

CHOICES

Feminist Majority Foundation Campus Program E-Zine

April 9, 2007

www.feministcampus.org

"This Is What A Feminist Looks Like"

- Women Around the World

YOUNG WOMEN TAKE THE LEAD: MOVING FROM CAMPUS TO CONGRESS

The National Young Women's Leadership Conference: *From Campus to Congress* was a roaring success! Over 375 young women and men from 36 states gathered at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) to hear incredible feminist speakers from all over the country. Upon arrive at the conference, participants eagerly grabbed their purple tote bags, information packets and copy of Ani DiFranco's latest album *Live at Carnegie Hall*.

At the opening plenary Ellie Smeal, President of FMF, Kim Gandy, President of NOW and E. Faye Williams, Director of the National Congress of Black Women, delivered motivational speeches to the eager audience. According to these inspiring women, the young people sitting in the packed auditorium represent the present and are the key to creating change in the future.

FMF intern Leah Branch said, "With feminists in Congress, progressive change can happen." Branch added, "It was a good summary of the direction the conference was going to take."

The lunch keynote, California Representative Lynn Woolsey, resonated strongly with the students.

"She affectively articulated the need

to include more young people, especially young women, in political office," said Patrice St. Peter, a FMF intern and Westfield State University student.

Woolsey discussed the importance of getting out of Iraq and the importance of the work/family balance act. She was also very candid with the students about her time as a welfare mother, reminding us that one woman can make a difference.

After Congresswoman Woolsey's address, participants attended small group workshops. Students were given the opportunity to discuss leadership skills, coalition building, fundraising as well as foreign and domestic policies that effect women. Ac-



ording to Janel Quarless-Cole, FMF campus organizer, the more than 40 students in each workshop, "examined the need for young women to run for office and the tools necessary for effectively doing so."

The day closed with a reception hosted by Ms. magazine held at UDC Law School. Over 200 students and members of the Ms. community attended.

In her welcome, Erica Hsu, publishing assistant for Ms. magazine stressed "There are multi-generations of women that work at and produce Ms."

Never Go Back, the theme of the reception, displayed the determination of feminists to keep the progress of civil rights, women

rights and human rights moving forward.

On Sunday featuring global leadership, the opening plenary made the connections between U.S. foreign policy and women's affairs.

Bethsheba Orero, a Kenyan fellow from Population Action International discussed the impact of the Global Gag Rule on African women while Awista Ayub, founder of the Afghan Youth Soccer League spoke about the increasing violence against girls in Afghanistan and the importance of sports. Traditionally, girls in Afghanistan played both basketball and soccer. Those opportunities were taken away by the Taliban.

Jin In of Girl Scouts USA, reminded par-

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ticipants that American policy has an effect on woman and girls around the world. Angeline Martyn from Americans for UNFPA discussed how to build American support for the work of UNFPA and to restoring the United States' moral and financial contribution to the organization while Dana Olds of One World Foundation spoke about her organization and the importance of young people, especially women of color, to become actively engaged in human rights.

This message was reiterated during the *Standing with Our Sisters Around the World* workshop. Students learned about the need for global reproductive rights, advocacy and international reproductive rights.

Other panels included, From Afghanistan to Iraq and Darfur, Women Lose in the War, The Nuts and Bolts of Foreign Policy-from International Aid to NAFTA and CEDAW, Making the Most of Traveling Abroad and Women in the World.

Students had the opportunity to actively participate in the current Amnesty International umbrella campaign to support CEDAW (Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) Visit www.amnestyinternational.org for more information.

"When planning the conference we realized that giving the students time to network and share ideas as well as be educated on current feminist issues, was very important." Ashley Bennett, a FMF intern and University of Wisconsin student said.

Immediately following the conference, more than 60 students joined hundreds of women leaders and their allies for the Equality Summit and Congressional Visit Day hosted by the National Council of Women's Organizations (NCWO) and the Younger Women's Task Force (YWTF).

On Tuesday morning, Lifetime Television sponsored the a breakfast to honor the record number of women now serving in Congress. Speakers included, Congresswomen Carolyn Maloney, Virginia Foxx, Nita Lowery, Hilda Solis, Lois Capps, Diane Watson, and former Congresswoman Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick. Although these distinguished speakers came from both sides of the aisle, they all agreed that having women involved in politics drastically shapes the direction of the government.

During the breakfast, Congresswoman Diane Watson stated, "The people that care for our children, can care for our country," and, "When you see the touch of the woman, you know it's about policy not power."

After the breakfast there was a brief panel discussion where participants learned the most effective strategies to lobby members of Congress and communicate constituent concerns. Member attendees were then encouraged to visit the offices of their representatives and put their newly found skills to work.

The grand finale of the festivities was the re-introduction of the Equal Rights Amendment to a room filled to capacity. People leaned in the doorway of the Russell Senate building room to hear Representatives John Conyers, Jerry Nadler, Carolyn Maloney, Lynn Woolsey and Sheila Jackson-Lee, among others, speak about the historic event.

Both conferences were an amazing success. It is our hope that *From Campus to Congress* inspired each and every participant to run for office and enact practical change through effective leadership. If you missed the national conference, I encourage you to attend a regional conferences. It will change your life. It changed mine.

Kassidy Johnson, campus organizer

WESTERN REGIONAL COLLEGIATE Women's Rights and Leadership Conference

Keynote Speaker: Dolores Huerta

Co-founder, United Farm Workers & President, Dolores Huerta Foundation

Saturday, April 14th
9-5pm

University Memorial Center
Room 235
University of Colorado-
Boulder

www.feministcampus.org/leadership/regional.asp

Mid-West Regional Young Women's Global Leadership Conference

Saturday, April 28th
10-5 PM

University of Minnesota-
Duluth

Featuring Feminist Activist & Poet Venus Jones

Come for Issues, Actions, and Solutions!

www.feministcampus.org/leadership/regional.asp

A Young Feminist's Reflection on the Equal Rights Amendment

I have been a supporter of the ERA since I started college at West Virginia University. It is incredible to be a part of the modern movement for the passage of the ERA. When the Feminist Majority Foundation asked me to be a part of the press conference in support of the historical amendment, I didn't give it any thought; I simply said yes. Standing beside Representative Carolyn Maloney and Ellie Smeal made me feel like an integral part of the ERA movement. Studying the ERA in textbooks always seemed to make it a dead issue, but when progressive congressional members introduced it again this week, I felt a fresh breath flow through the modern women's move-

ment. That breath quickly turned into a full voice that was clearly heard last Tuesday at the press conference. Standing before a room of my foremothers of the ERA and my generation of feminists, I felt solidarity. As we all stood and cheered with hope for a guarantee by the U.S. Constitution, we bypassed generational gaps and divisions of race and class.

I hope this amendment does more than eradicate discrimination that has plagued America, I hope it becomes an icon for equality in the new millennium and bridges all Americans together under the U.S. Constitution.

Lauren Wallace



Lauren Wallace (standing next to Pelosi photo) delivered the closing remarks at the re-introduction of the

Equal Rights Amendment press conference on 3/27/2007. She is a senior at West Virginia University in Morgantown, WV. She is the president of the WVU FMLA and a former FMF intern.

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