

**DRAFT FOR THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED TO CHANGE, CLARIFY, MAKE MORE ACCURATE TO WHAT YOU INTENDED, AND TO ADD EVEN BEYOND WHAT YOU HAD A CHANCE TO VOICE.**

**Participants included:**

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**March 27, 2008 Women's Caucus Meeting Notes from  
"Vote2008: What Should a Feminist Do?"**

NAEA Women's Caucus members and others met on March 27, 2008, from 12-1:30 p.m. at the National Art Education Association conference in New Orleans to discuss: **"Vote2008: What Should a Feminist Do?"** This open discussion was intended to focus on relevant issues today that build on the past, are of the present, and look to the future. The following documents what transpired among participants, as well as the action plans generated at the end of the meeting.

**Karen Keifer-Boyd** introduced the forum: "Vote2008: What Should a Feminist Do?" is, of course, an ironic play on mass media representations of feminists and feminism. But it is also about affirming our moment in history and a body of knowledge and experience that many NAEA Women's Caucus members represent. This is a historical moment resulting from the efforts of many generations. We could debate whether the electoral process makes sense, whether it works or not. What is the history and what are the politics of the electoral process? Who does not have, or has lost, the right to vote? We are reading, debating, and discussing the current presidential election. There are many more young people involved this time. News and talk shows feature feminist mothers and their grown daughters discussing their perspectives. What are our responses to media representations? By default, the primaries and presidential elections always have been about race and gender because of absence of people of color and women. This should not be avoided in our discussion. However, we can enlarge the discussion

by entangling race and gender matters with issues of socio-economic class. This could include concerns of healthcare, housing, education, disparities, and war. **We can imagine change. What does it look like? Around which issues should we organize? What spaces do we have for deliberation, to learn to be persuasive, and for difference to be voiced and heard?**

**Read Diket** discussed research on media representations and her pedagogical approach and student response to interpreting media representations of presidential candidates. For instance, *Americans are being faced with the images of politicians—who they were and who they are now. Clearly this image presents...corruption versus the young charismatic patriot and whether or not they are the same. The dual images also ask a question, “Can you trust him?” After years of being a politician, John McCain has changed. The off set of a much larger politician to former soldier wants you to doubt, as a viewer, what you may have already determined, “Is he still that young patriot fighter he once was?”* Art appreciation test essay (2008 question on “Exploring McCain.” From cover image February 11 issues of *Newsweek*, article written by Evan Thomas); quote from an undergraduate William Carey University)

**Patricia Amburgy** posited that need for universal healthcare is a critical issue in the United States. What might the future become? Small changes or global concerns: universal health care, more people involved in government—inspired and passionate.

**Anniina Suominen Guyas** pointed out that healthcare should not be seen as an option, but instead it is a human right as it is understood in her homeland of Finland. Education and healthcare are human rights. The resistance by the U.S. governments regarding ensuring the human right of healthcare and education is because of power that moneyed health insurance companies hold in Congress and even over doctors providing care.

power in money (income level); resistance seen in upper middle class; “right” to health care in a democracy (option in America, but right in Scandanavia). America needs to look at countries that are making it work; balance with physicians concern for quality of health care. Problem for elders.

**Sara Wilson McKay:** social contract

**Anniina Suominen Guyas** pointed out a gendered disparity regarding health responsibility in the signage in the Women’s restroom in the hotel regarding alcohol and fetus damage. A man checked and the same sign was also in the men’s bathroom, however, the language “Consuming alcohol can cause fetal damage” indicated that women could damage the fetus they carried and did not educate men about alcohol consumption and the impact this had.

**Caryl Rae Church:** Referred to a media slogan: “Obama is more a woman than Hillary.” — sexual, passionate. Hillary viewed as strong leader distances perceptions of her as a woman. Discussion pursued regarding societal beliefs that women can’t be powerful leaders. If they are seen as powerful leaders, they are not viewed as women.

Race and gender: the “charismatic” Obama; talk shows; generational aspect—waiting for this moment.

**Karen Keifer-Boyd:** Gender has been a part of earlier presidencies by “absence.” The question is where are we as women in the process; what does this mean to women of color. What do women want to change? What roles do we want?

Karen discusses the media image of Obama, which references Michelangelo's *Creation*, and the news media's (particular those in opposition) rhetoric of annoyance with "god-like" references to Obama. The image also suggests man's power to create woman. However, with the caption of a feminist pitch, and the confident smile of the young woman in profile in the foreground, camera angle from below looking up denoting power of those in the photo, and a frozen moment of the handshake (I am reminded of Bill Viola's video, *Greeting*, which extends in time—historically and clock time—a Renaissance painting)—the image also suggests the ironic question, "What should a feminist do?"

**Wanda Knight:** Wanda spoke to the image of Obama as a savior, reaching out in symbolic commitment. Do we want a patriarchal leader, or White leader? The images have use in teaching visual culture; otherwise the viewer is blind, affected by imagery but lacking understanding of the means. What do we want! How is what we want being confused in the visual onslaught?

**Gina Wenger:** Is spirituality in leader an Achilles heel, a means to appease the public?

**Karen Keifer-Boyd:** Margaret the curly red-haired girl in *Dennis the Menace* stated on a t-shirt sold at Wal-Mart, “Someday a Woman Will Be President!”. Walmart pulled the shirt because it offended family values.

From <http://www.womenarewonderful.com/aboutus.html>

Four months after Dr. Ann M. Ruben completed her study, her husband showed her the "Dennis the Menace" Sunday cartoon in which the red-haired, bespectacled, feisty icon, Margaret, makes it clear to Dennis that she believes **Someday a Woman Will Be President!** After she shared the results of her study with the late Hank Ketcham, the cartoonist who produced this comic strip for over fifty years, he agreed to permit her to put Margaret's image and message on a T-shirt.

The Margaret T-shirt gained national notoriety in 1994 after one Wal-Mart store in Miramar, Florida carried it and when the national office of the company discovered that fact, they banned the Margaret T-shirt saying the message promoting female leadership went against their philosophy of family values. Dr. Ruben bought three shares of Wal-Mart stock and complained of this practice as a stockholder in a letter to the president of the company. She gave him three weeks to lift the ban and during that time she got a call from a senior vice-president of Wal-Mart offering her a bribe to shut up. She refused the bribe and instead after four weeks gave the story to Associated Press. Women from California to Connecticut marched in front of Wal-Mart stores. They threatened to

boycott, tear up their Mr. Sam's cards and sell their Wal-Mart stock. Within 24 hours, the company changed its position and ended up buying 50,000 T-shirts in 1995.

**Sara Wilson McKay:** Described a conference she recently attended, *Global Girl & Intimate Leaders*. Some of the research presented included pictorial representation and neurobiological information, such as females have more cones in their eyes. The ratings of confidence of leadership change depending on strength of handshakes when a man and woman shake hands, men shake hands, or women shake hands.

[When a child is born, emotions develop; thus have larger range to manipulate; effective leaders do not wince.]

**Read Diket:** Women have more gray matter, men more white matter. I am preparing some resources from Reuben Gur, a Pennsylvania neuroscientist who has studied gender issues very extensively. It was his talk at AERA that I was remembering from about seven or eight years back. White matter supports analytic operations; gray matter supports extensive connections.

**Wanda Knight:** Tensions around global warring, environmental tragedies, domestic abuse, fear of another 9/11. People perceive “masses” as less informed, but how knowledgeable are they? She is torn as a person of color and as a female. With the gravity of issues of race, she leans more toward a candidate that can change negative perceptions of people of color. Which candidate could win? She suggests that we all look at candidates’ closely; the presidential candidate quarrelling needs to stop.

**Marjorie Cohee Manifold:** Are we ready for a matriarchal leader, no matter what the gender? We can’t be reductionist. Symmetries of the universe, earth—things are connected. Respect for the earth is of critical importance to all.

**Read Diket:** Is Obama doing the political thing, as in “dogs playing cards?” Will Obama break?

**Marjorie Cohee Manifold** suggests that we go beyond gender and race to equity in general, to religious freedom. One major concern is divisiveness. This has historically been problematic of the women's movement. For example, the Suffragettes once united with the Abolitionists, but when it seemed that women might become empowered before people of color, there was a split that may be remembered in the poignant declarations and condemnations of division evidenced in the speeches and writings of Frederick Douglass. His words could be instructive for us today. "Right is of no sex, Truth is of no color."

I am also concerned that the struggle of women and people of color to find equity in our present day out-of-balance politico-socio-economic global society should be contextualized within its larger framework. Our Earth has been cast in peril (perhaps irreversibly) by the imbalance of powers between women/men, entitled races & nations versus & minority races & nations, fundamentalist religious polemics versus humanist spiritualism, greed versus need, etc. These are

the larger issues that demand immediate attention—we haven't the luxury of waiting to 'see what will happen'- regarding the gender or color of the next world leader.

**Wanda Knight:** White female typically goes to a White male household.

**Karen Keifer-Boyd:** Social justice and democracy; avoid surplus powerless; right to vote; change the representation. What are our ideas for what we can do using our collective strengths as art educators, and the organization of the NAEA Women's Caucus?

**Sara Wilson McKay:** The world is constructed by what women choose to do; by conversation.

**Pam Taylor:** Send re-visions of media representations to her to include in the *Journal of Art Education*. As editor she can include where “fillers” are needed in the journal and will also send to Lynn Ezell at NAEA for fillers in other NAEA publications. Pam will construct a call for this and send it out on the Women's Caucus listserv.

**Caryl Rae Church:** It would be helpful if the NAEA Women's Caucus set up mentoring.

**Karen Keifer-Boyd:** Good idea. This can be done. First we need to change the way the NAEA conference business meetings are so that they are not at the same time, but staggered throughout the five-day conference. Then we can each invite new conference attendees that we meet in passing at the conference, our students in attendance, and art educators we have known, to attend the WC business meeting to meet each other. Each WC meeting we can send around a sheet in which those willing to mentor, or wishing to be mentored, sign the sheet with their email.

#### **Action Ideas:**

- Imagine what our role might be in health care. How does the media represent that issue? How can we change that media representation? Revisionists of media use strength of imagery; Women's Caucus website could visualize difference, reach out to educate masses; use listserves (WC listserv--Elizabeth Garber).
- NAEA business meetings need to be staggered to allow for multiple communities.
- Mentoring as agents of change.
- WC website (Lilly Lu) could articulate positions of members on issues, organize actions, and prioritize goals such as those concerning practical ways that art education can influence education. Reach out to educators. Develop resource of models and approaches that bridges theory in practice.
- Use Wiki for collaborative writing to develop standpoints.  
Marjorie Manifold: I suggest a 'wiki' or open forum that would invite ideas/art for change and encourage the initiation of conferences, fairs, town-hall meetings, exhibitions,

activities of engagement etc. - dedicated to grass-roots efforts to regain balance in these regards.

- Also iTunes, podcasts, youtube.
- Oprah, a powerful woman with good ideas, discusses books that empower. (Marjorie-- add your idea of a discussion of readings outside the field)