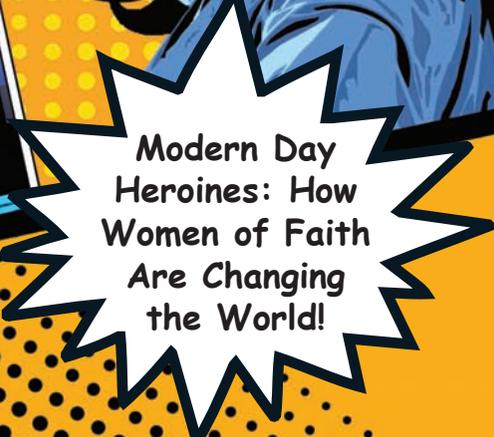


HEALERS OF OUR TIME:

WOMEN, FAITH AND JUSTICE



The
H.O.T.
Study



Modern Day
Heroines: How
Women of Faith
Are Changing
the World!



THE SISTER FUND



"Despite a common perception that religion is a force that does more harm than good in the world, women of faith have a long and distinguished history as catalysts for social change."

—Katharine Rhodes Henderson, author of *God's Troublemakers: How Women of Faith are Changing the World*

What do Eve Ensler, Marian Wright Edelman and Queen Rania Al-Abdullah have in common? What thread do these powerful women share in their vastly diverse experiences? These women are Healers of Our Time - "H.O.T." modern day heroines whose religious or spiritual values have had a direct impact on their work for justice in the world.

Representing different religious traditions, races, and walks of life, these women exemplify a cross-section of faith-inspired social leaders who are agents of progressive change in a world aching for justice and peace.

Inspired by these and countless other women whose names we rarely hear on the news, The Sister Fund commissioned **Healers of Our Time: Women, Faith and Justice**—a mapping study of the emerging field of Faith and Feminism.

The purpose of the H.O.T. study is to:

1. Identify and document key current developments that combine women's empowerment and religion, in the areas of activism, academia and, pop culture in the United States
2. Share resources, i.e. organizations, websites, and literary references, that can be useful to practitioners, researchers and funders, and
3. Provide recommendations based on the study's findings



Women are slowly advancing in number and prominence as religious leaders. In 2000, Vashti Murphy

McKenzie was named the first woman bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and in 2007, Katharine Jefferts Schori was appointed Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the U.S., becoming the first woman elected primate in the Anglican Communion.

Some Healers of Our Times “H.O.T.” Examples:

Anglican Women’s Empowerment (AWE), founded by Phoebe Griswold, pursues gender equity in the Communion of the Anglican Church worldwide.

www.episcopalchurch.org/unsw.htm

Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA), founded by Blu Greenberg, champions women’s rights through advocacy and curriculum building efforts.

www.jofa.org

Women’s Islamic Initiative for Spirituality and Equality (WISE), founded and led by Daisy Khan, encourages women’s scholarship and Qur’anic interpretations that are favorable toward Muslim women.

www.asmasociety.org/wise

Women, Faith, and Development Alliance (WFDA), led by Jean Duff, is a unique new partnership of 80+ organizations to reduce poverty by increasing political will and investments in women’s and girls’ empowerment around the world.

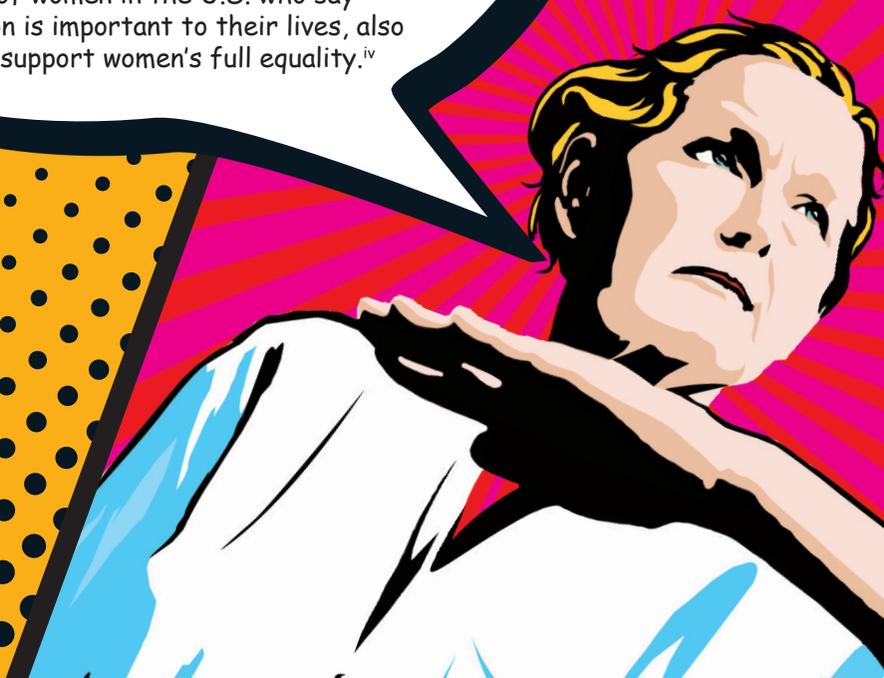
www.wfd-alliance.org/

Majority of Religious Women in U.S. Favor Feminist Ideals!

93% of women in U.S. say they believe in Godⁱ and 82% say that religion is an important part of their lives.ⁱⁱ

77% of American women strongly support the idea of women's full equality in society.ⁱⁱⁱ

75% of women in the U.S. who say that religion is important to their lives, also strongly support women's full equality.^{iv}



Research reveals that a great majority of women in the U.S. rely on their involvement in religious groups as powerful venues to gather, think, share, and strategize about ways to fortify their own lives as well as serve the common good. Right now in the U.S., 93% of women say they believe in God^v and 82% say that religion is an important part of their lives.^{vi} Almost 85 million women belong to congregations, and over 33 million are active members.^{vii}

Meanwhile, over 77% of American women strongly support the idea of women's full equality in society. Of these women, 85% say that the issue of women's equal roles is **extremely** or **very** important to them.^{viii}

Not surprisingly, the two concerns overlap. Among women in the U.S. who say that religion is important to their lives, over 75% strongly support women's full equality.^{ix}

In spite of this widespread overlap, there are but a few **visible** conversations that discuss the intersection of faith and women's empowerment in the U.S. However, the **H.O.T.** study finds that extensive work is being done by U.S. based Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other faith-inspired women, under the radar.

Just think how much more powerful the individual efforts of these separate groups would be if further united towards common goals of social justice and peace. As long as the silos remain separate, the road will continue to be a long, hard march. But if bridges were erected to connect the silos and unite the voices of sister organizations, existing commonalities would ensure achievement of shared goals more quickly. As revealed in the **H.O.T.** study, **the intersection where faith and feminism meet is a powerful convergence for social change!**

H.O.T. Highlights! Activism, Academia and Popular Culture



The Sister Fund's H.O.T. study, conducted by the **Institute for Women's Policy Research**, and supplemented by **Women in Theology and Ministry, Candler School of Theology**, at **Emory University**, explores where faith and feminism meet in the areas of activism, academia and popular culture.

Activism

During 2006, 548 women responded to a "Faith and Feminism" survey revealing insights about women's faith-fueled activism, their inspirations and challenges. In addition to pursuing women's religious leadership and reinterpretation of scriptures, these activists are also

championing peace, economic security, and women's well-being in society. The survey's findings are supplemented by additional research.



Academia

A major contribution of women's leadership in the field of religious studies is the development of feminist, womanist, mujerista and Asian women's theologies studies which encourage the exploration of biblical texts and religious tradition from women's experience as a starting point. These woman-centered frameworks take seriously the interplay of race, class and gender and have yielded visible results, like the use of gender-sensitive or inclusive language in liturgy and an increase in the number of female

students enrolled in seminary, clergywomen in mainline Protestant denominations and women rabbis.

Pop-Culture

The **H.O.T.** study takes a tour through the junction of "Faith and Feminism" in politics and pop-culture. Reviewing books, movies, television, web resources and more, the study highlights everything from religious discussion in presidential elections to the popularity of the book **Eat, Pray, Love**.

H.O.T. Challenges

- Women's activist and academic work, especially pertaining to religion and faith, remains relatively unnoticed in most of American public life.

- Religious institutions often avoid advocacy for women, particularly when it promotes changes in their traditional roles.
- Funding is a common problem for women's religious gender-justice activism. Religious funders can be reluctant to fund feminism, and secular funders can be reluctant to fund religion. Meanwhile, only 6.4% of grants from the 1,154 largest U.S. foundations give specifically to women and girls.^x Internationally, funding earmarked for women and girls is .06 %;^{xi} of that, grants targeted for faith-based social justice activism are miniscule.





More Healers of Our Times “H.O.T.” Examples:

Drisha Institute for Jewish Education places women in leadership positions within Jewish communities across the world and sponsors women’s empowerment programs. Devorah Zlochower is a model instructor for Jewish women aspiring to be rabbis at the world’s first center for women’s advanced study of classical Jewish texts. (www.drisha.org)

Turning Point, founded and led by Robina Niaz, provides counseling, education, advocacy and crisis intervention for Muslim women and their children. (www.turningpoint-ny.org)

Women’s Ministry of the National Council of Churches (NCC), led by Rev. Ann Tiemeyer, champions the spiritual and professional development of women in positions of leadership and responsibility in the NCC and its 50+ member denominations. (www.nccusa.org/news/070803tiemeyer.html)

Other H.O.T. organizations can be found in Chapter One and Appendix 3 of the study.



An example of a partnership between faith-based and secular organizations is **Auburn Media, The White House Project, Shesource.org** and the **Women’s Funding Network**, who have joined efforts to train progressive women of faith to be effective public speakers and political leaders.



Five U.S. based women's funds and the **Women's Funding Network** have recently completed a three-year partnership with faith-based women's programs in their local communities. These secular funders and religious service providers share wisdom, strategy and resources, each leveraging their unique organizational power to strengthen the capacity of the women they serve.

The **Faith, Feminism and Philanthropy: Finding Common Ground** report can be found at www.dallaswomensfoundation.org and the monograph of project's inception can be found at www.wfnet.org/documents/publications/WFN_Monograph.pdf



A Few Recommendations:

Faith-Based Women Activists can:

- Reach out to secular women, as well as women from diverse faith traditions, races, ethnicities, classes, sexualities and ages.
- Nurture a new generation of young women activists.
- Utilize new media (i.e. blogs, websites, podcasts, e-conferences, etc.) to raise the visibility of issues around women, religion, and social change.
- Seek out media training to spread the word about current efforts. Become spokeswomen for justice.

Secular Feminists and Social Justice Leaders can:

- Invite progressive women of faith as members, event speakers, etc. Foster dialogue and participation.

- Identify common agendas, especially focusing on women and girls, and collaborate on issues of mutual concern.

Feminist Religious Scholars can:

- Translate scholarship into more accessible language and publications.
- Organize conferences, events, and networks that include faith-based practitioners and activists.

Religious Leaders can:

- Respect the opinions and contributions of women who provide significant support for religious communities.

We Can Start a Dialogue. We Can Start a Movement!

- Vigorously work to support women's empowerment by encouraging women's full participation in lay and clerical leadership.

Philanthropists can:

- Review funding criteria to allow support for women's faith-based efforts to advance social justice activism, scholarship, leadership, advocacy and direct service.
- Fund projects that foster collaborations between traditionally secular and faith-based activists and institutions in order to help build a movement.



Healers of Our Time: Women, Faith and Justice is the first study of its kind that focuses on contemporary women activists and scholars of diverse religious traditions in the U.S., and how the media portrays them. Passionate in their pursuits and clear about their calling, Muslim, Jewish, Christian and other faith-inspired women are involved in transformative work, defying the odds of opposition from authorities, and a persistent lack of funding, visibility and support.

We encourage readers to learn about these modern day heroines, partner with them, support and fund their efforts, to increase their capacity for effecting powerful social change.

To download the complete **Healers of Our Time: Women, Faith and Justice Study**, visit: www.faihandfeminism.org/mappingstudy, beginning June 1, 2008.

i Harris Interactive 2003

ii IWPR 2007

iii IWPR 2007

v Harris Interactive 2003

vi IWPR 2007

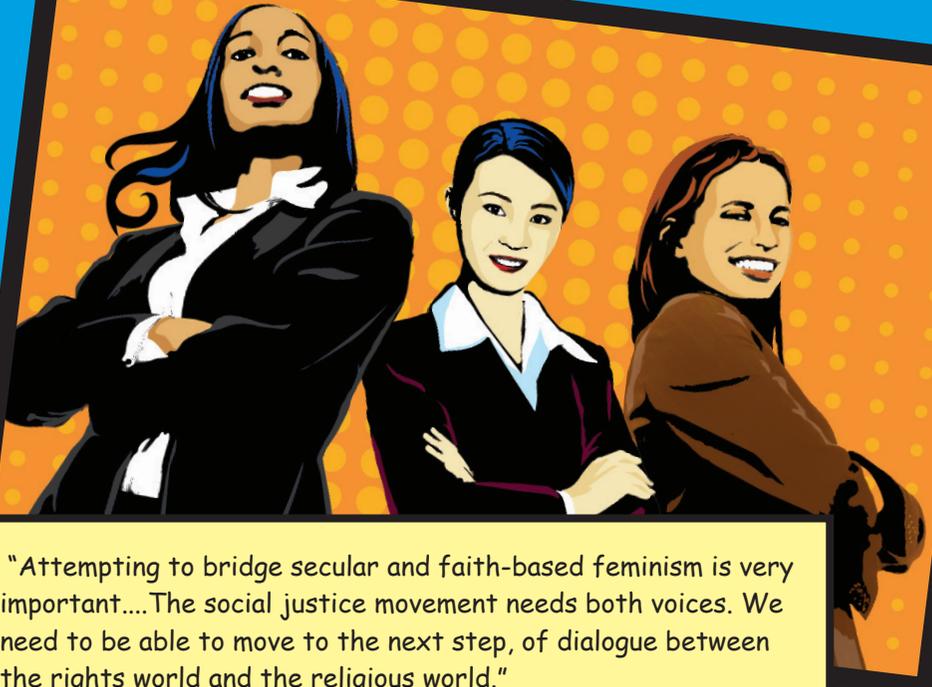
vii Based on Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001 and
U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the
Census 2006

viii IWPR 2007

ix IWPR 2007

x The Foundation Center

xi Announced at the 2007 Clinton Global Initiative
Annual Meeting with the U.N. General Assembly in
New York City (9/26/07 9/28/07)



"Attempting to bridge secular and faith-based feminism is very important....The social justice movement needs both voices. We need to be able to move to the next step, of dialogue between the rights world and the religious world."

—Dorothy Q. Thomas, founding director of the Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Division and a 1998 MacArthur Fellow, taken from the book **Faith and Feminism, A Holy Alliance** by Helen LaKelly Hunt



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