

# HOUSTON<sup>'77</sup>

## NEW YORK 2007

### FREEDOM ON OUR TERMS

#### ***Freedom on Our Terms: A New Agenda for Women and Girls 30 Years after the National Women's Conference***

November 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007 in New York City at Hunter College

#### ***Program Summary***

We guarantee that you have never attended a Conference quite like this one. Because we start from an historical base that includes lessons learned from Seneca Falls in 1848, Mexico City in 1975, Houston in 1977, Copenhagen in 1980, Nairobi in 1985, and Beijing in 1995, we have traveled far beyond the necessity of discussing if Women's Equality will occur because we know it must if this world is to survive. We start from an activist's perspective that refuses to be diverted by those interested in promoting and prolonging discrimination against women and girls. In the words of the National Women's Conference, we are here to "move history forward" and we will do so at breathtaking speed. Fasten your seatbelts because when we say "Freedom on Our Terms," we mean just that.

When Elizabeth Cady Stanton proposed at the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention "that it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to elective franchise," how could she have guessed that it would take seventy-two more years of fierce struggle before women won the right to vote? When Alice Paul unveiled the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923, how could she have guessed that eight and a half decades were destined to pass without adoption of the ERA and its constitutional guarantee of full equality for women? When women from across the country, led by Congresswoman Bella Abzug, met at the 1977 National Women's Conference in Houston, how could we foresee that thirty years later so many of the resolutions in the National Plan of Action would still be unfulfilled? When the United States still refuses to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979, what does that say to the international community about how seriously this country views sex discrimination? When women today still earn only 77 cents for every dollar a man makes, how much longer will it take to achieve equal pay for equal work? When one in four women will experience domestic violence during her lifetime and one in six women will be the victim of sexual assault, how long will that terror continue? When a recent report on women in the world's parliaments ranks the United States as number 68 with 16.3% women members, it's clear how many nations are far ahead of us in recognizing women's leadership. When in 2007 the United States Supreme Court reverses 30 years of precedent to eliminate protection for women's health in abortion procedures, how much

longer will it be until Roe v. Wade is totally overturned? How many more generations of women will have to keep fighting for equality on these and other issues? The time is now. We demand full equality for women in our lifetimes and on our terms. We must fight back with a new 21<sup>st</sup> Century Agenda for Action for women and girls.

For those unaware of the lessons of history or the statistics of present oppression, let us refer you to the groundbreaking work of women historians who show us how to rethink the past and reshape the future. Let us also urge you to read the never-ending series of reports and studies stacking up on shelves all over the world that document the oppression of women and girls. Recent reports like “The World’s Women 2005: Progress in Statistics” by the United Nations Statistics Division, “Women, Work and Poverty” by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, “Missing: Information About Women’s Lives” by the National Council for Research on Women, “Women and Health Coverage: The Affordability Gap” by the National Women’s Law Center and the information from the “Because I Am a Girl” Campaign in Britain (which estimates that nearly 100 million girls die each year because males are more valued in their countries) are especially relevant.

We have studied such documents all our lives. Now it’s time to ACT. Since this is the first National Conference for women and girls, we offer a truly intergenerational approach. Since this is one of the only Conferences to ask each participant to submit a questionnaire along with her registration, we have a head start in formulating recommendations for action. Since in the span of little more than two days, we will offer Roundtable Discussions, Plenary Sessions, Videos, Oral Histories, Interactive Components, Workshops, Issue Caucuses, Music and Receptions—this Conference will require all the stamina and spirit the attendees can muster. In return, we offer you, as Jill Ruckelshaus said at the 1977 National Women’s Conference: “Your pride in being a woman...your future and a certain knowledge that at the end of your days you will be able to look back and say that once in your life you gave everything you had for justice.”

**More conference information and an online registration form are available on the Bella Abzug Leadership Institute Website which is [www.abzuginstitute.org](http://www.abzuginstitute.org).**