

NOW Foundation Board Report

To: NOW Foundation Board Members

From: Bonnie Grabenhofer, Vice President, and Jan Erickson, Director of Programs

Date: Sept. 16, 2016

Current Focus – Document Organizing for Schlesinger Archives

What will be likely be close to 1,000 NOW government relations/public policy and NOW Foundation documents are being sorted, filed and organized for shipment to the archives. That is, the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library of the History of Women in America, part of Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, where our papers are being catalogued and properly stored, <http://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/schlesinger-library> You can peruse NOW's records currently on file at, <http://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/schlesinger-library/collection/records-national-organization-women> The papers of a number of NOW national officers are also on file at the library; see the Betty Freidan collection at, <http://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/schlesinger-library/collection/betty-friedan> NOW chapter and state leaders and feminist historians are urged to send their papers and memorabilia to state historical archives or university collections.

NOW Founder Pauli Murray Commemorated

The Schlesinger Library home page currently features an article about NOW Founder, Reverend Dr. Pauli Murray, “A Heroine in Everyday Life: Pauli Murray’s Legal Education,” <http://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/schlesinger-library/blog/heroine-in-everyday-life-pauli-murrays-legal-education> “Attorney, activist, poet, professor priest, feminist, advisor, friend and survivor. In a career that spanned most of the 20th century, Murray lent her voice to a wide array of causes and organizations as she tackled the overlapping inequities of race, gender and class in American life,” the article begins. The library holds an extensive collection of Pauli Murray’s papers which you can read at, http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/deepLink?_collection=oasis&uniqueId=sch00067

On a related note, NOW Foundation has been asked by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to write a letter of endorsement for the designation of Pauli Murray’s family home in Durham, N.C. as a National Historic Landmark, <https://savingplaces.org/places/pauli-murray-house#.V9sxYU13tok> Review of the proposed historic landmark designation by the Landmark Commission is scheduled for mid-October.

It's hard to overstate the importance of Pauli Murray's life (1910-1985) accomplishments; her work influenced the positions of Supreme Court justices **Thurgood Marshall** and **Ruth Bader Ginsburg** in landmark civil and women's rights cases. In addition to being a co-founder of NOW, Pauli was the first African American awarded a doctorate of law from Yale University; she was also the first African-American to be ordained as an Episcopal priest and was named a saint by this denomination in 2012.

An article on the Salon website, "Black, queer, feminist, erased from history: Meet the most important legal scholar you've likely never heard of,"

http://www.salon.com/2015/02/18/black_queer_feminist_erased_from_history_meet_the_most_important_legal_scholar_youve_likely_never_heard_of/ notes that Murray began to argue in the 1960s that the **Equal Protection Clause** should be applied to cases of sex discrimination in much the same way that it had been applied in cases of sex discrimination. Pauli Murray's work preceded and informed law professor and advocate **Kimberle' Crenshaw's** work on the intersectional nature of race- and gender-discrimination.

Murray's legacy will be honored next year by the naming of a new residential college by **Yale University**. That announcement in April was made in response to demands from a group of students to change the name of Calhoun College at Yale, named after former U.S. Vice President John C. Calhoun who supported slavery. Yale said that it will retain the Calhoun name on that college.

2016 Presidential Transition Activities

Staff is participating in several coalition efforts to make recommendations to the incoming administration, as we have done for prior administrations. As noted in the Government Relations board report, we are reviewing an extensive reproductive rights **Blueprint** draft. Additionally, coalition work has just begun on a broader set of recommendations covering the wide range of women's issues. About forty organizations are part of that effort. At some point, we should be able to circulate at least one of the transition recommendations documents to NOW Board members and leaders for their review.

In 2009, NOW, Feminist Majority and other women's organizations participated in a series of meetings with transition teams and submitted a list of recommendations for the new administration which responded to the many setbacks in women's rights and programs that were incurred during the George W. Bush presidency. In addition, the women's rights leaders proposed that a cabinet-level Office on Women be established.

Something to Consider for a Clinton Administration

A letter sent by numerous women's organizations to the **Obama-Biden transition** team in late 2008 proposed that their administration establish a cabinet level **Office on Women**. Nearly 50 organizations, representing 14 million women, signed the letter. The result of this effort was not

a full-blown cabinet level office, but the creation of the **White House Council on Women and Girls**. The Council has served as more of a communications facilitator between women's organizations and the White House, but has also taken a lead in planning and conducting a number of important campaigns, including ones that addressed domestic violence/dating violence especially involving athletes, sexual assault on campus, equal pay, girls of color, and other issues.

But the idea of an Office on Women is a good one and deserves further consideration. What would constitute the mission and responsibilities of that office will need to be fleshed out, how would that office interact with top administration and agency officials, what sorts of projects might be undertaken, etc. Because women's issues often take a back seat to almost any others, a way to mainstream our needs, concerns and views and have them better integrated into administration initiatives and the shaping of important policies and programs remains a worthy objective.

NOW leaders, with Feminist Majority Foundation, met with the Obama Administration

At the 2016 National NOW Conference, former NOW President Kim Gandy mentioned to us that we had omitted (inadvertently, to be sure) information in the new 2006-2016 timeline of NOW's (and NOW Foundation's) about efforts in late 2008/early 2009 by women's leaders to shape policies of the incoming Obama administration and to advocate for initiatives that would aid women hard hit by surging unemployment due to the 2007-2009 economic recession.

Kim, with former NOW president, Ellie Smeal, and others met with the Presidential Transition Team to urge that the economic recovery package with funding for "shovel ready" jobs (read: men's jobs) be expanded to include funding for jobs that women primarily held. Their request was met with success and the story behind this effort was recounted in an article by Kim in one of her regular *Below the Belt*, which appeared on the NOW website in March, 2009

Economic Recovery: What's Now Got to do With It?

When I told this happily-ever-after "stimulus story" in my president's report at NOW's board meeting last weekend, several members said that they wish more people knew what NOW and other advocacy groups really do in Washington. In reality, this work is often tedious, always time-consuming, and definitely not glamorous, but it's oh-so-important to women's lives.

So in that spirit, I offer this glimpse into NOW's efforts "behind-the-scenes" during the past several months to ensure that women are positively impacted by the economic recovery package and that they play an integral role in the revitalization of our economy and our country. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was passed by both houses of Congress and signed by the president on Feb. 17.

But what happened in the lead up to that day, and what's NOW got to do with it?

Soon after the election, the NOW officers and staff started participating in a variety of meetings with the Obama-Biden transition team -- from reproductive rights and immigration to hate crimes and economic issues (like equal pay and family leave). None of the scheduled meetings appeared to address how women would be included in the developing economic stimulus plan, which I kindly brought to their attention. The transition team lobbed that ball back to our court, asking NOW and the Feminist Majority to put such a meeting together. When we did, we made sure that the diversity of the women's community was represented and that we put forward very specific measures that could be included in the plan. It was a very different kind of meeting.

Before the meeting, we were hearing that billions of dollars would go into "shovel ready" projects. Newsflash! Women make up less than 15 percent of the construction industry, and a lot of the positions filled by women are lower-paying administrative jobs -- not the work that pays serious money. Women's unemployment was almost as high as men's at that point, and we know that 40 percent of women are the sole support of themselves or their families.

One of the challenges was that our recommendations needed to do one of two things: 1) invest in efforts or projects that would put women back to work and help jump-start the economy, or 2) alleviate the pain of the unemployed and those who were most profoundly suffering from the recession.

We invited groups that would bring specific perspectives about where women were losing jobs, and also where relief was needed. For example, the National Association of Social Workers outlined the need to shore up critical social services at a time when they were most necessary. The American Library Association pointed out that 70 percent of people who use public libraries say they use the library to look for a job, so the closing of libraries would affect not just the women working there but the people who depended on their resources.

Pitching the Transition Team

I can't resist saying that this meeting didn't *look* like the other transition meetings I attended. In addition to the presence of more women, the room actually looked different -- because Feminist Majority President Ellie Smeal had asked that the chairs be set in a circle, with no table in the center, to facilitate discussion. And it did. There was more discussion, more questions, more give-and-take than at many other meetings.

Ellie set the stage and talked about jump-starting President Obama's promised investment in early childhood education -- which would have the additional benefit of helping parents who are seeking jobs. Teacher layoffs are happening nationwide, even in wealthy parts of the country. What happens when those teachers find work in other sectors, and start moving up the ladder? When the recession is over, will those teachers come back to teaching? A lot of them won't, effectively locking in those losses. As much as we've invested in recruiting teachers, the country simply can't afford to lose so many of them, and the cost of replacing them after the recession will be staggering.

NOW's contribution to the meeting addressed health care and creative ways to meet the growing needs and address spiraling costs, all while employing more women. We urged that the economic stimulus plan invest in establishing more and better community health centers, for a whole variety of reasons. Not only do community health centers employ a lot of women -- nurses, medical technologists, community health counselors, outreach workers -- but they take a load off of the overburdened emergency medicine system. They offer a place for people to go besides an overcrowded and expensive emergency room *and* a place to promote preventive care and community wellness -- and preventive care is a key item that was already on Obama's agenda before the stimulus package.

The huge nursing shortage was also on the table, but it's not because people don't want to be nurses. In fact, thousands of people would like to enroll, but the nursing schools can't admit them because they don't have enough faculty to teach them -- in part because the hospitals won't release their expert staff to teach (presumably because of the nurse shortage -- it's a chicken and egg thing). In other words, an injection of recovery plan funding could ramp up the capacity for nurse training and other medical training, thereby ramping up employment of people who are ready, willing and able to work, and for whom there are jobs waiting.

Ideas for Change Become Reality

Adding to the exchange were ideas from Women Employed on non-traditional work and youth employment; from the National Council of Negro Women on the foreclosure crisis and what needs to be done; from the Institute for Women's Policy Research on unemployment insurance modernization; from the National Labor College on investing in education and communities; from Legal Momentum on setting goals to hire women into a fair share of the shovel-ready jobs; and from the YWCA about the need for an investment in child care and on the need to suspend the time clock associated with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) -- we can't tell women on welfare to get a job or lose assistance for your family during a time when there really aren't jobs to be had!

I could go on and on. But let's get to the good part. We received an extremely encouraging reaction from the transition team members who met with us -- they were very engaged, asked a lot of questions, and stayed far longer than we expected. We left feeling that all of our preparation would bear fruit in the form of more inclusion of women's needs, and we were right.

But it wasn't until the final recovery package was released that we saw many of our specific ideas reflected. We saw money for community health centers, money directed to states specifically to prevent teacher lay-offs, and funding for training of medical personnel.

Unemployment insurance modernization even made it into the stimulus package, which means that a lot of women who previously weren't eligible for unemployment insurance are going to be eligible now. The package establishes an emergency fund for states that increase TANF spending on job training for welfare recipients and allows for one-time short-term benefits. As we looked through the act, over and over we saw reflections of the very specific proposals that we had made, and with big numbers next to

them. Numbers that started with a "B" (as in billion), which means there would be the power to actually do something.

Connecting with Congress, Framing the Issue

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Before the package was finished, we wanted to make our pitch to Congress, because it wasn't enough just to pitch the people who were doing the administration's part. This huge package was going to go through the House and the Senate as well. So, as we were making the rounds at the swearing-in events on Jan. 6, congratulating the new members of Congress, we had about 30 seconds with each of them. Our "handshake" pitch was: "Please make sure, while we're rebuilding our physical infrastructure with shovel-ready jobs, that we are also rebuilding our *human infrastructure* -- with teachers, nurses, social workers, and the like -- because that infrastructure is fragile too." Of course we were talking with mostly receptive new members of Congress, but it was rewarding to get such positive responses, along with an occasional "aha moment" about the observation that most shovel-ready jobs would go to men.

One of my favorite stories came from our final event of the day, a reception for the wonderful new member of Congress from Ohio, Mary Jo Kilroy, who is also a longtime supporter of women's rights. Because it was later in the day, we actually had an opportunity to spend some time with her. She was clearly already working on the issue, and we shared with her some of the ideas from the group, and agreed to follow up with more information. The *next* evening, at another event, I had a conversation with a terrific new member representing New York, Paul Tonko -- and when I gave him my pitch about including women in the stimulus plan, he said, oh yes, Mary Jo from Ohio spoke about that in our freshman breakfast this morning. (High five!) It was one of those moments that reminds me why we do this and why we keep doing it.

The very next morning, Ellie and I met with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's top policy staff to outline the groups' ideas, and later that afternoon we met with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's Chief of Staff and policy advisors, and even had a few minutes with the Speaker herself. We talked with them about the proposals we gave to the transition team.

Funny story: A member of Pelosi's staff suggested that we come up with the female equivalent of the term "shovel ready" -- clearly "apron ready" wasn't going to work! And she was right -- the terms we use to frame an issue make a difference, and the testosterone-laden "shovel-ready" had already made its way into the stimulus lexicon without a parallel for women. We never did come up with a catchy alternative, but the term I had coined in December, human infrastructure, caught on and entered the public dialogue, often used in connection with physical infrastructure.

Those of us who work in public policy tend to think of December as the time when we get to catch up on our filing, clear out our old emails, and maybe even (finally) take a vacation. None of that was in the cards this year. It's impossible to convey just how many hours we put into this issue during

December and early January, and how really fruitful it turned out to be, and how much of a difference it's going to make to all the women who are unemployed, and all those who are suffering.

And as with much of what we do, it's an enormous amount of preparation for a few minutes of opportunity, but when women's advocates are not at the table, the outcome is not the same for women. It's been a hectic, wild time, but tremendously worthwhile. And, before anxiousness over the next big struggle takes over, I wanted to share with all of you this feeling of joy and pride that our organization continues to lead on the issues critical to the well-being of women and families.

NOW's (and NOW Foundation's) Accomplishments, 2006 – 2016

Since some of the new Board members may not have seen it, we put together a **Timeline of NOW's Accomplishments, 2006 – 2016** for distribution at the **2016 National NOW Conference** and our 50th Anniversary. This timeline is different from other timelines that staff had prepared over the years in that it provides a short background and context for our actions. For the record, we are attaching a copy of the Timeline to this Board report.