



We all know that every action we take has consequences, including what items we purchase. As holidays approach, I remind myself that the extra work it takes to find gifts that are pleasing, affordable, and promote social justice is worth it. In light of the WNS programming in January on one of my favorite subjects – childbirth - I wrote a column on my transformative birth experience. Best wishes for a joyous holiday!

Susan Logsdon-Conradsen, Ph.D.
Director of the Women's Studies Program

HOLIDAY GUIDE TO SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS GIFT-GIVING

Gifts for Feminists



Love Your Body 2009 Calendar
\$12.95
NOW.org



This is What a Feminist Looks Like T-Shirt \$20.00
feminist.org

Fair Trade



Fair Trade Gift Bag
3 bars of Divine Chocolate from Ghana and Costa Rican
Forestal ground coffee in a handmade bag from Bangladesh. \$15.00 Serrv.org



Every Litter Bit Helps Journal
Handcrafted by a family of artisans in Bali using recycled paper, leaves & twigs. \$17.95
Originalgood.com

Support Women



Recycled Rice Bag Tote

Made by a woman's cooperative in Cambodia aimed at abolishing human trafficking. A fair trade & eco-friendly product. \$18.00
GlobalGirlfriend.com



Riverbank Bracelet

Purchasing products from the Women's Craft Cooperative helps sustain poor & homeless women \$32.00 rosies.org

Gifts that Give More



Clean Child-birth Kits to Burmese Midwives
Provides sterile birth-ing kits and maternity kits to trained midwives to increase the chance that both mother and child survive. \$24.50 greater-good.org



Education for Girls
This gift will offer girls the opportunity to learn reading and other valuable skills. \$35.00 worldvision.org

The Importance of Smart Shopping

It is hard to comprehend the impact of our everyday shopping choices; however, the truth is that whenever we make a purchase we affect someone, somewhere. Did you know that the Department of Labor classifies over 50% of US garment factories as sweatshops? And did you also know that over 90% of workers in sweatshops are women? The reality is that corporations are constantly searching for the quickest, easiest way to make a profit, and in today's world of economic globalization that means outsourcing. For the past few decades corporations have moved factories to impoverished, developing countries in order to

hire cheap labor and circumvent US labor regulations. By doing this, these manufacturers can deny these workers a living wage, timely pay, paid overtime, lunch and work breaks, and the right to unionize; they have no obligation to provide safe or sanitary working conditions, no age requirements for employment, and no employee protection from sexual harassment or other abuses. These injustices are not isolated to overseas factories either. American sweatshops (and agricultural farms) often employ a large number of immigrants who are easy to exploit due to language barriers and an ignorance of their labor rights.

Some might argue that in a competitive global economy, corporations have no choice in this matter; they can either adhere to US labor laws and see their profits dwindle or exploit workers and stay profitable and competitive. This, however, is simply not true; per Feminist.org, "Nike could pay all its individual workers enough to feed and clothe themselves and their families if it would just devote 1% of its advertising budget to workers' salaries each year!" Respecting the dignity and basic rights of workers is not too much to ask of these companies, and it is something the American people should demand.

Brittany Poley

Symbols to Look For When Shopping—



I'm a feminist because....



I believe in social justice for everyone. I dream of a world where everyone's daughters and sons are free of gender violence, attend school, are both nurturing and strong, are free of poverty, are seen as equal, and have lives full of possibilities. I am a feminist since I want to make that a reality for not just my own two children, but for all children.

Susan Logsdon-Conradsen

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 5— Women's Studies Department Party, 2pm, Krannert Faculty Lounge

January 21— Film: The Business of Being Born, 5pm, Evans Aud. CE Pending

January 26— Panel on Home Birth, 6pm, Science Aud. CE Pending

BIRTH IN AMERICA: MY JOURNEY TO AN EMPOWERED BIRTH

I did not mean to become one of those "radical" home-birthers. To be sure I did not accidentally have my son (my second-born) at home; it was planned and there were two midwives and a doula there. In fact, when I was pregnant for the first time I thought I would have a baby like everyone else, heavily drugged in a hospital. But then my research led me to some startling statistics.

The US ranks 41st in the world out of 171 countries for maternal mortality; it is tied with the eastern European country of Belarus and just above Serbia and Montenegro. The death rate is 1 in 4,800 which far surpasses other developed countries which average 1 death in 16,400. The researchers indicated that midwifery care is key; nations where midwives attend a lot of the births have much lower intervention rates and better maternal outcomes. Our babies are not doing so well either. Out of 37 developed countries, the US ranks 27th in infant mortality rates according to the CDC; in the US 6.86 babies die out of 1,000 live births. However, there are large racial and income

disparities in infant mortality rates; among African-Americans there are 9 deaths per 1,000 which is closer to rates in developing nations. The US also has a c-section rate of 30%, twice the rate recommended by the World Health Organization. There are other stats I could tell you about the routine use of questionable practices, slippery slopes of interventions, risks of epidurals, etc., but I think you get the point.

So I decided to learn everything I could about how to have a truly natural (no medications, no interventions) birth. Most people I told of my plans dismissed me, some ridiculed me, some questioned my ability and my sanity. But I did it. Annalise was born completely natural after 23 hours of labor, in a hospital. My motivation had been wanting the healthiest child I could have, improving the odds for me and my child. What surprised me was how amazing the experience was, how empowering it was. I have never felt so strong, so in awe. I birthed this beautiful 9+ pound baby myself. Words can not truly explain how transformative this was. For so many years I had seen my

body as an object, something to criticize and "work on", but now I saw how truly amazing it was and what it was capable of. I was transformed. My son Daken was born 3 years later at home. My daughter was also there, woken up minutes before, and she sleepily cut the cord. Another wildly empowering experience. Now when I get drawn into negative self talk about my body I recall the strength and ability of my body - how I birthed these wonderful gifts and then breastfed them. My body did that. I did that.

I believe that all births are beautiful, and I do not mean to imply there is only one way to have a birth that is "right"; that is in fact contrary to my intention. My hope is to educate women to the possibilities open to them, to show them how strong and capable they are, and to encourage them to do the research and make informed choices for themselves. I also believe we should all work together to advocate for safer births and healthier moms and babies. Aren't those family values we can all agree on?

SOCIAL JUSTICE: EXPERIENCE IT FIRSTHAND

Locally

AIDS Resource Council of Rome is offering volunteer opportunities. Duties vary from office work to community work in HIV/AIDS education and prevention. For more information please call (706) 290-9098

First Steps is looking for interpreters, especially those proficient in Spanish to help counsel new and expecting parents. If interested, please call Juliet Simmons at 706-238-9266.

Regionally

The Mothers Movement Online is an open source site for information about the social, cultural, economic, and political issues related to the well-being of mothers.

Mothersmovement.org

The International Cesarean Awareness Network of Atlanta seeks to improve maternal-child health by preventing unnecessary cesareans through education & support for new moms.

Atlanta.ican-online.org

Globally

Global AIDS Alliance seeks to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS around the world & makes ending gender inequality a priority.

Globalaidsalliance.org

IBFAN— The International Baby Food Action Network aims to strengthen controls of the baby feeding industry to save lives and prevent suffering caused by inappropriate infant feeding.

ibfan.org