



## Washington Lookout

# Women Attract Annual Progressive Limelight

Run Date: 06/30/09

By Jackie Bischof  
WeNews correspondent

Women put in a strong showing at the progressive movement's largest annual conference earlier this month. MomsRising appeared among leadership groups and five out of six finalists for an annual award for community activism were women.

(WOMENSENEWS)--MomsRising's success in building political influence through multiple alliances with other groups has made it a star in the progressive political sphere.

That was apparent earlier this month when Kristen Rowe-Finkbeiner, executive director and co-founder of MomsRising, who work to increase awareness of motherhood and family issues, participated in two discussions at a three-day gathering of leading progressive activists in Washington, D.C.



Graciela Sanchez at America's Future Now! Conference.

Credit: Campaign for America's Future

Organized by the Institute for America's Future, a left-wing think tank founded in 1996, and its younger, activist sister group, the Campaign for America's Future, the conference is considered one of the most important events on the progressive meeting calendar.

The gathering put Rowe-Finkbeiner in a mix that included many well-known female political participants: journalist and activist Naomi Klein; Anna Burger, secretary-treasurer of Service Employees International Union; and Illinois State Representative Jan Schakowsky, chief deputy whip of the House Democratic Leadership.

But it was Rowe-Finkbeiner's particular topics--"maternal profiling," or the workplace biases facing women with children, and the "mothers, family and women's movement in the 21st century"--that brought the most female-focused issues to the gathering.

### Labor Union Act Top Priority

Passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, which streamlines and simplifies the process for forming a labor union, was the gathering's top priority, with attention also spread across energy policy, education and immigration reform.



Make more stories  
possible



Tweet It!



Ads by Google

#### Exclusive Ladies Group

Inspiration in Action! Try the Only Social Network for Empowered Women.

[BraveHeartWomen.com](http://BraveHeartWomen.com)

#### Avoid Healthcare Unions

Keep Your facility Union-Free Free previews, order online

[www.healthcareseries.cc](http://www.healthcareseries.cc)

Health care also garnered major attention. During the meeting, Healthcare for America Now, a coalition of 1,000 progressive groups, announced it would spend \$82 million in advertising and grassroots mobilization in support of President Obama's health care plan.

After the conference, Rowe-Finkbeiner, who leads MomsRising along with Moveon.org founder and MomsRising President Joan Blades, said the gathering had provided opportunities to form new partnerships and to explore "new cross-organizational programs."

One such program would be an online chat forum for members of diverse organizations to discuss and coalesce, which would give MomsRising an idea of the different perspectives that exist in their partner organizations.

Since its start in May 2006, MomsRising says it has developed partnerships with over 100 organizations nationwide. These partnerships strengthen its ongoing push to form a voting and pressure bloc to end discrimination against working mothers and to push for the economic security of families.

### Partnerships Fuel Change

One partnership involved lobbying and petitioning with the National Women's Law Center and the National Partnership for Women and Families last fall for the passing of the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act.

Another partnership, during the most recent Christmas shopping season, meant working with healthytoys.org. Together they sent warnings via text message to parent's cell phones about the potential toxins in certain toys.

Most recently, in April, the group pushed for paid sick leave legislation in Oregon with Parents for Paid Leave and the organization Time to Care for Oregon Families. That partnership resulted in a MomsRising staff member dressing up as a giant sandwich and delivering peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, along with requests from local mothers to Oregon legislators to support paid family leave. The request is currently being considered by a committee in the Oregon legislature.

In addition to a strong showing of women in its leadership galaxy, the conference--which included discussions on challenges faced by female employees in the current economic climate--was also eye-catching for its up-and-coming female stars.

The Institute for America's Future joined the Generational Alliance, a national coalition of organizations devoted to the empowerment of youth. They sponsored 105 young people at the meeting, 56 of which were women, with a focus on minority leaders involved in community organizing who were active in the 2008 presidential election.

Sukhdeep Kaur, 20, representing the Center for Community Change, was among the many young female recruits. The center supports low-income, community-based organizations.

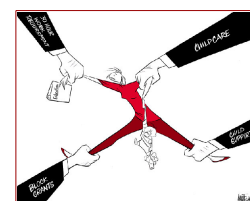
After the conference, Kaur said one highlight was hearing Maria Blanco, executive director of the Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity at Berkeley University, Calif., speak at a panel about the Supreme Court. During the discussion she expressed her ardent support for the nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor.

### Women Lead Nominations



[Visit our channel](#)

### Series Stories by Women's eNews



[It's the Economy](#)



[Series Page](#)



[Make more stories possible](#)

The centerpiece award of the meeting celebrates the memory of a woman named Maria Leavey, an activist who worked with the Campaign for America's Future to promote progressive media. She passed away in 2006 at the age of 52.

This year, five out of the six finalists for the third annual Maria Leavey Tribute Award for community leadership were women.

The winner of this year's award was long-time activist Graciela Sanchez. She won for her work as director of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center in San Antonio, Texas, an arts and cultural expression center for San Antonio residents. The center campaigns for social justice in areas of gay and lesbian rights, immigration, labor and health care.

The four other female finalists--Judith Barricella, Merrilee Milstein, Margarida Jorge and Marilyn Fowler--were singled out for their work, respectively, in campaigning for the rights of individuals with physical disabilities, working on affordable health care advocacy with unions and grassroots organizations and equality of women globally.

The one male contender for the award was Bob Crittenden, executive director of the Herndon Alliance, a non-partisan coalition of organizations campaigning for affordable health care. They are based in Seattle, Wash.

Robert Borosage, president of the Institute for America's Future and a former director of the Institute for Policy Studies, a longstanding leftist think tank, anchored the meeting.

Borosage served as a key campaign advisor to the 1988 presidential campaign of the Reverend Jesse Jackson and has advised a number of other progressive political campaigns. He also helped to found, and chairs, Progressive Majority Political Action Committee, which trains and funds progressive leaders for political office.

"I do think that, particularly in this younger generation, young women are active, they are leaders, they are engaged," said Borosage. "The generation before them broke all those barriers, now women are walking through the doors that are open."

*Jackie Bischof is a graduate of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in New York. She has written for The Citizen, Journalism.co.za (South Africa), Editor's Weblog (Europe), The Huffington Post and Black Star News (U.S.). She blogs regularly on <http://jaxbischof.wordpress.com>*

Women's eNews welcomes your comments. E-mail us at [editors@womensenews.org](mailto:editors@womensenews.org).

---

## Read More

## Related Stories



Mimi Abramovitz

[Women Need to Know Their New Jobless Benefits](#)

<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm?aid=3959>



Rep. Jan Schakowsky of Illinois

[Schakowsky: Pushing for More After Ledbetter](#)

<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm?aid=3928>



Mothers act up on stilts in Boulder, Colo.

[Political Moms Make Family Values Their Baby](#)



Sheila Gibbons

['Maternal Profiling' Story Has Faint Heartbeat](#)

**For more information:**

[MomsRising](#)

[Campaign for America's Future](#)

Note: Women's eNews is not responsible for the content of external Internet sites and the contents of Web pages we link to may change without notice.

---

**Send this story to a friend.**

Your Name:   
Friend's Email:

---

**Please donate now by going to:**



**Or donate by check made out to:**

**Women's eNews**

and Mail it to:

Women's eNews  
6 Barclay Street, 6th floor  
New York, NY 10007

To Obtain Permission to Reprint or Repost This Article: :

**COPYRIGHT.COM**  
REUSE THIS CONTENT

For Complete Step-by-Step Instructions: [Reprint FAQs](#)

---

Copyright 2009 Women's eNews. The information contained in this Women's eNews report may--with the prior written authorization of Women's eNews--be published, broadcast, rewritten or otherwise distributed.

Women's eNews is a nonprofit independent news service covering issues of concern to women and their allies. An incubator program of the International Institute for Community Solutions, Women's eNews is supported by our readers; reprints and licensing fees; and the Carnegie Corporation of New York; the International Institute for Community Solutions, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; the Barbara Lee Family Foundation; the Open Society Institute; the Rockefeller Family Fund; The Helena Rubinstein Foundation; the Sister Fund and the Starry Night Fund. The donations from readers are critical to our success. Donate now by going to <http://www.womensenews.org/support.cfm>.

Women's eNews subscribers may select whether to receive a daily full text, daily summary or weekly summary. To change your email address, send mail to [membersvcs@womensenews.org](mailto:membersvcs@womensenews.org). To change the frequency of your mail or to cancel your subscription, send a message to Member Services ([membersvcs@womensenews.org](mailto:membersvcs@womensenews.org)) or use our online form: [http://www.womensenews.org/update\\_subscription.cfm](http://www.womensenews.org/update_subscription.cfm)

---

[Home](#)   [About Us](#)   [Donate](#)   [Arabic Women's eNews](#)   [Press Release](#)   [Sylvia](#)   [Links](#)   [Contact us](#)  
[Search Archives](#)   [Subscription and Membership](#)   [Pressroom](#)   [Help](#)

21 LEADERS FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

[REPRINT FAQs](#)

[Make Us Your Homepage!](#)

Copyright 2009 Women's eNews Inc.

[sign in](#)