



Left: Staff Associates Mallory Naake (left) and Hannah Dorfman (right) prepare WATER's banner for the Women's March on Washington. **Top center:** Jean Stokan, Director of the Institute Justice Team for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas (left); Hannah Dorfman (center); and Mary E. Hunt (right) protest the immigration executive order outside the National Prayer Breakfast, February 2017. **Bottom center:** Poster at protest outside the National Prayer Breakfast. **Right:** Poster at Women's March on Washington in D.C. © 2017 Connie Kennedy

Want to Be an Intern or Visiting Scholar/Minister at WATER?

WATER welcomes students and visiting scholars/ministers from seminaries, universities, congregations, and colleges worldwide to apply for a summer or year-long internship. The program includes event planning, writing and editing projects, non-profit fundraising, community outreach, and website/social media maintenance.

Summer internships typically begin in May and end in July, with flexibility; a minimum of six weeks is required. The application deadline is April 1, 2017. Year-long internships typically begin in September and end in July. Visiting scholars/ministers work on their own projects and schedule. Apply: www.waterwomensalliance.org or 301.589.2509.

Join Us to Do Justice

We at WATER are deeply concerned by the direction the current U.S. administration is moving. We are especially chilled by the unjust treatment of immigrants and refugees, among many other egregious policies. It is now our practice to affirm that all of WATER's efforts are focused on changing the cultural and intellectual assumptions that ground discrimination, exclusion, and destruction. We gather in service of a very different vision—inclusion, equality, and justice. We welcome all. Join us!



Women's  Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual

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Who We Are

WATER is a global network, an educational and spiritual space, a center for dialogue on feminism, faith, and justice. We connect activists, religious leaders, students, scholars, and allies who are using feminist religious values to create social change. Founded in 1983 by Mary E. Hunt and Diann L. Neu, we have been empowering people to address structural violence for over thirty years — making WATER one of the oldest feminist religious non-profit organizations in the world.

The WATER community needs you to work toward inclusive theologies and rituals, to push for social change, and to collaborate across many differences. Join us! To learn more about what we do, visit us at www.waterwomensalliance.org.

Mary E. Hunt Diann L. Neu | Co-directors Hannah Dorfman Mallory Naake | Staff Associates Joe Scinto | Volunteer

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Feminist Spiritual Practice— On the March

By Mary E. Hunt



The WATER contingent gathers at the Women's March on Washington in D.C. © 2017 Connie Kennedy

The roaring success of the Women's March on Washington and the many related marches around the world signal a new spiritual vibrancy that supports action for social justice. Huge numbers of diverse folks; overwhelming good will in sometimes crowded conditions; creative, constructive manifestations of progressive opinions; a deep sense of not being the only one who opposes the policies and practices of American hegemony; and new resolve to bring about justice made it happen. The role of feminist religion and spirituality in this is telling.

The coming together happened in women's living rooms, on-line as some people with disabilities attended this time, in D.C. where so many people gathered that the city was virtually closed, and in towns and cities on every continent, including Antarctica, where women and men, young and old simply had to respond to ideologies of hate and exclusion.

These marches and rallies were not feel-good fests, but serious, if at times light-hearted (a popular chat: "We want a leader, not a creepy tweeter") manifestations of people who expect and are working to create a just world. Nary an arrest was reported. Speeches and music added content, pink hats made a statement, but the heart of the matter was being there, showing up, embodying something that puts the brakes on a greedy 'America first' approach.

People got together not because of a particular dogma or doctrine, but because of visions and hopes that mirror feminist spiritual commitments.

The organizers' genius to invite and ignite people for action touched a nerve. These marches were not simply the unleashed energy of disappointed voters, nor a counter inaugural. They reflected the values and commitments to equality and justice that are shared more broadly, held more deeply than even the organizers realized. That surprise says something about the need to vocalize, amplify, and publicize feminist spiritual values in all of their complexity.

Institutional religions played a helpful, if supporting role. Many churches and synagogues opened their doors (especially their bathrooms) to provide for the physical and spiritual needs of those marching. Some hosted non-violence training sessions in advance of the events.

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The WATER Spirit

Elizabeth Hardt, 2015-16 WATER Staff Associate and Loretto Volunteer works with refugee resettlement in Louisville, KY. On January 31, 2017 she wrote:

"Late last night I was scheduled to pick up my client from the airport. He didn't come, but we still did. And we will continue to be there for every cancelled arrival and potential arrival for the next 120 days. Please, ask me about working with refugees in Louisville if refugee resettlement in the US makes you feel unsafe or upset. Open conversation, compassionate neighbors, and safe homes are what we all want, refugees included."

Thank you Elizabeth, for embodying WATER values and carrying on the WATER spirit!





Then



Now

Former WATER Intern Wins \$51 Million Lawsuit!

On January 26, 2017, former WATER Staff Associate now Attorney Emily Derstine Friesan helped win an age discrimination case in the U.S. District Court in Camden, N.J. The 66-year-old plaintiff was awarded \$520,000 in losses, plus \$50 million in punitive damages from Lockheed Martin. This makes the case one of the largest age discrimination awards an individual has ever received. It puts Lockheed Martin and other companies on notice that discrimination for whatever reasons is unacceptable.

Emily was an intern with WATER in 2008 through the Washington Community Scholars Program of Eastern Mennonite University. One of the joys of hosting so many interns (more than 70 to date) is to see how their lives unfold. That they are doing justice work, like Emily, is a boon to everyone.

As Emily wrote in response to our congratulations, "It is wonderful to have the constant support and affirmation from WATER and the WATER network. We are rocking the world and ending injustice one individual at a time." Congratulations, Emily, and keep on!

Immigrants Welcome

WATER Statement Rejecting Executive Order

The Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) rejects the Executive Order on immigration issued by President Donald J. Trump. We join people of good will in welcoming all persons, especially those who flee difficult circumstances, to come to the United States, a country of immigrants.

Courts of law will decide if this order and other recent ones are legal. But the world court of public opinion has already rendered a judgment. Banning persons of Muslim faith, singling out majority-Muslim countries, and halting all refugees from entering the country for months, leave vulnerable people, particularly women and children, without recourse. These practices run counter to American values. These travesties wreak havoc on lives. They serve only to divide people, weaken democracy, and increase global instability.

We urge our colleagues in the United States to protest vigorously against this and other encroachments on constitutionally guaranteed freedoms.

We assure our international colleagues that they are as welcome as ever in our midst. We take every opportunity—from supporting legal strategies to reaching out to neighbors, even strangers in elevators—to speak a word of welcome, to offer a hand of hospitality, to provide safe passage because it is our way of life in a globalized world. ■

... On the March (from page 1)

Progressive religious groups were out in force as banners and signs revealed. But the real story is the more generalized spiritual sense of the marches that reflects a more diffuse, but no less effective, source of motivation.

Some of it is reactive—against the threats to Obamacare, in opposition to discrimination against immigrants, and more. But most of the spiritually rooted values are affirmative—wanting health care, quality schools, safe drinking water, equal opportunity in housing and employment—for everyone without exception. There is a groundswell against war and torture. Climate change is taken seriously and racism is abhorred.

The intentionally broad agenda that attracted millions to march meant that no one was completely satisfied but that everyone was willing to give a little. As the great musician and cultural worker Bernice Johnson Reagon put it years ago, “If you are in a coalition and you’re comfortable, you know it is not broad enough.” There was discomfort at the marches.

Racism remains a signal problem that organizers had to address and participants cannot forget: Black Lives Matter. Structural barriers to full participation must be broken.

People marched to embody a world we want to bequeath to those who follow. Quite simply, no one issue determines the future, but all condition what it will look like and who will survive to live it.



l to r: WATER colleagues Connie Drapeau Kennedy, Judy Bond, former Staff Associate Cathy Jaskey, Co-director Diann L. Neu, and her daughter Min Hunt-Neu (front) enjoying the Women’s March.

This approach to facing discomfort in order to move forward is not a sign of cheap relativism, but a hallmark of feminist spirituality. Without abandoning one’s beliefs, it is possible to pass over the rigid, narrow foci that have kept patriarchal ecumenical and interfaith efforts from succeeding. It is not a sign of rampant secularization, but evidence of responsible religiosity, and better, spirituality expressed by embracing a shared vision of human flourishing and cosmic harmony. Now we know what democracy looks like. ■

Mary E. Hunt is Co-founder and Co-director of Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER).

Winter 2017 Programs

Join us at WATER or by phone. Register for upcoming events on our website or email waterstaff@hers.com

WATERtalks



For our first WATERtalk of the 2017 season, the WATER community spoke with **Heather White** on her work *Reforming Sodom: Protestants and the Rise of Gay Rights*. She outlined a history that is often invisible: the role of religion in the shaping of early gay rights movements.

In February, we spoke with **Rabbi Mychal Copeland** on *LGBTQI Issues in Religion: Their Roots in Feminist Religious Studies*. She showcased how LGBTQI and gender issues are inextricably linked within American religious traditions.

Upcoming: Wednesdays, 1-2pm ET
March 8 with Caitlin Breedlove
April 5 with Ayesha Chaudhry
May 3 with Judith Freeman
June 14 with Ani Zonnenveld

WATERmeditations

In January, **Mary E. Hunt** offered *In Praise of Salt Water*, inspired by her recent trip to a salt bath in Bad Zurzach, Switzerland. We contemplated what Mary terms the “salt water dynamic,” in which “sometimes something very, very small makes a huge amount of difference.”

Mallory Naake led our February meditation, *A Prayer for the World*. Using a tree image, we reflected on our strong roots that ground us to resist injustices and break the status-quo.

Upcoming: Mondays, 7:30pm ET
March 6 with Cheryl Nichols
April 3 with Janet Bohren
May 8 with Hannah Dorfman
June 12 with Phoebe Knopf

WATERrituals

with **Diann L. Neu, Mallory Naake, and Hannah Dorfman**

In January, many WATER friends from around North America joined for *Women Marching in Solidarity: on Washington and around the Globe*. A powerful sense of purpose and hope strengthened the group to march with three million justice-seekers the following Saturday.

It is hard to be a feminist of faith in these uncertain times. In February, the WATER community gathered for *Feminist Faith for Forty Days*, a preparation for the upcoming Lenten season that integrated spirituality and justice.

Upcoming: Tuesdays, 7:30pm ET
March 21 Spring Equinox
April 25 Honoring Catherine of Siena
May 16 Mother’s Day Ritual

Find audio of all Programs at www.waterwomensalliance.org

WATERritual International Women’s Day - We Celebrate You!

By Diann L. Neu

The month of March calls us to solidarity with women — women friends, women’s communities, women worldwide. What women come to your mind and heart this International Women’s Day?

Women Friends

Solidarity work that emerges from justice-seeking friendships is solidarity work with a human face ... It is work that includes hugs as well as legislation, watching one another’s children grow as well as stopping nuclear war, Solidarity is just as spiritual as sacrament is political.
—Mary E. Hunt, *WATERwheel*, Summer 1990

Women’s Communities

The hand of the child cannot reach the ledge; the hand of the elder can not enter the gourd; both the young and the old have what each can do for the other. — Yoruba Proverb

Women Worldwide

The mountain-moving day is coming ... All sleeping women now will awake and move. —“Awake” by Akiko Yosano, 与謝野 晶子, (1878-1942)

Women in Solidarity

Praise women of the seven continents for the new life they bring.
Praise to you, sisters of Asia,
for your strong resistance to oppression.
Praise to you, sisters of Africa,
for raising your voices in public squares.
Praise to you, sisters of Europe,
for your leadership in peacekeeping.
Praise to you, sisters of North America,
for confronting racism and economic inequities.
Praise to you, sisters of Latin America,
for struggles that bring about equality.
Praise to you, sisters in Antarctica, for your scientific research.
Praise to you, sisters of Australia,
for your steadfast demands for justice. —Diann L. Neu

Act for Women

- Contact an international woman friend. Connect!
- Sign a petition in support of women. Make your voice heard.
- Make an impact in an instant. Donate to a woman’s charity.

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