

WOMEN'S ADVOCATE, CITY OF HOUSTON
April 1, 1974 - March 29, 1977

Chapter One

On Wednesday, March 9, 1977, City Council voted 6 to 1 to reduce the salary of the office of Women's Advocate to \$1.00 per year. The only dissenting vote was cast by Mayor Fred Hofheinz. This move was instigated by seven citizens' complaints that Dr. Nikki Van Hightower, the current Women's Advocate, had planned and participated in a march and rally on International Women's Day, supporting, among other issues, The Equal Rights Amendment, a woman's right to choose the alternative of abortion, and the right to choose sexual preference. The "fair-minded" citizens bringing the complaints included Suzanne Thomas of the American Party, hiding behind the title "Concerned Citizens of Westbury," and other well-known advocates of compulsory pregnancy ("Right-to-Lifers").
...cont. P. 2...

VOL.8 NO.4 HOUSTON AREA N.O.W. APRIL 1977

Program and Business Meetings	5
Dues Renewal.....	5
Amicus Curiae Brief.....	6
Calendar.....	7
E.R.A. Alert.....	8
Cop Shop Suit Update.....	10
Houston Area N.O.W. Folk.....	11

Well, Dr. Van Hightower was one of the speakers at that rally. Her talk centered mainly around support of the E.R.A., with some mention of the right to choose. Both of these issues are law in the State of Texas. As far as the rally being planned by Nikki on City time and with City money, the whole idea would be hysterically funny if the results were not so sick. I was one of the planners of that rally, along with many other feminists from various groups, and rest assured that the money and time used did not come from City Hall.

On the following Wednesday, March 16th, City Council was packed. Testimony from all sorts of people - young, old, black, brown, white - was heard in support of the Women's Advocate. Support for the most part defended the right of free speech for a City employee and for the necessity of the Women's Advocate position. Opposition usually used the same old right-wing rhetoric against the E.R.A., abortion, and sexual preference. The debate was long, tiring, and bitter.

City Council decided that it probably was not legal to reduce the salary of the office, so they voted at that time to abolish the position all together. This proposal was tabled until Tuesday, March 29th.

Originally criticizing Van Hightower for her participation in the March 5th rally, Councilperson Louis Macey at this stage charged that the Women's Advocate had not properly consulted the Council on matters involved in the performance of her job.

Bull. As a member of the Affirmative Action Division of the Mayor's Office, Van Hightower is supposed to report to the Mayor's Office through her supervisor. This is the normal chain of command, and this is the way she has proceeded.

There has been some discussion of the Women's Advocate's so-called "enormous" salary of \$18,400. The average salary of persons appointed by the Mayor is over \$32,000. Dr. Van Hightower is underpaid at best.

So, where do we go from here? I, for one, am angry. I do not expect this anger to dissipate any time soon. For those of you "pink ladies" out there who seem to delight in reading this publication to City Council, you may give City Council this message, loud and clear: I have never seen the women's community so unified over any issue before. I have not before experienced the feeling of so many old and new faces coming out to speak their pieces, to give their money, and to do so much long, grueling work. If the position of Women's Advocate is abolished, you will see me walking those blocks, making those telephone calls, organizing my precinct, and, most of all, voting, so that I will not see those same faces sitting behind City Council desk after next November.

I expect every feminist in Houston to do the same.

Renee Rabb

Chapter Two

On Monday night, March 28th, a candlelight vigil for the Women's Advocate was held in Martha Hermann Park in front of City Hall. Dr. Nikki Van Hightower lit the first candle and thanked the large crowd of supporters who had gathered to await the morning and the vote of City Council.

Chapter Three

The long, damp night that followed was nevertheless one made easier by a congenial feeling of solidarity and purpose shared by the hardy women and men who maintained the vigil outside City Hall. The ranks swelled again at noon the next day for a short rally in support of Dr. Van Hightower, after which the group took its place inside Council chambers and awaited City Council's action.

What followed in the next hour will have to go down in the history of the struggle for women's rights in Houston as one of its bleakest moments. Making it the first item on the agenda, City Council voted 6 to 3 to abolish the position of Houston's Women's Advocate. With one blow, justice, fairness, and the struggle for full equality of all of Houston's citizens were swept aside for the momentary satisfaction of six men who have shown little or no grasp of the problems of discrimination that women face every day in all aspects of their lives. Councilmen Louis Macey, Larry McKaskle, Frank Mann, Frank Mancuso, Homer Ford, and James Westmoreland voted to abolish the office, while Mayor Fred Hofheinz, and Councilmen Johnny Goyen and Judson Robinson, Jr., voted to retain the position of Women's Advocate.

The battle may have been lost, but the war on discrimination, prejudice, and bigotry will continue. The very name NIKKI has become a rallying point around which will gather women and men of all races, economic backgrounds, and political persuasions. We can only say thank you, Nikki, for your tireless efforts in the fight for equal rights here in Houston.

The City Council, in its hasty and arbitrary action, has overlooked two extremely important results of that action. They have been the instruments for forging a new, strong, and dedicated coalition of individuals and groups, many becoming concerned about and interested in city government for the first time. The time between March 29th and election day in November is not long enough to erase the bitter memory of a deliberate blow to the struggle for equal rights and human dignity. In addition, City Council's action can only be viewed as one of the best examples we have at hand of the need for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment as soon as possible. What better example of the fact that what male politicians make into law one day may be voted out of existence the next day, week, month, or year at their own personal whims? Equal rights under the law must be the law of the land.

Linda Jones

PROGRAM MEETING - April 6th

Peggy Kirkendall, Chair of the YWCA Committee on Women in Crisis, will discuss "Battered Women." Viewing the problem of battered women as a feminist issue, Ms. Kirkendall will describe the development of the proposed shelter for women in crisis. The meeting will be held April 6th at the Clayton Library, 5300 Caroline, 7:30 P.M.

BUSINESS MEETING - April 13th

The April 13th business meeting will be at the home of Nancy Kuykendall and Joy Goodman, 4426 Tonawanda, at 8:00 P.M. The evening's entertainment will include composing letters to our legislators on a variety of bills that require our attention. Come and bring your ballpoints; stationery and stamps will be provided.

* * * * *

DUES RENEWAL

For those of you who have not yet paid your 1977 dues, this will be your farewell Broadside. Yes, it is that time of year again, the membership renewal deadline. Please use the form on the last page to renew your membership in Houston Area N.O.W.

* * * * *

Your editor has grown weary of having to call people for contributions to the BROADSIDE. At each deadline there is nothing to print, and we have to start dragging articles out of you. No more. If you want a BROADSIDE, get your information in by the deadline which appears on the calendar each month.

HOUSTON AREA N.O.W. FILES AMICUS CURIAE BRIEF

An amicus curiae (friend of the court) brief by Houston Area N.O.W. was accepted for filing in the Texas Court of Civil Appeals, 14th Supreme Judicial District, on March 9th. The N.O.W. brief argued for the rights of unwed mothers.

An unwed mother chose to bear her child and relinquish it for adoption. The father, who was married, abandoned the mother, ignored her during pregnancy, displayed no interest in the child, failed to respond promptly to repeated contacts by the adoption agency, refused to commit himself to providing for care of the child, and failed to assert any claim to the child until after it was placed for adoption, even though he knew the child was bi-ethnic, had severe medical problems, and needed to be placed quickly.

When the child was 2 1/2 years of age and in an adoptive home, the illegitimate father sought custody. At trial the jury found that the biological father had engaged in conduct that endangered the physical and emotional well-being of the child.

The N.O.W. brief made two basic points: (1) N.O.W. argued that the Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade, which upheld a woman's right to have an abortion, also protects the right not to have an abortion. If a pregnant woman knows that she cannot make reasonably expeditious provisions for a home for the child and that the agency placing her child can be held in limbo while the father dallies trying to decide whether he will claim the child, the chance that she will opt for an abortion is immensely increased. Furthermore, it will be an abortion forced upon her by lack of a realistic alternative. (2) The N.O.W. brief further contended that to give a biological father who has made no commitment to the child the same interests as the mother, who has made an enormous commitment by carrying the pregnancy to term, simply because he has casually impregnated her (possibly by a one-night stand or by rape) is nothing less than invidious sex discrimination.

No woman who has given birth to a child has the right to wait and leave the child in limbo while trying to decide whether to provide for it. She is responsible for the care of the child; and if she should fail to provide for its care, she could be criminally liable. To allow a father to wait around to make his decision whether to care for the child is untenable and unconstitutional.

The brief was submitted by Helen Cassidy, an attorney for Houston Area N.O.W.

. . . FLASH . . . We just learned as this BROADSIDE was going to print that our amicus curiae brief was very effective. The court's ruling came down on March 30th in favor of our position. We have no more details at this time but were told that our brief was a major factor in this decision.

APRIL CALENDAR

- 6 Program Meeting, 7:30 P.M., 5300 Caroline
- 12 Opening, "Women Artists - 1550-1950," U. T., Austin
- 13 Business meeting, 8:00 P.M., 4426 Tonawanda, 723-6769
- 22 BROADSIDE deadline
- 22-24 N.O.W. National Conference, Detroit

broad·side

- 1: a sheet of paper printed on one or both sides and folded
- 2: any strong or comprehensive attack, as by criticism
- 3: the simultaneous discharge of all the guns on one side of a ship

E.R.A. ALERT #462-B(1)

Well, we lost the Office of Women's Advocate. Would you like to make it 3 for 3? Friends, E.R.A. in Texas is in trouble. State legislators tell us that the Anti's are lobbying every day and have massive letter-writing campaigns going. Do you want Texas to become the 4th state to vote to rescind? If not, write - and get at least one other person to write - each of the legislators listed below:

Senators

P. O. Box 12068
Austin, Texas 78711

Tati Santiesteban
Bill Braecklein
Gene Jones
Max Sherman
Babe Schwartz
Don Adams
Oscar Mauzy

Ray Farabee
Raul Longoria
Walter Mengden
Bill Meier
Lloyd Doggett
Carl Parker

Representatives

P. O. Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78769

Clay Smothers
Tim Von Dohlen
John Bryant
Bob Close
Eddie Bernice Johnson
Joe Robbins

Luther Jones
Bill Clark
Bob Hendricks
Tom Schieffer

Order from Texans for ERA, 711 San Antonio, Austin, Texas 78701:

New brochures, "27th Amendment to our U. S. Constitution" (200 for \$8)
Bumper stickers, "Support Equal Rights Amendment" (25¢ each)
Buttons, "ERA YES", (25¢ each)

Do you want to lose your right (if you are a woman) to decide whether or not to continue an unwanted pregnancy? If not, send your protests to such pending bills to the following Senators:

Chet Brooks
Betty Andujar
Lloyd Doggett
Gene Jones
Bill Meier
Carlos Truan
Jack Ogg

Bill Braecklein
Ron Clower
Ike Harris
Frank Lombardino
Bill Patman
Walter Mengden

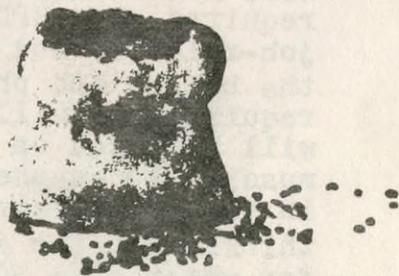


pointblank times

a lesbian/feminist publication

a year's subscription
(12 issues) is \$5
sample copy 50¢

p.o. box 14643
houston, texas 77021



**HOUSE OF
COFFEE BEANS**

In the Village

2526 Rice Blvd.

10-6 M - F

524-0057

10-5 Sat.

COP SHOP SUIT UPDATE

"I am not one to throw the word 'revolutionary' around lightly, but full integration of our cities' police departments, and by full I mean fifty-fifty, no less, is a revolutionary goal of the utmost importance to women's rights. . . . - in short, the nation's entire lawful power structure (and I mean power in the physical sense) must be stripped of male dominance and control - if women are to cease being a colonized protectorate of men."

Susan Brownmiller, Against Our Will:
Men, Women and Rape, P. 436.

Houston feminists have an opportunity to make real revolution in our city by supporting the sex discrimination suit filed against the Houston Police Officers Association and others in January of this year by Houston Area N.O.W. and Women's Advocates, Inc.

Height and physical agility requirements for the HPD were not validated prior to their institution as legally required, and HPD now admits that these criteria are not job-related, and it has been reported that HPD will drop the height and physical agility standards and that new requirements will be introduced. Whether the new tests will be based on physical size and upper shoulder muscles is anyone's guess, but only a firm believer in the tooth fairy and miracle wash-day products thinks that the department will voluntarily make entry for women on a 50-50 basis a reality.

The feminist suit seeks back pay and benefits for more than 200 women who were excluded from the HPD in the past two years. Help with this real revolution. Send your tax-deductible pennies and dollars to Women's Advocates, Inc., c/o Houston Area N.O.W., 4021 Mandell, #8, Houston, Texas 77006.

OFFICERS:

President	Renee Rabb
Vice President	Linda Jones
Secretary	Joy Goodman
Treasurer	Cynthia Millis

BROADSIDE STAFF:

Joy Goodman, Editor
Linda Jones
Nancy Kuykendall
Denise Krause
Carolyn Elliott

ABORTION INFO

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

MASCULINE MYSTIQUE

EMPLOYMENT COMPLIANCE

PUBLIC RELATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

Nancy Kuykendall	723-6769
Catherine Livingston	524-7149
Jo Stewart	522-5094
Craig Roberts	524-6517
Pamela Hamilton	526-5050
Linda Smith	529-2156
Helen Cassidy	748-5369
Nancy Landau	928-6561

NOTE: To contact persons whose phone numbers are not listed above, call 524-5743 and leave a message.

* * * * *

The views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of Houston Area N.O.W. or N.O.W., Inc.



Massage

To explore the spaciousness within.
To balance energy

For appointment call:
Beth Kendrick
529-5308



Houston Area Chapter
National Organization for Women
 4021 Mandell #8 Houston, Texas 77006

BULK RATE
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 Houston, Texas
 Permit No. 9902



BROADSIDE

IS FREE WHEN YOU JOIN NOW.

- I want to join NOW and enclose \$25 for local & national dues.
- I enclose hardship dues of \$16.50 for local & national membership.
- I'll pay in two equal monthly installments of \$12.50 (regular) or \$8.25 (hardship).
- I want to subscribe to BROADSIDE and enclose \$4.
- I enclose \$ _____ as a donation to Houston Area NOW.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ ZIP _____
 Phone _____

Mail this form to: Treasurer
 Houston Area NOW
 4021 Mandell #8
 Houston 77006