

Margaret
Cunningim
Women's Center

African American Women in Higher Education: Challenges of the 1990s

Cherie Y. Hamilton, Director of Recruitment and Staffing, Personnel Services

It practically goes without saying that during their school years and in their professional lives, most, if not all, women of color experience some form of differential treatment based, at times simultaneously, on both their gender and racial/ethnic origins. Several recent reports,



Ready, world? Here I come!

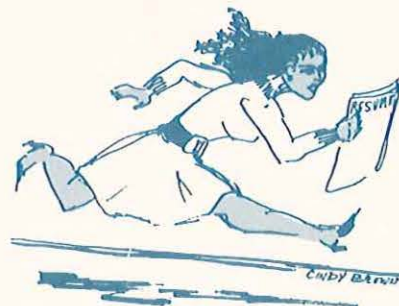
including an article titled "Double Jeopardy: Women of Color in Higher Education" (*Educational Record*, Fall 1987/Winter 1988), provide an analysis and some revealing statistical evidence of the problems that African American, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian American women face as students, faculty, and academic administrators.

From the article cited above we learn that black, Hispanic, and Native American women, at 59 percent, 52 percent, and 55 percent, respectively, hold the numerical edge among the college enrollees from their racial/ethnic groups. Women in general comprise the majority of American students annually enrolled

in master's programs, and according to a recent prediction by the Department of Education, by the year 2000 American women will be earning more doctoral degrees than their male counterparts.

Despite their numerical advantage as students, women continue to be seriously underrepresented in the professoriate and among college and university administrators. Such underrepresentation is especially acute among women of color.

Deborah Carter, one of the three co-authors of the *Educational Record* article cited above, writes that black women "comprise only 0.6 percent of the full professorships, compared to 1.6 percent for black men, 9.9 percent for white women, and 83.2 percent for white men." That these disparities in the professoriate and among high-level academic administrators are not attributable to race alone is



Why do I have to be over-qualified?

further attested to by the fact that among the presidents of 117 historically and predominantly black colleges and universities, only seven are black women (two of whom lead all-female institutions); 109 black men and one white man account for



the majority. What makes these disparities all the more ironic is the fact that historically, more black women than men have gone on to college (because black male high school graduates have had better opportunities for employment than their female counterparts). Dean Sharon Watson Fluker notes in "It's All Been Said Before: Minority Education Loses Ground," an article appearing in the February, 1989 issue of *Women's VU*, that "Black women, in particular, bring to academe an even stronger tradition [than that of black men] of achievement in education."

Today the changing nature of the American job market, along with a number of other economic and social factors, has brought about a drastic worsening of the status of a disproportionately large segment of the black male population. Indeed, the crisis of the African American male is so severe and emotionally charged that it has given rise to the popular, apocalyptic metaphor of "the black man as an endangered species."

Without minimizing what is indeed a pressing problem, this emphasis on the plight of the black male has some paradoxical and frustrating implications with respect to the status and the attitudes of African American women. Deborah Carter observes, for example, that when black female academics protest

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Challenges of the 90s (from page one)

their isolation, underutilization, and third-class citizenship, they are often told "that they 'should step back and give black men the opportunity because racism and discrimination have had more serious repercussions for black men than for black women'."

According to Carter, the "back-seat" argument advanced by some within the racial/ethnic community itself "creates a deep schism for black women who are reluctant to be seen as stifling the progress of black men." Their isolation, underutilization, and third-class citizenship constitute one of the major challenges that women of color must seek to deal with more effectively in the 1990s and beyond.

The question of whether matters pertaining to race/ethnicity take precedence over gender leads, inevitably, to the much debated issue of how women of color relate to the women's movement and feminism. Succinctly put, if some black women in academia and the professional world in general are loath to be perceived as competing with black males--supposedly to the detriment of both sexes--many are also leery of being seen as having been co-opted



As a single parent, I need speed and stamina. And a good day care center...

by a movement launched by and for white middle-class women.

Issues and conditions based on gender distinctions may indeed have varying repercussions as they affect particular groups of women, but they are not exclusive to any one racial/ethnic group or class. Thus, African American women and other women of color must also meet the challenge

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of asserting themselves on issues of importance to all women.

Indeed, women of color will have to face the problems that all groups



*Success!
In the best job I ever had:
CEO of my own company.*

of women and many individual women confront, whatever their race or ethnic identities. And African American women must continue to deal with those issues that are peculiar to the so-called black experience, regardless of gender. It would seem, however, that overt or subtle male dominance, demeaning female stereotypes, and the growing affirmative action backlash will have especially deleterious effects on black women and other women of color, who are already so woefully under-represented on the faculties and among the top administrators of the nation's colleges and universities.

By aggressively meeting the challenges highlighted in this essay, African American women can play leadership roles in the development and implementation of strategies that will benefit not only women and minorities in higher education, but also the academic community itself and, ultimately, society as a whole. ■

It's your health

*Mary Fern Richie, MSN, RN
Dept. of Physiological and Psychosocial
Nursing, School of Nursing*

Recent reports indicate that over ninety percent of caregiving activities are the responsibility of women (fifty percent female spouses and forty percent daughters and daughters-in-law). Thus as the proportion of older adults continues to rise, women must

be alert to the potential toll on physical and mental health of caregivers: those whom Elaine Brody calls "the women in the middle."

The notion of "caregiver burden" was coined initially in reference to the plight of family members caring for relatives with Alzheimer's disease. In fact, however, this term applies to all forms of care of dependent older family members. While a number of variables have been studied in relation to caregiver burden, there is fairly conclusive evidence that adult daughters and daughters-in-law are the most affected group, thus supporting Brody's "woman in the middle" hypothesis. While attempting to juggle multiple roles and responsibilities, these caregivers often suffer physical health decline, including fatigue and weight loss, and experience a plethora of troublesome emotions including guilt, anger, resentment, embarrassment, and depression.

One reason why many caregivers experience stress is their lack of preparation for assuming this kind of role. Just as education is vital in managing the demands of parenthood and helping to raise well-adjusted children, so too, families need help in learning optimal ways to care for and relate to their frail relatives.

In addition to education, other strategies can be quite useful in helping to minimize the ill health effects of caregiving. Maintaining time for yourself -- to continue an enjoyable hobby, to exercise, to visit with friends -- is essential. Easier said than done? Springer and Brubaker suggest devising an action plan in which needs and resources are identified. This helps in remaining focused on what the problems are and who/what is available to help manage these. Using formal assistance from community agencies, including respite care, adult day care programs, and homemaker services, allows the caregiver relief from providing continuous care.

Social support is another way to cope with the demands of caregiving. While other family members are usually assumed to be the major source of support, several studies have confirmed that relationships with neighbors, friends, and co-workers may be just as important in

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Speaking of women . . .

Jeanne Peck, a sophomore majoring in English, interviews Susan Chapman, President of the Black Student Alliance.

Besides attending a dozen meetings, going to class, and studying, Susan Chapman plans to change the world in a week.

"A typical week for me means getting up at 7:00 a.m. to study because I don't have any other time to do it," says the president of the Black Student Alliance (BSA). "My mornings are filled with classes, and at night I'm either in meetings or working in my office in the BSA."

The engineering science/math major from Cincinnati, Ohio is also working to give a loud, aggressive voice to women and blacks at Vanderbilt. Since her first year at Vanderbilt, Chapman has made sure that black students here are not ignored.

"That year in the spring of 1987, some students and I presented a manifesto to the administration calling for a lot of changes on campus," she said.

The manifesto called for a higher black student population, a minority engineering dean, and more books by and about African Americans in the library.

Carolyn Williams, Assistant Dean of Minority Affairs, School of Engineering, started in the fall of 1987 after the manifesto, but the increase in black students that had been hoped for has not materialized.

Chapman sees herself as a motivator who can get the administration and students to listen to her.

"We have to crack down. Things have to change," she said. "The administration thinks things are OK when (racial tensions) are covert. But when we have a march or a manifesto, you will notice that something will happen. Before I leave here, something has to change."

Chapman is accustomed to leadership roles and is undaunted by the burden of being the voice of the BSA.

"I don't even think about being a black woman. I know what needs to be done and I know how to motivate my people to help me get it done," she said. "I've always been very aggressive and straightforward, and

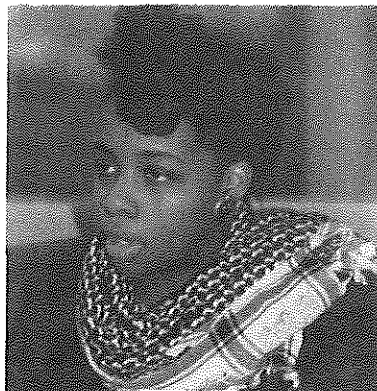


photo by Lesley Collins

Susan Chapman, president Black Student Alliance

everyone who knows me knows that. When it comes to business, I don't play."

In the long run, Chapman hopes to study urban planning in graduate school and later start an engineering management consulting firm. Her dream is to have "a corps of engineers and a corps of architects and planners who will focus on lower income housing. I also want to help minority businesses, especially blacks and women." She says, "I want to help others who don't have as much as I have. You're wasting your time if you only do things for yourself." And with a laugh she adds, "I want to change the world!"

Health (continued from page two)

providing social support. Social support can come both in the form of helping with concrete tasks (e.g. overseeing medication consumption, providing transportation and/or financial assistance) and in the form of being emotionally available for listening, comforting, and problem-solving. Support groups work by allowing members to help each other through sharing solutions to problems, exchanging information, and understanding mutual feelings and concerns.

Finally, a relatively new resource for working caregivers is that of elder-care counseling. Some companies have as part of their benefits package consulting contracts whereby employees have access to experts, in the hometowns of their older relatives, who can advise them on issues of health care options and the like.

Women seeking more information about caregiving and relating to their aging parents are directed to the following resources: *The Second Mid-Life Crisis: Relating to Aging Parents* by Vanderbilt experts Powers, Morgan, and Brawner; *Family Caregivers and Dependent Elderly* by Springer and Brubaker; and *The 36-hour Day*, a very practical guide for caring for persons with dementia or memory loss, by Mace and Rabins. ■

Feminist Health Writers/Activists. See Your Ideas in Print!

The National Women's Health Network, the only national organization devoted exclusively to women's health, is looking for writers for its bimonthly newsletter *The Network News*.

They would like you to:

- write reviews of new books, films, and other resources on women's health topics
- write articles about women's health topics (maximum = 1000 words)
- write about women's health topics you are involved with, write about women's health activities in your communities
- write letters responding to articles in the newsletter or responding to controversies in the public media
- send them "health news tid bits" (referenced) from the journals, magazines, and newspapers you read
- send them your graphics (cartoons, photographs, line drawings).

Your contribution will reach their 8,000 readers. A small editorial group will be pleased to work with you on your contribution, so don't feel it has to be perfect! (A free subscription to the newsletter will be given to contributors.) Send contributions to Editor, National Women's Health Network, 1325 "G" Street, N.W., Lower Level, Washington, D.C. 20005 (202)347-1140

Highlights from Future Shock: Catholics for a Free Choice conference

On June 2, 3, and 4, 1989, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) sponsored a landmark conference--FUTURE SHOCK: New Challenges in Ethics and Reproductive Health. Below are excerpts from a speech delivered by Rosemary Radford Ruether for the Saturday night banquet.

"Prochoice is Prolife: Winning the Propaganda War for Reproductive Rights."

For seventeen years, since the Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade*, right-wing forces wishing to reverse the Court's decision and recriminalize abortion have sought to wrap themselves in the flag of absolute virtue and claimed to represent the "right to life." To defeat this crusade, it is imperative that the reproductive rights movement become much more persuasive in convincing middle-of-the-road Americans that antichoice is antilife. It needs to make clear that the ultimate goal of the antichoice movement is both to recriminalize abortion and to block access to sexual education and contraception, especially for poor women, teenagers, and poor nations, the very people whose lives are most devastated by unregulated reproduction.

Antichoice is antilife! This is the motto we need to claim. Antichoice fundamentally opposes all the conditions--cultural, social, medical, and legal--that promote the possibility of a woman being able to conceive and bear children when she wants them and is best able to care for them. It is fundamentally against the cultural, social, medical, and legal conditions that help societies limit demographic growth and so have some chance of providing adequate food, housing, education, and health care for those children who are born. "Life" in humans or any other species is not promoted by unregulated birth but by planned and chosen births that are in harmony with the social means to sustain the lives of those who are born.

Prochoice Catholics must unmask the facile and delusory rhetoric and tactics of those Catholics who equate antichoice with antiwar and who

claim that both types of activism are a "seamless" continuum in defense of life. We must take responsibility to impress on the consciousness of our church and of our society that the real effects of the antichoice campaign will be the recriminalization of abortion. Such recriminalization will not only fail to lessen the demand for abortion; in fact, it will exacerbate that demand under conditions that will kill adult women as well.

Women have been treated as reproductive vessels to be controlled by male priests, doctors, or social experts, not as moral agents in their own right. This attitude toward women lies at the heart of the antichoice movement and links its adherents to those male family planners who design coercive methods of birth limitation. Both types of men deny the fundamental personhood of women as moral agents. Both types of expropriation of the womb fail because they refuse to respect women as decision makers...Only when women are fully affirmed as the primary responsible persons in reproductive decisions will sustainable life on earth become an attainable goal.

Rosemary Radford Ruether is Georgia Harkness Professor of Applied Theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and is a CFFC board member.

Conscience,
September/October 1989



Jane Curry as Samantha

"Samantha Rattles the Woman Question" is the title of one of two performances by Jane Curry in February. On February 26 at 7:30 p.m. in Psychology 103, Curry will appear as Samantha Allen, central character in numerous books by the late-19th century author Marietta Holley. Funny and wise, Samantha speaks on behalf of women's rights in ways that are surprisingly contemporary despite the period costume and setting.

On February 28 at 4:10 p.m., also in Psychology 103, Curry will again use humor to address gender equality in higher education in a program entitled "Just Say Know: Educating Females for the 21st Century," which presents several officials from the mythical but oh, so realistic Pandora College, including Mrs. Bennett Canon, a member of the college's Board of Trustees, and Miss Prudence Post VanModern, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. These two performances have been given to enthusiastic audiences nationwide, and each will be followed by a discussion period.

Both programs are sponsored by the Women's Studies Program, and are free and open to the public. ■

News quote

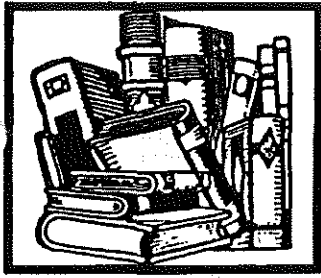
New Harvard Business Review Chief. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, a Harvard Business School expert in organizational behavior and a noted management consultant, took over the top editorial job at *The Harvard Business Review* on Friday (12/1/89), succeeding Theodore Levitt, who will return to teaching.

The change occurs in what might be considered one of the most influential jobs in American higher education, journalism, and business.

Nonetheless, it was accomplished with an extraordinary lack of fanfare.

The *Review's* article by Felice N. Schwartz on the "mommy track" succeeded on that score in placing the entire spectrum of work and family issues on the national agenda. "I didn't think it was a mistake to do something on that topic," Kanter said. "I would have preferred to see more data backing up broad assertions."

The New York Times,
December 4, 1989



In the library

Naomi E. Heiser
Women's center librarian

The women's center library regularly receives a number of scholarly journals dedicated to women and gender issues. There is a remarkably broad range of subject matter addressed due in part to the interdisciplinary nature of many of these journals. This is the first in a series of examples of articles to be found in recent editions of these journals which may pique readers' interests:

"Do or Die: Problems of Agency and Gender in the Aesthetics of Murder", by Josephine McDonagh (in *Genders*, Number 5, Summer 1989)

The aesthete-murderer is a feature of Romantic and post-Romantic literature popularized by Thomas De Quincey (the "opium eater") in a series of essays entitled "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts" (1827-54). In this conception, murder is seen as an act of transcendence beyond social transcriptions that "attempts to exceed the bounds of discourse that define reality." Ironically, however, this goal is always frustrated since the "transcendent moment" of murder is ultimately unrepresentable and leads back into the discourse "with a vengeance." McDonagh notes that this is evidenced in our culture by the enormous amount of literature produced in varied forms (detective stories and horror films, for example).

In this romantic conception, murder is not a universal option. It is a distinctly gendered act in which agents are most often male and victims female, "an inscription of male violence against a feminized object." McDonagh believes that "sex murder is an extreme form of masculinity existing on a continuum in which 'normal sexuality' (i.e. male heterosexuality) also takes its place."

In De Quincey's peculiar vision, it is the issue of control (of "the feminine") that underlies his thinking.

For De Quincey, the "domestic murder," in which an entire family is eliminated, is the "perfect" murder. In this case, murder is an expression of power and agency in the face of the breakdown of social order. If men are indeed alienated from the "circulation of capital" and the products of their labor, "the major anxiety faced by De Quincey and his contemporaries," their only recourse to control is within the domestic sphere. The obliteration of an entire

household is therefore the ultimate means of controlling it.

The abundance of cultural representations of murder, and specifically sex murder, are dangerous for women because of the "dynamic capacity of representations to interact in and construct the 'real world'." McDonagh believes that aesthetic representation, as exemplified by De Quincey, performs the same function as murder: the controlled perpetuation of a social order. ■

Calendar of events

Call 322-4843 for further information on the programs listed below.

Book Group will discuss *Homeplace* by Anne Rivers Siddons, a novel about a woman approaching forty who confronts the years that went before. Jane DuBose will be the facilitator on Monday, February 5, 5:15 p.m. until 6:15 p.m. at the women's center. Light refreshments.

Panel of Women Law Students will discuss law school and law as a career and answer your questions. Tuesday, February 6, 4:30 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. at the women's center. Light refreshments.

Challenging Some Myths About Childbirth will include videotaped vignettes of actual births followed by small group discussion on aspects of childbirth led by Penelope F. Wright, RN, MCN, Director, Perinatal Parent Education. Identical programs on Monday and Tuesday nights, February 12 & 13, 4:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. at the women's center. Men are welcome. Reservations are required and size of each group is limited to the first twenty who call 322-4843.

Contemporary Women's Fiction: Issues and Art is the noontime seminar on Tuesday, February 13 led by Nancy A. Walker, Director of Women's Studies. Walker will report on her analytical survey of more than twenty-five novels written by women from 1969-1988. Her research will be published in a book to be released in May of this year. Please note that this seminar will be

held at noon on the 13th in room G23 of the Divinity School and will end promptly at 1:00 p.m.

Feminist Themes and the Study of International Relations: a noon-time seminar led by Jean Bethke Elshtain, Centennial Professor of Political Science on Monday, February 19, 12:15 p.m. in Sarratt 118. Dr. Elshtain will discuss contributions of feminist themes to the inquiry into the centrality of war making. Her presentation will refer to issues addressed in her recently published book *Women and War*.

Lunchtime Book Review will hear Jan Rosemergy, Coordinator of Communication Services, John F. Kennedy Center, discuss *A Wider Giving: Women Writing after a Long Silence* edited by Sondra Zeidenstein. An anthology of poetry and prose by women who made their commitment to writing after age forty-five, *A Wider Giving* also illustrates some sources of women's silence and women's empowerment. Participants also will be invited to discuss formation of a women's center writers' group. Wednesday, February 21, 12:15 p.m., Sarratt 205.

Panel of Women Medical Students will discuss medical school and medicine as a career and answer your questions. Tuesday, February 27, 4:30 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. at the women's center. Light refreshments.

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Announcements et cetera

Association for Women in Science (AWIS) has a chapter in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, AWIS-ETC, P.O. Box 278, Oak Ridge, TN 37831-0278. This national organization's goals are to promote equal opportunities for women to enter the sciences and to achieve their career goals.

The *AWIS newsletter* of November/December 1989 (available in the women's center library) calls attention to the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, February 15-20 in New Orleans. AWIS is sponsoring a reception and several symposia are planned especially for women. Some titles of symposia are: "Women Scientists in Early Career Years: Strategies for Success," "Surviving Graduate School: What to Expect from Your Advisor," and "Is There Life After Graduate School?"

For more information contact AWIS, 2401 Virginia Avenue, NW, Suite 303, Washington, DC 20037, 202/833-1998.

Hispanic Woman Named U.S. Surgeon General. Dr. Antonia Novello has been nominated Surgeon General of the United States. She will be the first woman and the first Hispanic to hold this influential position. A pediatrician, Dr. Novello is an expert on kidney disease in children.

Career Opportunities News



Dear Readers:

HELP! HELP! HELP! Remember the Margaret Cuninggim Lecture!

Last year several kind and generous readers designated all or part of their contribution to the Faculty and Staff Campaign for the Margaret Cuninggim Lecture Fund. Thank you one and all.

We still need MORE!

At the end of 1989, \$24,000 had been endowed for the Lecture. The goal for the Fund's endowment is \$50,000. In 1990 I hope to add \$5,000 to the endowment from the Faculty and Staff Campaign.

Any part of your contribution to the Faculty and Staff Campaign may be designated for the Lecture Fund. Until the goal has been reached, I am transferring gifts designated for the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center to the Lecture Fund as well.

Please help complete this endowment by designating the Margaret Cuninggim Lecture Fund in your 1990 Faculty and Staff Campaign pledge. Thank you.

Nancy A. Ransom, Director
Women's Center

DATE RAPE: A panel discussion about how the law and the university react to date rape and what individuals can do to help stop this crime. Panelists are: a lawyer, Grant Glassford; a university official, Brock Williams, Assistant Dean of Residential and Judicial Affairs; and a counselor, Jakota Herring, from the Rape and Sexual Abuse Center. Thursday, February 8, 7:30 p.m. at Sarratt 118. Sponsored by Students for Women's Concerns.

A gift for you at the women's center

A number of copies of a 1989 publication, "A New Perspective: Southern Women's Cultural History from the Civil War to Civil Rights" have been given the women's center. Free copies will be available at the women's center as long as the supply lasts.

The papers in this volume were compiled from a conference held May 10-11, 1988 at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. This conference planned by a committee representing fourteen southern state humanities councils had as its purpose to examine women's contributions during this important period and to plan future humanities programs based on new, emerging research.

Edited by JUDITH T. HELFER

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