

Jean Hardisty Launches PRA Salon Series

Political Research Associates founder Jean Hardisty launched PRA's Salon Series in August with a preview of her upcoming reports on the Bush Administration's promotion of heterosexual marriage as a solution to society's ills.

Our salons bring together PRA colleagues, supporters, and friends from the Boston area and around the country for stimulating conversation about emerging trends and initiatives of the Right. Lively discussions follow each presentation, held in PRA's library, with those listening by phone from Atlanta to Anchorage contributing questions and comments by e-mail. Along with Jean, we've been joined by *Public Eye* editorial board member Frederick Clarkson on Right Wing attacks on mainline churches (in October); and PRA Senior Analyst Chip Berlet on the popularity of conspiracy theories on both the Right and Left (in September).



Jean Hardisty making a point at PRA inaugural Salon.

Salon participants were one of the first public audiences to hear from Jean about her soon-to-be published research on marriage promotion programs. She traces the leap of the belief that marriage heals the ills of society, including poverty, into government programs during the Bush Administration. Bush's Assistant Secretary of Children and Families in the Department of Health and Human Services from 2001 until the summer of 2007 was Wade Horn, founder the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) who famously said, "The husband is the head of the



Audience at Frederick Clarkson's presentation. From left to right: Amy Lessler, Cynthia Tschampf, Susan Yanow, Nicki Croghan, Pam Chamberlain, and Tarso Luis Ramos.

Continued on page 2

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Welcome once again to **PRAccess**, an inside look at the workings and doings of Political Research Associates, prepared for our friends and supporters. We so appreciate all you do to make our work possible.

We've had a busy summer and fall at PRA. PRA research director Tarso Luis Ramos and Senior Analyst Chip Berlet are just back from the annual Values Voters Conference of the Christian Right. No surprise that the Christian Right is in disarray as to how to respond to the Republican candidates for president. Some voices promote pushing for the best nominee possible and then supporting him regardless of how far short of their ideal he may fall. Others advocate refusing to compromise and thus refusing to vote for Republicans who fail to meet their standards.

No surprise that they remain vitriolic regarding reproductive choice and gay marriage.

Not very surprising that misogyny was an overwhelming presence at the conference. Huge numbers of men chose to take a bathroom break when women took the stage. When those women pointed out that Religious Right women candidates generally capture more of the electorate than Religious Right men — but have to knock themselves out to pull in only a third as much financial (and other) support as men — male hissing and grumbling filled the room.

More surprising was the precipitous death and burial of all nuance and variation in their position on immigration. This year a "run them all out on a rail" approach was the only one heard — and it was roundly applauded.

To read Tarso and Chip's on the spot reflections on the event and see Chip's photos please go to PRA's web site (www.publiceye.org) and look for the special conference link.

Continued on page 5

In This Issue...

New Marriage Reports Coming Soon	2
PRA Staff in Action	3
ARKs Going On-Line	4
Financials	4
Amy Lessler Joins PRA	4
PRA Interns: A Critical Resource	5

PRA Salon Series *continued from page 1*

wife just as Christ is head of the church.”

Horn sought to reshape federal welfare policies with this view at the core. One of his great victories was securing \$50 million annually to fund fatherhood programs for low-income couples and another \$100 million for marriage promotion programs for low-income women (especially those on welfare) in the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act. These funds have been and continue to be distributed through grants to the states and to faith-based and community organizations for such activities as couples’ counseling/classes that encourage marriage and discourage divorce; marriage promotion campaigns including billboards and other pr devices, marriage education in high schools (read: abstinence education), and fatherhood and marriage day events.

Jean argues that Bush and Horn use these programs to eliminate the idea that the government should act against poverty and provide a social safety net, and to justify cutting women from the welfare rolls.

Bush and his conservative cohorts believe overcoming poverty requires individual solutions found in being Christian, married, and living a worthy life that is supported by the free market. Traditional marriage, with fathers as providers, anchors, and the sources of wisdom who pass down “democratic”

values — as only men/fathers are in contact with and understand the values of the outside world — will ensure children are healthy and productive.

All this circulates in the halls of government despite *research* proving that education is the most powerful poverty-fighter for women — as they gain the skills necessary to generate decent incomes to care for their families and themselves — along with accessible child care and health care, and women/infant/children (WIC), food stamp, and similar programs.

Fatherhood and marriage promotion programs are becoming increasingly bipartisan, Jean suggests, and Reagan’s notorious image of the cheating “welfare queen” still circulates and shapes policy.

Where are the programs countering these policies, the audience asked, and how do we come up with counter-images to dispel enduring stereotypes? Who is investing to match the Christian Right’s wealth of resources — like Focus on the Family’s \$142 million annual



Frederick Clarkson speaking at the October Salon.

budget for campaigns and exporting their views all over the world? The answer was simple: committed donors, strong programs and counter-messaging are not yet happening. The urgency is greater than ever for the progressive movement to mobilize large and diverse constituencies that use a consistent message to put strong pressure on every decision maker. As Jean said, we must “disturb

their sleep in every way possible.”

You can listen to Jean’s and other Salons, and read the speaker’s handouts, online at www.publiceye.org/salon2007. To access that site or to learn how you can participate in Salons either in our library or from wherever you live or work, please contact Renee Sweeney at r.sweeney@publiceye.org or give her a call at 617.666.5300.

Jean Hardisty Exposes “Marriage Promotion” in New Reports

We’re excited to announce that in January 2008 Political Research Associates, in collaboration with the Women of Color Resource Center, will release two reports on marriage promotion by Jean V. Hardisty, the political scientist who founded PRA in 1981. The reports (titles are in development) (1) expose distortions of social scientific research by those who promote marriage as a supposed cure for poverty; and (2) examine the “marketing” of marriage promotion — both inside and outside the federal government. A brief summary of Jean’s research appears in the Salons article in this issue of *PRAccess*. PRA and WCRC are grateful to The Ford Foundation for funding Jean’s research. Both reports can be ordered in mid January 2008 via PRA’s website, www.publiceye.org.

PRA Salon

The Immigration Debacle: How We Got Here and What’s Next

December 4, 2007

Maria Elena Letona, Executive Director of Centro Presente, tracks how we came to the point where even “compromise” federal immigration reform cannot pass and considers the challenges ahead with the Right emboldened, the immigrant rights movement on its heels, and progressives in disarray.

Centro Presente is a 26-year-old Massachusetts nonprofit dedicated to immigrant rights, and the self-determination and self-sufficiency of the state’s Latin American immigrant community of Massachusetts. For information, contact Renee at r.sweeney@publiceye.org.

PRA Staff in Action

PRA research staff have been on the go, producing and presenting, with our work in heavy demand! Here are some of the highlights.

◆ PRA Director Katherine H. Ragsdale flew to Birmingham, Alabama in July to support the New Women All Women’s Health Clinic as it was being targeted by Operation Save America’s campaign of intimidation against a woman’s right to choose. In describing the havoc, Katherine said, “Can you imagine going to your doctor’s office and navigating through a crowd of 150 protesters screaming at you? Well, Operation Save America came, they saw, they harassed, and they annoyed; but they did not close the clinic.” Earlier in the spring, the National Abortion Federation annual conference heard her message that the first step toward violent action starts with “the disregard for the consciences and values of others.”



Chip Berlet spoke at the annual KOS meeting and presented on conspiracy theories at PRA’s September Salon.

◆ In August, PRA Senior Analyst Chip Berlet presented at the popular Yearly Kos convention, held in Chicago and sponsored by the blog *Daily Kos*. Not surprisingly, bloggers crowded his panels — “What to Do About the Religious Right?”

and “Is the Religious Right Really Dead?” — and posted about them afterward.

- ◆ Katherine was the *only woman* interviewed about the death of Jerry Falwell, by any media covering the story. “There’s a lot of debate about what God says, and no denomination should be the final word on public policy,” she stated.
- ◆ Senior Researcher Pam Chamberlain discussed LGBTQ intersections with reproductive justice at SisterSong’s biannual conference, which brought together women of color organizations from around the country to Chicago in June. She also engaged on that and other issues at a preconference held by Causes in Common, a coalition of LGBTQ and reproductive justice groups that includes PRA.
- ◆ In the spring, Pam gave the keynote to and held a convening with 70 young reproductive justice grassroots leaders participating in the New Leadership and Networking Initiative meeting at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA. She unveiled her newly-developed powerpoint, *Understanding the Right: A Pre-requisite for Reproductive Justice*, which received high praise for its presentation of helpful, new information about the Right’s initiatives opposing reproductive rights.
- ◆ Research Director Tarso Luís Ramos’ article “L.A. Story,” explored the exaggeration and



US Social Forum Opening March as it traveled through downtown Atlanta.

exploitation of African American-Latinos tension and violence in Los Angeles in *Colorlines* magazine’s May/June 2007 issue. He was interviewed by XM Radio’s “The Urban Journal” on the subject in May.

- ◆ Chip was interviewed about 9/11 conspiracy theories by the History Channel for a documentary aired in August, and his article “Siren Song – Conspiracy!” was published in the October 2007 issue of the *New Internationalist* magazine.
- ◆ In June, Pam and Tarso presented PRA’s popular *Right Wing 101* workshop, and spoke at sessions on African-American/Latino tensions, racist population control, and homophobia at the first-ever U.S. Social Forum meeting in Atlanta.



Pam Chamberlain with fellow panelists at the US Social Forum: Lucia Leandro Gimeno, in foreground; Pam Chamberlain, Doyin Ola, Jay Toole, and Bran Fenner, in back.

Political Research Associates, Inc.		
Statement of Activities for the Year Ended December 31, 2006 with Comparative Totals for 2005		
	2006	2005
SUPPORT AND REVENUE:		
Grants and Contributions	\$ 917,997	\$ 516,673
Program Revenue	26,135	13,926
Special Events, Net of Direct Costs	5,557	-
Interest and Other Income	14,388	5,771
TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE	964,077	536,370
FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES:		
Program	550,642	586,557
Administrative	123,356	81,445
Development	146,260	111,637
TOTAL FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES	820,258	779,639
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	143,819	(243,289)
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR	577,888	821,177
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 721,707	\$ 577,888

This is a summary representation of our fiscal standing as of December 31, 2006. For an official copy of these audited financial statements, from which this information was derived, please contact Amy Lessler at Political Research Associates.

* * *

PRA sends many thanks to the many individual and foundation donors who make our work possible. There is not space to list your names here, but please know that we are grateful for your confidence in PRA and your investment in building a just, democratic, and pluralistic society.

Amy Lessler joins PRA



Political Research Associates is happy to welcome Amy Lessler as Executive Assistant/Office Manager. She joined us in July, after Cindy King embarked on a new life in Florida with her new wife. PRA staff and colleagues will miss Cindy's unceasing and sparkling smile and are grateful to have had the benefit of her administrative and organizing expertise and her long-time and continuing commitment to human rights for all.

Amy comes to PRA from her position as marketing assistant with The Theater Offensive, a Boston-based queer theater company. She is a 2006 graduate of American University in Washington, D.C., where she majored in public communications and minored in women and gender studies. While at AU, Amy interned at the Human Rights Campaign, the National Center for Transgender Equality, and the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. She was also a leader with the campus's queer student group, the GLBT speaker's panel, and Alpha Phi Omega, a national community service organization. A supporter of using art as activism, Amy volunteers regularly at Cambridge's folk venue, Club Passim.

ACTIVIST RESOURCE KITS Going On-Line and Free of Charge

Immigrant Rights Article Now in Spanish!

Updated *Defending Reproductive Rights* ARK Coming Soon!

In 2005, PRA released *Defending Justice*, our criminal justice Activist Resource Kit (ARK), in both a print and web version. Now, PRA is pleased to make our other valuable and frequently used ARKs even more accessible—at no cost—to organizers, activists, and researchers everywhere by posting them online.

Our website www.publiceye.org now presents *Defending Immigrant Rights: An Activist Resource Kit*, in its entirety. You will find useful analyses of the anti-immigrant movement's goals, tactics, and factions; examples of anti-immigrant ads & literature; descriptions of common anti-immigrant arguments and suggested responses, among other resources.

Thanks to a grant from the Fledgling Fund, our website also offers a Spanish-language translation of the ARK's popular essay, "Immigrant Rights: Striving for Racial Justice, Economic Equality and Human Dignity," by Camellia Phillips for the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. Over the coming months, we will post additional Spanish-language translations of the ARK's key articles online.

This spring, watch the web for a special updated version of *Defending Reproductive Rights*, and other ARKs in the series.

A Critical Resource – PRA Interns

Fresh energy flows through PRA's offices every semester as new interns join us. We are reminded why our work is important by seeing it through their fresh eyes. Our fall intern Jessica Hitch, a recent Boston University grad, remarked, "It's taking me a while to digest all this inequality" as she waded through right-wing arguments. Another intern marveled at the level of detail in Focus on the Family's *Unplugged* magazine, a guide for parents in choosing what music and movies their children can listen to and watch. Library interns recently encouraged us to be more nuanced in our descriptions of books on race, leading us to enrich our categories.

Interns assist research staff, write short entries for *The Public Eye*, and undertake special projects. This past summer, our intern from the Reproductive Rights Activists Service Corps at Hampshire College was Ana Mester from Mount Holyoke, who focused on updating our *Defending Reproductive Rights ARK*. Vivian Chang from Wellesley and Christina Collins from Hampshire worked on updating our *Constructing Homophobia* files. Josh Flaccavento, a Clark University grad student, helped secure permission for online updates to our *Immigrant Rights ARK*. This fall, Jessica is following up on Anna's work by ensuring our *Reproductive Rights ARK* has the most up to date selections and securing author permissions for the web version.

For the past year, a fantastic crew of library volunteers helped design a special on-line cataloguing system of our collection of 7,500+ volumes; this new resource will soon be on our website. Spring library interns were Sean Thibodeau from Simmons Graduate School of Library and Information Science and Kathleen Bridget O'Keefe, a library volunteer at local collections, who stayed through the summer. This fall we are joined by Gena Pliakas and Jennifer McClain, a Simmons grad and grad student, respectively, and "Anna" Aeyoung Chung, a local library volunteer.

Continued from page 1

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Speaking of PRA's web site – we're now averaging over 1.5 million hits a month from 600,000+ individual visitors. We're working to upgrade the appearance and navigability of the site so that we don't squander that amazing opportunity to reach the public.

We've also launched a PRA Salon Series as yet another opportunity for friends and supporters to deepen their knowledge about the Right's tactics to undermine social justice and government oppression to deny civil liberties. You'll see more about the salons in this issue of PRAccess.

Read on for more about the work your support makes possible. You've helped to make PRA the unique and important organization it is today. Now, we're primed for growth, and I ask that you give as generously as possible. I want to remind you of Leaping Left, a special major donor initiative whose members have

each pledged \$50,000 a year for three years. And, other donors have made pledges to give \$2,500 to \$10,000 for each of the next three years. These investments enable us to plan our work three years and more into the future, and they make us more efficient and effective. Please consider whether that level of commitment may be possible for you. But know that, whatever amount you are able to give will make a difference. Do give me a call if you'd like to discuss a multi-year pledge, if you know of others who aren't yet but may wish to become PRA donors, or if you'd like to talk about anything else regarding PRA.

Again, thank you for your wonderful support for PRA and your investment in building a more just and equitable country and world. And, best for the coming holiday seasons!

Katherine Ragsdale

Coming up in

The Public Eye

- Pam Chamberlain unpacks the Heritage Foundation's growing interest in family values.
- City by city, the new homeland security tactics repress free speech, by Heidi Boghosian.
- Another look at Christian Right parenting, by Jeremy Adam Smith.

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PRAccess

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For information on additional materials available from PRA, please visit our website: www.publiceye.org and order on-line.

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Item on PRA wish list: For the PRA media room, a standalone DVD player, and a four-head VCR that plays VHS videotapes. Our old ones died.