

“Evolve or Die!”
The 2009 NOW Election

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Abstract: This case explores the 2009 National Organization for Women’s (NOW) presidential election between Terry O’Neill and Latifa Lyles. The candidates positioned themselves as the solution for NOW’s flagging membership and relevance within the women’s movement. O’Neill appealed to second-wave feminists with her “in-the-streets,” outsider strategies. Conversely, Lyles drew support from young feminists who sought to integrate feminism into mainstream domains. This polarization intensified when rumors of NOW’s organizational mismanagement and fiscal instability circulated among members, exacerbating existing antagonisms regarding inter-generational feminism and NOW’s decision to endorse Barack Obama over Hillary Clinton. Such pressures molded this election into a highly personal battle to claim the future of NOW. The 2009 contest between Lyles and O’Neill illuminated the traditional orientations and dichotomies that public discourse uses to classify and divide women, and illustrated the difficulties of leadership transition within an organization. This election presented a crossroads for NOW and posed the challenge of synchronizing organizational needs with those of the larger movement it serves.

Introduction

It was Day Two of the National Organization for Women’s (NOW) 2009 Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana, and the moment for which members of the largest women’s organization in America had been called to action. After workshops on every conceivable permutation of feminist issues, including one titled “Classist, Racist, Sexist Auto Insurance: An End is in Sight,” and lectures by notables such as Barbara Ehrenreich and Rep. Gwen Moore (D-Wis.), 404 delegates out of the more than 500,000 members were about to cast their vote for the future leadership of NOW.

Judging by the hostile energy reverberating through the room, not many participants had made it to that morning’s opening yoga session. NOW had set this year’s theme as “Turning the Tide for Equality,” yet a unified movement was flagrantly lacking. Members had polarized into factions according to generational, feminist orientation, and approached their fellow women not as sisters, but as dichotomous “others.”

The majority of women in attendance self-identified with second-wave feminism, which raged out of the 1960s and legitimized the US women’s movement through demands for equal protection and representation under the law. NOW’s minority of younger members affiliated with third-wave feminism, the 1990’s radical renaissance of the women’s movement (Dicker 2008). Such a generational split has divided women into generalized binaries that have been happily reinforced by a culture enamored by some good “girl-on-girl” action: old/young,

militant/flippant, un-sexed/over-sexualized. This perceived incompatibility undermined discussions on the less symbolic, but more salient organizational issues of NOW, such as managerial administration, accountability, and fiscal solvency.

NOW members who identified with third-wave feminism clustered in support of Latifa Lyles, the current Vice President of Membership and choice candidate of NOW President Kim Gandy, 55. If Lyles, 33, won, she would be the youngest president in the organization's history, as well as NOW's second African-American president following Aileen Hernandez. At face value, Lyles, as a young, black woman, was the perfect body to defy the stereotype that NOW was an organization solely for older, white women. Third-wavers supported her mission to diversify membership and bring a fresh image to NOW by increasing web-based tactics. Additionally, young feminists felt that this strategy would make NOW more appealing to their age group and would increase membership and participation. Lyles also championed insider policies in which NOW would work closely on the Hill to directly influence political process (Womensphere 2009).

Alternatively, second-wavers rallied for Terry O'Neill, also a former VP of Membership, who Patricia Ireland, NOW President from 1991-2001, had championed. O'Neill presented herself as a candidate with solid leadership experience and a desire to return to the outsider, grassroots activism of the 1960s and 1970s. She felt that NOW would best serve as an external pressure on the government, avoiding party allegiances and indebtedness to any administration (Womensphere 2009). O'Neill seemed to fit NOW's image and would likely find support from the average affiliate member.

The NOW election conflicted with other festering issues within the organization. A radical smattering of second-wavers, angry that NOW had endorsed Barack Obama at the expense of Hillary Clinton, adopted the acronym P.U.M.A (Party Unity My Ass), and opposed Gandy as NOW's leader. They also questioned Gandy's management and demanded to see NOW's budget to reveal its true financial status (Carpentier 2009).

The feminist blog-o-sphere was also highly invested in the NOW election and ran extremely partisan, "truthy" pieces about the candidates. One blogger derided Gandy and Eleanor Smeal, former NOW presidents and founders of the Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF), as "dishonest Obama enabling hacks" (Berman 2009). Though Lyles and O'Neill did not engage in such mudslinging, the seemingly endangered state of NOW, along with volatile political and inter-generational resentments, proved an explosive combination.

Consequently, the NOW Conference dissolved into conflict. Second-wavers threatened, "We have to take back the women's movement because it's obvious these third-wavers can't get the job done. Only when they are afraid of us will they respect us." Likewise, the younger generation bemoaned their elders. "For people of one generation to be complaining about the next generation, give it up. If you're not relevant anymore, you're not relevant. Move on," (Faludi 2010).

In the hours before the election, the delegates' intensity made it seem as if the entire feminist movement was at stake. Was NOW on the brink of self-destruction? Was this conflict representative of feminism as a whole? Would Lyles re-invent NOW, or would her 21st Century tactics fail to attract young members while simultaneously isolating loyal, due-paying elders? Would O'Neill's in-your-face activism bring about a resurgence of the 1960s style protests that were NOW's original source of power, or would this technique fail to address the core reasons for NOW's popular decline? Would NOW delegates find common ground, or divide even further? Who would decide the future of NOW?

History of NOW

Betty Friedan and a small group of women founded NOW at the Third National Conference of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1966. Friedan served as the first President and represented women similar to those she chronicled in *The Feminine Mystique*—that is, NOW worked primarily on behalf of white, middle- to upper- class women. Even though African American women helped build NOW, their priorities, including ending racism and poverty, were not at the forefront of NOW's agenda (Barasko 2004).

NOW envisioned itself to be a “NAACP for women,” a watchdog agency that would pressure the government into enforcing women's rights legislation, such as Title VII. NOW's guiding principles, which are still in effect today, are to remain at the vanguard of the women's movement, to be an activist group, to maintain political independence, to focus on diverse issues and tactics, and to mobilize at the grassroots (Barasko 2004). NOW's statement of purpose from Article II of its bylaws is as follows:

NOW's purpose is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men. This purpose includes, but is not limited to, equal rights and responsibilities in all aspects of citizenship, public service, employment, education, and family life, and it includes freedom from discrimination because of race, ethnic origin, age, marital status, sexual preference/orientation, or parenthood. (NOW 2010).

In its 45-year history, NOW has fought the ever-changing threats to women's equality through a variety of activist tactics, including hunger strikes, marches, protests, and public shamings. These grassroots, outsider strategies shape legislation indirectly by pressuring officials to comply with public demand. The merits of this strategy, as opposed to direct strategies such as policy writing, are that NOW can freely choose its positions without feeling obliged to a political party or administration (Barasko 2004). Outsiders call the shots as they see them, with little concern for political correctness and maintaining ties with the powers that be.

NOW became disenchanted with political, insider strategies following its endorsement of the Mondale/Ferraro ticket in the 1984 Presidential campaign. NOW believed that in exchange for support, Mondale would make women's issues a priority. Not only did Mondale shrink from supporting pro-woman policies, but the media interpreted any fleck of support as obliged towards NOW. When Mondale lost the election, it reinforced the lesson that direct candidate support helped the politician more than it helped NOW (Snyder 2005). NOW leaders and members often differ on their allegiances towards insider/outsider social change strategies. The life experiences and social location of women in the movement influenced their positions, and an easy argument has been to attribute NOW's internal differences due to conflict between the waves.

“Kill Thy Mother?” Feminist Intergenerational Conflict and NOW

Some critics postulate that women struggle with transitions of power more than men because they've historically lacked opportunities in sports and student government, where such skill sets are developed. There are also those who feel that female cooperation of any kind is impossible, and that sisterhood is a myth. Others prefer a psychoanalytic approach and have

diagnosed feminism with an Electra complex, or a chronic self-devouring of its mother figures (Faludi 2010). Conflict between old and young feminists has been a popular trope, dating from the Suffragists and the Flappers—but is there more to this pathological matrilineage than the

myth implies?

Liberal feminism developed along with the second-wave and NOW, and sought formal legal equality for women in work and civic life. American society in the mid-20th century did not acknowledge women's autonomy or allow them public participation. Liberal feminists did not seek to overthrow the social order, but to increase women's participation within the system. By utilizing tactics parallel to those used in the civil rights movement, liberal feminists worked ardently to gain equal access within male-dominated institutions, such as universities, and they added sexual harassment and segregated employment to public and legal discourse (Dicker 2008).

By the early 1970s, factions within the second-wave had spawned radical feminism, which sought to replace hierarchical systems of power in favor of collaborative processes that addressed women's daily needs. Radical feminists spoke out about taboo subjects, such as domestic violence and lesbianism, as a way to draw “witness” to these experiences (Barasko 2004). White feminists still could not grapple effectively with the issue of race, and Alice Walker's “Womanism” opened a new avenue for black women to claim sisterhood (Dicker 2008).

But radical feminism could not have developed without the successes of liberal feminism, which gave women social footing in national discourse. Second-wave leaders, such as Shirley Chisholm and Gloria Steinem, brought women's issues to the nightly news and trail-blazed impressive careers that inspired future professional women. This group harnessed the frustration and unfulfilled expectations of the Suffragist's first-wave and used this energy to lead marches, boycotts, and discussion groups that confronted the daily realities of women's experiences and challenged the oppressive status quo (Faludi 2010). And they succeeded. Second-wavers, both liberal and radical, are responsible for Title XII, *Roe v. Wade*, and the foundation of national rape crisis hotlines. No bras were burned in the second wave of feminism, but the visual analogy does reflect the rebellion of this movement.

In the Electra trope, Third Wavers play the homicidal daughter, rebelling against mother's values and gains (Faludi 2010). Growing out of the apathetic, and somewhat regressive, privileged eighties, these women reaped the rewards of their feminist mother's struggles. They played on sports teams, excelled in higher education, and rocked the vote. Then, in 1991, the Clarence Thomas hearings in which Anita Hill became a scape-goat for presenting claims of sexual harassment against the Supreme Court nominee, shocked women into memory of the need for the feminist movement. Rather than adopting “post-feminism,” third-wavers like Rebecca Walker, Alice Walker's daughter, asserted that feminism was not dead but reincarnated (Dicker 2008). They criticized the second-wave's narrow gender focus and included race, class, sexual orientation, and social institutions into their discourse (Dicker 2008).

From the “Riot Grrrls” to the Spice Girls, third-wave identification was a wild spectrum. A woman could be anything she wanted and anyone could be a feminist. Third-wavers utilized non-traditional media such as zines, pop culture, and the Internet to tease, flirt with, and challenge the status quo. Second-wavers regarded this generation as puckish and narcissistic, focused only on cultural expression and impression management rather than civic engagement and social change (Faludi 2010).

Would the hard-earned authority and privileges of the second wave be safely entrusted to

the third wave? As Mary Daly, a feminist theologian and second wave leader, kindly reminded Rebecca Walker at the Re-Imagining Conference in 2000, “I’m not dead yet!” (Faludi 2010).

Latifa Lyles: “NOW Is the Time”

In 2005, at the age of 29, Latifa Lyles had become the youngest national officer in NOW’s history. Lyles started her organizing career as a policy analyst for the Older Women’s League (OWL) and as a membership manager for Public Justice, the largest public interest law firm in the United States (Department of Labor 2011). Lyles’s impressive career stemmed from her humble beginnings as the daughter of a single mother living in the Bronx. Lyles states her first feminist act as sneaking down to Washington, D.C. for the 1992 reproductive rights march and telling her mother that she was going on a “field trip” (NOW 2011).

After announcing her intentions to run for NOW President, Lyles received the support of Kim Gandy and prominent third-wavers such as Jessica Valenti, founder of the popular website *Feministing*. In a *Harper’s* article from 2010, Valenti said, “I never paid attention to a NOW election in my life until I knew Latifa was running...this could be the moment where NOW becomes super-relevant to the feminist movement again” (Faludi 2010). The media interpreted this statement to represent the views of all women of Lyles and Valenti’s generation.

Lyles achieved significant successes within her NOW tenure, including doubling online donations, making diversity of membership a priority, and engaging new media, such as the blog-o-sphere and social media (NOW 2011). President Gandy supported Lyles in her candidacy, but brought significant baggage to the election. Gandy’s insider tendencies unnerved certain members of the feminist community, who viewed her as too chummy with the Obama administration and as seeking self-promotion within the political system. They felt that such power should reside with NOW’s general members. Gandy’s opponents viewed Lyles as Gandy’s “hand-picked successor” who would perpetuate her use, or misuse, of power (Socks 2009).

Lyles’ slate, which included Sonia Ossorio, Janice Rocco, and Liz Gilchrist, chose the slogan, “Our time is NOW.” Her rhetorical platform, in the same lofty tone as President Obama’s, stressed the importance of cutting-edge tactics to reach a wider and more diverse population. In concordance with the successful strategies of young, grassroots organizers, Lyles stressed the Internet as the new Main Street for social protest and as an important mechanism for generating donations and membership (NOW 2011).

Veronica Arreola, a feminist blogger who attended the 2009 convention, reported Lyles’ convention speech on her personal blog, *Viva la Feminista*. According to her notes, Lyles continued her platform’s rhetorical appeal, speaking of youth, change, and revitalization. She stressed that NOW must work to get women writing bills instead of simply goading current lawmakers to pass them. Lyles’ touched briefly on the rumors surrounding NOW’s financial status and problems within the Gandy tenure by calling for a “truth-telling campaign,” in which members and leaders would be transparent and accountable for their statements (Arreola 2009). It is unclear as to whether information about NOW’s financial status was ever made available to the delegates.

Yet as grand and progressive as Lyles’ goals were, she did not include tangible steps that NOW leaders or affiliates could take to institute the changes she desired. Rather, her ephemeral sentiments directed towards the young, vibrant third-wavers, did little to appeal to the managerial-minded and veterans of social change.

Terry O’Neill: “Feminist Leadership NOW”

Terry O’Neill joined the NOW campaign only six weeks before voting. Olga Vives, NOW’s then Vice-President, urged O’Neill to join the race. Vives ran until health concerns prompted her to withdraw from the campaign. As former Vice-President of Membership from 2001-2005, O’Neill, like Lyles, had deep understanding of NOW’s internal workings. In addition to Vives, former NOW President Patricia Ireland, as well as former Illinois senator Carol

Moseley Braun, also supported O’Neill’s determination to hold the Obama administration accountable for keeping their promises to American women (Martin 2009).

O’Neill’s law career and experience as chief of staff for a city council member in Maryland helped to set the stage for her NOW platform. After working inside the system, O’Neill recognized the need for NOW to be the “bad girl” in the political arena, the anti-cheerleader who would call the plays as she saw fit. NOW’s support of Obama would not be guaranteed, but contingent on his policies towards women. Her platform was grounded in the need to “return to the basics of the movement,” an in-the-streets and in-your-face approach to grass roots organizing à la Occupy Wall Street (T. O’Neill, personal communication, November 3, 2011).

O’Neill’s platform, “Feminist Leadership NOW,” stressed viable organizational processes to revive NOW’s member participation, and to address intersecting values of gender, race, homosexuality, and economic justice to promote equality. Her model of change targeted individuals to engage in civil participation, and often disobedience, at the local level by writing letters, staging demonstrations, and engaging community members. This bottom-up, grass roots approach placed more power with the members and made them accountable for their organization’s mission.

Some opponents viewed O’Neill’s activist strategies as nostalgia for the glory days of radical, second-wave protest and felt that such tactics no longer met the needs of the movement. Still, O’Neill held fast to her position that grassroots engagements such as marches, boycotts, and sit-ins were crucial to feminist participation. “Without such activism, NOW would be just another political lobby,” O’Neill argued, “and Washington already has enough of those” (T. O’Neill, personal communication, November 3, 2011). The 56-year-old’s slate included young women of diverse ethnic and class backgrounds, including Erin Matson, Bonnie Grabenhofer, and Allendra Letsome. O’Neill promised to be an accountable leader and deliver measurable results (NOW 2011).

And the Winner is...

Back in Indianapolis, NOW members needed to vote for the candidate who would best engage NOW in the 21st Century. The organization desperately needed someone to reinvigorate the movement and to help restore a solid membership base. NOW supporters are by nature passionate and strong-minded individuals, and this election elicited fierce opinions on what the future goals of NOW should be, and who would realize them. It was going to be a tough race.

NOW prides itself on being stringently democratic, almost to a fault (Barasko 2009). The delegate naming process, as well as the parliamentary and voting procedures that accompany elections are so painstaking that members are often fatigued by the time they have to cast their vote. Delegates at the 2009 conference were already high-strung from the divisive elections and further agitated by byzantine protocol. The utility of this process, however, is that it prevents outside factions from swinging the election, as every voter is accounted for as a supporter of NOW (Carpentier 2009). Still, conspiracy theories surrounding PUMA’s lingered and hostility permeated the conference.

NOW (Carpentier 2009). Still, conspiracy theories surrounding PUMA's lingered and hostility permeated the conference. Olga Vives, Vice President of NOW, best summarizes the climate in which voting was to take place:

The movement created this expectation in young women that they were fit to lead when they hadn't learned the ropes. They were demanding the top without having to earn their stripes. We created these little monsters and all this 'You can be anything that you want.' That's who we created and that's who is now demanding control." (Faludi 2010).

But would those demands be realized? It was time for the ballots to decide.

Epilogue

On June 20, 2009, the members of NOW elected Terry O'Neill as their president by eight votes. In her first statement as President-Elect, Terry O'Neill testified to NOW's commitment to work on behalf of all women. She shared her experience as a survivor of domestic violence and committed herself to mobilizing and empowering women. As opined by some, the O'Neill campaign simply out-organized that of Lyles and was more successful at presenting O'Neill as both an inspiring leader and effective manager.

Outgoing NOW President Kim Gandy joined Eleanor Smeal at the Feminist Majority Foundation, and maintains strong ties with O'Neill and NOW. Latifa Lyles is currently on maternity leave as Deputy Director of the Women's Bureau at the Department of Labor.

July 21, 2009 was Terry O'Neill's first day in office. Her first acts of President included standing with Sen. Carolyn Maloney as she reintroduced the ERA, and meeting with the National Council of Women's Organizations.

NOW has introduced virtual chapters and the online blog *Say it Sister!* as a way to reach women who may not be able to attend traditional chapter meetings. This forum allows women to post opinion pieces on feminist issues not affiliated with NOW's official positions.

2011 has proved a battleground for women's rights, and NOW has stayed at the frontline. President O'Neill has called for the protection of women's jobs within the federal bailout plan, free access to birth control under the Affordable Care Act, and the reversal of the Health and Human Services' Plan B age restriction. NOW remains a viable and respected force to be reckoned with.

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Appendix A: NOW's Bylaws

www.now.org

Article VIII. Membership Meetings

Section 1. National Conference

A. There shall be an annual meeting of the membership (hereinafter referred to as the National Conference or the Conference) which shall rotate through the regions and shall be held for the purpose of transacting the business of the organization.

B. The National Conference shall be the supreme governing body of NOW.

C. The Conference shall be held in the month of June or July, and at such other times as the membership may decide by written petition of ten percent of the membership or a majority vote of the National Board. The Board shall fix the exact date and place of the national Conference and give at least sixty days' advance notice thereof in an every-member NOW publication. It shall make arrangements for hotel and meeting place accommodations and determine the Conference agenda.

D. In the even-numbered years, the National Conference shall include a special issue or constituency summit in the event that NOW Foundation does not sponsor such a summit.

E. The above changes adopted at the 2003 Conference shall take effect after the 2004 Conference.

F. No membership meeting at any level of NOW shall require NOW members in good standing to pay a registration fee or any other fee in order to participate in the business events or activities of said meeting. No distinction of any kind shall be drawn by the Conference or the Committee between those able to pay fees over and above basic dues and those unable to pay such fees.

Section 2. Voting Privileges

A. Only delegates in good standing whose dues are received by the national organization or its appropriate subunits at least ninety days prior to the Conference and who are duly registered and in attendance shall be eligible to vote at the Conference. Each delegate shall have one vote. Delegates shall be chosen from the chapters, with one delegate for the first ten members and one delegate for each additional thirty members or major fraction thereof. Alternates equal in number to one-fourth of the delegates in the chapter shall be elected and numbered according to the order in which they will be called upon to serve. Chapters shall elect at least one alternate. Members-at-large shall elect alternates on the same basis as chapters. Members-at-large shall elect one delegate for the first ten members and one delegate for each additional thirty members or major fraction thereof present and eligible to vote at a state conference. National officers, National Board members, and State Coordinators/Presidents shall be voting delegates at the National Conference.

B. A Credentials Committee of at least six members shall be appointed by the President with the approval of the Board. The paid NOW membership on national records on the date 120 days before the national Conference shall be used to determine allocation of the delegates. The Credentials Committee shall notify the chapters and state organizations at least ninety days in advance of the National Conference of the number of delegates eligible from the chapter or state at-large membership. Chapters and states shall submit names of delegates to the Credentials Committee. Delegates' names sent no fewer than thirty days before the first day of the National

Conference shall be pre-credentialed.

C. Use of the unit rule is prohibited. There shall be no proxy voting.

D. A quorum shall be twenty-five percent of those members registered and eligible to vote as delegates and shall include one officer and two other National Board members.

Section 3. Participation in Conference

The National Conference shall be open to all NOW members. Only delegates shall be entitled to vote, but all NOW members shall be entitled to speak.

Appendix B: Member Information on NOW's 2009 National Conference

www.now.org

National NOW Conference: 2009 Electing the Next Leaders of NOW and Shaping Our Agenda What You Need to Know to About Voting at the National Conference

At this year's conference, NOW will elect four national officers to lead the organization for the next four years. The conference will take place June 19-21, 2009, in Indianapolis, Ind. We also vote each year on resolutions, which form the basis of NOW's organizational policy and guide our work between national conferences.

Sound interesting? Here's how to participate:

- You must be both a current member and a delegate in order to vote at a National NOW Conference. To qualify to be a delegate, you must have: 1) an expiration date of 0903 (March 2009) or later for renewing members; or 2) proof of payment of dues to NOW by March 21, 2009, for new members.
- If you meet the above membership qualification to be a delegate, you must next contact your local chapter to request a delegate slot. Chapters may submit their delegates early, so make your request soon! If your local chapter does not have open delegate slots or if you are unable to find or reach a chapter in your area, call your state NOW organization. You can find **local and state NOW chapters online**.
- As a delegate, you must register for the conference (either in advance or on-site). Don't forget to make your **reservations at the hotel**, too, as the excellent conference rate has a cutoff date.
- If you are unable to secure a delegate slot in advance, one more option is available. You may attend the conference, and inquire (as soon as possible) with the credentialing committee whether any chapters have open delegate slots that they are filling on-site. Chapters that are unable to fill their delegate slots sometimes assign them to attendees at the conference. Remember, you will need to show **proof of membership**.
- If you obtain a delegate slot, either from your own local chapter or from another chapter, you will still need to get "credentialed" when you arrive at the conference -- all delegates must submit **proof of membership** and a photo ID to the registration/credentials committee. **Everything you need to know about credentialing** is on our conference website.
- When you vote, please make sure you have your credentialed badge with you and a photo ID. Voting is Saturday night (June 20) from 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM at the conference hotel.
- **Read about the slates/candidates** for national NOW office. At this time, two slates have announced their candidacy; other slates are free to announce at any time, and additional nominations for officer tickets can be made from the floor of the conference at the 9:00 AM plenary session on Friday morning (June 19).
- **Election rules** and **other resources** are also available online.
- Resolutions will be discussed and voted on throughout the day on Sunday (June 21). **Learn more about the resolution process**.

**Appendix C: National NOW Officer Slate Information, "NOW is the Time" Slate
www.now.org**

Latifa Lyles for President
Sonia Ossorio for Executive Vice President
Janice Rocco for Action Vice President
Liz Gilchrist for Membership Vice President
Ticket Platform
Campaign Website

Latifa Lyles

Candidate for: President

Chapter Affiliation: Washington, D.C.

Member Since: 1999

NOW Offices Held: *Elected:* National VP Membership (2005-present); DC-NOW Program Coordinator (2001- 2005); National Board (2002-2005); Mid-Atlantic Regional Director (2004-2005) *Appointed:* WOCA Summit Committee (2005); National Young Feminist Taskforce (2003- 2005)

Personal Statement: It has been my great honor and privilege to serve for the past four years as a National Vice President. When I marched on Washington for the first time at 16, I didn't know I would devote my career to women's rights. But having grown up as an athlete, daughter of a single mother, and a young community volunteer, I knew I would find my place on the front lines in the fight against inequality. I didn't get here alone, but with the mentorship of NOW leaders who paved the way for me and countless other young women to work alongside them in the fight for justice. I believe we must forge ahead in this spirit of unity and leadership to build a stronger, more powerful organization. I am asking not just for your pledge of support for my candidacy, but also for your commitment to NOW's future and our common vision for equality.

Sonia Ossorio

Candidate for: Executive Vice President

Chapter Affiliation: NOW-NYC

Member Since: 1999

NOW Offices Held *Elected:* President, NOW-NYC (2005-2009); VP of Public Information, NOW-NYC (2001- 2003); Chair of Women and Media Project, NOW-NYC (1999-2001)

Personal Statement: As President of NOWNYC, I've been on the frontline fighting for women's rights. Our chapter brought thousands of activists to the March for Peace, Justice and Democracy in 2006. We created campaigns that led to the repeal of the statute of limitations on rape and strong laws against human trafficking. We've held the television/film, music and fashion industries accountable for the images of women they mass market.

Under my leadership, NOW-NYC has significantly grown its operating budget and visibility. El Diario/La Prensa and NY1 News have profiled me as a leading Latina activist. As a new mother, I am even more motivated to create a world for the next generation where true equality for women exists. If I am elected, my commitment to you is that I will work each day to strengthen and grow our organization so that we can be an even more influential voice shaping the national

and local agenda on women's issues and a bigger force taking action to bring justice for women.

Janice Rocco

Candidate for: Action Vice President

Chapter Affiliation: Los Angeles

Member Since: 1991

NOW Offices Held Elected: President, Los Angeles (1996-1998), Santa Barbara (1993-1995); California NOW, Action VP, (2001-05), Treasurer (2008-09), State Board (1993-2009), PAC (1996-2009); Southwest Regional Director (2004-06, 2008- 09); National Board (2002-2006); National PAC (2005-2009)

Personal Statement: In 1992, I participated in the March for Women's Lives and NOW's "Elect Women for A Change" campaign. These events helped chart my course in life. As an activist, I learned to organize, fundraise, attract media attention, and make public policy changes. As President of L.A. NOW, I had the opportunity to get NOW's message out through the national media and I will continue working to end sexism in the media. I've spent ten years working as a Chief of Staff in California's state capitol. Fighting for marriage equality, California's Violence Against Women Act, and the law to require abortion training for medical residents has taught me to fight for what is right and never give up. I've worked on the most competitive political campaigns in the state – raising money, developing messages and running successful races. I'm committed to increasing NOW's reach working alongside all of our members.

Liz Gilchrist

Candidate for: Membership Vice President

Chapter Affiliation: Northern Virginia

Member Since: 1980

NOW Offices Held Elected: Northern Virginia NOW, Coordinator (2005-2007), Vice President (2003-2005); Mississippi NOW, Assistant State Coordinator (1983-1985); Jackson NOW, Vice President (1981-1983)

Appointed: Director, Major Gifts and Planned Giving, National NOW staff (2000-present)

Personal Statement: As Vice President- Membership, I will work to take NOW's fundraising and membership outreach to new levels of effectiveness and sophistication. I have worked for more than 15 years as a development professional at two national advocacy organizations, including nearly 9 years at NOW, where I have doubled our income from gifts of \$1,000 or more and built a strong planned giving program. I also serve on the national boards of two large social justice organizations -- ACLU and Greenpeace -- where I have been closely involved in financial and investment management and overall governance. I was a practicing attorney for nearly 13 years, and will continue to bring those skills and experiences to bear on the legal issues that every non-profit regularly faces. Most importantly, I am a deeply committed feminist activist whose organizational home for nearly 30 years has been NOW. I would appreciate your support.

Platform

Our job as feminist activists is to change the world. In 1966, NOW battled sex-segregated want-ads, illegal abortion, and job discrimination, giving names to problems that had none, including sexual harassment and domestic violence. NOW recognized early that no one can be free when

another faces discrimination and that women's rights are human rights. And our fight includes the struggles for LGBTQ rights, immigrant rights, and racial and economic justice.

We have won landmark battles, but the struggle continues as the unrelenting effort to roll back our gains carries on. The economic downturn is used as an excuse to slash programs, scapegoat immigrants, and step up discrimination against women in the workplace. But we can't let it be an excuse to let our activism or women's rights fall by the wayside. It's true we face enormous challenges, but we also have great opportunities we must use to our advantage to move our organization, movement and women's equality forward through the next generation.

We pledge to work our hardest and smartest for our organization and for women and girls and to steer our organization through these difficult financial times. As officers for the next term, we intend to lead NOW not just to survive, but thrive. We will strive to continue NOW's cutting-edge legacy by:

- Reinvigorating our grassroots activists and network, as they are the cornerstone of our legacy and success and what makes NOW stand out from the crowd.
- Continuing to not only change policies and laws but also to change minds using media and social networks to move forward a feminist agenda in our society.
- Broadening our reach across communities for a more diverse organization using time-tested in-the-street organizing and new technology.
- Not limiting the scope of our work and our core issues but prioritizing and developing cutting edge campaigns including organizing resources.
- Examining, evaluating and innovating our organizational structure and processes to maximize our resources to achieve our vision, goals and NOW's mission.

The "NOW is the Time" team is up to the challenge. Together, not only do we bring a depth and breadth of experience and perspectives but also critical skills in development, marketing, public policy, grassroots and political organizing, media outreach, coalition building and management. We have a broad range of experience in NOW at the local, state, and national levels; we have worked in large and small chapters, and we cherish the vast diversity in NOW.

We invite you to join the conversation as we work to build and grow. Visit our website for updates, find us on Facebook, follow our Twitter feed, and let us know what you think. We're in this together, and we need you with us. We hope to see you in Indianapolis.

Appendix D: National NOW Officer Slate Information, "Feminist Leadership NOW" Slate

www.now.org

Terry O'Neill for President
Bonnie Grabenhofer for Executive Vice
President Erin Matson for Action Vice
President
Allendra Letsome for Membership Vice
President Ticket Platform
Campaign Website

Terry O'Neill

Candidate for:

President

Chapter Affiliation: Montgomery County-MD

Member Since: 1994

NOW Offices Held: *Elected:* VP Membership, National NOW (2001-2005); NOW National Board, Mid-Atlantic Region (2007-present); NOW National Board, Mid-South Region (2000-2001); President, Maryland NOW (2007); President, Louisiana NOW (1996-1998); President, New Orleans NOW (1998-2001)

Appointed: Racial Diversity Committee, National NOW

Personal Statement: I'm running for President because I want to use my skills and ability to overcome the challenges we face and to seize the opportunity that exists at this moment in history. I believe women around the country are fed up with persistent inequality and are ready to put justice for women at center stage. Upon election, my running mates and I will immediately launch a series of national action campaigns to demand the things women need to achieve real equality.

Simultaneously, I will restore NOW's revenue stream by bringing together our vendors, donors and leaders to work with me in implementing a plan to reverse our membership losses, and revitalize our message and grassroots organizing. My administration will be transparent and accountable. I will set goals and report results. I ask you to join us, and together we'll win the struggle for equality and justice.

Bonnie Grabenhofer

Candidate for: Executive Vice President

Chapter Affiliation: DuPage County NOW -

IL Member Since: 1982

NOW Offices Held *Elected:* National NOW: National NOW Board, Great lakes Region (2002- 2004); Illinois NOW: President (2003-2009); VP Action (2002-03); Chair IL NOW PAC (2001- 2009); DuPage County NOW (1983-present): President (three terms); VP Action; State Council Representative; and Secretary

Appointed: National NOW: Intergenerational Committee (2002-2003); Lesbian Rights CIC (2001-2002); President's Cabinet (1999). Illinois NOW: Co-Chair IL NOW PAC (1999-2001); Member, PAC Board most years (1987-2009)

Personal Statement: I've been a NOW activist for over 25 years because helping to achieve equality and justice for women is the most important work I do. As president, I worked with IL NOW to introduce reproductive justice legislation, lead pro-choice support for a fiercely contested clinic; and start a successful telemarketing campaign to support our work. But our struggle isn't over.

Using my NOW experiences and professional expertise in learning, business processes, and performance improvement, I'll work to restore our financial health, and improve organizational capability and results. I would be honored to have your support now, and as we work together to reclaim our role as the preeminent women's organization and achieve equality for all women.

Erin Matson

Candidate for: Action Vice President

Chapter Affiliation: Uptown NOW -

MN Member Since: 2002

NOW Offices Held *Elected:* NOW National Board (2006-present); Prairie States Regional Director (2008-present); Minnesota NOW President (2003-2006, present)

Appointed: National State President's Caucus co-chair (2005-2006); National NOW Young Feminist Task Force (2003-2008); co-chair (2006)

Personal Statement: I joined the women's movement twelve years ago after anorexia left me with only a few days to live. In recovery, I swore I would devote my life to justice for women. As Minnesota NOW President, I led a successful campaign against pharmacist refusal clauses that included several pickets, testifying in the state legislature and public consciousness raising on college campuses. I personally negotiated national concessions from Walgreens. I am an artist, award-winning online strategist and advertising copywriter. I believe we can and must raise our voices collaboratively, inclusively and without fear - across chapter boundaries. When I was 24, I won a Federalist Society debate against Phyllis Schlafly and, afterwards, stunned her speechless by telling her that there were thousands more young feminists just like me!

As Action Vice President, I will drive bold, creative and unwavering campaigns, amplifying our demands for equality and real progress.

Allendra Letsome

Candidate for: Membership Vice President

Chapter Affiliation: Northern Prince George's County NOW

Member Since: 2002

NOW Offices Held *Elected:* Maryland NOW Executive Vice President (2003-2005); Maryland NOW Co-President (2005-2006); Maryland NOW PAC Chair (2005-2006)

Appointed: NOW Young Feminist Task Force (2002-2005); Maryland NOW Legislative Intern (2002-2005)

Personal Statement: The first time I represented Maryland NOW at the table testifying in front of the Maryland House of Delegates, I knew my presence was due to the work of brave and dedicated women who had gone before me and to the mentoring I received from strong

local NOW leaders. Women may still have a long way to go, but we're making progress and NOW is helping us do it.

I am running for Membership Vice President because I am committed to growing our activist base and fostering the type of leadership and passion that I believe is inherent in every NOW member. I am also committed to working with the Action Vice-President to reach out to and connect with the next generation of feminist leaders. Within NOW, there is a place for every activist, not only to participate, but to rise to new and unforeseen heights.

Platform

We Believe in the Power of NOW

We live in amazing times! And we join progressive people here and around the world in celebrating the hope and promise of the Obama administration. But we also know that we will not see meaningful, lasting change for women unless we have a strong feminist movement fighting for all women's rights.

NOW needs a new team of leaders who are up to the task of strengthening and revitalizing our organization and our movement. NOW's grassroots activists are the heart and soul of this organization. That's why we commit to support NOW activists in every way possible to be their most powerful and effective.

We will lead change

- We will lead national action campaigns that attract, empower and mobilize local activists.
- We will strengthen NOW's financial health through innovative fund raising techniques -- and good-old member recruitment.
- We will use cutting-edge technology to amplify activist voices, increase collaboration and place social justice for women at the center of political discourse.

We will be accountable to you

- We pledge to be transparent and accountable to NOW's members.
- We will implement open forums, both online and in person, so that NOW activists have access to their national officers and each other.
- We will listen and respond to chapters, and support local activism with training, networking and online tools.
- We will also provide meaningful support to NOW's national committees and task forces, linking them to one another as well as to the National Board and state presidents.

We are the best team for NOW

Because of the hope inspired by the new administration, many activists and donors feel that they can just sit back and wait for progressive change to take root. We know better.

Now more than ever, we need a strong feminist movement to ensure that women's rights and feminist issues make it to the top of the priority list at all levels of government. We are a new team of experienced leaders, and with your help we know we can strengthen and revitalize NOW and the feminist movement for the tasks ahead.

The Feminist Leadership NOW team members have the passion, skills and a record of success to meet the challenges we face. Collectively, we have 50 years of NOW experience. But even

more importantly, we are ready to lead NOW in making needed change so that our organization sets the direction for the future - and wins for women. Our team will not rest until women - all women - have equal rights and enjoy parity in every facet of society.

We respectfully ask for your support and your votes so that we can deliver the promise of change and hope to women NOW.