



HAWAII WOMEN LAWYERS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1994

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GIRLS IN GANGS: "VIOLENT EQUALITY" OR MEDIA HYPE?

By Meda Chesney-Lind

After working to break the silence about girls and their problems for more than 20 years, it seems odd to criticize journalists for showing an interest in girls. But that is what I was compelled to do after receiving a siege of media calls about the "problem" of girls in gangs. (Perhaps the strangest was from a national television series that wanted me to produce a "girl robber" for their weekend program.)

The reporters who called me are almost all young women themselves, but they quickly become aggravated with me when I won't confirm "what everybody knows" - that girls are more violent today.

As their lack of interest in the real problems of girls becomes clear, I find myself becoming increasingly frustrated and angry. The damage done by the stories they have culled from the police files about girls a different color than they, living in a part of the city they don't understand, finding themselves in situations they cannot imagine, is hard to undo.

Much of the new wave of "girls in gangs" stories relies on a crude form of equity feminism to explain

the supposed trend toward female violence. "Ironic as it is, just as women are becoming more powerful in business and government, the same thing is happening in gangs," reported *NBC Nightly News* (4/6/93).

Often these stories amount to a backhanded swipe at the women's movement. "Some of the politicians like to call this the Year of the Woman," ran the introduction to a *Street Stories* segment about female gang members (CBS, 1/23/92). "The women you are about to meet probably aren't what they had in mind. These women are active, they're independent and they're exercising power in a field dominated by men."

Print journalists put the same spin on the issue. "You've Come a Long Way, Moll" was the *Wall Street Journal's* headline on one of the first stories in the genre (1/25/90). "Delinquent Girls Achieving a Violent Equality" was a *Washington Post* report (12/23/93). A *New York Times* article (11/25/91) contended that stealing was an act that makes girls feel "equal parts bad girl and liberated woman."

All these reports, with their implication that feminism has somehow led young women to lives of crime, are based on a supposed crime wave whose very existence is questionable. Arrests of girls have risen - as have arrests of boys - but girls'

share of serious crimes of violence had changed little. In 1977, for example, girls accounted for 10.6 percent of arrests for such crimes, according to FBI stats; in 1991, the figure was 11.7 percent.

Studies of female delinquents show that girls have long been members of gangs, and that girls' occasionally violent behavior has been largely ignored during most decades. But if there has been no radical change in girls' gang behavior over the past few decades, why are these facts being used now to construct a female crime wave?

To many feminist criminologists, the pattern is more than a little familiar: The same hype attended the media "discovery" of adult women criminals in the 1970s. The existence of that female crime wave was soundly refuted by subsequent research, but not before provoking a wave of coverage: "Women are gaining rapidly in at least one traditional area of male supremacy - crime," the *New York Times* reported in 1972 (6/13/72).

In the stories that touted the female crime wave of the 1970s, the liberated "female crook" was a white political activist, a "terrorist," a drug-using hippie. This stereotype may have served to discredit the young women who were challenging the racism, sexism, and militarism of their day.

Today's demonized woman is African-American or Latina, and she is a

violent teenager living in a poor neighborhood. In an environment where "gang" has become a code word for race, the stories create a political climate where the victims of racism and sexism can somehow be blamed for their own victimization. Simultaneously, the link with feminism warns their most privileged white sisters of the "dark" side of their efforts to seek a better life for women. To undo the damage, we must begin to listen to girls on the economic and political margins, and seek ways to convey their lives, and their choices, accurately.

Meda Chesney-Lind is the director of the women's studies program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She is the author of Girls, Delinquency and Juvenile Justice and the vice president of the American Society of Criminology. ♦

WOMEN'S FORUM

Debi Hartmann June 24, 1994

Debi Hartmann, the Chair of the Board of Education, will be our speaker in June. Ms. Hartmann and the Board of Education have been featured news items with the recent confidential, selection of the new Superintendent of the Department of Education.

Come listen to Ms. Hartmann's position. Other interesting issues are the change from the current system to community based management. Please make reservations now.

July, 29, 1994

We have no speaker reserved at this time, but are looking for a panel of speakers on sovereignty and another panel regarding how to be appointed to Boards and Commis-

sions. Keep the 29th open, and the announcement will appear in the next newsletter.

Gubernatorial Candidates - Ala Moana Hotel August 26, 1994

HWL is proud to host a debate between the Gubernatorial candidates at our August Women's Forum. Saiki, Cayetano, and Fasi have all agreed to speak. Each candidate will speak briefly on the topic of their choice. They then will take questions from the audience.

MAKE RESERVATIONS EARLY FOR THIS FORUM. We are anticipating a large non-member turnout. Due to organizational costs, the fee for this Forum will be \$20.00 for members and non-members.

HWL is committed to keeping our Forums affordable, and have had only two exceptions to the rule of charging members only the cost of the lunch.

Marion Higa September 30, 1994

Marion Higa, the State Auditor, is an exciting and well-informed guest. The Auditor's Office has become famous for its numerous detailed and well-written investigative reports on behalf of the State Legislature. These are the reports that generally make headline news, as the audit uncovers the loss, misplacement, misuse, and sometimes sheer abuse of state funds and the failure of many agencies and departments to fulfill their legislative directions.

Anyone who works with state agencies and departments should take advantage of listening to Ms. Higa and asking her questions. She is very familiar with statutory laws, and may even dispense information that could be relevant to a case or issue you are working on.

Judicial Selection Commission October 28, 1994

We sold out our Forum with the four women judges. Those of you who came know that many of the questions centered around what makes a person qualified to be a judge and the selection process. The judges could not answer that, but the Commission members may be able to. You do not have to have judicial aspirations to find this forum interesting, thought-provoking, and stimulating.

We will be hosting several members of the Commission, which will provide our guests with a good cross-section of the entire Commission's practice and policies.

Thank You, Kathy Young!

Kathy Young is stepping down from her position as co-editor, along with Cori Lau, of this newsletter. Susan Jaworowski will now be working on the production of the newsletter. If you have any announcements or letters you wish to submit to the newsletter, you can write to HWL, or contact Susan at 625-1386 (answering machine) or Rhonda Nishimura at 537-6119. ♦

BATTERED WOMEN'S ADVOCACY PROGRAM: Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and Legal Hotline

Until recently, there have been no legal resources available to help women obtain restraining orders against their abusers. The Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and Legal Hotline, with partial funding from the Hawaii Justice Foundation, recently initiated the Battered Women's Advocacy Program, which

provides legal representation to domestic violence victims who are seeking restraining orders against their abusers.

The DVCLH is very excited to announce the start-up of the Battered Women's Advocacy Project which offers this new and much needed service. In the past year, the Legal Hotline received approximately 800 calls involving questions about Family Court restraining orders. With the support of the Hawaii Justice Foundation, the DVCLH has been able to increase attorney Donna Davis's workload from part-time to full-time. Donna now dedicates half of her time to restraining order cases and questions. Since the Battered Women's Advocacy Project started taking clients in mid-April, the Project has helped twelve women obtain restraining orders in Family Court.

The Battered Women's Advocacy Project provides three types of services: (1) Legal representation to victims of abuse at Family Court Order To Show Cause hearings, when obtaining restraining orders against the abuser; (2) Legal representation to victims of abuse who need to modify restraining orders to increase effectiveness and (3) Legal representation in obtaining a restraining order in an emergency situation, when the Adult Services Branch has not deemed the situation to be an emergency.

In connection with these services, the DVCLH has developed a brand new pamphlet of information about the Battered Women's Advocacy Project and helpful information about the restraining order process. If you or your client(s) have any questions about the Battered Women's Advocacy Project or need informational pamphlets, please call the DVCLH at 531-3771. ♦

SARAH BUEL, ESQ. ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: Videotape Available

Videotapes and audiotapes of Sarah Buel's riveting and inspiring presentation on May 13 are available at cost from the Hawaii Institute for Continuing Legal Education (HICLE). Videotape purchase: \$32 (first class postage and handling included); videotape rental: \$16 (postage and handling, including return mail postage, included) or \$10 (if tape picked up and renter returns it at own expense); audiotape cassette purchase: \$10 (including postage and handling). Please call HICLE at 956-6551 to inquire about obtaining a copy of the tape. ♦

NEW HSBA GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL COURTESY AND CIVILITY

Like other HSBA sections and affiliates, the Board of Directors of Hawaii Women Lawyers has been asked to take a position on the proposed HSBA Guidelines for Professional Courtesy and Civility. To review the full text of the Guidelines, refer to the January 1994 Hawaii Bar Journal, or call HSBA at 537-1868. The HWL Board is leaning toward supporting the Guidelines. Unless we hear about valid reasons to oppose it from HWL members, we intend to vote in favor of the Guidelines at our July board meeting. Please voice your opinions to President Laura Thielen by July 8, 1994. ♦

MOMMY, ESQ.: Summer Reading for Young Children

Are you tired of reading stories to your children that contain passive female characters who never seem to be able to take charge of their own lives? The following is a list of books about young and mature female humans and animals who are active, resourceful, and/or not afraid to take charge!

The Tale of Martha B. Rabbit by Shirley Barber

Martha B. Rabbit's bountiful supply of winter food that she painstakingly grew, put up, and stored is stolen by ruthless robber rats. She resolves to pick up the pieces, goes to work and becomes renowned in the forest as a gifted caterer, saving a homeless kitten in the process.

Need a House, Call Ms. Mouse by George Mendoza

Ms. Mouse is a world-famous architect who designs houses for all kinds of animals that are perfectly suited to their lifestyles.

Heggedy Peg by Audrey & Don Wood

A hardworking single mom saves her children from a wicked sorceress. (May be a little scary for tiny tots, but it has a happy ending!)

When Grandma Came by Jill Paton Walsh & Sophy Williams

This well-travelled grandma thought she had seen it all...until her little granddaughter came along.

Tarzanna

by Babette Cole

Tarzanna lived in the jungle with her animal friends. This story is about her urban adventures and how she helped save the president!

Princess Smartypants

by Babette Cole

Can Princess Smartypants find a suitor to meet her challenges and, more importantly, does she have to find one?

Come By Chance

by Madeline Winch

Bertha's seemingly self-imposed exile leads to her industrious restoring of an old house which becomes a haven for animals in the winter-time.

Angelina Ballerina

by Katharine Holabird

Angelina's constant and sometimes annoying propensity for dancing gives her the drive to become a world-famous ballerina.

The Paper Bag Princess

by Robert Munsch

Elizabeth lives in a castle, wears beautiful clothes, and is going to marry Prince Ronald - until a dragon smashes the castle, burns all her clothes, and carries off the prince. Clad only in a singed paper bag, the plucky girl sets off to rescue Ronald by outsmarting the dragon.

Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie

by Peter & Connie Roop

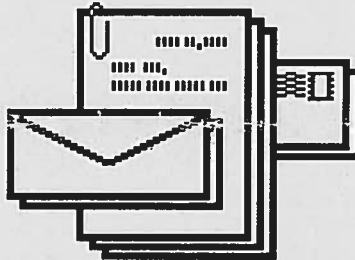
The true story of a brave teenage girl who keeps her father's island lighthouse fire burning while he is stranded on the mainland.

Kate Shelley and the Midnight Express

The true story of a fifteen year old girl who braved a terrible storm to warn the stationmaster that the railroad bridge was down. She prevented the express train from hurtling into the river and saved the crew of the engine that had fallen in. *[Ed. note: Kate's bravery makes me choke up every time I read this story. She became a heroine nation-wide for her actions—and wait until you hear what the railroad did to express its appreciation!]*

Happy summer reading! ♦

**LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR**



HWL Newsletter welcomes letters to the editor. If you have something to get off your chest, please write us at: Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 2072, Honolulu, Hawaii 96805.

All letters are subject to established guidelines as published in the April 1993 HWL Newsletter. A copy of the guidelines is available, upon request, from Susan Jaworowski at 625-1386. Views of the authors may not necessarily be shared by this organization. ♦

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HWL MEMBERSHIP

HWL invites you to become a member, or to renew your membership dues, if you have not already done so. Please send the following form to P.O. Box 2072, Honolulu, Hawaii 96805. Dues are as follows:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular members \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Out-of-state members \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Student members \$10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New admittees (within 1 year of Hawaii admission) \$20 | | |
| HWL President's Circle: | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 |

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone (day) _____ (night) _____

Please indicate if you are interested in information about serving on the HWL Board or Committees or note any topics or projects in which you would be interested in assisting.

If you have any announcements you wish to submit for the monthly newsletter, please call Rhonda Nishimura at 537-6119 or Susan Jaworowski at 587-0663 (mornings)/625-1386 (afternoons), or send a copy to HWL by the end of the month.
