

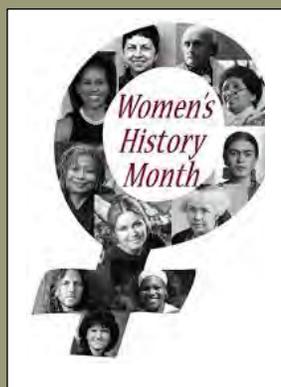


Special Interest Articles:

- Sister Marge White: Theme of March issue
- Lois Lawler: On theme's Franciscan Perspective
- LCWR and UISG: Religious Leadership's focus

Individual Highlights:

UISG	2
Honorees	3
History Project	4
Oceans	5
Women/Children	5



Donna Wilhelm, Dorothy Pagosa, Marjorie White, Maxine Smith, Michele Richardson, Rose Grabowski, Rose Marie Bommer, Shannon Fox — Social Justice Committee

March is Women's History Month *by Sr. Marge White*

There is much to reflect on in this March issue of our Social Justice Newsletter. March is National Women's History Month.

You will find articles focusing on women's issues from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), Union of International Superiors General (UISG), Women and Children First, The

National Women's History Project, Lois Lawler, and a variety of website resources. Also included is the LCWR Resolutions to Action entitled *Oceans in Peril: Acidification* written by Jo Ann Showalter, SP.

On a personal note, I first became involved in social justice in 1972 while living in Detroit, Michigan as an outreach worker and community organizer.

It was the time of Caesar Chavez and the lettuce boycott. The boycott was addressing issues of workers' safety in the fields and just wages.

I remember picketing major grocery stores asking that shoppers not buy lettuce. During this time I was also introduced to the complexities of going door to door asking

Continued on pg. 2

A Franciscan Reflection on Women's History Month

By Lois Lawler

Weaving the stories of *women's lives* is the 2015 theme for Women's History Month. While the tapestry of history has been largely woven by men, in 1946 Mary Beard began using "modern techniques of documentation and analysis to portray women as significant actors in the public arena through history."¹

Feminist historians and others now seek to insert the feminine threads that have been lost and discarded over the centuries—a challenging

and rewarding work aligned with the Franciscan search for truth and equality.

Much of women's history has been forever lost—erased from our memories, or so overlaid by the norms of our patriarchal culture that it can only be retrieved by extensive research, the imaginative gift of re-visioning, and the burning desire to know and record the truth. And, when reconstructed, it often finds non-acceptance in the *status quo* intellectual community of scholars.

The effort to reclaim women's contributions is needed in all dimensions of history, including, and perhaps most especially, in Christianity. In *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, Elizabeth Fiorenza states, "Both Christian Feminist theology and biblical interpretation are in the process of rediscovering that the Christian Gospel cannot be proclaimed if the women disciples and what they have done are not remembered."² She

Continued on pg. 4



March is Women's History Month. . . (continued from page 1)

residents to support Community Development Block Grants for sidewalks and lighting... when they couldn't afford to buy the necessary food. I still remember a gentleman saying to me, "*Ma'am, when I have enough money to buy food to feed my family, then I'll sign*

your petition." It really made me reflect that the issues of struggling families and my issues as an organizer were not always in sync.

Although my life is now engaged with leadership responsibilities, I have not abandoned my passion for

doing whatever I can to promote values of peace and justice for all peoples and our planet.

I hope you find the articles stimulating and reflective as we, women and men Franciscans, live a life dedicated to equality, justice and peace. ■

"We are in an age of great hope and a lot of despair, where we talk of love and practice indifference."

The Fault Lines in Society . . . From the UISG

Sister Carmen Sammut, president of the Union of International Superiors General, in an address to 70 major superiors in February, asked them to contemplate the "fault lines" in society where people fall through the cracks and there are no safety nets. Her words are equally applicable to us. May we take her words into our hearts and contemplate their meaning.

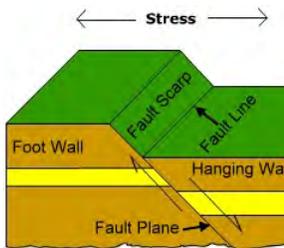
We are surrounded by wealth and masses go hungry; we are trying at all costs to prolong life, and destroying life in many ways; we advance in human dignity and freedom and enormous numbers are victims of modern slavery caused by unjust systems such as human trafficking; we know such medical advancement and are faced with new or old diseases, more resistant to known drugs; we are in an era of much social communication and of a lot of biased information; we are in an intercom-

nected world, yet often do not notice those near to us; we are in an age of multiculturalism, and at the same time an emergence of ultra-nationalistic ideologies.

We are in an age of great hope and a lot of despair, where we talk of love and practice indifference. We acknowledge that we are stewards on our planet and yet act as owners. We know many beautiful families, yet the values of long-term fidelity and commitment, the very basics of relationship in human life, are put to question. We are at a point of expanding consciousness on our universe, its origin, its way of functioning and trying to understand what this means for us, for our story, for our faith. We are at an era of continual movement of peoples bringing with it a mixture of culture and religions, yet we often fear each other, for our real knowledge

of each other is often superficial.

I ask you to look at the signs of the times, in your context, these paradoxes which make us aware that a great part of our contemporaries are crying out to God whoever they deem God to be. God is always on the side of the oppressed, of the ones feeling lost or discarded, of those who are abandoned and disregarded. God always answers their cry by sending someone. This is the whole Bible story and it is our story still today. This is where we enter. We are each called, because God has heard the cry of the people and God moved our hearts. We are members of our religious families because we want to listen to God's own desire in the now and make it our own. It is God's mission that we are called to take up on the fault lines. ■



2015 Theme: Weaving the Stories of Women's Lives

March is National Women's History Month. Every year the National Women's History Project selects a unifying theme to be shared with all who want to promote women's history.

This year's theme presents the opportunity to weave women's stories—individually and collectively—into the essential fabric of our nation's history. Accounts of the lives of individual women are critically important because they reveal exceptionally strong role models who share a more expansive vision of what a woman can do. The stories of women's lives, and the choices they made, encourage girls and young women to think larger and

bolder, and give boys and men a fuller understanding of the female experience. Knowing women's achievements challenges stereotypes and upends social assumptions about who women are and what women can accomplish today.

There is a real power in hearing women's stories, both personally and in a larger context. Remembering and recounting tales of our ancestors' talents, sacrifices, and commitments inspires today's generations and opens the way to the future.

2015 is also the 35th anniversary of the Women's History Movement and the National Women's History Project. We are proud that, after decades of dedicated

research and technological advances, the stories of American women from all cultures and classes are accessible and visible as never before.

Numerous scholars and activists helped shape the Women's History Movement, and also provided the research and energy which created and sustains the National Women's History Project.

During 2015, we recognize and celebrate the many ways that women's history has become woven into the fabric of our national story. ■



2015 National Women's History Month Honorees

In celebration of the National Women's History Project's 35th Anniversary, the following nine women were chosen as **2015 Honorees** who have contributed in very special ways to the work of "writing women back into history."

Together, these 2015 Honorees have written, co-authored, or edited more than 60 books and one has produced 30 CDs. Collectively, their creations reveal the depth and breadth of the multicultural female experience.

They have woven women's stories into the fabric of our history.

- **Delilah L. Beasley** (1867–1934)
Historian and Newspaper Columnist
- **Gladys Tantaquidgeon** (1899–2005)
Mohegan Medicine Woman, Anthropologist, and Tribal Elder
- **Eleanor Flexner** (1908–1995)
Historian and Independent Scholar
- **Polly Welts Kaufman** (1929–Present)
Writer, Teacher, Activist

- **Lynn Sherr** (1943–)
Broadcast Journalist and Author
- **Judy Yung** (1946–)
Oral Historian, Author, and Professor
- **Darlene Clark Hine** (1947–)
Historian and Educator
- **Holly Near** (1949–)
Singer, Songwriter, Social Activist
- **Vicki L. Ruiz** (1955–)
Educator and Pioneer in Latina History

Click here to see photos of the honorees and read a brief bio of each:
[2015 Honorees](#)



A Franciscan Reflection . . . (continued from page 1)

“We are Franciscans seeking to build, empower, bond, and speak.”

goes on to quote artist Judy Chicago, “...But our heritage is our power.” To empower women it is essential to know our heritage. Franciscans are particularly blessed in that so much information from Francis and Clare has been preserved through the ages, allowing contemporary Franciscans to quote with authority the vision of the early founders.

Franciscanism as a way of life stands in stark contrast both to the patriarchal culture in which it was developed, and to the male-oriented economic and political power paradigms of our own age. On their website, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary describe St. Francis as

...a universal man (who) speaks to us of peace, a man of dialogue, someone at ease with all creatures. Francis invites us to go beyond all boundaries, cultural, geographical and

*mental...to meet the other and build relationships of respect, **equality**³ and justice.*

Franciscan values can contribute and create links which humanize and bring about peace.

Both previous SSJ-TOSF Social Justice Committee newsletters highlighted ***The Deepest Desires***, affirmed at the General Chapter in 2013: *We are Franciscans seeking to build, empower, bond, and speak*. How parallel this is to the contemporary women’s history movement, a movement that has been

- **building** over the last century to reconstruct our past in a way that includes women’s contributions;
- **empowering** women politically, economically, and educationally;
- **connecting and creating bonds** between women who

work for justice; and

- **speaking** the truth, telling the stories of women

While this month we celebrate the achievements in the development of women’s history, we know that there is still much to be done.

Knowing the truth of history and women’s place in it are essential steps in achieving justice by addressing the persistent financial, economic, and educational gender gaps of today’s world.

Notes

1. Elise Boulding, *The Underside of History: A View of Women through Time* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1976), 6.
2. Elizabeth Fiorenza “In Search of Women’s Heritage,” *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns of Women’s Spirituality* (New York: Harper Collins, 1989), 30.
3. My emphasis. ■

National Women’s History Project

In 1980, the National Women’s History Project (NWHHP) was founded in Santa Rosa, California by Molly Murphy MacGregor, Mary Ruthsdotter, Maria Cuevas, Paula Hammett, and Bette Morgan to broadcast women’s historical achievements.

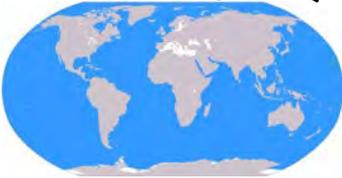
The NWHHP started by leading a coalition that successfully lobbied Congress to designate March as National Women’s History Month, now celebrated across the land.

Today, the NWHHP is known nationally as the only clearinghouse pro-

viding information and training in multicultural women’s history for educators, community organizations, and parents—for anyone wanting to expand their understanding of women’s contributions to U.S. history. ■



LCWR — Resolutions to Action



Social Analysis

Oceans are a vital segment of the planetary oxygen/carbon dioxide exchange, functioning almost as a global “lung”: carbon dioxide is absorbed by seawater and through a complex procedure oxygen is produced and given off into the atmosphere. The process has helped keep our climate balanced for untold eons. The problem arises with the additional carbon in the atmosphere. The oceans continue to absorb carbon dioxide, although the process is slowing down and the amount of carbon in seawater is growing out of proportion. Increased carbon in sea water changes the pH levels and the water becomes increasingly acidic. This

Oceans in Peril: Acidification

phenomenon is now being seen in parts of the Pacific Ocean, the Bering Sea, and other areas. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) media services, the oceans are currently “in the midst of a silent crisis” instigated by multiple factors including climate change.

“How much carbon are we putting into the ocean? We’re dumping the equivalent of a hopper car of coal—about 100 US tons—into the ocean every second.”

—Craig Welch,
“SeaChange”

As the pH is lowered and the sea becomes increasingly acidic, sea life is being impacted almost to the point of no return. Scientists and

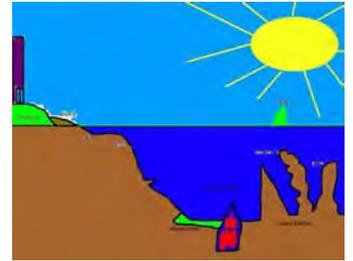
fisher folk are seeing this phenomenon in shell fish of all types: clams, oysters, crab, mussels, and more. The acidic conditions prevent the juvenile shell from developing and the shell fish die.

Reflection

Ocean acidification is considered by many to be the twin of climate change. There is no magic wand, no quick fix for what has been damaged, but there are efforts to begin the process of repair and healing.

Earlier this year, UNESCO launched their Ocean and Climate Platform 2015 jointly with several research bodies and non-governmental organizations to inform the international debates on

Continued on pg. 6



Sea life is being impacted almost to the point of no return.

Women and Children First

The **Women and Children First Bookstore** was founded in 1979 in Chicago to further issues of importance to women and children. The purpose in beginning the store 33 years ago was to promote the work of women writers and to create a place in which all women would find books reflecting their lives and interests. They strive to do this in an atmosphere in which all are respected, valued, and well-served. It is still their

purpose, online as well as in the store.

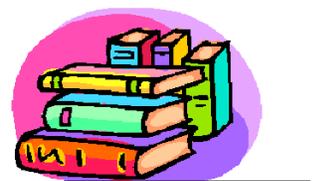
Approximately 25 years ago they established The Women’s Voices Fund, a project of Women & Children First Bookstore and a grantee of the Crossroads Fund, to raise money to help sustain and develop an ongoing program series focused on women’s lives, ideas, and work.

Women & Children First is the only venue to offer regular programming with

such a focus, and has provided the sole financial support for this series for over 25 years.

Outside support through the Women’s Voices Fund is crucial to guaranteeing that a wide and diverse range of women’s voices and the best voices in children’s literature continue to be heard. ■

If so inclined, visit their website at www.womenandchildrenfirst.com





Franciscan Spirituality and Cosmology

“We respect the earth and recognize that all life is interconnected in a continuing cosmic evolution.”

SSJ-TOSF Congregational Commitments
26th General Chapter

Oceans in Peril... (continued from page 5)

carbon dioxide emissions as the international community moves toward the December climate treaty talks in Paris. The recent agreement in Lima, Peru was an important first step. One hundred and ninety-two countries agreed to set a deadline of March 2015 for nations to develop a plan to reduce their greenhouse emissions. There are multiple components to be considered but this is an important step and a sign of hope for planet Earth.

Efforts to reduce global carbon emissions will ultimately help to reduce the amount of acidification

of the ocean. Ideas and programs to accomplish this are beginning to be taken seriously on many fronts. This is the ideal, but it will not be easy. In reality, dealing with ocean acidification will require that nations address a myriad of issues including changing food sources, job loss, and education to help human communities adapt to the shift in environment. With careful planning and broad participation, it can be done.

California and states from Maine to Maryland, have taken it upon themselves to develop some sort of carbon restriction

programs. Oregon and Washington are also considering additional carbon restrictions. Washington already has a law requiring a percentage of electricity generation to come from alternative energy sources. Every effort, whether local, regional, statewide, or national, to reduce carbon in the atmosphere will have an impact at the global level. No reduction of carbon is too small to matter to the planet as a whole or to our oceans in particular. People of faith are called to safeguard all of God's creation and in doing so, to help craft a healthy future for all.

Action

- Obtain more information by reading the Pulitzer Prize winning report written by Craig Welch of the *Seattle Times*. www.seattletimes.com/seachange
- Call your members of Congress and urge climate action in our country. The UN delegates can only negotiate what nation-states will support.
- Read *Seasick* by Alanna Mitchell. It is relatively

easy to read and details major shifts within the ocean waters and the ability of the ocean to continue to support life as we know it.

- Encourage your state legislators to evaluate and put into place a state level program to limit carbon emissions.
- The Global Catholic Climate Movement is a newly formed international coalition of religious congregations

and Catholic organizations, including LCWR. Become a part of its growing influence. catholicclimatemovement.global

- **Take the St. Francis Pledge.** All across our country, Catholics are taking the pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor and joining the Catholic Climate Covenant. catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/

WEBSITES
referenced in this issue

Global Sisters Report –
www.globalsistersreport.org

Women and Children First:
www.womenandchildrenfirst.org

Leadership Conference of Women Religious:
www.lcwr.org

National Women's History Project:
www.nwhp.org

The Global Catholic Climate Movement:
www.catholicclimatemovement.global

The Francis Pledge:
www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge

REMEMBER...

We welcome your submissions in the form of

- “Sightings”
- Brief write-ups of your activities, “prototypes,” suggestions for workshops, books, articles, films, resources.

Please send these to Sister Shannon Fox by the end of March for inclusion in the April issue of our newsletter, *We Commit Ourselves*.

~Your Social Justice Committee