

South of the Garden

The Newsletter for the Resource Center for Women and Ministry in the South

Volume 39, Number 3

September 2018

Fall

by Rebecca Welper

Two of my favorite things happen in the fall: rugby and GOTV (get out the vote). As the summer heat fades to crisp autumn, I can spend hours outside, knocking doors or running drills, feeling the promise of victory. But rugby, unlike politics, offers something more than winning: reconciliation.

During the match your enemy is anyone in the other jersey, and you'll do anything to stop them. There might be blood, black eyes or broken bones. But all that ends when the whistle blows. You honor the sacrifices you made for your team, then you shake hands with your opponent—and you all head to the pub. At the social, a ritual as old as rugby itself, you bond with members of the other team over beers, bruises, and battle scars. You sing bawdy songs that women ruggers have reclaimed with feminist and queer-positive lyrics. You realize a love of rugby is more important than team loyalty.

Is this something we could do in politics? Could we fight for causes *and* candidates we believe in, and find some way to build bridges after elections? Immediately a voice inside me yells, "Nope!" As a queer woman, why should I be responsible for building bridges with those who want to oppress me? When I think too deeply about people who voted for the "other team" in the last election, I feel sick and scared.

So how do we do it in rugby? Granted, the stakes are lower. But passions run high. I can't tell you how many hard-fought matches I've played in, when I cursed the other players and their dirty tricks, tried to hurt them just for revenge, and felt despair when we lost in overtime. If it weren't for the ritual of the social, I'd just regroup with my team and demonize our opponents. I'd miss out on connecting with fine people who just had the bad luck of living in a different town.

Is it really any different in politics? In our social media silos, we forget our dearly held beliefs and fierce loyalties are the products of how we were raised and who we're surrounded by. Yes, we need to stand up when our rights and those of our neighbors are being threatened. But can we have more grace for how others came to their views? Maybe we can find common ground if we develop new political rituals.

This fall we are offering programs to tend to brokenness in our world and learn skills to build bridges. Doing Our Own Work is an intensive seminar for white people who seek to deepen their commitment to confronting white privilege and challenging racism in all its forms. On September 25, you can join us for National Voter Registration Day. And at our 7th annual Homegrown: NC Women's Preaching Festival, we'll celebrate "Her Voice Through the Generations." For many of us, these will be voices of hope.



Citizen

by Jeanette Stokes

After graduating from Duke Divinity school in 1977, I moved to Greensboro, North Carolina, where I had friends. While I was looking for a job, a friend encouraged me to volunteer for McNeill Smith's campaign for the US Senate. So, I did.

A longtime attorney in Greensboro, Mac was well-respected as a progressive, affable, and energetic man who frequently rode his bike down Market Street from his home to his office. He hoped to win the primary in May 1978 and be Democratic challenger to Jesse Helms that November.

Though I started out working for free, I stayed with the campaign long enough to get paid a bit. Mac's campaign had great slogans, my favorite being, "Skinny cats for McNeill Smith," the implication being that other candidates were supported by big money.

When Mac lost in the May primary, I was out of a job, but our congressman, Richardson Preyer, was up for re-election, and I quickly found work in his campaign. I ran a campaign office filled with postal workers and older women (well, they seemed old to me then). I was fascinated by the congressional staffers and amazed by their dedication and long hours. (I could often reach people in the congressman's office in DC after nine o'clock on a week night.)

Mr. Preyer won the election in November, though it would be his last term. He'd be swept out of office two years later in 1980, replaced by a Republican who rode into office on Ronald Reagan's coattails.

Those two campaigns were my first serious forays into politics, and I've been an advocate for citizen involvement ever since. I ran a campaign for a friend who ran for the NC State House of Representatives, I lobbied for the Equal Rights Amendment and reproductive choice, attended precinct meetings, marched in the streets on Moral Mondays. But once the current administration moved into the White House in January 2017, I've felt a special urgency to be more involved.

As a nonprofit organization, RCWMS can't endorse candidates, though we can encourage you to work for the candidates of your choice. We can, however, be involved in issue politics in a number of ways. Three I'd like to mention here are protesting at Tuesdays with Tillis, volunteering to register voters, and voting against the constitutional amendments on the NC ballot in November.

RCWMS has signed up to be a partner in National Voter Registration Day on September 25, 2018. This is a national effort to get nonprofits involved in voter registration. It's an effort that registers hundreds of thousands of people across the country in a single day. The deadline for registering to vote in the November 6

(Continued inside.)

Calendar

* = RCWMS events. For registration form and more information: www.rcwms.org.

***DOING OUR OWN WORK: An Anti-Racism Seminar for White People**
Part 1: September 6, 7, 8, 9 - Pilgrim United Church of Christ, Durham, NC
Part 2: October 11, 12, 13, 14 - Trinity Ave Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC
Thurs. 7-9:00 pm, Fri. & Sat. 9-5:00, and Sun. 1-5:00
Doing Our Own Work is an intensive seminar for white people who seek to deepen their commitment to confronting white privilege and challenging racism in all its forms. Offering more than 40 hours of "class time," Doing Our Own Work equips participants with the analysis, skills, and tools needed to be more effective anti-racist allies. By limiting enrollment to 16 people, this seminar provides a context for in-depth reflection, learning and dialogue as participants work to deepen their knowledge of systemic racism, offer each other support and accountability, grow beyond shame and guilt, and practice the skills of interrupting racism.
Leader: Melanie Morrison
Cost: \$475. Scholarships available.
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, info@rcwms.org

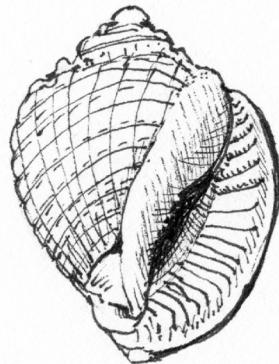
September 5, 2018, Wed., 6 pm reception, 7 pm reading
READING from *All This Happened Long Ago-It Happens Now* by Iris Tillman Hill
Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University, Durham, NC
A chapbook ranging deftly through documentary poetry and history to current events and a profound meditation on family today.

September 7-8, 2018, Friday-Saturday
THE MANDALA: Colorful Creations for Self-Expression, Relaxation & Discovery
The Oratory Center for Spirituality, Rock Hill, SC
Leader: Claudia Fulshaw
Cost: \$55 Sat. only, \$125 overnight (includes meals and a single room). To register, contact The Oratory directly, oratorycenter@gmail.com or 803-327-2097.

September 11, 2018 Tuesday, 11:30 am—2 pm
ART OF CONSCIOUS AGING: A Group for Women
Parlor in Carr Building, Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, 927 West Trinity Avenue, Durham, NC
Topic: Movement My Garden Taught Me
Leader: Didi Pearce
Bring a bag lunch and something to drink.
Newcomers welcome.
No fee to attend. No need to register.
Contact: RCWMS, 919-683-1236, info@rcwms.org

September 22, 2018, 9:00 am-4:00 pm
FINDING YOUR BALANCE, CATCHING YOUR BREATH: A Gentle Yoga and Journaling Retreat for Moving Through Loss
Dogwood Studio, Chapel Hill, NC
Leader: Mitzi Quint, LCSW
Cost: \$85
Contact: mquint@mitziquint.com

October 5-7, 2018
THE VIEW FROM HERE: Spirituality and Writing
Norbertine Conference Center, Albuquerque, NM
This is a small group writing and reflection experience with writing prompts and time and space to write. You do not have to consider yourself a "writer" to be a part of this spiritually uplifting and reflective retreat.



The Retreat Center is located in the South Valley, a quiet and rural area with spectacular views and great facilities. As a part of this weekend, you will be able to attend the Mass Ascension at the Balloon Fiesta held every year in Albuquerque. (Balloon Fiesta tickets are \$15.) There is space for 12 participants.
Cost: \$385 with food and airport transport; \$250, food and retreat only
Contact: lynnehintonnm@aol.com

October 7-13, 2018
CHOOSING CONSCIOUS ELDERHOOD Ghost Ranch, New Mexico
This retreat, for people 50 and up, is an opportunity to learn powerful practices that support your journey toward a conscious elderhood. Co-sponsored by Sage-ing International, for many years a leader in conscious aging education. (www.sage-ing.org)
Leaders: Ron Pevny, Center for Conscious Eldering, and Anne Wennhold
Contact: ron@centerforconsciouseldering.com

October 11, 2018, Thursday, 6 pm-8:30 pm
OUR STORY CONTINUES: An evening of story and art, blessing the animals we have loved and lost
The Stable, Durham, NC
St. Francis Day is typically the day of the blessing of the animals. In this season, we are scheduling this retreat for those animals who have died, whom you miss, and who continue to be a gift in your life. Through storytelling and art, through tears and laughter, we will explore our relationship with the animals we have lived with who are now gone. Our relationships with our animals can be among the most powerful of our lives and in this evening, through art and story, we will honor that-our animals as continuing blessing.
Leaders: Jehanne Gheith and Claudia Fulshaw
Cost: \$35 (includes light snacks)
Contact claudia@artwanders.com or call 919-306-2919

*October 25-26, 2018, Thursday-Friday
HOMEGROWN: NC Women's Preaching Festival
Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, 927 West Trinity Avenue, Durham, NC
In an ecumenical spirit of collegiality, we'll lift up the voices of local clergywomen to inspire, learn, and hone our craft. We'll hear wonderful preaching and discuss the art of proclamation in all its forms. We'll pray, eat, worship, and celebrate together.
Website: ncwomenpreaching.wordpress.com

November 6, 2018, 10 am-4 pm, Tuesday
FINDING YOUR SPIRITUAL CONNECTION TO ART & NATURE
Well of Mercy, Hamptonville, NC
Leader: Claudia Fulshaw
Cost: \$100 (includes lunch)
Contact claudia@artwanders.com or call 919-306-2919

January 26-February 2, 2019
INTERPLAY GUATEMALA ADVENTURE
Villa Sumaya, Lake Atitlan, Guatemala
A seven-day InterPlay adventure in the Guatemala highlands. Rejuvenate your body, mind, heart and spirit in the shadow of three majestic volcanoes.
Leaders: Kate and Billy Amoss, Ginny Going, Tom Henderson, InterPlay teachers
Cost: \$1,500; \$400 deposit. Send deposit to Colleagues, 400 S. Boylan Ave., Raleigh, NC 27603
Contact: Ginny at colleagues.interplay@gmail.com

*Weeks of Quiet & Writing in 2019:
January 2-9, 2019, May 5-12, 2019, September 22-29

Books

by Jeanette Stokes

Recently, while having lunch with the amazing AJ Mayhew, we got to talking about novels about the South. In 2011, AJ published a very successful novel set in the South, *The Dry Grass of Autumn*, and her second book, *Tomorrow's Bread*, is due out early next year. AJ grew up in Charlotte, NC, where her second book is set. I recommend her work to you!

Peggy Payne is another wonderful writer who includes views of the South. Her first novel, *Revelation*, is about a Chapel Hill preacher who hears the voice of God. Her next book, *Sister India*, is about a white Southern woman living in India, and her most recent novel, *Cobalt Blue*, is about an artist in the North Carolina sandhills who encounters Kundalini energy and travels the globe.

I asked some friends for their favorite books and novels about the South. Here's what three of them recommend.

Carol Henderson, who leads writing workshops for RCWMS, favors:

Dimestore: A Writer's Life, Lee Smith (memoir)

Salvage the Bones, Jesmyn Ward

To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee

The Color Purple, Alice Walker

Their Eyes Were Watching God, Zora Neale Hurston

The Underground Railroad, Colson Whitehead

The Complete Stories, Flannery O'Connor

Writer Georgann Eubanks recommends:

These Same Long Bones by Gwendolyn M. Parker (about Haiti)

Good Morning, Miss Dove by Frances Gray Patton

Black and White by Lewis Shiner

Emily Seelbinder, a professor of English at Queens University in Charlotte and a former RCWMS Board Chair, says she could read the following novels about the South again and again.

Eudora Welty, *The Optimist's Daughter* (set in Mississippi)

On Agate Hill, by Lee Smith (set in Hillsborough, NC)

Clover, by Dory Sanders (set in South Carolina)

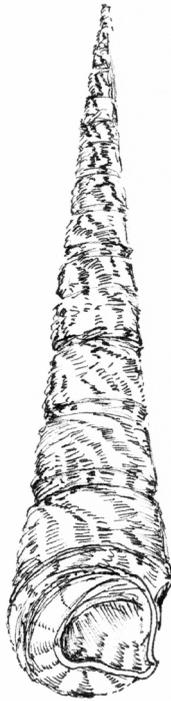
Their Eyes Were Watching God, by Zora Neale Hurston

The Marrow of Tradition, by Charles W. Chesnutt (a fictional account of the Wilmington "riot" of 1898)

Cape Fear Rising, by Philip Gerard (on same set of events in Wilmington)

I have news to share about more of RCWMS's writer friends. *The Middle of Things*, by our Communications Director Meghan Florian, and *Murder on Shades Mountain*, by Melanie Morrison, appeared on a list together this summer. The Michigan Bestseller List, which is compiled from Michigan bookstores, lists books about Michigan topics, written by Michigan authors, or published by Michigan publishers. Meghan and Melanie are both Michigan natives. Many of Meghan's essays are about her life in Durham while Melanie's book is about Birmingham.

Lastly, I am thrilled to report that Rachael Wooten is in contract negotiations with a publisher. Rachael has been working on a book about Tara, the female Buddha of Tibet, for as long as most of us have known her. It looks like we will all be able to read the book before long.



Citizen...

election this year is October 12. Join other RCWMS folks in helping to register voters on September 25. Email Rebecca Welper for details: Rebecca@rcwms.org. For background info: nationalvoterregistrationday.org.

RCWMS board member Karen Ziegler has spearheaded Tuesdays with Tillis, a protest that takes place every Tuesday at US Senator Thom Tillis' office in downtown Raleigh. The protests have focused on a rotating docket of issues including immigration, voting rights, healthcare, and more. Sometimes there are thirty people and sometimes there are way over 100. Randa McNamara leads singing and Jewel Wheeler helps to organize the protestors. A wonderful community of justice loving friends has grown up among the regulars. I commend this practice of protesting to you.

There will be amendments to the NC Constitution on the ballot in November. Six were proposed by the NC General Assembly, but with court battles in progress about some of them, the final number is still unclear. Of the original six, two impose discriminatory restrictions on voting rights. Two increase the legislature's power at the expense of the governor, other executive offices, the judiciary, and, most importantly, the citizens of North Carolina. One purports to protect victims' rights and another to protect the rights of hunters and those who fish. These last two are unnecessary and already fully covered by existing state law. The first four mentioned here are seriously dangerous attempts to wrest power from the governor and other officials and consolidate it in the hands of the legislature. The slogan I like is "Nix All Six." Read more about the amendments here: democracync.org/take-action/our-votes/.

Essay Contest

RCWMS is committed to supporting women as they find their voices and make them heard. Our 2019 Essay Contest opens for submissions on November 1. Women eighteen years of age and older may submit previously unpublished nonfiction essays of 1400 words or less.

THEME: Essays should focus on Activism, Protest, Citizen Engagement, or Holy Anger. We hope that people will write about the ways that they participate in democracy and how they understand faith or spiritual practices as inspiring or supporting their activities in the public square.

DETAILS: Women 18 years of age or older may submit up to 2 nonfiction essays, 1,400 words or less. Submit online only: <https://rcwms.submittable.com/submit>. Previous first-place winners and current RCWMS Board members not eligible. No sermons, please. Do not put your name on your essay(s). Fill out the online cover letter form with the essay's title, your name, address, phone, and email. Submissions open November 1, 2018 and close January 15, 2019.

PRIZES: \$300 for first place, \$200 second, and \$100 third. The winning essay will be published in the RCWMS newsletter, *South of the Garden*, March 2018.

NOTIFICATION: Winners will be notified by email.

Website

by Rebecca Welper

Next month we'll be launching the new RCWMS website! Communications Director Meghan Florian has been working tirelessly to update content and reimagine the website's look and feel. With the new site, we'll be able to reach a broader audience and make it easier for everyone to sign up for events, order books and DVDs, and keep up with what's happening at the Resource Center.

We're excited that our online publications will be more accessible and easier to read on the new site. We'll continue to share updates about events, book recommendations, and other news, all in one place on the new site's blog. Many of you have already been contributors to the blog, and we always welcome new voices. Be in touch with Meghan@rcwms.org if you'd like to write about a wonderful feminist book you've just read, or want to share the experience you had at an RCWMS workshop or retreat.

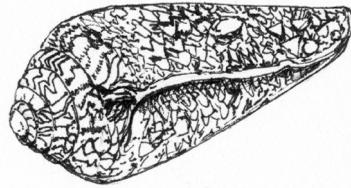
The soft launch of the website has been underway with the new donation page, and we appreciate everyone who has tested it out with recent donations! If you are a current (or prospective) monthly sustainer, make sure to sign up on the new site, rcwms.wpengines.com/donate/ (If you had been giving recurring donations through the previous system, those are no longer active.)

Thank you for your patience and support while we transition to the new site. We think you'll be pleased with the results. Watch your email inbox for an announcement when the new site officially launches!

RCWMS

RCWMS is a forty-one-year-old nonprofit dedicated to weaving feminism and spirituality into a vision of justice for the world. RCWMS sponsors workshops, conferences, and retreats on women, religion, creativity, spirituality, and social justice. The organization mentors and encourages young women, religious leaders, writers, and activists.

RCWMS appreciates contributions of time, energy, money, and stock. To contribute, contact RCWMS or visit www.rcwms.org. We are grateful for support from Kalliopeia Foundation, E. Rhodes & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Vanguard Charitable, Inavale Foundation, Emerald Isle Realty, A-Squared Fund of Triangle Community Foundation, and Community Foundation of Western NC.



Shells

by Jeanette Stokes

After my mother died in June of this year, I brought a few of her things back to North Carolina from Tulsa—photographs, dishes, silverware, books, and linens. On a recent morning after a bath, I was drying off with one of Mother's fluffy bath towels when a childhood memory washed over me. When I was four or five, after a bath, Mother would wrap me up in a great big towel, gather me in her arms, and parade me around the house. Even though my dad was the only person to observe the parade, it made me feel special, safe, and loved.

Now, I find myself making small gestures in an effort to hang onto her. I place one of her pillows on a chair, one of her favorite spoons in my cereal bowl, and her towel by the bath. I know I can't actually hang onto her. And yet, she will always be with me—in my heart, in my gestures, sometimes in the sound of my voice.

People have been so kind since my mother died. Some sent flowers, Tulsa friends attended her funeral, and many people sent cards, called, or sent me email condolences. From the beginning, my mother was a generous supporter of RCWMS. And at the end of her life, we invited people to express their condolences by contributing to the Center. RCWMS and I are so very grateful for those contributions.

My mother and stepfather collected shells. When they were younger they enjoyed visiting North American beaches and amassed quite a collection. Mother displayed some of the larger more interesting shells on glass shelves in the guest room in her house. When artist (and RCWMS workshop leader) Sue Sneddon came to visit me in Tulsa shortly before Mother died, I invited Sue to take a few shells. She selected three or four and, a few weeks later, sent me drawings of the shells. A particularly sweet way to honor my Mother's memory. You will see Sue's drawings in these pages.

RC People

RCWMS Trustees: Barbara Anderson, Solita Denard, Jehanne Gheith, Cathy Hasty, Erin Lane, Márcia Rego, Rebecca Vidra, Molly Williams, and Karen Ziegler

Jeanette Stokes, Executive Director
Jennifer McGovern, Administrative Director
Meghan Florian, Communications Director
Rebecca Welper, Development Director & Programs
Bryant Holsenbeck, Artist in Residence



SUBSCRIPTIONS to South of the Garden cost \$20 and run for 12 months from the time placed. Foreign or First Class is \$25. A subscription is free to anyone for whom the subscription fee is a burden. Tax-deductible contributions over and above the subscription fee are appreciated. Please, send a check to our office at: RCWMS, 1202 Watts Street, Durham, NC 27701, or go to www.rcwms.org.

YOUR MAILING LABEL shows the year and month your subscription will expire. 1909 = 2019 September.

ISSN 0890-7676
www.rcwms.org info@rcwms.org 919.683.1236

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Durham, N.C.
Permit # 1054

The Resource Center for Women
and Ministry in the South
1202 Watts Street, Durham, NC 27701
919-683-1236
Return Service Requested.