 2014, Emma and 22 other Columbia and Barnard students filed a federal Title IX complaint alleging that the university mishandled sexual assault cases.

Sen. Mikulski Honored with Woman of Impact Award

Retiring U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D- Md.) was honored as a Woman of Impact for her decades of service in Congress. The first Democratic woman to be elected to the Senate in her own right and the first to serve in both the House and the Senate, Sen. Mikulski built a solid record of legislation supporting women's health care, helping to establish the Office of Women's Health and Research at the National Institutes of Health and authoring the Women's Preventive Health Amendment under the Affordable Care Act. The senator also championed affordable child care, fair pay and measures to end gender discrimination. She was unable to be present at the conference but provided a video message thanking NOW for the award.

A third plenary session was moderated by Terry O'Neill and introduced speaker the Reverend Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, who

frequently appears on major media outlets. An author of numerous books, including the *Piety & Politics: The Right-Wing Assault on Religious Freedom*, Rev. Lynn spoke about winning the latest efforts to use religious liberty violation claims to deny LGBTQIA person their civil rights. Also featured on the dais was Candace Bond-Therault, Policy Counsel for Reproductive Rights, Health and Justice at the National LGBTQ Task Force where she works to combine reproductive rights communities and the LGBTQ communities to fight against religious refusals to provide vital health care services. A new wave of “conscience exempt” or religious claims to refuse service is being waged by conservatives.

For NOW Foundation’s Victoria J. Mastrobuono Award for Women’s Health, Jessica Gonzales-Rojas, executive director of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH), was named recipient. NLIRH is the only national reproductive justice organization that specifically works to advance reproductive health, rights and justice for the 28 million Latinas in the U.S. Jessica serves as Adjunct Professor of Latino and Latin American Studies at City University of New York, teaching courses on reproductive rights, gender and sexuality.

Former NOW VP Latifa Lyles Moderates

Former NOW Membership Vice President Latifa Lyles who is the director of the Women’s Bureau, Department of Labor, organized an excellent panel, *Know Your Rights: Recent Federal Initiatives to Achieve Equal Pay*. The workshop was moderated by Lyles with senior officials from the Department of Labor, Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs as well as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission with Commissioner Charlotte Burrows presenting on the panel. The panelists reported on a number of important advances made by the Obama administration toward fair pay, safe-workplaces and improved overtime pay rules through various executive orders and regulations.

NOW PAC Presentations Excites Crowd

Former NOW national president and current president of the Feminist Majority Foundation, Ellie Smeal, moderated the PAC luncheon on Saturday. She headed up a lively discussion of how feminists can make serious gains this election year. Smeal outlined the path by which she believes feminists and allies can help take back the U.S. Senate and win majority control of the U.S. House of Representatives away from right-wing, anti-women’s equality Republicans. Other speakers included NOW VP Bonnie Grabenhofer who manages NOW PAC and the MsPresidentNOW campaign, Jacqueline Kozin, a NOW PAC board member and former CT NOW president, Mini Timmaraju, who serves as Women’s Outreach Director for Hillary for America, and Jamia Wilson, executive director of Women, Action & the Media.

NOW PAC outdid itself this conference with a reception, poster session and silent auction. The Ms. President NOW campaign is NOW PAC’s nationwide effort to elect Hillary Clinton as the first woman president and campaigners have been hard at work now for more than a year. They have called tens of thousands of NOW members and voters to urge them to volunteer with the campaign, caucus, and vote in their states’ primaries. They also ran for delegate positions to party conventions, carried out visibility events, tabled, door knocked, rallied and held watch

parties. Creative posters shown at the reception gave viewers a good idea of how it all came together. The PAC auction of feminist, women's suffrage and ERA memorabilia and other items raised much needed funds for our work this election year.

Ever-popular presentations by the NOW Political Action Committee included an exploration of the *2016 Feminist Political Landscape*, moderated by long-time PAC Director Linda Berg, with panelists NOW Vice President Bonnie Grabenhofer, and Feminist Majority Foundation President Eleanor Smeal. The prospect of electing the first woman president and Democrats re-gaining Senate control were two of the exciting possibilities discussed. A second NOWPAC panel talked about the importance of filling the pipeline of feminist political activists and *Engaging a New Generation of Political Leaders*. Jacqueline Kozin moderated with panelists, Hala Ayala of Virginia NOW and Alice Cohan of Feminist Majority Foundation.

Remembering Our History

Of heightened interest for this 50th anniversary conference were workshops featuring NOW co-founders and pioneers. Long-time feminists activists and NOW leaders, Mary Jean Collins and Pam Ross participated in a dialogue with younger feminist activists, Bettina Hager, Jeanine Johnson and Pam Yuen in the workshop, *Recruiting NOW Leaders – Attracting Young and Older Feminists*. For the afternoon breakout session, Muriel Fox joined Mary Jean Collins (a former NOW press secretary), Eleanor Pam (president, Veteran Feminists of America) and Barbara Love (author, LGBTQIA feminist activist) to discuss *The Founding of NOW: She Was There*. The group talked about the founding meeting, how it came about, how these leaders had the vision to create NOW and about the issues and organizing that took place.

Where Did We Go from NOW and What Did We Take With Us? was the title of a workshop by NOW long-time leaders, Lois Galgay Reckitt, Judy Murphy, Myra Terry, Marion Wagner, and Marian Watkins. Panelists shared their memorable experiences of the early days of working with NOW, gaining organizational skills and personal confidence. A related workshop, *Documenting Our History and Digitizing NOW Chapter Archives*, co-moderated by Karen Bojar and Kathy McMahan-Klosterman, with Joanne McQueen, Patricia Ulbrich and Jody Perkins, urged attendees to document the rich history of the second wave feminist movement while many of our founding members are still with us. The group learned how to collaborate with a university or historical library to preserve the story of NOW and archive materials for the World Wide Web.

2006—2016 Timeline of Major Actions and Accomplishments

In time for the 50th anniversary celebration, NOW Government Relations Director Jan Erickson, with the help of talented NOW interns, prepared the most extensive timeline yet of the organization's work. You can read about our important accomplishments over the decade on the NOW website at, <http://now.org/resource/timeline-of-major-actions-and-accomplishments-national-organization-for-women-2006-2016/>

NOW Foundation Organized Two Dozen Workshops

NOW Foundation organizes the workshop part of NOW national conferences and a few additional workshops of the two dozen excellent panels should be noted. In the workshop, *Ending the Culture of Complacency: Campus Sexual Assaults*, president and CEO of Legal Momentum Carol Robles-Román and Legal Momentum staff members provided insight into how sexual assaults may be better handled on college campuses, and described their “Enough is Enough” New York statute to end campus sexual assault. Legal Momentum is formerly NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Building a Grassroots Movement to Expand Support for Caregivers shed light on the urgency of tackling the inadequate support given to caregivers, and featured several personal and very powerful testimonies regarding the hardships of caregiving under the current system. *For-profit “Prisons”- Immigrant Women and Children Flee Violence, End up Detained and Deported* was another particularly powerful session. Panelists discussed the inhumane conditions of immigrant women and children detained in for-profit prisons, and featured a panelist who shared her personal story of experiencing detention in one such prison.

Finally, a session on *Pursuing the Best Route to ERA Ratification* looked at the expediency of the three-more state ratification strategy for the Equal Rights Amendment and another, *Riding the Title IX Wave – Expanding the Network and Protecting LGBTQIA Students* pointed out the importance of having trained Title IX coordinators in all schools, colleges and universities to assure that students’, administrators’ and teachers’ equal education rights are protected.

Strategic Action Programs – A Board Led Grassroots Engagement Effort

Over the past six months two dedicated fellows, M.E. Ficarra and Emily Imhof, have researched, proposed and fine-tuned three Strategic Action Programs. Under the direction of board member committees, the fellows conducted webinars and prepared recommendations for actions. At the conference, the fellows and their committee members presented a workshops on each of the three programs; 1) expanding access to abortion care; 2) ending the sex-abuse-to-prison pipeline affecting girls and young women of color; and, 3) building the intersectional case for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. On Sunday, resolutions to implement each of the Strategic Action Programs were debated and adopted.

2017 NOW Forward Feminism Conference

Next year’s conference will be held in Orlando, Fl. at the Florida Hotel and Conference Center, June 30 – July 2, 2017. Please join us!