

## MCWC Bids Farewell to Hilary Forbes

by Linda Manning, Director of the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center

This summer, those of us at the Women's Center face a sad and difficult task. We will be saying goodbye to Hilary Forbes, Assistant Director for Programs, as she prepares to move back to the Northeast at the end of June.

Hilary started at the Women's Center in the summer of 1998 after completing her Master's Degree in Higher Education Administration here at Vanderbilt University. Since that




time, she has done an exceptional job of designing, planning and implementing all of the programming sponsored by the Women's Center. Hilary is one of those people who operates mostly behind the scenes, and so effectively that programs seem to run themselves. In reality, however, she puts an enormous amount of work into conceptualizing and planning a diverse array of groups, lectures, workshops and other events that serve the needs of students, faculty, staff and the community. She also handles the endless details that make everything run so smoothly.

There is not room here to mention all of Hilary's accomplishments over the last four years, but we can highlight a few from that long list. A focus for Hilary, from the beginning,

has been her desire to meet the needs of *all* women on campus. She has reached out consistently to different groups and has collaborated and co-sponsored events with the Asian American Student Association, the Hispanic Student Association, the Organization of Black Graduate and Professional Students, International Student and Scholar Services, Panhellenic Council and their member sororities, the National Panhellenic Council and their member sororities, the Interfraternity Council and their member fraternities, the Vanderbilt Department of Athletics, Lambda, Project Dialogue, the Women's Studies Program, the Women's Faculty Organization and the University Staff Advisory Council. She initiated the Reading Sisters group with Nicole Massie, the Consciousness Raising group (with the help of Sarah Walton) and the Living with Loss group (which was led by Erika Callaway). Hilary developed the Women's Center team for the yearly Race for the Cure and, in partnership with the Actor's Bridge Ensemble, brought the first performance of *The Vagina Monologues* to campus. Over the last two years, proceeds from *The Vagina Monologues* have provided approximately \$38,000 for community service providers in Nashville.

Hilary has also provided exceptional leadership for Vanderbilt's efforts to combat violent crimes against women on campus. She has been the Project Director for our

Department of Justice grant program that created Project Safe, and she was the major author of the proposal that resulted in our second two years of funding. Hilary created the first Take Back the Night Program in cooperation with Belmont University in 1999. This moving event continues to draw hundreds of participants every year, and provides the opportunity for many to share their own personal stories of survival. For the past two years, this event has initiated the YWCA's Community-wide Week Without Violence. Along with Becky Spires, Mary Beth Carroll and Liz Garcia, Hilary started the Hand in Hand Program, which has continued with the added leadership of Jen Howard, Sandra Harrell, and now Arielle Helmick. This comprehensive, sixteen-hour program has now trained over 120 students, staff and faculty to provide information, resources and referrals about violence against women to their peers on campus.

Hilary has been an exceptional team member and has made an invaluable contribution to the mission and goals of the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center and to Vanderbilt University. She has been a leading advocate for gender equity and diversity on the Vanderbilt campus. She has also been a valued friend and colleague. We will miss her, and we wish her all the best in her future plans. 

## Spoilers: One Woman's Story of Violence and Abuse

by Jeannette Harris with Jonathan Farley

On a warm October day in 1997, in the mid evening, and in a place called Page County, Virginia, I found myself dialing 911: a criminally-inclined, occasionally violent man was in my home, and he refused to leave. He was 13 years my junior, twice my size. He had been frightening me for some time. He was my husband.

When the deputies arrived, I met them at the front door and requested that my husband be asked to leave voluntarily. Their only other legal recourse was to arrest him.

Instead, deputies arrested me—for assault (I had tried to defend myself)—and I was kept in jail overnight by the magistrate. He claimed I was “intoxicated.” The next morning I was released (“on bond to keep the peace”) to the same man who had been threatening, abusing, and harassing me. I had no shoes (they had arrested me without them), no money, and no identification. After some argument, I was allowed to call a legally connected acquaintance, who said there was

nothing he could do. The County Attorney, a woman who had helped create an outreach program for abused women, refused to drop the charges of assault.

Eventually I left my house—the house that I bought in 1978, and which, under Virginia law, I owned—in order to preserve my personal safety. During the two months I was gone, the court vacated the charge of assault, and, in a subsequent hearing, ordered my husband to leave. Nevertheless, the police refused to supervise his departure. He left my home unlivable, letting throngs of vandals into my house.

Our legal system had suborned false imprisonment, criminal trespass, rape, perjury, robbery and fraud.

There is something sick about a system that can take away the most precious thing we have—the freedom to work productively and constructively, the right to choose what is done to us and what belongs to us—when we have done nothing wrong. There is something sick

about a judicial system that can force violence and criminality on a woman's mind, body, spirit, soul, heart, house, property, credit, finances, and living. A legal system that should prevent and punish criminality should not itself engage in criminality, and punish victims because they happen to be female.

I am not a lump of meat, without rights in my own house and state and country, a country whose legal system appears to be neither just nor legal, but perhaps just an enforcement arm of “the good ol’ boys” club. Our country doesn't need irresponsible middle-aged boys. It needs men.

While my experience may have been singular, women should stay alert after they call 911. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that I would have dealt with the situation better than the deputies and magistrate who arrested me and put me “on bond to keep the peace.”

911 is not a joke, as the rappers say. If you are a woman, it can kill your soul, and your peace.

Jeannette Harris is co-chair of the Green Party of Tennessee and the creator of the award-winning magazine, *A Country Rag* ([www.countryrag.org](http://www.countryrag.org)).

Jonathan Farley is a mathematics professor at Vanderbilt, a Fulbright Distinguished Scholar at Oxford University, and a Green Party candidate for U.S. Congress.

Sandra Harrell, M.A.C., Program and Director, and Hilary Forbes, M.A., and Director of the program, at the Center respond to “Spoilers” on page 8.

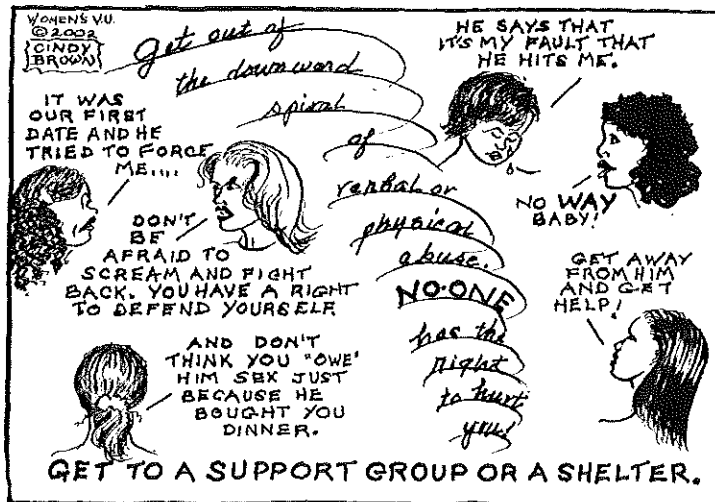


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Campus address: Franklin Building, 316 West Side Row.  
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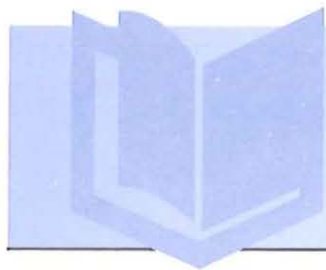
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Linda Manning, director  
Hilary Forbes, assistant director for programs  
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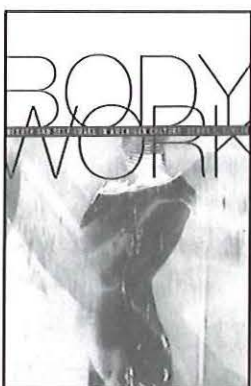
### Researcher Investigates Women and Body Work

Sociologist Debra L. Gimlin considers that women's relationships with their bodies and with beauty are more complex than most people realize. She does not feel that many females are so preoccupied with their bodies that they are unconsciously cooperating with the backlash against women's economic and social progress. In *Body Work: Beauty and Self-Image in American Culture* (University of California Press, 2002), Gimlin illustrates how women "manage to create space for personal liberation within those very activities that often appear socially and personally destructive."

Both men and women judge and value females according to their appearance, which is considered an outward symbol of their character and identity. The writer undertook a study of women's interpretations of their own participation in body work, and she notes that, as the ideal female body is impossible to achieve, all bodies are defective to some degree.

Gimlin's research took place on Long Island in New York, where she analyzed "four settings in which women attempt to negotiate identity by changing their bodies, their perceptions of their bodies, or both." She studied women of varying ages at a hair salon and participated in two series of aerobics classes; she also interviewed a plastic surgeon and twenty of his female patients, and attended meetings of a chapter of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance and of its Fat Feminist Caucus.

Women show limited rather than complete resistance to beauty ideals, according to the writer. Many women enjoy their participation in various forms of body work and in the camaraderie and friendship they find there. Together they fail to attain the perfect body. Gimlin also discusses the roles social class and age play in body image and appearance, especially in settings like the beauty salon.



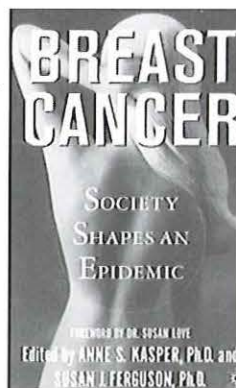
Courtney W. Howland has edited *Religious Fundamentalisms and the Human Rights of Women* (Palgrave, 2001), a comprehensive and fascinating but sobering study of the worldwide effects of extremism. The various forms of fundamentalism have certain features in common and all threaten women's rights and thus human rights. Some experts consider religious fundamentalisms to be religions, while

other believe that they are actually abuses of religion. Many find them to be "political or cultural movements that use religion as a cover."

The book, originally published in 1999, grew out of a conference in Washington organized by the International Rule of Law Center at the George Washington University Law School. The contributors, from universities and institutes across the globe, represent a broad variety of disciplines. Some of the writers are religious while others are not, but all are deeply concerned about abuses of human rights.

Basic themes in fundamentalist thinking include the patriarchal family and the need for women's sexuality and reproduction to be controlled (by men). Other common beliefs are that women's proper roles are as wife and mother and that they belong at home and not in the public sphere. In some countries the laws conform to religious teachings, especially where women's rights are concerned. In many areas women challenge their status and protest to varying degrees against the injustices they encounter. Often religious women rebel only to the limited extent they feel their beliefs permit.

Among the diverse topics examined by the contributors are: gender and rights in Muslim societies; Christian fundamentalism in the United States; Buddhism, human rights, and the Thai sex trade; the Hindu Right and women in India; the education of Afghan females; Jewish fundamentalism; Muslim women and laws in Europe; gender-based asylum in the United States; and Catholicism and women's rights in Brazil.



Other new acquisitions include: *No Turning Back: the History of Feminism and the Future of Women* by Estelle B. Freedman; *Breast Cancer: Society Shapes an Epidemic* by Anne S. Kasper and Susan J. Ferguson; and *American Women Activists' Writings: An Anthology, 1637-2002* edited by Kathryn Cullen-DuPont.





# SUMMER

## JULY

Monday, July 1, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

*Women's Center Discussion Group.*

This group will meet the first Monday of each month and is open to all students, faculty, staff & community members interested in spending time with like-minded thinkers.

Tuesdays, July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

12:00 noon - 1:00 pm

*Creative Life Planning Group.*

Monday, July 8, 5:15 pm

*Book Group.*

The group will discuss *Bel Canto* by Anne Tyler. Judy Helfer will facilitate the conversation.

## AUGUST

Monday, August 5, 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

*Women's Center Discussion Group.*

Tuesdays, August 6, 13, 20, 27

12:00 noon - 1:00 pm

*Creative Life Planning Group.*

Monday, August 12, 5:15 pm

*Book Group.*

The group will discuss *No Ordinary Time* by Doris Kearns Goodwin. Carmen Gherman will facilitate the conversation.

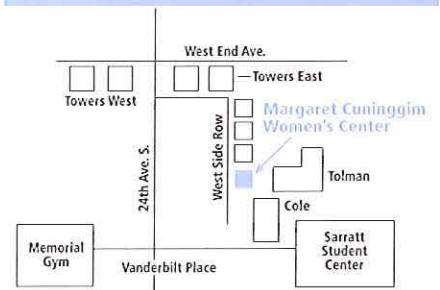
**Margaret  
Cuninggim  
Women's Center**

## Calendar of Events

### PLEASE SAVE AND POST.

Unless otherwise stated, all programs are held at the Cuninggim Center, Franklin Building, 316 West Side Row. For more information on the events listed, call 322-4843.

### How to find us . . .



*The Cuninggim Center is located in the Franklin Building at 316 West Side Row.*

### Women Volunteers Needed

BETTER DECISIONS teaches decision-making skills to inmates at the Tennessee Prison for Women. A training weekend for new volunteers is planned for September 14-15. Volunteers work one-on-one with an inmate/student one hour weekly during the eight-week course, which begins the week of September 23. Graduation is November 18. For further information, please contact the Program Director, Kathy Masulis, at 832-8327, or by e-mail at [info@betterdecisions.org](mailto:info@betterdecisions.org).

Project Safe is offering support groups for women who have experienced violence by a dating partner or any form of sexual assault. The group's location is confidential. Please contact Project Safe at 322-1333 for more information.





Little is known about Mary Fields' early life, other than she was born a slave in Tennessee and orphaned soon after. When the Civil War ended and Mary was emancipated, she journeyed north, stopping in Ohio where she found shelter and work at a Catholic convent, forming a close connection with one of the elder nuns, Mother Amadeus. The convent moved to Montana without Mary, but when she received word that Mother Amadeus was gravely ill, Mary traveled west intent on nursing the ailing nun back to health. She succeeded, and finding herself in the Wild West, Mary decided to remain as protector to the nuns.

Protect the nuns she did, in the process obtaining a reputation for herself as a fearless, always-armed woman who loved her spirits along with a little bit of trouble. Ironically, this rowdy behavior—specifically a nonfatal shootout with a male coworker angered by Mary's superior monthly pay—caused her to be ousted from the convent. The nuns, however, grateful for her protection and loyalty, agreed to fund her in her own business—a café. Unfortunately, too many free meals to the underprivileged cost Mary the café; she subsequently took work as a U.S. mail coach driver in Cascade, Montana, a professional move that earned her the name Stagecoach Mary and the reputation as the most reliable driver around—she never missed a day of work. She retired from

the Postal Service in her sixties, opening a laundry service in Cascade, where she continued to spend her free time drinking, carousing, and scrapping at the local saloon. She died of liver failure in 1914.

## Spoilers: A Response

by Sandra Harrell and Hilary Forbes

Thirty years ago, when the battered women's movement began, the notion of *anyone* being arrested when police arrived was incomprehensible. The most a battered woman could expect was that the police officer would tell her batterer to "take a walk"; many battered women were asked what they had done to cause the violence; still others were encouraged to take the matters into their own hands.

Fortunately, due to the brave efforts of women like Tracy Thurman in Connecticut who sued her local police department for failing to protect her, law enforcement agencies across the nation have developed policies and protocols that govern individual police officers' responses to domestic violence incidents. However, problems continue to exist.

Dual arrests (arresting both parties involved in a domestic violence situation without determining the primary aggressor) and arrests of battered women have become increasingly frequent across the country. Not only do these arrests support myths about the gender-neutrality of domestic violence by inflating the number of supposed female perpetrators, they result in a profound distrust by battered women of the legal system. As evidenced by the article by Ms. Harris on page 2, battered women who are arrested when they call the police are much less likely to call them again.

This does not have to be the case. The Nashville Metropolitan Police Department's protocol, which is considered a model across the nation, specifically outlines the responsibilities of the responding officer in a domestic violence case. Their protocol discourages dual arrests.

If an officer has probable cause to believe that two or more persons committed a misdemeanor or felony, or if two or more persons make complaints to the officer, the officer shall try to determine who was the primary aggressor. Arrest is the preferred response only with respect to the primary aggressor.

The protocol gives explicit instructions about how to determine the primary aggressor. It also explicitly outlines a person's right to defend herself against threats or force. When followed, this protocol leaves no room for arresting a battered woman who fought back or who is understandably irate when the police arrive. And, when it is not followed, there are ways to hold individual police officers and departments accountable.

Escaping an abusive relationship is difficult enough. You should not also have to worry about being jailed or intimidated by police. Informing yourself about the police responsibilities and protocols when responding to domestic violence can help to protect your right to protection and justice.

For more information, call Sandra Harrell at 322-1333.

*The Women's Center and Project Safe (p.s.) are grateful to the Nashville Metro Police Department and specifically Lt. Rita Baker for informing this article.*



# A N N O U N C E M E N T S

## INVESTMENT CLUB

The West End Investment Club was formed in 1996 after the Women's Center Book Group read *The Beardstown Ladies' Common Sense Investment Guide*. Meetings are held off-campus every third Tuesday of each month from 5:15 pm to 7:00 pm. For more information contact Peg Earheart at 297-6302 or [earheart@library.vanderbilt.edu](mailto:earheart@library.vanderbilt.edu).

## COCKTAILS FOR A CAUSE

Planned Parenthood of Middle & East Tennessee (PPMET) is hosting another fun get together for all Planned Parenthood supporters at Jackson's Bar & Bistro in Hillsboro Village, Tuesday, July 16, from 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm. Cost is \$10. Contact Keri Adams at 345-0952 to RSVP or for more information.

## JULY NASHVILLE NOW CHAPTER MEETING

This meeting's program on Tennessee's Homegrown Feminists will take place Monday, July 22, at 7:00 pm at the Peace and Justice Center, 1016 18th Avenue South. Candidates for various offices will be attending.



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Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center  
Vanderbilt University  
316 West Side Row  
Box 351513, Station B  
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