



CENTRAL SQUARE

1970s-1990s

The Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women (CCSW) works in an inclusive manner to promote equity for all women and girls, and advocates on their behalf with other City departments and officials, local organizations, and state government to increase opportunities through policy and program recommendations and development, and to build public awareness of key issues affecting women and girls.

The Cambridge Women's Commission recognizes, supports, and advocates for all who self-identify as women or with womanhood, including transgender, gender fluid, and non-binary persons. We stand with and for women and girls of all sexualities, races, ethnicities, abilities, immigration status, or religions. For more on the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women, visit our website at www.cambridgewomenscommission.org or contact:

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INTRODUCTION

The term "second wave feminism" refers to the feminist activity and thought that took root in the late 1960s and continued for approximately two decades primarily in industrialized nations in the West. As the women's movement sparked across the United States, Cambridge became a center of revolution and organizing, much like New York, San Francisco, and other major U.S. cities twice its size. At the turn of the new decade in 1970, many local protests demanded changes that were similar to the national movement's calls; from the Bread and Roses March of 1970, to a protest of Harvard University's 1970 commencement led by Sandra Graham, to the famous 1971 takeover at 888 Memorial Drive. Cambridge activists were fighting for greater access to health and child care, racial equity, an end to the Vietnam War, a condemnation of sexual violence, and so much more.

In Central Square, activists organized around abortion access, domestic violence prevention and services, prisoners' rights, housing, representation in the arts, and much more. In this guide, we highlight feminist, socialist, and educational institutions that emerged and thrived in Central Square from the late 1960s through the 1990s and recognize the unique contributions they made to Cambridge feminist history.

We acknowledge that feminist organizing, while aspiring to inclusion, has experienced and continues to experience exclusions of race, class, gender identity, religion, and disability. Our work has led us to many stories from multiple perspectives, and we know there are always more to find.

Learn more about women's contributions to Cambridge by visiting the Cambridge Women's Heritage Project database at www2.cambridgema.gov/Historic/CWHP



CENTRAL SQUARE | TOUR



- 1 51 INMAN STREET**
Cambridge Women's Commission
1977 – Present
Back Porch Dance Collective
1990 – 2001

- 2 7 TEMPLE STREET**
YWCA Cambridge | 1891 -
Present

- 3 159 PEARL STREET**
Transition House | 1976 – Present

- 4 858 MASS AVENUE**
Savanna Books | 1989 – 1996

- 5 795 MASS AVENUE**
City Hall | 1888 – Present

- 6 99 BISHOP ALLEN DRIVE**
BARCC | 1973 – Present

- 7 46 PLEASANT STREET**
Cambridge Women's Center
1971 – Present

- 8 595 MASS AVENUE**
Bread and Roses | 1969 – 1971

FEMINIST APPROACHES

- 9 552 MASS AVENUE**
Abortion Access Project | 1992 –
2006

- 10 512 MASS AVENUE**
Marquee Bar | 1970's – mid 80's

- 11 450 MASS AVENUE**
Underground Railway Theater
1979 – Present

- 12 438 MASS AVENUE**
CCTV | 1987 – Present

- 13 2 ½ DOUGLASS STREET**
New Day Films | 1971 – Present

FEMINIST COMMUNICATION

- 14 143 ALBANY STREET**
Sojourner | 1975 – 2002

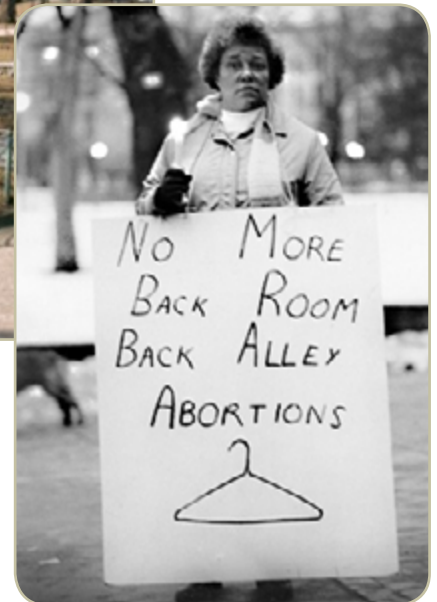
PRISON ABOLITION COLLECTIVES

CONTEXTUALIZING THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

- 1969** The Women's Liberation Conference. Six hundred women meet at Emmanuel College in Boston."
- 1970** The Women's Strike for Equality March in Washington takes place.
- 1970** *Women and Their Bodies*, a 193-page booklet, later known as *Our Bodies, Ourselves* is published.
- 1971** The takeover of a Harvard building at 888 Memorial Drive by local women to protest the lack of affordable housing in Cambridge and the need for a women's center leads to the purchase of 46 Pleasant Street which becomes the Cambridge Women's Center.
- 1973** Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC) is founded by a group of volunteers and survivors who created and staffed a hotline to answer calls from rape survivors. BARCC helped organize some of the first *Take Back The Night* marches in Boston, along with local students.
- 1976** Transition House, the first domestic violence shelter on the east coast, is born after two women opened their apartment in Cambridge as a refuge for other women fleeing abusive relationships.
- 1977** The Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women is established as a department of the city.
- 1988** Project 10 East forms at the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, becoming one of the first Gay-Straight Alliances in the country.
- 1989** The Women's Civil Rights Rally in Boston acknowledges "women who have been victims of male violence."
- 1990** Emory University offers the first Ph.D. program in Women's Studies.
- 1991** Cambridge's first Pride Brunch takes place at City Hall, organized by the Cambridge Lavender Alliance with support from Mayor Alice Wolf.
- 1993** The March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi-Equal Rights and Liberation takes place.
- 1995** The Fourth U.N. World Conference on Women is hosted in Beijing; in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), and Nairobi (1985).



International Women's Day March of 1970 in Boston. Photo by Liane Brandon



Abortion Rights Demonstration (1975). Photo by Ellen Shub

51 INMAN STREET

Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women | 1977 – Present



In the year leading up to its founding, a group of women joined together and worked tirelessly to propose a local Women's Commission to the City Council. The Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women (CCSW) was officially established by ordinance of the City Council vote on October 3, 1977. The Commission was tasked with providing activities, programs, and policy recommendations to "insure the equal status of women in educational, economic, political, health, legal and social spheres."



First Commission Swearing-In, 1977

Barbara Smith, a leader in the women's health and Black feminist movement and the CCSW's first Co-Executive Director alongside Freada Klein, explained the different reach of the Commission and other feminist organizations at that time. "One of the things I feel the Commission can do is to deal with some of the issues of the women in Cambridge who have not been affected by feminist organizations and activities up to this point... Because it is a public commission and because of its relationship to the city government, it might have access to different kinds of women, might be appealing to different kinds of women." In 1980, Nancy Ryan, former director of the New Bedford Women's Center, became the Executive Director of CCSW where she remained for 25 years. Her organizing history and progressive feminist views influenced the role of the Women's Commission as a beacon for global and local women's voices and struggles.

The early CCSW also sought to connect with groups that had predominantly women membership - child care organizations or religious groups - but didn't identify with the feminist movement. Early projects included a "Women's Work" photo exhibit that toured throughout Cambridge, translation and printing services, women's job fairs, "Reel Women" film festival by Cambridge women, Newtowne Court Women's Center Fabric History Project, an event with Angela Davis, "Women, Race and Class... Building a Movement for All Women", lobbying workshops, a Latin American Women Photography Exhibit, numerous CoMadres (Commit-



CoMadres event for International Women's Day, March 10, 1987

tee of Mothers and Relatives of the Disappeared, Assassinated, and Political Prisoners of El Salvador) events, establishing The Domestic Violence-Free Zone, and many self-defense and safety awareness programs that trained hundreds of women in Cambridge.

Feminist Graffiti

Mary Leno, former Project Coordinator for CCSW (1989-2008), catalogued feminist, lesbian, and political graffiti from around Cambridge during the 80s and 90s.



51 INMAN STREET

Back Porch Dance Collective | 1990 – 2001



In 1990, The Back Porch Dance Company was founded as an interracial, intergenerational dance company for women with members whose ages spanned three generations. The directors, Joan Green and Vicki Solomon, brought together a group of women and girls for a 12-week workshop that evolved into the company. During its lifespan, the company included both professional and amateur dancers.

The company created productions that were grounded in oral histories and the special interests of women. They shared their feminist mission with audiences all over Cambridge and the Northeast - from a residency and performances at the Cambridge Senior Center, to a Women's Day celebration in Lowell, and a conference on Women and Money hosted by the Boston Women's Fund in 1995.

Though the group was focused on creating beautiful productions, it also became a support group for the women involved, as members retired, went off

to college, and faced other life transitions. The Company's other important focus was outreach, bringing performances, classes, workshops and the empowerment of dance and oral history to elders (mainly women) in elder venues throughout New England.

The group, part of the Cambridge Performance Project, rehearsed at the Cambridge Friends School and held an office at 51 Inman Street through their relationship with the Department of Human Services. Though the company had built a solid reputation and performed throughout New England, it dissolved in 2001, owing to changes in the lives of the directors.



Celebrating Cambridge Women and Work, 2000



Dreamfields, 1996



Voices from the Back Porch, 1992



Voices from the Back Porch, 1992

All dances pictured were choreographed by Joan Green and Victoria Solomon with the group.

7 TEMPLE STREET

YWCA Cambridge | 1891 – Present



In 1891, members of the Cambridgeport branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union established the Cambridge YWCA ("the Y"). The earliest programs offered by the Y were in music, cooking, dressmaking, penmanship, and hygiene. As young girls were displaced throughout New England following the industrial revolution, the YWCA responded by building a boarding house in 1911. Later, a health education program was added, including a pool building that was a site of community respite until the 1980s.

Until 1946, YWCA's were racially segregated. The YWCA's national mission expanded to fight discrimination and racism in the 1950s, which remains the core of its current mission to "empower women and eliminate racism." Throughout the 70s and 80s, committees and partnerships focused on addressing racism led to meaningful actions within the organization and wider community. The Community Relations Committee - chaired

by Renae Scott - designed a course titled "Black Women: The American Experience" for Cambridge women to explore the intersections between racism and sexism. In 1977, the Affirmative Action Committee ended the Cambridge Association's relationship with 37 vendors in protest of policies and programs out of alignment with affirmative action. The committee shared their learning and processes with other organizations across Cambridge through annual conferences. The YW hosted many events and conferences centering on the voices of women



Jan Gadson, co-leader of "Black Women: The American Experience" course, facilitates a discussion. *Cambridge Chronicle*, Vol. 131, Num. 41, 13 October 1977

of color, including an event in 1987 featuring Mireya Lucero, the "first women's activist to visit the US from El Salvador's area of conflict," co-sponsored by the Cambridge El Salvador Sister City Project, and Cambridge Women's Commission, and Central America Solidarity Association.

Renae Gray

After moving to their permanent location, Transition House hired Renae Gray to build coalitions with Third World women (the terminology for BIPOC women at the time) and to train a mostly White, middle-class staff to address their implicit biases when working with guests. Gray remained committed to ending violence against women and girls throughout her life, and was involved in many education and health initiatives across Cambridge and Boston. Gray also worked at the Haymarket People's Fund, and served on the boards of the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House (MFNH), the Women's Theological Center, and the Cambridge Algebra Project. To read a full biography of Renae Gray, visit the Cambridge Women's Heritage Project.

In the 1970s, the Cambridge YWCA was a lively space for feminist conversations and education (see "A Snapshot of 1970s Women's Liberation Events"). Their youth program for girls has focused on eliminating racism, building career awareness, and promoting self-awareness, which has seen different iterations over the years. Years later, Denise Simmons, in her first term as Mayor (2008-2009), founded GOLD - Girls Only Leadership Development - which grew through its partnership with the Cambridge YWCA, with similar goals to the YW's earlier youth programs for girls.

The Cambridge YWCA continues to provide housing, educational support services, and recreational spaces for women. Housing for families is provided through the Tanner Residence at 7 Temple Street, and Renae's Place for Homeless Families, named in honor of Renae Gray. Families work closely with case managers to create plans for building sustainable lives.

7 TEMPLE STREET

YWCA Cambridge (continued)

Snapshot of 1970s Women's Liberation Events

from the *Cambridge Chronicle Archives*

- 1970** "You've Come A Long Way Babe, and You Ain't No Place Yet," a panel discussion on women's liberation includes organizers from NOW and Bread and Roses.
- 1971** Tuesday evening sex education lectures begin with representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.
- 1972** Feminist courses are offered including "Self Defense," "Home Repairs," and "Women and Their Bodies." That spring, Sandra Graham, Mary Ellen Preusser, and Cornelia Wheeler - members of Young Women Committed to Action - host a panel focused on women in politics.
- 1973** Hue-Tam Ho Tai presents a lecture series on Vietnamese women, "An Historical Survey of the Legal and Economic Position of Women in Vietnam," which tied the legacy of Vietnam's historical matriarchal culture to contemporary Vietnamese women's independence.
- 1974** Girls from across New England attend the Eastern Regional YWCA Junior High School Conference for discussions and activities.
- 1975** "Changing Role of Women," a panel focused on women in education and the workforce featured Micleta Bruce of the Office of Manpower, Lisa Zankman of the Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women, Pat Bonner-Lyons, director of the Aswalos House in Roxbury, and Sara Ann Shaw, moderator and reporter for WBZ-TV.
- 1976** YWCA hosts a panel discussion on the State Equal Rights Amendment to educate people on the major differences between the Massachusetts and federal ERA, and their impacts on family law, marital property, employment laws, and criminal laws.
- 1977** Friday evening women's film series begins with "A Prison Film: Still Living," a documentary about women's prisons.
- 1978** A four-day series with events sponsored by the Greater Boston Area Task Force calls attention to the "neutron bomb issues and escalating arms race" and intersections with violence against women.
- 1979** Two workshops titled "Combating White Racism" create space for "non-Third world women" to examine racism at personal and institutional levels.
- 1981** A slide tape presentation featuring lesbian lives, titled "Straight Talk About Lesbians," is presented by producer Liz Diamond.



YWCA Auto Mechanics Course. *Cambridge Chronicle*, Vol. 133, Num. 38, 20 Sept 1979



In 1991, the YWCA hosted a grand opening of the 7 Temple St location with a portrait exhibit featuring local women. Cheng Imm Tan (pictured here), Director of Renewal House at the time, was featured in the exhibit. Photo provided by *Cambridge Chronicle*, Vol. 145, Num. 42, 17 Oct 1991



YWCA Feminist Course, *Self-Defense*

HOUSING & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Cambridge has a rich history of organizing for housing and economic justice. Equity and access to basic needs like food and safe housing are feminist issues, and many women have led these efforts over the years.

Housing

Due to gentrification and the encroachment of universities into neighborhoods, historically Black neighborhoods like the Port and Riverside communities have needed for decades to advocate for housing as a human right. One of many groups that emerged in the 70s-90s was the **Eviction Free Zone** (1988 - 2007), which had roots in the Haitian, Latino, immigrant, and tenant-led community. Their office was out of 55 Norfolk Street.

In 1969, MIT bought 13.9 acres of industrial Cambridgeport, mostly land of the Simplex Wire and Cable Company. Their plan was to build luxury high rise buildings without community input. The Simplex Steering Committee emerged in 1974 to insist on neighborhood priorities at the site. A unanimous vote in a community-wide referendum kicked off an 18-year campaign that ultimately resulted in a compromise that included low and mid-rise affordable housing, job opportunities and public open space.

True to their spirit of pairing grassroots action with public policy, organizers set out with ladders, paint and brushes one night to create a giant mural of MIT - depicted as an octopus - grabbing up all the surrounding buildings. In 1975, there was another protest against the building of McDonald's (463 Mass Ave) where people held signs reading, "We need housing not hamburgers."

Partnerships across many of the organizations featured in this tour guide also led to more services for homeless communities. In the 80s, a program for homeless women and children was formed through the YWCA, Transition House, and the Community Learning Center (CLC). The CLC was also involved with the founding of the Multi-Service

Center (MSC) in 1981, which supports homeless and near-homeless people across the city. The MSC houses Cambridge Haitian Services, which provides case management to the Haitian community. Collaborating across organizations and hiring community organizers were common strategies to reach more women and families among these organizations.



Protest against the building of McDonald's, 1975

Sandra Graham

Sandra Graham, a Cambridge housing advocate, gained international attention in 1970 when she organized Riverside neighborhood residents in a protest of the Harvard University commencement, against the university's eviction of long-time residents from their homes. The group succeeded in forcing Harvard to construct both elderly and family housing complexes over the next ten years.

She co-founded the Riverside Cambridgeport Community Development Corporation, which became a highly successful community corporation that upgraded existing housing and created new low and moderate income housing for Cambridge residents. Graham became the first woman of color to be elected to the Cambridge City Council in 1971, and later as a State Representative in 1976. The Graham and Parks Alternative Public School was named in her honor, along with Rosa Parks. To read a full biography of Sandra Graham, visit the Cambridge Women's Heritage Project and Cambridge Black Trailblazers.

Economic and Food Justice

Several organizations in Central Square emerged during this time period focused on economic and food justice - **Food For Free** (1981-Present), **Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee** (1965-Present), and **Harvest Co-Op** (1974-2018). Each of these organizations were crucial partners in feminist organizing around domestic violence prevention, housing programs, and community resource distribution.

858 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

Savanna Books | 1989 – 1996



In 1989, Gail Willett opened Savanna Books at 858 Massachusetts Avenue with the goal of sharing books that celebrate Black, Asian, Latin, and Native American youth. In the years just before the bookstore's founding, Gail had led a mail-order business out of her home. She wanted her kids to have access to stories that represented them – and for other families to have the same. As part of her work with the bookstore, Gail facilitated professional development workshops with teachers about the importance of books representing the stories of children of color. The workshops were offered throughout Greater Boston and reached as far as Chicago. At the time, Savanna Books was one of only two bookstores in the country focused specifically on youth of color.

The bookstore regularly hosted authors and illustrators, including Pat Cummings, who created over 30 books for children and received the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work: Children, as an illustrator for *Our Children Can Soar* (2009). Other speakers at the bookstore

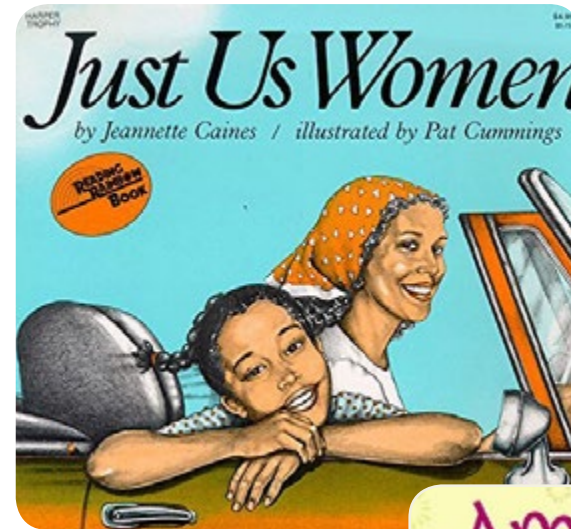
included Eloise Greenfield, author of many works offering positive depictions of African American families and relationships, as well as Mary Hoffman, author of *Amazing Grace* (1991). In order to offer larger in-store events, Savanna Books moved to 1152 Massachusetts Avenue in 1993. It closed a few years later in 1996.



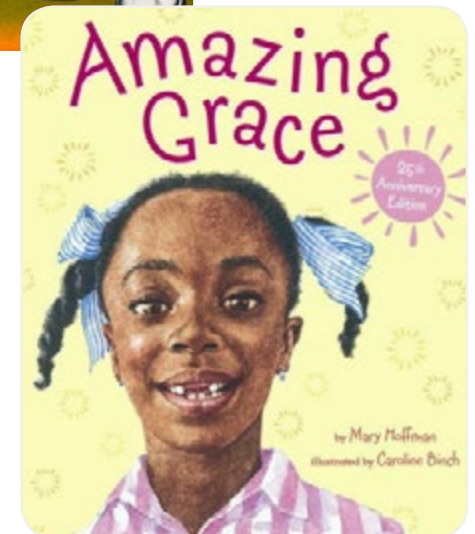
Gail Pettiford Willett — photo by Berta A. Daniels



Poet Sam Cornish (c) reads at the 1989 grand opening. Gail (l) and her son, Kamil Willett (r)



Just Us Women, by Jeannette Caines and illustrated by Pat Cummings (1984)



Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman (1991)

795 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

City Hall



Domestic Violence Initiatives

Until 1981, it was entirely legal for a husband to sexually assault his wife. The movement against domestic violence (then, the “battered women’s movement”) began to find its national presence in the 70s as women shared their experiences in consciousness-raising groups, or fled to some of the earliest programs housing survivors.

Following many years of work by grassroots organizations and activists (timeline below), Cambridge passed the “Domestic Violence-Free Zone” initiative on March 7, 1994. Led by Councillor Katherine Triantafyllou, the city resolution resulted in 55 signs installed throughout Cambridge, and the Domestic Violence Free Summits which began in 1995. These summits laid the groundwork for the city’s current Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative.



Photo courtesy of the Domestic Violence-Free Zone Initiative

Domestic Violence Initiatives Timeline

1973

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center forms out of the Cambridge Women’s Center.

1975

Betsy Warrior begins the Battered Women’s Directory Project which publishes the first international directory of individuals and programs advocating for battered women.

1976

Chris Womendez and Cherie Jimenez open Transition House, the first domestic violence shelter on the East Coast and the second in the country.

Freada Klein, Elizabeth Cohn-Stuntz and Lynn Wehrli found the Alliance Against Sexual Coercion, the first organization in the country to recognize sexual harassment in the workplace.

1978

Emerge opens in Boston as one of the earliest feminist-informed abuser programs and would later have three Cambridge-based offices. Local women’s organizations partnered with Emerge to make referrals and organize public education campaigns.

Abuse Prevention Act (M.G.L. Chapter 209A) passes in MA, providing protective orders for battered women. The Act was drafted by Transition House’s Battered Women’s Action Committee.

60 people from eleven Massachusetts programs convene to create the MA Coalition of Battered Women Service Groups (The Coalition) to collectively receive funding from the state.

1981

The Coalition publishes *For Shelter and Beyond* (1981), a training guide for domestic violence service providers.

1985

Transition House begins the Dating Violence Intervention Project (DVIP) for middle and high school students, which becomes a nationwide model for consent-based and healthy relationships curricula.

1994

“Domestic Violence-Free Zone” passes in Cambridge.

1995

On The Rise opens as a day program to provide safety and resources to homeless women.

1998

The Network/la Red, formed by “battered lesbians to address domestic violence,” is formed by Cambridge resident, Beth Leventhal.

795 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

City Hall

Feminist Anti-Pornography Ordinance vs. FACT

Still a point of tension in feminist thinking today, pornography was an issue of complex debate in the 80s in Cambridge. In 1985, the Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement launched an anti-pornography bill in Cambridge. This ordinance would have legally placed pornography under the heading of sex discrimination in the Cambridge Human Rights Ordinance.

The proposed bill defined pornography not as obscenity or speech but as concrete action that is "the graphic, sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures or words...dehumanized as sexual objects who enjoy pain, humiliation or rape..." It allowed any victim, including children or "transsexual" people (the term for transgender people at the time) to sue civilly, those who have exploited them through pornography. It was not a criminal, but rather a civil ordinance that addressed the concrete harms of pornography. When the bill was first launched, hundreds of women publicly testified in support of the anti-pornography ordinance — many who had been abused in the pornography industry and others for whom pornography became the template used for their sexual exploitation.

The Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force (FACT) led the opposition to this bill through local protests and meetings. Because the bill would allow claims against anyone producing, selling, exhibiting, or distributing pornography, there was concern that the bill would benefit the dominant group (whether intentionally or not) by further ostracizing gay or lesbian images and literature, and sex workers. Nancy Ryan, Executive Director of the Women's Commission at the time, presented this case to City Council during the hearings. FACT continued to oppose any feminist legislation against pornography, including the federal Attorney General's Commission on Pornography sometimes referred to as the Meese Hearings (1985-1986).

The feminist anti-pornography ordinance was defeated in Cambridge by fewer than 4,000 votes.

Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts THE DOCK VOLUME 15, NUMBER 4

Cambridge anti-pornography ordinance defeated

Through the years there have been countless efforts to limit systems of censorship on the American public. But none has been more determined than the current attempts of the Women's Alliance Against Pornography (WAAP), a national organization, to have local ordinances passed which define pornography as sex discrimination.

The latest battleground was in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A binding referendum on November 5, 1985, which voters turned down, would have amended Cambridge's new Human Rights ordinance to provide that persons "victimized by pornography" could claim sex discrimination and seek civil damages either through the Cambridge Human Rights Commission or through the courts.

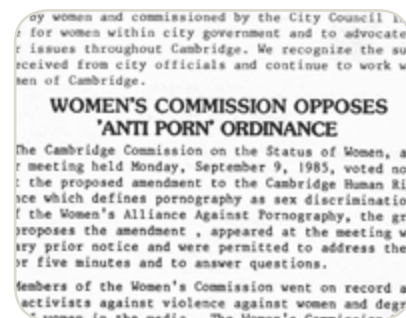
The measure would also have allowed anyone who could prove that he or she was a victim of pornography to seek an injunction to ban that material from Cambridge.

CLUM worked in coalition with the Feminist Anti-Censorship Task Force to defeat the question because of the pull of censorship such as could have resulted in Cambridge.



The offending statute defined pornography as "the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words which also include one or more of the following:

American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts,
The Docket newsletter Vol.15, Num. 4



Opening Doors newsletter of The Cambridge
Commission on the Status of Women, 1985

"Feminists opposing the question were concerned that their literature exploring sexual issues could become victims of the ordinance. Gay men and lesbians were similarly concerned."

99 BISHOP ALLEN DRIVE

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC)
1973 – Present



In the fall of 1972, a group of women in the Greater Boston area were searching for resources for survivors of sexual assault. As part of a larger national movement that recognized the need for and sought to establish rape crisis centers, feminists were redefining rape as an intrinsic part of patriarchal culture that oppressed women, asserting that ending rape could not be achieved until women and men were equal. Rape crisis centers were being formed to address unmet needs of survivors, provide 24-hour hotlines for callers, and counseling, as well as legal and medical support services.

BARCC was the second rape crisis center in the country, and the first in New England. Staffed by volunteers and survivors and operating as a collective, the organization officially started out of a room on the second floor of the Women's Center, with only a mattress on the floor and a desk phone for the hotline. On March 26, 1973, the *Boston Globe* published a notice, "Rape center opens today." The first caller was Dory Cote, who described the support she received from BARCC as life-saving, "I could walk into that building at any time and there was always someone there to greet me, to support me, to hear me, to let me express



Take Back the Night March, Boston Fens, 1973. Courtesy of BARCC.

my rage, to let me express my grief without judgement." Dory, like many survivors who sought BARCC's services, became a volunteer, taking calls for the hotline and staying connected to the organization for years.

BARCC was similar to many early feminist organizations that were anti-establishment. The programs were intended to disrupt and challenge mainstream thinking, like volunteers speaking out in public or accom-

panying survivors to hospitals and courtrooms. These programs eventually became formalized as part of BARCC's operations. Over time, BARCC's programs and advocacy achieved numerous victories on behalf of women and survivors of all genders, and the organization that started as part of an anti-establishment movement began partnering with legal, medical and government infrastructure to expand services for survivors.

46 PLEASANT STREET

Cambridge Women's Center | 1971 – Present



On March 6, 1971, a protest for International Women's Day (organized by Bread and Roses) led around 2000 people to 888 Memorial Drive, a former knitting factory owned by Harvard University, and claimed it as a women's center. The organizers read a solidarity statement explaining that they had taken over the building in solidarity with women, the Riverside community, and all the people of Vietnam. For ten days, while talking to the press about the community's demands for low-income housing, protesters held the building, shared child-care responsibilities, provided health and self-defense classes, and met about whether to stay in



Photo courtesy of *Left On Pearl*

the building and risk arrest and incarceration. The takeover has since been documented in *Left On Pearl*, a documentary film by Susie Rivo.

A \$5,000 donation from Susan Lyman (a Trustee of Radcliffe College), in addition to other fundraising, supported the founding of a permanent women's center at 46 Pleasant Street, now known as the Cambridge Women's Center (CWC). Move-in began on February 5, 1972. Constant streams of women filled the space and an exciting, generative energy led to some of the earliest feminist groups in the country focused on lesbian and bisexual identity, self-defense, and reconciling trauma and abuse. The library and kitchen became community gathering spaces for learning, connect-



L-R: Lorraine Mercer Galvin, Bunny, Dotty Prout, Susan Jacoby
Photo by Esther Leidolf (1978)

ing, and cooking. *On Our Way*, the newsletter for CWC, began publishing stories by local feminists in October of 1971, which are still available on their website.

A key principle was that all women's voices should be heard, and the structure be as

non-hierarchical as possible. A core group of six volunteers represented the Coordinating Committee. They met weekly, and instituted biweekly Staff and Projects meetings in order to include as many voices from the community as possible in decision-making. Volunteers have always been critical to the functioning and survival of CWC. In the beginning there were no paid staff, and volunteers are still responsible for staffing the center, answering the helpline, leading support groups and workshops, and so much more. In 2021, CWC celebrates its 50th anniversary with ten days of events in honor of the ten-day takeover. Archives for CWC are housed at the Northeastern University Archives and Special Collections.

Libby Bouvier

In 1972, Libby Bouvier moved from Southern California to Boston. She had previously lived and worked at the San Fernando Valley Peace Center, a draft counseling center during the turbulent Vietnam era. The center was under constant threat of attacks from political groups and the men seeking counseling were often in crisis themselves; she learned valuable skills in de-escalating crises. Libby met with the organizers of the Women's Center and became the first person to officially reside there, so that the house would not be unattended at night or on weekends, and so that someone could help protect against vandalism and threats from volatile men whose wives had fled domestic violence to seek refuge at the Center. In the subsequent decade, Libby also worked at the Women's Center, managing the office and the library, answering phones and helping with the newsletter. Reflecting on those early years, Libby noted, "The Women's Center was a resource for a wide range of women that needed help. It gave them hope."



46 PLEASANT STREET

Cambridge Women's Center | 1971 – Present (continued)

Community Organizing

In 1998, Lynn Murray, a volunteer facilitator for the Women of Color Rap group, became the Cambridge Women's Center's first community organizer. Beginning with a women of color reading circle and young women's activist group, Murray created spaces at the Center for women of color, low-income women, and women experiencing trauma to become actively involved in the Center's community organizing efforts. "At the time, the Center wasn't identifying institutional oppression - there was a lack of connecting the dots. I knew it was a place where you had the ability to make something happen. You could start a group or create what you wanted to see, so I thought 'I'll create it!'"

When people visit any new space, searching for signals of safety always comes first. The whiteness at the Center - seen through the volunteer demographics and art work - can prevent women of color from entering the space.

Murray visited Black women, Cape Verdean women, and Latin American women throughout Cambridge neighborhoods and invited them back to the Center. **Women of Action** (WOA), a group of low-income women working for economic justice, formed from these connections. One of the major campaigns the group organized was the Transit Justice Project. Before this project, buses did not have ramps that could lower for accessibility - often leaving mothers struggling to enter the bus, or drivers passing people with strollers entirely in order to save time. In collaboration with an accessibility organization, and through signs, calls, and meetings with the head of the MBTA, the Transit Justice Project was successful. The transit justice campaign resulted in: 1) bus lifts installed in buses and that were accessible to anyone who had a mobility issue, including mothers with strollers; 2) an increase in cleaning in elevators and train and bus stations; 3) signage throughout stations about the new cleaning and bus services along with phone numbers to call if there were any problems in service for customers.



Women of Action members and their children

Soon after, WOA crafted campaigns around women's experiences with the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA). Low-income women experienced lack of support and were pushed around to multiple organizations. WOA met with the Director of CHA to advocate for Cambridge women. The campaign resulted in CHA agreeing to work with their staff on customer service and sensitivity with clients.

46 PLEASANT STREET

Combahee River Collective | 1974-1980



Founded by Black feminists Demita Frazier, Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, Margo Okazawa-Rey, among others, the Combahee River Collective held its earliest meetings at the Cambridge Women's Center beginning in 1974.

In 1977, the "Combahee River Collective Statement" was released which continues to be one of the most significant and far-reaching documents to come out of Cambridge and Boston feminist activism. Their collective statement read, "As Black women we see Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face." Interviews with the founders of the Combahee River Collective are featured in *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (2012) by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor.

In *Ain't nobody gonna turn me around: Forty years of movement building* (2014), Barbara Smith chronicles the Cambridge and

Boston women's movements from her perspective. Smith worked closely with Marlene Stephens and other Boston activists to organize CRISIS in response to a series of murders of Black women across Boston in 1979. They published thirty thousand copies of "Six Black Women: Why Did They Die?" in English and Spanish, criticizing Boston's nonresponse and sharing resources for self-protection and community organizations. Among many protests and direct actions that followed, the Combahee River Collective and CRISIS organized a protest in Boston Common in April of 1979 with 500 people marching through the streets. Protests continued through the year - often at the intersection of feminism and racial justice - including the "Abortion Rights Action Week" from October 21-28, 1979 which was planned to acknowledge "...the tremendous reality of violence against women."



Bellán Borde Anti Police Brutality Rally 1-15-1980. Photo © Susan Fleischmann



Abortion Rights Action Week Flyer



Black Women: Why Did They Die? Pamphlet

46 PLEASANT STREET

Women's School | Fall 1971 – 1992



Following the founding of the Cambridge Women's Center in March, 1971, twenty women formed a collective to develop the longest running "Women's School" in the United States. The Women's School was a home for envisioning the future and implementing the present of the Boston women's movement; a "school" where consciousness was shared and concrete political and cultural action emerged. Eight- to ten-week courses offered in the Fall and Spring spanned topics including women's health, global feminisms, women's history,



politics of lesbianism, Marxism, self-defense, auto mechanics, older women's lives, and many others. The first term began on March 5, 1972 and drew over 300 registrants.

WOMEN'S SCHOOL CLASSES

American Sign Language
Black History
Car Repair
Feminist Humor
Jewish History and Culture
Lesbian Liberation
Lesbian Literature
Marxism
Politics of Incest
Racism: History & Action
Self-Defense
Wheelchair Repair
Women's Labor History
Women and Smoking

The collective also offered workshops for women in the community on cross-class perspectives, anti-racism, and local struggles of the moment. The philosophy of the collective focused on socialist-feminism. In practice, this meant affirming that volunteer teachers were not a scholarly elite isolated from students. Instead, collective education led to concrete analysis and class projects, such as research on lesbian therapy, a training manual for women therapists, and a support group for Latinas in 1983.

Accessibility was essential to providing a welcoming environment. Registration fees were kept low (beginning at \$3.00), and students without children were required to provide one night of childcare for others who needed it. "Advertising" was done through word-of-mouth, at events, and through fliers and brochures painstakingly typeset by hand and copied.



Women's School Course Listing, Spring 1982

Incest Resources | 1980 – 2020

Co-founded in 1980 by Dr. Elaine Westerlund, Incest Resources was the first organization in the country for survivors of childhood sexual abuse. IR was an all-survivor, all-volunteer, nonprofit organization that provided free groups and workshops for survivors by survivors, as well as literature, resource lists, recovery materials, and other support services. The IR Discussion Group, based upon an original self-help group model developed by IR, met monthly at the Women's Center from 1983-2020 and was so valuable it expanded to two meeting

rooms in the 80s with up to 70 survivors each month, including survivors from neighboring states. In the 80s IR was also instrumental in the founding of the Deaf Women's Counseling Project and ran the first group for Deaf survivors in the country. Other recovery and public education initiatives launched by IR include the Survivor Quilt Project and The Survivor Theatre Project. After 40 years, the work of IR is being carried on by a successor organization, The bIRch House (www.birch-house.org).

PRISON ABOLITION COLLECTIVES

Several collectives advocating for prisoners' rights and prison abolition emerged in Cambridge during the 1970s, setting the foundation for many long-lasting initiatives advocating for prisoners. The Massachusetts Bail Fund, which provides bail assistance for low-income folks, was founded in Cambridge. At several of the feminist organizations featured in this tour guide, actions focused on supporting people impacted by the carceral system were central to the mission, including *Sojourner*, YWCA, and Cambridge Women's Center, among others.

The Coalition to Stop Institutional Violence | 1972-1989

The Coalition to Stop Institutional Violence met at the Women's Center and organized a successful campaign against the opening of a "special unit for violent women" at Worcester State Hospital in 1975. The group's vision was an anti-racist future and they opposed any form of institutionalization meant to serve as a resolution to individual or societal issues.

Gay Community News

Gay Community News (formally **The Bromfield Street Educational Project**) was located in Boston with many connections in Cambridge. In 1975, GCN created The Prisoner Project to provide prisoners with free newspaper subscriptions, books, and legal assistance. were provided in prisons. Prior to 1980, the federal prison system prohibited gay publications. The Bromfield Street Educational Project and National Gay Task Force successfully changed this policy, laying the groundwork for Black and Pink, a LGBTQIA2S+ prison liberation group that started in 2005.

Prison Book Program | 1972 - Present

In 1972, the Prison Book Program started out of the **Red Book Store** (1969 - Present) on River Street, a radical bookstore now known as the Lucy Parsons Center in Jamaica Plain. Volunteers sent requested books to local prisons. Eventually, family members of prisoners visited the Prison Book Program, which opened up new connections and programming, like a family connections program at MCI - Norfolk and a Spanish-speaking group called Nuestra Familia. Beginning in 1988, the program began publishing the National Prisoner Resource List (NPRL). Prison Book Program continues to support over 10,000 prisoners each year and has its office in Quincy.



Prison Book Program's first logo designed by Steve Hubble and Ray Champagne

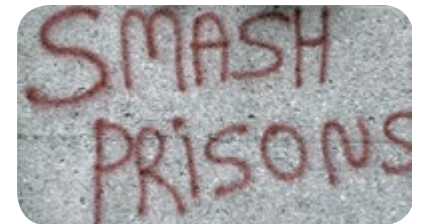


Photo by Mary Leno

Other Boston-based groups, like **Aid to Incarcerated Mothers** and **Families and Friends of Prisoners**, had much overlap with Cambridge-based organizers. Feminist activists regularly visited MCI-Framingham and MCI-Norfolk to teach writing classes and accompany family members on visits.

159 PEARL STREET

Transition House | 1976 – Present



Chris Womendez and Cherie Jimenez met in Cambridge at 159 Pearl Street after each had recently fled abuse. On January 1, 1976, Chris and Cherie, alongside Betsy Warrior and Lisa Leghorn, opened Transition House from their living room, creating the first domestic violence shelter on the East Coast and the second in the country.

By November, they opened a shelter on Elm Street as a project of the Cambridge Women's Center. Thirty volunteers staffed the 24-hour shelter where women could stay for four weeks, or six weeks if they had children. The Women's Center supported women in finding long-term housing and jobs. Not long after the Elm Street shelter opened, a radio campaign successfully fundraised \$24,000 for a down-payment on a permanent shelter. In 1978, Transition House became independent of the Women's Center and filed Articles of Organization drafted by Katherine Triantafyllou.

Through the 80s and 90s, there were many shifts in funding, poli-

tics, and organizational structure. The model of peer support became increasingly difficult as the political climate became more complicated, and guests needed support with housing, trauma recovery, courts, LGBTQ relationships, and much more. Transition House hired Yves-Rose (SaintDic) Porcena as the first Executive Director in 1998 after many years of a non-hierarchical structure. In addition to leading this new staffing model, Dr. Porcena built partnerships with Haitian and immigrant women's organizations, as well as social service organizations in Cambridge. By early 2000, a partnership between Transition House, Cambridge Housing Authority, and YWCA launched a transitional living program that provided skills-based employment training at the Y.

Ann Fleck-Henderson documents the evolution of the organization in her book *Transition House, 1976-2017*. Today, Transition House continues to be a leader in the local and national movements for domestic violence intervention and prevention,

"Cherie and I wrote letters to all public service agencies throughout Boston, discussing domestic violence. We invited women and children to call us if they had been battered. We listed our phone number in the Phoenix newspaper and with Project Place. We also listed it on poster boards like at the Cambridge Food Co-Op that was on the corner of Mass Ave and Pearl Street, along with the famous One Hundred Flowers Book Store.

We held meetings that were primarily young lesbians and housewives. We had bake sales and sold delicious cookies and cakes on the corner of Mass Ave and Prospect Street. This was how we received our first cash to help pay for our office expenses and copying of information regarding battering.

The first woman to call us was from Cambridge and was battered by her teenage son. She was literally thrown out of her own house. She helped by answering our phone and selling cakes. Within a month our small apartment was filled with women and children running for their lives. We had numerous bunk beds and at night we took our small daycare mattresses that were stacked in a corner of the kitchen and covered every inch of floor space with mats to sleep on. This apparently was much better than being in their home being abused."

— Chris Womendez, Co-Founder

595 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

Bread and Roses | 1969 – 1971



“What’s the
solution?
Start a
revolution!”

Following the formation of Female Liberation and Cell 16 in 1968, Bread and Roses was founded in 1969 by Meredith Tax and Linda Gordon, becoming one of the earliest women’s liberation organizations of “Second Wave” feminism in the United States. Starting in Central Square and soon spreading throughout Cambridge, its members formed smaller consciousness-raising groups of 7 to 10 women that met weekly or monthly, and were often based on neighborhood and/or political ideology. Early collectives of Bread and Roses met in Central Square and spread throughout Cambridge and the greater Boston area. Though the original founders set out to form a socialist feminist collective, a more pluralistic approach emerged in the smaller collectives, some aligning closely with socialist feminism, others with Marxist-Leninist ideology, and others finding their activism at the intersections of multiple approaches.

The phrase “Bread and Roses” finds its origins in the workers’ rights movement, starting with

the Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912. Workers’ rights were among the many issues Bread and Roses advocated for in Cambridge and Greater Boston. “As we go marching, marching, we bring the greater days,” sang members of this feminist group, also responsible for organizing one of the first marches in the country for International Women’s Day

Although Bread and Roses only lasted until 1971, it inspired and shaped the consciousness of thousands of women activists and was a generative experience for women who went on to form significant women’s organi-

zations, including 9 to 5, the first organization for women office workers, started by Karen Nussbaum, and The Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, which produced the classic *Our Bodies Ourselves*. Some organizers from Bread and Roses and Cell 16 also created Female Evolutionary Education, a group offering auto-mechanics, silk-screening, and martial arts classes out of 11 Tufts Street. A later Cambridge-

based Bread and Roses was the group to seize 888 Memorial Drive and found the Cambridge Women’s Center. After the takeover, Bread and Roses moved to Old Cambridge Baptist Church for a brief time. In 1978, Annie Popkin wrote her dissertation on the history of Bread and Roses, which can now be found at the Schlesinger Library.



International Women’s Day 1970, photo by Don Preston (*Boston Globe*)

FEMINIST APPROACHES

The feminist movement in Cambridge and Boston was comprised of many perspectives, leading to constant, hours-long conversations and negotiations within organizations. How each group approached feminist thinking and practice was organic — both messy and organized all at once. A few named approaches to feminism emerged within the movement. These are their broad definitions that encompass much more complexity.

Black feminism

An understanding of the experiences of Black women in relation to patriarchy, racism, and class oppression. The Combahee River Collective Statement articulated one set of politics for Black feminism in 1977.

Leftist feminism

Socialist of some stripe. At the time "socialist" was more common than "leftist".

Marxist-Leninist

Usually members of a Marxist-Leninist "pre-party formation" that was part of the "New Communist Movement", such as the October League, Proletarian Unity League, Revolutionary Communist Party, etc. Term as used then didn't include Trotskyist parties. The distinguishing characteristic was the view of economic oppression as the "primary contradiction." Many went to work in factories or supported struggles for union recognition or workplace improvements.

Radical feminism

At first, someone who was a radical and a feminist. But it came to mean

someone who was radically feminist-- usually separatist, not necessarily socialist. Radical Feminism locates the root of women's inequality in patriarchy, that is, the political, economic, social and personal subordination of women by men. Inequality by class, race, capitalism and militarism further compound male domination. Radical feminism opposes all forms of violence against women, including the prostitution of women and children and pornography, and advocates for all forms of social equality for women and girls, including reproductive, economic and political.

Separatism

A practice of trying to build one's life as much as possible without men.

Socialist-feminism

A term coined by Chicago Women's Liberation in '72 to describe a political outlook that was similar to that espoused by Bread and Roses and other early women's liberation organizations. It grew out of the anti-war movement, Civil Rights movement, and New Left. It encouraged women to organize in autonomous women's organizations; it was explicitly anti-racist and favored alliances with groups like the Black Panthers; and it was broadly socialist, believing that a revolution would be necessary to bring about socialism, but rejecting the "sectarian" Marxist Leninist and Trotskyist parties that were about.

Womanist

Coined by author Alice Walker and expanded upon in a theological context by Episcopal Divinity School professor Katie Cannon, womanism is a Black feminist orientation which unites women of color with the feminist movement at "the intersection of race, class, and gender oppression." -*Alice Walker*

552 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

Abortion Access Project | 1992 - 2006



The Abortion Access Project (AAP) grew out of Boston's chapter of the Reproductive Rights Network (R2N2), and was co-founded by Marlene Fried, Dr. Maureen Paul, and Susan Yanow. The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, which published *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1971), was AAP's first fiscal sponsor and participated in the early meetings. Susan Yanow served as the AAP Executive Director until 2004, and shared her private therapy practice office in Central Square with AAP from 1992 to 2002.

At the start, AAP had three goals: to increase hospital-based abortion services, to expand the types of medical professionals who could provide abortions, including physician assistants (PAs), nurse practitioners and nurse midwives, and

to raise awareness about lack of access. "Abortion may be legal, but who can get one?" was their slogan. Leading with an anti-racist lens, the organization sought to secure abortion access for those most marginalized by institutions.

Demonstrations at hospitals were a frequent strategy for the organizers to raise awareness of needed healthcare access; their first was at Mass General in 1994. AAP worked to introduce abortion care into the Cambridge Health Alliance, which now provides abortion services in a number of health centers, and also worked to get regulatory change, and now allow nurse practitioners, midwives and PAs to provide abortion pills across the state. To address and reduce abortion stigma, AAP placed ads across the MBTA system and on buses in Western Massachusetts.

By 2000, AAP had projects to expand abortion access in 17 states, with organizers in 11 of them. In 2007, after the founders had left AAP, the organization shifted its mission and changed its name to Provide. Fatimah Gifford leads Provide and focuses on "...free professional development training on how to give accurate, informed, and non-judgmental referrals for unintended pregnancy and abortion care."



International Women's Day March, Boston, 1970. Photo courtesy of Liane Brandon

Reproductive Justice is Racial Justice

Helen Rodríguez-Trias, MD (in 1993, named the first Latina president of the American Public Health Association) co-founded the **Committee to End Sterilization Abuse (CESA)** in 1974. The atrocity of eugenics laws which persisted throughout much of the 20th century meant that Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Indigenous, women with disabilities, and poor women were the most likely to be sterilized in the United States. By 1968, over a thirty-year period, a third of women of childbearing age in Puerto Rico had been sterilized and sterilization abuse was so common among Black women in the South that it was colloquially called "Mississippi appendectomy." Through the work of CESA, federal sterilization prevention guidelines were finally put in place by 1979.

Black feminist organizers, including Marlene Stephens and members of the Combahee River Collective, joined with White feminists like Madge Kaplan, to lead local actions for CESA and the Abortion Action Coalition. From 1977-1980, the **Abortion Action Coalition** formed out of the Cambridge Women's Center to oppose the local Doyle-Flynn anti-abortion amendment, which proposed cutting state funding for abortions. Activists organized in honor of Rosie Jimenez who had died from an unsafe abortion after the Hyde Amendment cut funding in 1976.

The response to sterilization abuse was not unified across the women's movement of the 70s. At a Boston women's conference in 1974, Dr. Rodríguez-Trias recounted that White women who wanted access to sterilization were opposed to waiting periods or other regulations after their experiences of being denied access. For many middle and upper class White women, sterilization was a privilege, while low income BIPOC women were being misinformed, or coerced by threats to their status.



Helen Rodríguez-Trias, New York City (1970s). Photo by Mel Rosenthal, courtesy of JoEllen Brainin-Rodríguez M.D.

512 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

Marquee Bar | 1970 - mid 80's



At 512 Mass Ave, where Phoenix Landing now stands, a women's bar once welcomed feminist musicians, local activists, and others for nights of music and dancing. Many lesbian women also crossed the Charles River into Boston to the Saints, Somewhere, or Somewhere Else.

Local LGBTQ+ nightlife spaces, including Machine and Bella Luna, recently closed in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. This follows a trend of dwindling LGBTQ+ bars and clubs locally and around the world.

As of 2020, there were only 15 remaining lesbian bars in the United States.



Activist and musician Marcia Deihl.
Photo by Ellen Shub

450 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

Underground Railway Theater | 1979 - Present



Founded in Oberlin, Ohio, one of the stops on the Underground Railroad, the Underground Railway Theater (URT) traveled the country for 30 years, creating live, accessible performances in the activist and collaborative spirit

of its namesake. In 2007, URT found its home at Central Square Theater. Throughout their history, co-Artistic Directors Debra Wise and Wes Sanders created original productions through intentional collaborations with a wide range

of community groups. Three produced centered on women's issues: *Are You Ready, My Sister?* (women collaborators on the Underground Railroad, 1985-2010); *Washed-Up Middle-Aged Women* (an ironic title based on interviews, 1993-98); and *Mothers and Whores - a Cabaret* (exploring the controversiality of abortion, 1978-2007).

By the late 90's, URT set out to find a permanent home in Cambridge. It collaborated with the Cambridge Public Schools and Harvard's Project Zero on a playwriting program, with Human Services to teach in city after-schools, and with the Cambridge Community Learning Center and playwright Melinda Lopez to produce *How Do You Spell Hope?* a play centered on Frederick Douglass and literacy. In 1999, they co-founded with CentaStage the "Women on Top Festival," featuring women playwrights. This set the stage for two formative collaborations: first with the women-led Nora Theatre Company, to build the Central Square Theater; and then with the Massachusetts Institute

of Technology, launching Catalyst Collaborative@MIT, which continues as an enormously generative interdisciplinary program.

In 2020, Underground Railway began the process of seeking new leadership, practices, and programs. Co-founder Debra Wise said, "I am proud of Underground Railway's body of work: our aesthetic experiments and collaborations with social-change organizations. And I feel the pain and the opportunities for change presented by this tumultuous time, when white artistic leaders in the American theater must reckon with the ways in which our practices have reflected and contributed to white supremacist culture."



From *Sanctuary - The Spirit of Harriet Tubman* (L-R: Valerie Stephens, Jorge Arce, John Lewandowski, Debra Wise, Wes Sanders)

438 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

Cambridge Community Television | 1987 – Present



In late 1985, the City of Cambridge and American Cablesystems reached an agreement for the provision of cable TV services: in exchange for using the public rights of way to run its cable, the cable company provided funding for the community to have access to the system. In 1986, to fulfill its license with American Cablesystem, Cambridge established Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) and appointed a board to set up the nonprofit Cambridge Public Access Corporation. Irwin Hipsman was hired in 1987 as CCTV's first executive director, and he then opened its first facility at One Kendall Square. Susan Fleischmann joined soon after in 1988. Prior to that, Susan had worked at Boston Neighborhood Network with Deborah Hill,

whom she describes as "...one of the mothers of public access television."

The public access station and channels in Cambridge allowed Cambridge residents, arts and cultural organizations, and city agencies to produce entertainment and informational and educational programming for the community. Feminists, in particular, have produced original shows and partnered with CCTV since its founding. For example, in partnership with the Cambridge Women's Center and Cambridge Women's Commission, CCTV created Cambridge Women in Cable (CWIC) in January of 1989. CWIC hosted monthly programs focused on reproductive rights, issues important to women of color, and many other topics, with producers for each program rotating monthly. The founders of CWIC believed that cable television should serve the people who most needed it. As the *Cambridge Chronicle* reported: "The group has lobbied the city and the cable TV company for jobs, train-

ing programs and programming options for local women for five years. This first show of what will become a monthly feature of local programming was written, produced, taped and edited entirely by women, most of whom had little or no experience with video or cable TV." (January, 1989).

The February show, titled "Women, Black / Black Woman," was produced by Cambridge playwright and poet Brenda Walcott. In honor of Black History Month, Walcott brought together Kate Rushin, a feminist poet, and Rene Westbrook, a painter and photographer. April's show, "Special Delivery," focused on the new midwifery program at Cambridge Hospital. Hosted by Catherine Russo and Nella

LaRosa, it followed several pregnant women as they approached the birth of their children, with special attention given to the role of midwives and doctors. In honor of Pride Month, June's show called "Lesbian Pride" included a group of 11 lesbian women discussing local lesbian life.

Up until the early 90's, CCTV also solicited tapes from around the country to commemorate each International Women's Day and in collaboration with Deep Dish TV, nearly five hours of films were shown each year. The monthly women's program, "Women Speak," hosted by Tess Ewing, continues to air on the first Wednesday of every month, usually focused on themes of women and work.

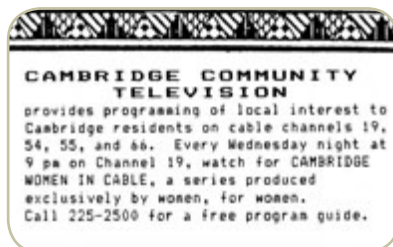
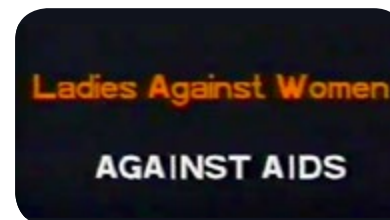


Photo Description



CCTV Program, *Ladies Against Women*



Still from *Ladies Against Women*

2½ DOUGLASS STREET

New Day Films | 1971 – Present



New Day Films began in 1971 and continues to be the largest, longest running social issue and feminist filmmaker-run cooperative in the country. The original founders were Liane Brandon, Jim Klein, Julie Reichert, and Amalie Rothschild. Before the cooperative formed, each of the founders were independently creating films about the issues facing women. At the time, mainstream media either didn't cover the women's movement or did so in an inflammatory way, and commercial distributors didn't think the women's Movement would last (!). Filmmakers, much like other feminist activists, had to find creative ways to distribute their message, which is why the founders created New Day Films. Their films helped to spread the word of the Women's Movement across the country.

Liane Brandon created three of the earliest films of the Women's Movement out of her home at 2 ½ Douglass Street, including *Sometimes I Wonder Who I Am* (1970),

Anything You Want To Be (1971), and *Betty Tells Her Story* (1972). *Betty Tells Her Story* is featured on the Criterion Channel. New Day Films continues to operate as a democratically-run cooperative of over 100 filmmaker members who gather once a year for four days to make decisions about the co-op. Their historical record and films are stored at Duke University.



Flyer for a screening of women's films, 1971

Cambridge Theaters

There are records of several Cambridge theaters started by women, or in support of women's film. In 1965, Bobbi Ausubel directed **Caravan Theatre** which showed her production of "How to Make a Woman" for four years. In 1977 and 1978 (respectively), **Mermaid Theater** was founded by Deborah Fortson and **Black Star Theatre** was founded by Nancy Krieger and Cindy Ruskin.

The legendary **Orson Welles Theater** at 1001 Massachusetts Avenue operated from 1969 to 1986, featuring independent and foreign films not offered in mainstream theaters. Many of the early films were felt to be misogynist and demeaning towards women and so in 1970, women from Bread and Roses picketed. This did have some effect: in June, 1971, the cinema featured "Women's Films" including films on abortion, childcare, and gender stereotypes.

Film Collectives

Several other organizations focused on women in film emerged during the 70s in Cambridge. **Film Women** (1974-78) began on Vassar Street as a women filmmaker cooperative organized to support women filmmakers. They published a women in film newsletter titled *WORKPRINT*. A local chapter of **Women in Film and Video New England** (WIFVNE) met in Arlington starting in 1981 and then at the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House on Cherry Street. WIFVNE screened *The Double Burden: 50 Years of American Working Mothers*, a film by Marlene Booth, at CCTV in 1989. **Cambridge Documentary Films**, which received an Academy Award for their film *Defending Our Lives*, started at 242 Huron Avenue. Their films *Taking Our Bodies Back* (1974), *Rape Culture* (1975), and *Pink Triangles* (1982) each feature stories from Cambridge.

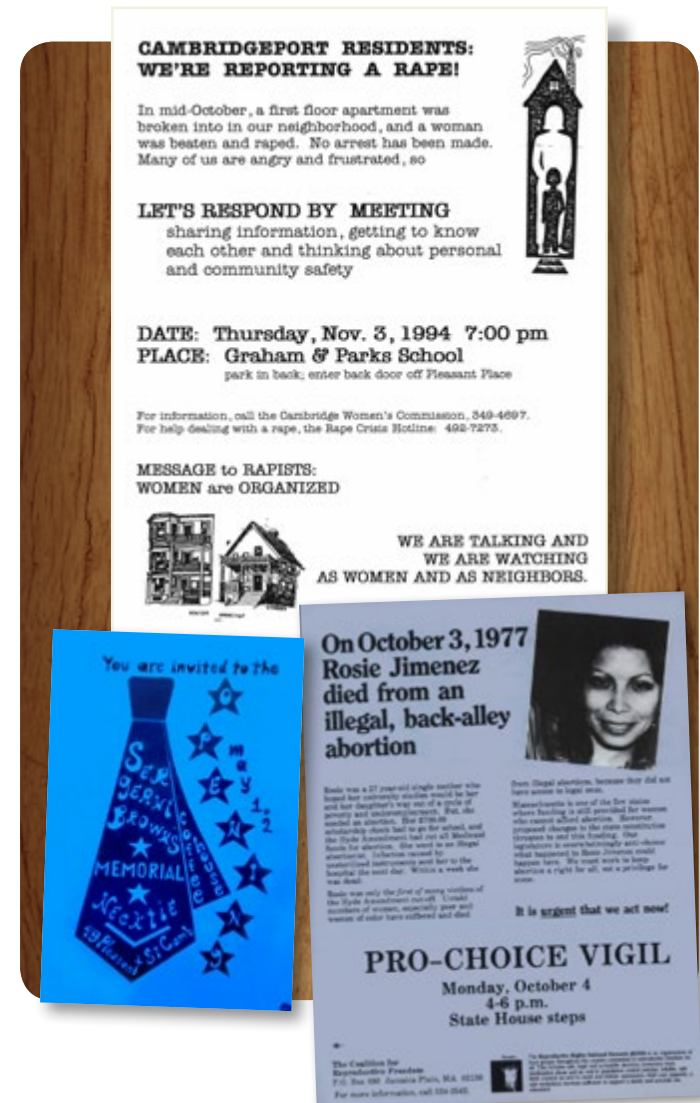
FEMINIST COMMUNICATION

As a precursor to the internet and social media, feminists communicated with each other (both locally and nationally) through bulletin boards, phone trees, mailings, and films. Social spaces - like music venues and softball teams - were meaningful spaces for building community outside of activism.

Flyers circulated regularly on **bulletin boards** and street light poles with opportunities for housing, jobs, political actions, and community groups. Nearly all of the physical spaces featured here had community bulletin boards. Other community spaces, like New Words Bookstore, Sargeant Brown's Memorial Necktie, Red Book Store, 100 Flowers, and Harvest Co-Op, were go-to spots to read flyers and meet up with friends. Many organizations also had **phone trees** - or lists of contacts - so feminists could connect with each other and network outside of meetings.

The message of the women's movement spread rapidly across the country through films and newsletters sent by **mail**. Using mimeograph machines and lettraset graphics, writers of newsletters and magazines created print materials for hundreds of people by hand. Mailings were especially relevant to the women's film movement, because mainstream distributors often denied requests to promote women's films, so distribution was entirely grassroots.

Through protests, women's restaurants, music venues, softball teams, public art performances, and book stores, feminists shared their visions for liberation and built community.



143 ALBANY STREET

Sojourner | 1975 – 2002



With its start as an MIT women's paper in September of 1975, *Sojourner* quickly grew into one of the biggest and longest-lasting women's liberation publications, alongside *Off Our Backs* (1970–2008). Named after abolitionist Sojourner Truth, *Sojourner* was best known for building community through groundbreaking news stories, an events calendar, and publication of women authors (some for the first time in their career). Original members who published *Sojourner's* first issue included Dee Shanck, Cynthia Helsel, Allison Platt, Karen Prendergast, and Cathy Lee.



Sojourner Issue, Vol. 9 Num. 3 — 11-01-1983

By welcoming both new and experienced writers, *Sojourner* was able to feature the voices of women from many life experiences and perspectives. Major articles grappled with topics like bisexuality, Palestinian solidarity, sexual abuse, women experiencing cancer, and work from the Cambridge Oral History Center (featured in *Mapping Feminist Cambridge: Inman Square*). By the 1990s, *Sojourner* became a resource for those most marginalized by poverty or incarceration. "WelfareBeat", a column promoting activism against welfare reform, started in 1997, followed by "Inside/Outside: *Sojourner's* Women in Prison Project" in 1999. The program included a pen pal listing and a resource guide connecting women with over 200 groups supporting prisoners.

Sojourner held larger events with speakers including Audre Lorde, June Jordan, Pat Parker, Alice Walker, Marge Piercy, Grace Paley, and Gloria Anzaldúa. Starting in 1994, the paper regularly published a women-owned business directory for Cambridge, Greater Boston, and national busi-

nesses, the staff working closely with business owners to craft appealing ads.

In addition to editorial and fundraising staff, *Sojourner's* topical sections of the paper, like poetry, events calendar, news, books, film, and photography, each had editors. Unlike many of the volunteer-led collectives of the time, *Sojourner* staff and editors received salaries for their work. In 1977, the staff decided to form both a for-profit company (focused on publication) and a non-profit entity which trained people in publishing skills. In 1996, *Sojourner Feminist Institute* would fully become a non-profit with a broader educa-

tional mission, including a journalist training program for young women. This model allowed readers and local activists to invest as little as \$25 to support *Sojourner's* operations, while *Sojourner* continued their community-based work. The collective approach of the time was also found in their decision-making process: everyone voted on which articles to include. The newspaper was located at 143 Albany Street from 1977 to 1990, when it moved 42 Seaverns Avenue in Jamaica Plain. By 2002, *Sojourner Feminist Institute* was no longer able to financially sustain its work and ceased publication. Archives for *Sojourner* can be found at the Schlesinger Library.

Radical Publishing Collectives

The staff at *Sojourner* typeset all the papers themselves and sometimes offered typesetting to other groups. *Sojourner* shared its floor of the brick warehouse building at 143 Albany Street with Xanadu, a radical collective that did the typesetting for *Gay Community News* (GCN), which published weekly from 1973 to 1992. Also published in Cambridge, by a collective that met in Old Cambridge Baptist Church in its later years, was the feminist journal *Second Wave* (1977–1983). In Boston, *Sister Courage* (1970–1974) was founded by 40 women interested in developing feminist theory and enhancing communication among local feminist organizers. Also published in Boston, although not a collective, was *Equal Times* (1976–1984), a free feminist paper featuring local women's news and events.

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WEBSITES

Black Women's Suffrage
<https://blackwomenssuffrage.dp.la/>

Cambridge Black Trailblazers
www.cambridgeblacktrailblazers.com

Cambridge Women's Heritage Project
www2.cambridgema.gov/Historic/CWHP

The History Project
www.historyproject.org

Lost Womyn's Spaces
www.lostwomynspace.blogspot.com



International Women's Day March, Boston, 1970. Photo by Liane Brandon

FILMS

The Cancer Journals Revisited
www.wmm.com

Jennifer Abod's Films
www.jenniferabod.com/films

Left on Pearl
www.leftonpearl.org

New Day Films
www.newday.com

A Moment in Herstory
www.catherinerussodocumentaries.com