I am also available for classroom presentations. If you are interested in having me speak to your class, please contact me at least one week in advance. Presentations that are currently available are:

Man Law: Heterosexist Propaganda or Responsible Advertisement Campaign? An approximately thirty minute presentation that explores an advertisement campaign launched by the Miller beer brewing company. The company claims the campaign is an effort to move away from its traditionally sexist and derogatory advertisements of the past. However, the company has allowed and even embraced the growing number of individuals that are using “Man Laws” to degrade women and promote gender inequality. The presentation will explore the “Man Law” phenomenon and how it can contribute to belief systems that promote sexual assault and violence.

The Other Half of the Solution: How Men can Prevent Violence Against Women: This workshop will cover the gender binary system with particular attention to masculinity as well as violence against women in a societal context. We will discuss ways that men can work to prevent violence against women. Perfect for Social Issues, Women's Studies, First Year Seminar, Leadership Development, staff trainings, and more.

To book a presentation you can contact me directly at mwerniko@ramapo.edu or X6209, or fill out an electronic form at: http://guide.ramapo.edu/womenscenter/presentations.html.

It is my goal to work closely with faculty, staff, and students to raise awareness about these issues. If you or any of your students have any questions or concerns, or would like to become more involved in the movement to end violence against women, please feel free to contact me at any time.
African Ancestry Month Events
Strengthening Traditions…Continuing the Legacy

Opening Celebration
Thursday, February 1
Banquet: Alumni Lounges 5:00 pm
Exhibit Viewing after Banquet:
"An Apparently Unimportant Event:
Self-Taught From the Centre D'Art
In The 1940's and 50's"
Kresge and Pascal Galleries, Berrie Center
Lecture: "Winds of the Spirit:
Haitian Vodun Art"
Robert Farris Thompson, Yale University
Sharp Theater, Berrie Center 8:00 pm

Trip to the Schomburg Center and Sylvia's Restaurant
Saturday, February 3
Departing The Circle 1:30 pm
Sign up at Roadrunner Central

"Love in the Nick of Tyme"
Sunday, February 4
Departing The Circle at 1:00 pm
Tickets Available at Roadrunner Central $10.00
Film star Morris Chestnut makes his theatrical debut in this
romantic comedy which includes unforgettable music written
by chart-topping R&B vocalist Vivian Green. "Love in the
Nick of Tyme" is a once-in-a-lifetime theatrical event.

Organization for African Unity Discussion Series
Wednesdays
Black Student Union Office (SC 225) 5:00 pm
All are welcome! Discussion topics are as follows:
February 7 - What does African Ancestry Month mean to you?
February 14 - Black inventors
February 21 - Are we carrying on our ancestors' legacy?

Black Maria Film Festival
Thursday, February 8
Sharp Theater, Berrie Center 2:00 pm
Since 1981, the annual Black Maria Film and Video Festival,
an international juried competition and award tour, has been
fulfilling its mission to advocate, exhibit and reward cutting
edge works from independent film and video makers. Enjoy a
selection of the 2007 winning films and videos, with commen-
tary by festival founder John Columbus. Free admission!

Black History Bingo
Thursday, February 8
Pavilion Room 3 5:00 pm
Come test your knowledge of black history with this fun bingo
game!

Going to Church with Ebony Women for Social Change
Sunday, February 11 and Sunday, February 25
See Roadrunner Central for more information and to sign up.

Book Discussion: The Dew Breaker
Monday February 12
York Room 12:45 pm
Sponsored by the Student Activities
Platinum Series
Learn about Haiti and the lives of
Haitian-Americans by participating
in a discussion of Edwidge Danticat's
novel, The Dew Breaker. The novel
explores the difficult conditions faced by
Haitians in the U.S. and at home. The book also raises the
question: Can Haitians reconcile themselves with those who
collaborated with repressive dictators - and if so, how?
Refreshments will be served.

Black Art Auction and Tea
Friday, February 16
Pavilion 7:00 pm
Join us for a sophisticated evening of tea and black art.
Sponsored by Psi Sigma Phi

Africana Film Festival
Saturday, February 17
Laurel Screening Room
12:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Films shown will include
Malcolm X, Panther,
Rosewood and Mississippi Burning

Trip to The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum
Saturday, February 17
Tickets and further information available at Roadrunner
Central
Sponsored by Student Activities

Pride in Our Roots
Sunday, February 18
Friends Hall (SC 219) 6:00 pm
Sponsored by Organization for African Unity

The Minority Report
Thursday, February 22
Alumni Lounges (SC 138) 1:00 pm
Sponsored by Black Student Union

Edwidge Danticat Reading/Book Signing
Friday, February 23
Sharp Theater, Berrie Center 1:00 pm
Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat is the author of several
books including Breath, Eyes, Memory: Krik? Krak!, a
National Book Award finalist; and The Farming of Bones, an
American Book Award winner. Hailed as the “literary voice
of a silenced Haiti,” Danticat's writings mirror the experi-
ences and concerns of the Haitian Diaspora.
African Ancestry Month Events
(continued)

Faces of America
Sunday, February 25
Sharp Theater, Berrie Center 8:00 pm
This one person show, written entirely from interviews conducted across the country, has been described as a truly multi-cultural portrayal of Americans.

Empowerment Through Art, Media, and Business: A Local and Global Look at African Americans Who Have Changed the World
Tuesday, February 27
Alumni Lounges (SC 136 and SC 137) 5:00 pm
Each panelist's life provides a blueprint on how to make individual and collective change - come be inspired!
PANELISTS: Rosa Clemente, a Black Puerto Rican woman specializing in media rights issues; Mo Beasley, an award winning performance poet, actor, producer and activist; Toni Blackman, the US Ambassador of Hip Hop; and Matt Middleton, entertainment lawyer (represents Fabolous, and Juelz Santana).
MODERATOR: April Silver, entrepreneur and co-host of the new Black talk show "My Two Cents" on BET. Dinner will be served.

For disability related accommodations, please contact the Women's Center at X7468 at least 24 hours in advance of program.

Women’s Center Events

Boys Don't Cry Film Screening
Thursday, February 8
Women's Center 8:00 pm
*Boys Don’t Cry* is a true story about finding the courage to be yourself. The film follows Brandon Teena, a transgendered teen who preferred life in a male identity until it was discovered he was born biologically female. A short discussion will follow the film screening.

Healthy Love Table
Tuesday, February 13 and Wednesday, February 14
Fishbowl 11:00 am - 3:00 pm
Buy a treat for your sweet! Heart-shaped lollipops will be sold with and without safer sex supplies attached. Information about healthy relationships will be available.

Healthy Relationships Program
Wednesday, February 14
Location TBA 11:00 am - 1:00 pm
Join the Women’s Center and the Bergen County Rape Crisis Centre for an informative program on relationships, trust and communication. The event will include the Clothesline Project, speakers and discussion.

Safe Zone Training
Wednesday, February 21
Alumni Lounges (SC 137) 3:00 pm
The Safe Zone Program is designed to create a safe and supportive environment on campus for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans(-sexual, -gendered), intersex, queer, and questioning (LGBTIQQ) students, faculty, and staff by training and clearly identifying allies on campus. RSVP by e-mailing Will Mazur at wmazur@ramapo.edu.

Female Friendly Funk
Thursday, February 22
J.Lee's 8:00 pm
For this month's event, the Women's Center will be working closely with Ebony Women for Social Change to support African Ancestry Month and include poetry readings. Female Friendly Funk is a monthly coffeehouse organized to empower women through the influence of music. Up and coming artists will perform non-misogynistic songs. Free food and fun in a comfortable atmosphere!

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**Special Meetings**

**Queer Peer Services Peer Support Group**
Every Monday
9:30 pm Women’s Center (C 220)
This peer support group creates a safe space for members of the LGBTIQQ community to talk about issues faced on campus pertaining to sexuality, relationships, and dealing with homophobia and related issues. All LGBTIQQ* people and their allies are welcome!

*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Intersexed, Questioning, Queer

**Women’s Herstory Month Planning Meeting**
Wednesday, February 7
1 pm Women’s Center (C 220)
Come express your ideas for Women’s Herstory Month 2007! If there is an event in your mind, we can help you make it happen!

If you need to fulfill your experiential component by volunteering your time, this is a great opportunity!
By a vote of 315 to 116, the House of Representatives, under the ambitious new leadership of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), passed a bill today to increase the minimum wage. The legislation proposes to raise the federal minimum wage from $5.15 per hour to $7.25 per hour over two years.

"While this is a definite improvement over the current minimum wage, $15,000 a year still isn't enough to support a family in this country. But it's a step in the right direction and the Senate should follow suit."

NOW applauds the tenacity of the new Congressional leadership and the inclusion of raising the national minimum as part of their "first 100 hours" goals. With this momentum, the Senate should work quickly to pass a clean minimum wage bill and send it to George W. Bush for signature.

"This is good news for women and families," says NOW President Kim Gandy. "This is a bold statement to George Bush and a tribute to the voters who said they wanted to see a change. Gandy adds, "Women's wages are the lowest of the low, and it is time our elected officials took notice. Raising the minimum wage is a matter of fairness."

Consider these facts: Overall, women are twice as likely as men to work at the minimum wage. Congress has not provided minimum wage earners with a raise in almost 10 years. However, in the last nine years, Congress has voted itself seven pay increases.

This long overdue raise would especially help women, who are 61% of those earning minimum wage - one third of these women are the sole breadwinners for their entire family.

The Act will also increase wages in the Northern Marianas Islands, a U.S. territory where garment workers only earn $3.05 an hour and many live in what amounts to indentured servitude.

For more information, see article below.

http://www.now.org/press/01-07/01-10.html

Excerpts from:

Paradise Lost
Greed, Sex Slavery, Forced Abortions and Right-Wing Moralists
by Rebecca Clarren for Ms. Magazine

The whir of hundreds of sewing machines reverberates in the thick, dusty air at the RIFU garment factory. Inside this large warehouse, behind a guarded metal fence, 300 employees—mostly Chinese women—cut, sew, iron and fold blouses with such efficiency and focus that they seem like machinery themselves. From piles of orange and pink fabric, the workers will produce over 15,000 garments today for J. Jill, Elie Tahari and Ann Taylor. These name brand companies don’t own the factory; like Liz Claiborne, The Gap, Ralph Lauren and others, they subcontract production to factories like this, scattered around the tiny Micronesian island of Saipan.

Counters above the sewing machines indicate how many pieces the women have completed. According to workers, if they can’t finish a set quota of garments in a day, they may have to stay later and work for free, or they won’t be eligible for future overtime opportunities—which they desperately need.

Coming from rural villages and the big city slums of poor Asian countries, these garment workers began their sojourn in the Marianas with a huge financial deficit, having paid recruiters as much as $7,000 to obtain a one-year contract job (renovable at the employer’s discretion). Many of them borrow the money—a small fortune in China, where most are recruited—from lenders who charge as much as 20 percent interest.

In a situation akin to indentured servitude, workers cannot earn back their recruitment fee and pay annual company supplied housing and food expenses of about $2,100 without working tremendous hours of overtime. Before being able to save her first dollar, a worker who owes, say, $5,000 to her recruiter has to work nearly 2,500 hours at Saipan’s current minimum wage—which equals six more 40-hour workweeks than exist in a year.

And that’s assuming she gets paid. Increasingly, workers are filing formal complaints that they have not received their wages, with some women going without paychecks for over five months. Still, workers at RIFU and other Saipan garment factories labor six days a week, sometimes up to 20 hours a day. “One or two days a week we’d work through an entire night, and I was exhausted,” says Chen Xiaoyan, 26, a nervous young woman with a thin ponytail who used to work for RIFU.

“Sometimes we had no Sundays off either, but if you didn’t want to work they’d allow you no overtime at all as a punishment.”

The American consumers who wear the clothes these women produce probably have never heard of Saipan or the 13 other islands that comprise the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Located just north of the U.S. territory of Guam, the islands were seized from the Japanese by U.S. military forces during World War II and served as the base for sending atomic bombs to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After the war, the islands became a United Nations territory, administered by the United States.

Then, in 1975, the islands’ indigenous population of subsistence farmers and fishermen voted to become a commonwealth of the United States—a legal designation that made them U.S. citizens and subject to most U.S. laws. There were two critical exceptions, however: The U.S. agreed to exempt the islands from the minimum wage requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (allowing the islands to set their own lowerminimum wage, currently $3.05, compared to $5.15 in the U.S.), and from most provisions of the Immigration and
Nationality Act. This has allowed garment manufacturers to import thousands of foreign contract guest workers who, ironically, stitch onto the garments they make the labels “Made in Saipan (USA),” “Made in Northern Marianas (USA)” or simply “Made in USA.”

The USA label tells customers “the quality is really good,” insists Cleofe de Guzman, a Filipina manager, as she walks down long, neat aisles past women pushing thin fabric through sewing machines. But to many Americans, adding USA to the label implies that goods are produced by Americans, not by foreign guest workers toiling under sweatshop conditions thousands of miles away.

The guest worker designation means that these foreign laborers can remain on the islands for an indefinite period but are not eligible for U.S. citizenship. If workers complain about conditions, not only can they be terminated at the whim of their employer, but because they’re exempt from U.S. immigration law, they can be summarily deported.

The local Department of Labor and Immigration, chronically underfunded, is of little help to them, taking six months to a year to complete reviews of complaints. There are no labor unions. While there is a Federal Labor Ombudsman’s office in Saipan, under the Department of the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs, it can do little more than offer translation services and refer aggrieved workers to other agencies; it has no authority to investigate or prosecute.

“There are serious problems here and everybody knows it,” says the ombudsman, Jim Benedetto, as he stares out his Saipan office window at a sheet of rain. “There isn’t anyone who would say there aren’t worker abuses.”

Such abuses have helped a highly profitable garment industry to flourish in the islands. At its peak, the industry annually exported to the U.S. garments worth $1 billion wholesale (with a retail value conservatively estimated at $2 billion). Considering that the success of the industry was tied closely to its low wages and exploitative guest worker program—and the fact that it was exempt from tariffs or quotas on exports to the U.S. mainland—it’s not surprising that both the Marianas’ government and the garment manufacturers have fought long and hard to maintain the deal.

Enter Jack Abramoff, who hardly needs an introduction. Caught in the crosshairs of one of the biggest congressional scandals in a century, the Georgetown educated lawyer was once a high flying Republican lobbyist on Capitol Hill; he now awaits sentencing on multiple criminal charges to which he has pled guilty: bribing public officials, fraud and tax evasion.

While at the Washington, D.C., offices of the Preston, Gates, Ellis & Rouvelas Meeds law firm in 1995, Abramoff and his team were hired as lobbyists for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. At the time, the islands’ sweet deal was in trouble, as a decade’s worth of rumblings about labor conditions and immigration abuses had finally led members of Congress and the Clinton administration to press for legislation to eliminate the island’s exemptions from U.S. minimum wage and immigration laws. But Abramoff, using his close ties to Republicans in the House, worked mightily to block such reforms.

Many of his efforts focused on the House Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over U.S. territories, including the Marianas. Although members of both houses of Congress and both political parties repeatedly pushed to bring the Marianas under federal immigration and minimum wage laws, not a single legislative attempt has succeeded—most killed in the House Resources Committee.

Beginning in 1995 and continuing to the present day, at least 29 different bills—some to raise the minimum wage, some to close off the immigration exemption, and some to deny use of the “Made in USA” label on products of the CNMI—were introduced by Sens. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) and Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) and by Reps. George Miller (D-Calif.) and David Bonier (D-Mich.). Twice—in 1995 and again in 2000—the U.S. Senate voted unanimously for Murkowski’s wage and immigration reforms only to have the bills die in the House Resources Committee. “We were instrumental in first delaying Senate consideration of the Murkowski bill. We then stopped it cold in the House,” Abramoff wrote in a 2001 letter to the governor of the Marianas, Pedro P. Tenorio.


Abramoff also cultivated powerful allies in the House leadership, notably Tom DeLay, who, as majority whip at the time, could keep a bill off the House floor even if the Resources Committee voted in its favor. According to the Associated Press, which, through an open records request, obtained the billing and correspondence records sent by Preston Gates to the Marianas government, Abramoff was in almost daily contact with DeLay’s top aides concerning Marianas-related matters. DeLay himself, the billing records showed, met or talked with Abramoff about the Marianas at least two dozen times in 1996 and 1997 alone.

Abramoff would later summarize his early Marianas lobbying successes in the 2001 letter to Tenorio: “We worked with the House leadership to assure the [minimum wage] bill would not move to the House floor, even if the [Resources] committee did act. It also allowed us to acquire some very powerful allies, such as Majority Whip Tom DeLay.” Three of DeLay’s former aides would end up joining Abramoff’s lobbying team and working on the Marianas account.

As Rep. Miller, the ranking Democrat on the House Resources Committee and a leading sponsor of reform legislation, told Ms., “The combination of DeLay and Abramoff kept anything from being considered in Congress for years. [The Northern Marianas] was a multimillion dollar client of Abramoff, and DeLay was actively working to make sure his friend was able to protect his client.”

With the election of George W. Bush in 2000, Abramoff gained additional connections. After three Abramoff associates
who had lobbied on behalf of the Marianas secured powerful positions in the Departments of Labor and Interior and in the General Services Administration, the lobbyist could gleefully report in his letter to Tenorio, “We have worked with White House Office of Presidential Personnel to ensure that CNMI-relevant positions at various agencies are not awarded to enemies of the CNMI.”

First at Preston Gates and then with the law firm of Greenberg Traurig, Abramoff was well-compensated for his lobbying efforts, bringing in nearly $11 million in fees from the Marianas government and from the islands’ garment manufacturers between 1995 and 2004. And his clients got exactly what they hoped for. “Our team has combated and defeated every single attack on the CNMI,” Abramoff wrote to Tenorio in 2001.

One of Abramoff’s favorite tactics for influencing members of Congress was to arrange Saipan junkets. As many as 100 people connected to the U.S. Congress—members themselves, or their staffers—traveled to the islands, sometimes with spouses or other family, including nearly half the Republican members of the House Resources Committee or their staffers. In addition to meetings with local officials, the trips—frequently all-expenses paid—typically entailed a stay at the Hyatt Regency resort, snorkeling in the crystalline waters and golf at one of the islands’ four championship courses.

Among the visitors were DeLay, his wife and daughter, and six of his aides. During his 1998 New Year’s holiday trip, he told Saipan officials, as was later reported in The Dallas Observer, "When one of my closest and dearest friends, Jack Abramoff, your most able representative in Washington, D.C., invited me to the islands, I wanted to see firsthand the free-market success and the progress and reform you have made.” At a New Year’s Eve dinner on Saipan, DeLay lavishly praised the governor—in a moment caught on camera and later shown by ABC’s 20/20—"You are a shining light for what is happening in the Republican Party, and you represent everything that is good about what we’re trying to do in America, in leading the world in the free-market system.”

Two years later, DeLay still saw the islands through rose-colored lenses, as he told The Washington Post: “[The CNMI] is a perfect petri dish of capitalism. …It’s like my Galapagos Island.” Even today, DeLay remains a booster. When Ms. contacted him, he was in Texas and unavailable for comment, but his spokesman Michael Connolly said, “I can’t think of anything that would have changed his position on the Marianas Islands. He stands by the things he has said in the past and he stands by the votes he’s made that pertain to the islands.”

To find the dark underbelly of Delay’s "Shining light,” simply cross a busy Saipan street and walk a few yards down a dirt road. At 10:30 p.m., knots of Chinese women are just getting off work at a nearby garment factory and making their way through the steady rain that slices the black night. These women eschew the more expensive, factory-owned barracks in favor of tiny homes constructed of corrugated tin, with thin wooden doors. In one tin dwelling, three women share a queen-sized bed that rests on a slab of concrete. The smell of frying vegetables wafts from the “kitchen”—a few hot plates and water-filled plastic buckets set outside on a concrete counter. Nine people share one toilet.

As they cluster outside, near a thin clothesline that doubles as a closet, one woman says that she’s worked here for two years and is nowhere close to paying the money back to her recruiter; the others shake their heads in agreement. Their fear is palpable: They’re afraid to use their names or to be photographed, even from the back.

“I heard that the lender might break my family’s legs if I don’t pay the money soon. I worry about it a lot,” one 35-year-old Chinese woman told Ms. a few days earlier, speaking through a translator. “I can’t imagine how long it will take to pay the money back. It’s very hard to be here. The only foods I can afford to buy are rice and some very cheap precooked vegetables. My teeth are always bleeding,” she says, her eyes like wet stone.

Most guest workers here are from poor Asian countries: China, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Thailand. Most have only a third- or fourth-grade education. Of the nearly 30 workers interviewed by Ms., almost all had left children back home with relatives, hoping they’ll earn enough in Saipan to finance their off-spring’s education.

“The recruiter told us that in America it’s a very free country, and because we had never been here we believed them,” says a 22-year-old garment worker from China’s rural Fujian Province. “They were lying.”

Despite the squalid living conditions, the young guest workers want to stay at their jobs long enough to make their sacrifices worthwhile. But if they happen to get pregnant while working in Saipan, they’re faced with a new nightmare. According to a 1998 investigation by the Department of Interior Office of Insular Affairs, a number of Chinese garment workers reported that if they became pregnant, they were “forced to return to China to have an abortion or forced to have an illegal abortion” in the Marianas.

These days, pregnancy is still highly problematic for guest workers. Many believe that if they get pregnant their employers will not renew their contracts for another year. That’s essentially what happened to Chen Xiaoyan, the former RIFU worker. Two years ago, she became pregnant while visiting her boyfriend back in China. RIFU, although ostensibly responsible for workers’ medical care, told her they would not renew her contract unless she provided them an affidavit saying she would pay for all pregnancy-related medical expenses. When she refused, Chen was fired.

Outside one of the barracks guest workers live in, located just yards from the factories where they work “It’s not fair and it’s not right,” she says. “I read from a book that the U.S. has the best law and protections for workers and I thought here it would be better than in China, but it isn’t.”

With few economic options, pregnant workers often feel they have no choice but to visit one of Saipan’s
underground abortion providers. At least four acupuncture clinics offer pills to induce abortions, according to a local translator and former garment worker.

“I’ve driven four Chinese women to get abortions here,” he says, pointing to an inconspicuous cement building with red Chinese lettering and an English sign that reads “Acupuncture, Herbs, Massage Oils.” “I see girls whose bleeding did not stop, and on two incidents I had to take the girls to the hospital.”

While Congress wouldn’t help the garment workers, at least the courts have tried. In 1999, two federal class-action lawsuits were filed on behalf of Saipan’s garment workers, alleging violations of U.S. and international laws, including forcing employees to work “off the clock” and under hazardous working conditions. A third case, filed in California state court by Global Exchange, Sweatshop Watch, UNITE! and Asian Law Caucus, accused U.S. retail firms of engaging in false advertising by indicating their garments were “Made in USA.”

In 2003, all three suits were finally settled with the garment industry, for a total payout of $20 million. The money was earmarked for workers’ back pay, a fund to help out workers who couldn’t earn enough to repay their recruitment fees, and an independent oversight board to monitor working conditions at 27 factories on the islands. Although it wasn’t part of the settlement agreement, the pressure generated by the lawsuits and legislative reform efforts led most of the companies that once labeled their garments “Made in USA” to change their labels to read “Made in Saipan (USA)” or “Made in Northern Mariana Islands (USA).”

The monitoring program, while an important effort, has had mixed results, according to a U.S. government source in the Marianas speaking on background. Inspections only take place twice a year and the results are kept confidential—even the retailers who pay for the program don’t see them. The monitoring board has discretion to put factories on probation, but that has occurred only once. Moreover, the program will sunset in July 2007, and there are no other proposals on the table to replace it.

As for the $20 million settlement, only $5.8 million is earmarked for direct pay to workers, and very little of that has yet been paid out, according to Timothy Bellas, one of the monitors. Considering that the settlement was a class action on behalf of thousands of workers, no one can expect a large sum. The board has managed to disperse $328,000 to some 300 workers under the “Disappointed Expectations Fund,” but those moneys are now almost gone.

Meanwhile—and even more ominously—Saipan’s garment industry is declineing. In January 2005, the GATT treaty, which had regulated all global trade in textiles and apparel since 1974, expired, eliminating quotas on textile exports to the U.S. The Northern Marianas had been attractive to garment makers because of its exemption from such quotas and from tariffs on goods shipped to the U.S. marketplace. Without those advantages, manufacturers are increasingly moving to such places as China, Vietnam and Cambodia, where they can pay even lower wages. Since the treaty’s expiration, seven factories have closed in Saipan, reducing the value of garment exports to half its 1999 peak and putting thousands of guest workers out of jobs. Some observers expect almost all factories to close by 2008, when a temporary restriction on Chinese apparel exports to the U.S. ends.

Considering that thousands of garment workers won’t be able to make enough money to pay back their recruitment fees in their home countries, what will they do if the factories close?

Desperate to make money, some will undoubtedly turn to Saipan’s revitalizing tourist industry for jobs—but there are few to be had. In mid-December, nearly 1,000 workers lined up at the World Resort Hotel’s job fair, hoping to be among the lucky ones to fill fewer than 100 vacancies.

To read the full Ms. article, visit http://www.msmagazine.com/spring2006/paradise_full.asp

Volunteer Opportunities

Made a resolution to volunteer more in the New Year? Check out these organizations you can volunteer with this semester!

The Women’s Center staff visited each one, and they are great places to learn and assist others!

Visit each organization’s website, listed below their name, for more information on volunteering!

Women’s Center - Ramapo College campus
(201) 684-7468
http://www.ramapo.edu/studentlife/womenscenter/index.html

Stop by the Women’s Center in C220 or e-mail us at women@ramapo.edu for more information about volunteering with us! Our office hours are Monday-Thursday 10am-7pm and Friday 10am-5pm.

Women’s Rights Information Center (WRIC) - Englewood, NJ
(201) 568-1166
http://www.womensrights.org/

The WRIC is a tax exempt 501 (C) (3) community based, non-profit organization, founded in 1973 in response to the needs of women caught up in a changing society. The WRIC is staffed by paid and volunteer professionals who help women help themselves—to develop the self-confidence, skills, knowledge and experience they need to make independent life decisions, to provide for themselves and their families and to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

The WRIC serves mostly low and moderate income populations, including single parents, displaced homemakers and dislocated workers through grant-funded, free or low cost programs and services. Some of our services include Shared Housing for One Parent Families, Lawyer Consultations, Career Services, Business Counseling, English as a Second Language, Citizenship Education, Computer Training, Educational Workshops, and referrals to other helping organizations when appropriate.
Volunteer Opportunities (continued)

Other services include Career Services, Business Counseling, English as a Second Language, Citizenship Education, Computer Training, Educational Workshops, and referrals to other helping organizations when appropriate.

The WRIC receives federal, state, county, local funding and depends on individual contributions to help pay for products and services not covered by grants, but necessary for the support of The WRIC Building and its services to the community.

Center For Food Action (CFA) - Mahwah, NJ
(201) 934-5085 http://www.bethhaverim.org/cfa.html

The mission of the Center for Food Action (CFA) in Mahwah, New Jersey is to prevent hunger and homelessness and improve the lives of individuals and families.

CFA provides emergency food, utility and housing assistance, advocacy and counseling services and access to other community resources. CFA helps their clients find solutions to their problems, achieve financial stability and create a brighter future.

The CFA pantry sites in Mahwah and Ringwood depend on food and monetary donations to keep the shelves filled with a supply of emergency groceries.

Volunteers are the heart and backbone of CFA. They need people to work in their pantries and at various events. Each of the centers needs folks to pack and sort groceries and do a variety of other jobs. There are opportunities for people of all ages to help.

CFA needs volunteers, especially in the pantry at the Mahwah site, between 10am-2pm each weekday.

Bergen County Rape Crisis Center - Hackensack, NJ
(201) 488-7110 http://www.bergencountyapecrisis.org/

The YWCA of Bergen County Rape Crisis Center is a private, non-profit organization providing services that lay the foundation for the healing process to all survivors of sexual victimization - women, children, men, their families and friends. The Center works to promote public awareness of the realities of sexual victimization and strive toward its elimination through outreach, activism, and community education.

The Center offers volunteer opportunities including direct work with clients, office tasks, speaking, fundraising, letter writing and research.

Planned Parenthood - Morristown, NJ
(973) 539-9580 http://www.ppgnnj.org/involved/

Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern New Jersey, Inc. (PPGNNJ) exists for the purpose of protecting the rights of, and providing the means for, every individual to control fertility and gain access to reproductive health care and family life education.

PPGNNJ volunteers help us to continue to bring low-cost, high-quality health care to thousands of women. While volunteers work in many different areas of Planned Parenthood, the majority work in PPGNNJ’s 10 medical centers as Medical Services Volunteers. They may:

o help to maintain medical records
o answer phones
o greet our patients

As the PPGNNJ medical staff says “We couldn’t do without our volunteers!” Hours are available weekdays, evenings, and Saturdays.

Volunteers also help in the PPGNNJ Administrative Office in Morristown, providing clerical support to departments such as Accounting and Education. These volunteers usually work weekdays between 9 am and 4:30 pm.

There are various Planned Parenthood locations throughout New Jersey.

Activism Corner

How can we support an increase in minimum wage?

As of January 28, 2007, there is a filibuster blocking the minimum wage bill.

Visit this link, type in your zip code and urge your senators to stand up for workers and raise the minimum wage:

http://www.capwiz.com/now/issues/bills/?bill=8727696

Tell Congress about Saipan

Three bills currently winding their way through the U.S. House and Senate contain provisions that would make federal minimum wage requirements applicable to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

To express support for increasing the minimum wage in the Marianas, contact the representatives on this site:

http://www.msmagazine.com/spring2006/paradise_full.asp

Stay updated on the minimum wage issue through sites such as these:

http://now.org/
http://www.feminist.org/

On the Web

Visit the Women’s Center website at
http://www.ramapo.edu/studentlife/womenscenter/
for even more information!

Newsletter created by Elyse Jankowski