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# Women's Studies Newsletter

Clearinghouse on Women's Studies  
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## GRASS ROOTS WOMEN'S STUDIES: SOUTHERN MISSOURI

by Betty Burnett

*[With this article, we begin a series of reports written by Contributing Editors, responsible for particular regions they have chosen to cover. Additions, corrections and other remarks responding to this report will be welcome. If you are interested in becoming a Contributing Editor—and writing such a report—see the Spring 1975 Women's Studies Newsletter.]*

Missouri is a conservative state, and southern Missouri is its most conservative area. The ERA has been defeated twice, and mainly through the efforts of women. Last spring during the ERA campaign, a lot of bad feeling was aroused and a lot of hysterical talk was heard. People are still afraid of "women's" anything.

Southern Missouri (south of the Missouri River or I-70) is mainly small town rural, but without the large wealthy farms of northern Missouri and with large, chronically depressed areas. In several Ozark counties over one-third of the population lives below the poverty level and the median school years completed ranges between eight and nine. Literacy programs and vocational training have priority over women's studies.

The largest city in southern Missouri is Springfield (pop. 120,000). There are 15 college level schools in the area: an extension of the University of Missouri, three state universities, one state college, three district junior colleges and seven small private colleges, six of which are church-affiliated. Fundamentalist religion is very influential in this region, and three of the four fundamentalist schools are determined to hold on to tradition. The fourth, Evangel College, is the most liberal and most receptive to change. Its women—while not feminists in a NOW sense—are aware of women's potential and importance; they are questioning roles, values and traditions in a quiet, deliberate way. Twila Edwards actively crusades on the Evangel campus and in the fundamentalist community for equality in social relationships, especially in marriage.

In general, the administrators at state colleges are not supportive of women's studies because, they say, not enough faculty and students are interested, not enough money is available (no one can afford to expand right now), and they don't feel they can

## PLANNING A NATIONAL WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION

by Elsa Greene and Elaine Reuben

On Saturday, March 20, thirty women came together in Philadelphia to begin laying the groundwork for a National Women's Studies Association and to plan for a national founding convention at which the Association will be launched. After two days of intense and high energy discussion, the group agreed in principle on a working paper which proposes a shape for the Association; they also created and approved an outline for a three-day, representational convention to be held in mid-November at San Jose State University.

In response to a proposal for a nation-wide conference on women's studies initiated by women at San Jose State in the summer of 1975, the Ford Foundation offered to fund a national planning meeting at the University of Pennsylvania. As San Jose had asked, the original grant was meant to cover costs for "six or seven" regional representatives. However, the conveners of the meeting—Marilyn Fleener and Sybil Weir of San Jose; Elsa Greene and Eileen Warburton of Pennsylvania—decided to go back to Ford for enough money so that 30 representatives could attend. Greene's letter to the Foundation explained that to provide sufficiently varied regional representation and to include some women who are directly in control of national women's studies resources, it would be necessary to assemble "ten predesignated [regional] representatives, plus ten additional representatives to be selected [by lot] from among nominees submitted by interested programs in each geographical area," plus ten representatives-at-large, e.g., women's studies journal editors, officers of funding agencies and two of the meeting conveners. The letter continued: "This design . . . will ensure that planning for the nation-wide meeting will be truly national from its inception. It will also establish our commitment to democratic process—a commitment which is basic to the ideals of those developing women's studies programs across the country."

Ford appropriated additional money and the conveners proceeded, with some trepidation, to implement their proposal. Eileen Warburton made up ten regions by drawing lines on a map so that approximately 15 programs would be included in

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