

Client: Help Lesotho
Outlet: The Nation
Date: December 14, 2006

The Nation.

Ho-Ho-Holiday Donations--2006

Katha Pollitt

Io, Saturnalia! I read somewhere that altruistic behavior has the same blissful effect on the brain as romance and motherly love, so this holiday season, why not exhilarate yourself by being especially generous to the groups below?

1. The Indigenous Women's Political Caucus. Out of the fight against the South Dakota abortion ban and the spirited local campaigns of progressive Native American women comes the IWPC. Founded by brilliant organizer Charon Asetoyer, this new group will support grassroots activism on women's rights and social justice. They'll be lobbying the solidly antichoice state legislature, building skills and support for future races--all the things the Democratic Party should be doing but isn't (NACB/IWPC, Box 572, Lake Andes, SD 57356).
2. Help Lesotho (HelpLesotho.ca). The small, landlocked, desperately poor African country of Lesotho has an HIV-positive rate of around 30 percent. Only 9 percent of kids graduate from high school. Help Lesotho keeps children in school, trains teachers, provides chairs, stoves, books and more to schools, promotes AIDS education and gives small stipends to grandmothers to help them feed their parentless grandchildren. If you'd like to be more personally involved, support and correspond with a needy orphan: \$402 a year provides everything for one child (11 Keefer St., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1M 2J9).
3. Loi Hua/Women's Promise. Remember Agent Orange? The Vietnamese can't forget. Thousands are still suffering from its use by the US military decades ago (birth defects, cancer, neurological problems, as well as devastating environmental damage). This small advocacy group, founded by a Vietnamese physician and an American public health practitioner, does scientific, legal and humanitarian work in support of Vietnamese victims. It is currently working on a class-action lawsuit against US manufacturers of Agent Orange (now on appeal after initial dismissal). Write your check to NCOSH, with "Loi Hua/Women's Promise" on the memo line, and mail to Trude Bennett, 2723 Old Sugar Road, Durham, NC 27707.

4. Women's Health and Justice Initiative. Fifteen months after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans is still a disaster area--especially for women of color. They were the most vulnerable before the hurricane and are much worse off now. The WHJI is opening a women's health clinic on the site of a shuttered clinic in Treme, one of America's oldest black neighborhoods. This is a new grassroots organization for which even a handful of donations would make a huge difference (Box 51325, New Orleans, LA 70151).

5. New Orleans Musicians Hurricane Relief Fund (NOMHRF.org). Because where would we be without jazz, zydeco, Cajun, gospel and blues? This group gives a helping hand to local musicians with such pressing problems as housing, instrument replacement, finding work. If you ever thrilled to Irma Thomas or Professor Longhair, it's time to say thank you. (800) 957-4026; 828 Royal St., # 833, New Orleans, LA 70116.

6. Health in Harmony (HealthInHarmony.org). Have you ever wished you could preserve the environment while providing medical care in the developing world? Here's your chance: Health in Harmony is a new, innovative organization that offers low-cost, high-quality care to impoverished rural people living around the beautiful, fragile, incredibly biodiverse Gunung Palung National Park in West Kalimantan, Indonesia (orangutans! sun bears! hornbills!). By promoting environment-friendly economic activity, HHH hopes to help animals, trees and people in one fell swoop (351 Pleasant St., #117, Northampton, MA 01060).

7. Bronx Defenders (BronxDefenders.org). This organization not only provides top-quality legal representation to low-income Bronx residents; it has a full staff of social workers and advocates to help them resolve the problems--poverty, mental illness, addiction, family dysfunction--that got them into trouble in the first place. Their commitment to "community-based lawyering" means the Bronx Defenders are involved not just in the courts but in local schools and social service provision. If every indigent defendant had help like this, there would be fewer people in prison and less crime too (860 Courtlandt Ave., Bronx, NY 10451).

8. In These Times (InTheseTimes.com). The left seems to think its magazines can live on air, then slaps its collective forehead--oh noooo!--when yet another publication gasps its last. Right now, before you forget, subscribe to our Chicago-based sister publication and help this lively monthly provide in-depth reporting, provocative commentary, reviews and, of course, the Appall-o-meter. ITT has lots of new, young talent on board, so prepare to be challenged and surprised. Already a subscriber? Give it to a library, a high school, your doctor's waiting room--at a low holiday rate of \$19.95 a year (Box 1912, Mt. Morris, IL 61054).

9. The Women's Review of Books (wewonline.org/womensreview). How many of you who complain about the paucity of women reviewers and the slighting of books by/about

women subscribe to the WRB? I thought so. Well, give yourself a treat, and get up-to-date on everything from Doris Lessing's latest novel to Ayaan Hirsi Ali's latest polemic, with sharp analysis from Vivian Gornick, Dorothy Allison, Ann Snitow and other great minds that do not think alike. Spread the word with gift subs, at \$33 (Old City Publishing, 628 N. 2nd St., Philadelphia, PA 19123).

10. National Center for Reason and Justice (ncrj.org). Thanks to the NCRJ's tireless efforts, Bernard Baran, imprisoned since 1985 in the wave of daycare-sex-abuse-panic cases that look so bizarre today, had his conviction overturned this year. Sadly, the injustice to Baran is not unique: Consider the Texas man convicted after a temporary boarder downloaded child porn onto his computer. Relying largely on volunteers, NCRJ gives crucial legal and moral support to innocent people charged with sex offenses--cases the other groups often won't go near--and fights for humane treatment of all prisoners (NCRJ, Box 230414, Boston, MA 02123).

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