

*Inspiring A Movement of Women's Health Around the World*

## Letter to Our Readers

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Please join me in celebrating the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. For me, and countless women everywhere, that first edition was *the* trusted reference in an era when frank information about sexuality and our bodies was hard to find.

And now? We are bombarded with marketing ploys about "what to use and how to feel" by drug companies and others trying to make a profit. But are decisions any easier to make? How can we know if our sources of information are reliable? What are the true risks of new drugs, devices, and medical procedures? The new edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (due out in May 2005) is just what women of all ages need to navigate the health care system and make sound decisions for ourselves and others. It draws from the expertise of hundreds of professionals and knowledgeable lay people. We expect this edition to become *the* one source of trusted information for women today, just as that first edition was 35 years ago.

**Our Bodies Ourselves**—the organization—relies primarily upon donations and foundation grants for support, as publication royalties are now less than 10% of our income. We do not accept funds from drug companies.

For those of you who may be hearing from us for the first time in a while, please know that our voices have not been silent. We

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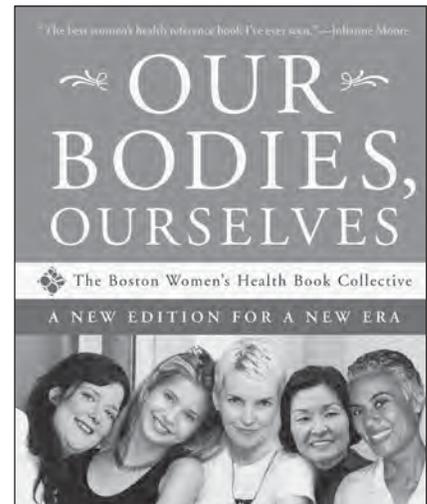
## New Edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* Will Hit Bookstore Shelves in May

by Heather Stephenson, OBOS Program Manager and Sarai Walker, OBOS Associate Editor

Over the past year, we have completely revised the "bible" of women's health, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Hundreds of writers, editors, photographers, illustrators, and expert content reviewers contributed their efforts on topics ranging from environmental health threats to reproductive rights. Our editorial team worked around the clock to deliver the manuscript for the eighth edition to Simon & Schuster in late July.

The publication of the new edition in May 2005 will be greeted by high-profile events, media engagements, and celebrity endorsements from Eve Ensler, Julianne Moore, Gloria Steinem, and many others. All across the country, friends of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* will be hosting parties and community meetings to spread the word about the book. Please contact Program Manager Heather Stephenson ([heather@bwhbc.org](mailto:heather@bwhbc.org)) if you would like to host or help organize an event.

*Our Bodies, Ourselves* is the nation's most trusted book about women's health and sexuality, and reflects the work of several hundred health care professionals and lay activists with a commitment to evidence-based information. Back in 1970, it was the first women's health book to incorporate personal experiences with factual information, and the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary



Cover for the 8th edition of "Our Bodies, Ourselves" (May 2005)

edition continues that tradition with an even more diverse group of women. The new edition covers every aspect of women's well-being, from nutrition and exercise to sexual health, childbearing, and menopause. It also addresses emerging issues in women's health, such as menstrual suppression, emergency contraception, female sexual "dysfunction," and direct-to-consumer advertising.

The new edition will have a fresh design; almost all of the approximately 120 photographs and line drawings will be new. The book also includes many new personal experiences, including women talking about sexually transmitted infections, reflecting

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## Letter to Our Readers continued from page 1

have, with grassroots support and donations, advocated for policies and programs that improve the health of women and our families. We have also helped women in other countries to culturally adapt, update and translate *Our Bodies, Ourselves* into 18 languages. This year, for example, life-saving information has been translated and adapted into French (for French-speaking Africa) and Polish.

Our Latina Health Initiative has used *Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas* (the Spanish-language version of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*) along with our Promotoras Training Guide as part of formal training sessions that promote healthy practices in the U.S. and in Latin America.

In November, Sally Whelan, a dedicated Program Manager who has worked with us for 25 years, was honored as the "Unsung Hero" of the year by Public Citizen in Washington, D.C.

The political climate remains a challenge—one that we need to face head on. With your financial help, we can continue our programs that enable greater self-determination and better decision-making for women around the world.

Please, especially now, when reliable information and activism is needed more than ever, *give a completely tax-deductible donation to Our Bodies Ourselves*. \* You can make it program-specific and/or donate it in honor of someone you wish to recognize. \$100, for example, will

\*Our Bodies Ourselves (also known as the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, Inc.)



Sally Whelan, Program Manager (right), receiving the Phyllis McCarthy Public Interest Service Award from Dr. Sidney Wolfe, Director, Public Citizen's Health Research Group, with OBOS Executive Director, Judy Norsigian.

provide 10 discounted copies of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* to women with limited resources, be they in poor rural areas or in inner city schools. \$1,000 will provide books, materials, and a trainer for 10 Promotoras seeking to become peer health educators in a Latino community. \$4,000 will enable 200 hundred copies of a foreign translation/adaptation to be printed and distributed to women's groups and non-governmental organizations serving the women in their regions.

Thank you for your support, and remember that you may donate online at [www.ourbodiesourselves.org](http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org) or return the enclosed envelope with your contribution.

Towards good health for all,

Sally Deane, Chair,  
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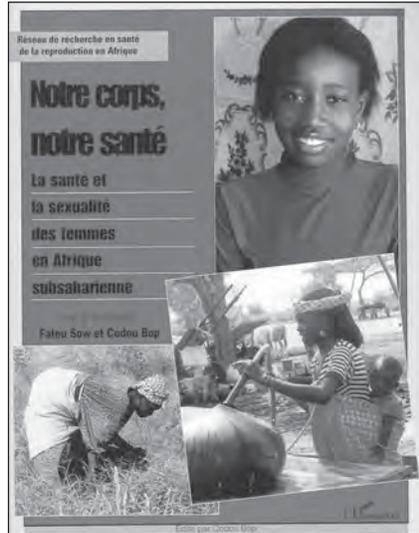
## Global Editions At Home and Abroad

by Sally Whelan, Program Manager

**O**ur *Bodies, Ourselves* (OBOS) continues to reach regions of the world where women have little access to quality health information and where culturally appropriate information is even scarcer. In recent years we have been able to shift OBOS publication rights from commercial publishers to women's organizations, allowing these groups editorial control of the book and encouraging them to alter it to meet their own needs. In this way, global editions have evolved over the years from direct translations to cultural adaptations and on to other books inspired by OBOS, reflecting the realities of women's lives in disparate regions—from Eastern Europe to Latin America to Africa.

In February 2004, the organization Groupe de Recherche sur Les Femmes et Les Lois from Senegal celebrated the publication of their OBOS-inspired book in French, addressing the health and sexuality concerns of women in sub-Saharan Africa. We raised funds early in this project to allow for distribution of 400 complimentary copies of *Notre Corps, Notre Santé* to women's and health organizations throughout francophone Africa.

A cultural adaptation for Poland is just hitting the bookstores and is already excerpted on the website of the coordinating group, the Network of East-West Women – Polska. Women in India and South Korea are finalizing edits on new editions due out in early 2005. The Tibetan Nun's Project in Dharamsala, India produced a shortened Tibetan version inspired by OBOS, which they will distribute throughout the Himalayan region. In Seoul, South Korea, women at the Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center, Alternative Culture Pub-



Cover for "Notre Corps, Notre Santé," produced in Senegal

lishing and local universities have collaborated to produce an adaptation, replacing OBOS photos and personal narratives with those of Korean women.

In order to increase access to these global editions for immigrant women in the United States, we distributed the recently published Armenian, Bulgarian, Japanese and Serbian books to organizations across the U.S. serving these



Cover for the new Polish edition of "Our Bodies, Ourselves"

immigrant communities. Program staff receiving the books at cultural and community centers, refugee resettlement organizations, state agencies and ecumenical service centers have indicated that OBOS adaptations will be used in their medical advocacy programs, domestic violence workshops, preventive health education, adjustment/trauma counseling and youth and elderly services.

Our Global Translation/Adaptation Program plays an important role in the success of these projects, offering lessons from years of experience, publishing expertise, and a broad network of contacts. In-country groups face considerable obstacles that are inevitable in projects with minimal budgets and in countries where women are breaking new ground with controversial material. Tools such as our *Guidelines for Translations and Adaptations of OBOS* and a CD-ROM of OBOS graphics provide the lessons and resources from experience, while electronic excerpts from our website and other information sources provide updated content, and a listserv enables the sharing of experiences and strategies among coordinating groups.

With our 35 years of networking among colleagues in women's organizations, international agencies, technical advisory groups, health literacy programs, policy and research institutes, and the media, we often link a coordinating group with useful contacts who provide many types of in-kind support. There are many examples: a colleague may connect the coordinators to a group in their own country, previously unknown to them, which becomes a collabo-

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## Public Voice & Action

by Judy Norsigian, Executive Director

Advocating for women's health continues to be a significant component of OBOS' work. Hundreds of media and other public appearances during the past year enabled us to disseminate the findings of academics and activists whose work we value, as well as the core content of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Topics most often addressed included:

- Midwifery and evidence-based childbirth practices
- Menopause
- Policies affecting reproductive health
- Risks of breast implants
- Biotechnologies that affect women's health

All of these issues are of increasing importance to women and we receive your input and feedback on our website, in your letters and at public appearances daily.

In May 2004, we co-organized an invitational meeting entitled **Gender and Justice in the Gene Age**, along with the Center for Genetics and Society and the Committee on Women, Population and the Environment ([www.giga.org](http://www.giga.org)). This conference, held at the Ford Foundation, brought together academics, researchers, and advocates concerned about the profound implications of the new genetic

technologies. The meeting led to the formation of a loose network that continues to exchange ideas and information about new trends in the field.

Some participants subsequently collaborated to educate the public about serious shortcomings with California's Proposition 71 (which will raise three billion dollars to support stem cell research in California). Until this effort, the debate was largely viewed as one between pro-choice/pro-science advocates on the one hand, and anti-choice conservative and religious forces on the other hand.

New resources we have made available at our website include a state-by-state chart noting Medicaid coverage for reproductive health services, including services available to qualified immigrants (see <http://www.bwhbc.org/medicaid.htm#list>).



Panelists for the PBS television show, "Second Opinion," on menopause. It is airing nationally in 2004 and 2005 (Judy Norsigian is third from the left).

OBOS remains active with the Prevention First Coalition ([www.preventionfirstcoalition.org](http://www.preventionfirstcoalition.org)), the Committee on Women, Population and the Environment ([www.cwpe.org](http://www.cwpe.org)), and a small group of scholars and advocates working on responsible stem cell research. We also continue our advisory board roles with the Abortion Access Project, CICCR (Consortium for Industrial Collaboration in Contraceptive Research), and CONRAD, which has supported critical microbicides research. We recently joined the U.S. Cochrane Center Consumer Coalition and are currently members of the Coalition's Steering Committee. We wrote the first draft of the Coalition's web-based consumer course containing five modules addressing evidence-based healthcare (EBH) and integrating relevant cultural and linguistic elements.

Finally, we have taken great pleasure in hosting and meeting with visitors from such countries as Nepal, Japan, Jordan, Armenia, and Chile. No one ever leaves our offices with fewer than 10 pounds of materials, as well as fresh perspectives on how to improve women's health. As someone remarked recently, "Your energy, knowledge and advocacy is inspirational." ■

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## New Edition of OBOS continued from page 1

on the loss of a newborn, and describing the ambivalent emotions that surround caring for an elderly parent with Alzheimer's.

A new web-based companion to the book will ensure access to expanded, up-to-date content along with new web links. This website will launch with the book in May.

Now that the new edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* is nearly finished, we are planning ahead to produce two single-topic books with Simon & Schuster, one on menopause and one on childbirth. We expect both books to become premier resources for women navigating pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause. ■

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## Latina Health Initiative – Looking Back at 2004

by Zobeida Bonilla, LHI Program Manager

**D**uring this past year we continued our efforts to reach more communities with accurate and reliable health information in Spanish. From Costa Rica to Uruguay, from California to New York, we received requests for books and materials in Spanish that help local groups provide health education to women in their communities. These requests came from very diverse communities: farm workers unions, women's health clinics, shelters for victims of violence, midwives, universities, women in prisons.

- In San Francisco and New York City, two dissimilar groups—a Planned Parenthood center and a faith-based community—used *Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas (NCNV)* and the *Guía de Capacitación para Promotoras de Salud* to begin community health workers programs in their communities and tackle the need for health information in Spanish. Their common goal: to reduce disease and increase awareness about national killers affecting the Latino community.
- An activist working with women in prisons requested copies of *NCNV* to reach the Spanish-speaking women who often ask for health information and who comprise 15%–17% of the total female population in state and federal prisons. As she wrote to us:

*few places are less empowering to women than prison. Most women are locked up for non-violent crimes, and many have arrived there through poverty, addiction and abuse. Medical information is hard to come by.*

- Her group recruited women who are fluent in Spanish to translate letters and work with them on the distribution of *NCNV* and other Spanish-language materials,
- Women in poverty all over the world continue to face adverse health consequences in the absence of health services and adequate information to keep themselves well. Nicaragua, for example, suffers high rates of infant (35/1,000) and maternal (35.3/100,00) mortality. An activist dedicated to the humanization of childbirth and helping her sisters in Nicaragua sent this letter to our office:

*Dear friends,*

*Many thanks for your Spanish edition of Our Bodies, Ourselves. I received a copy of the text as well as the guide for training health promoters, which I use in my work. I'm a midwife in Costa Rica, and formed a non-profit organization dedicated to the humanization of childbirth in Costa Rica. I also work in Nicaragua and continue to try and help midwives there. A dear midwife Doña Alicia Huete Diaz continues her struggle there [in Nicaragua] to provide midwifery care to poor women who come to her door daily. They cannot pay her, so she continues to work for free. Right now I'm trying to get together equipment and materials for her work and am asking for donations. I'm sending her my copy of "Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas" and the "Guía de Capacitación para Promotoras de Salud". I am hoping that you would be able to send me another copy for my use. I could photo-*

*copy it, but it wouldn't be so easy to use. Please let me know if you can send me a copy.*

- In Palma de Mallorca, Spain (one of the main islands in the Balearic Sea), 25 women gathered during this past year in the community of La Vileta to discuss the main health issues that affect women in the region. Despite the changes in the political landscape of the area that have impeded women's health activists, the group is determined to continue its work and bring the "Women, Health, and Quality of Life" seminars using *NCNV* to as many women as possible throughout the islands. A cycle of seminars on women's health was initiated by the local women's health network, with *NCNV* and the *Training Guide for Promotoras de Salud* as core resources. After eight sessions, the group is ready to extend the seminar series throughout the health centers in all the Balearic Islands.

Since 2002, when we self-published the training guide, more than 400 copies of the manual have been distributed, and over 4,000 copies of *NCNV* have been distributed during the same period free of charge or at very low cost to communities across the US, Latin America, and other parts of the world. During this period we worked with community-based groups in 6 states across the nation delivering seminars and workshops for community health workers and health professionals who work with Spanish-speaking women.

We have witnessed first hand how the use of culturally and

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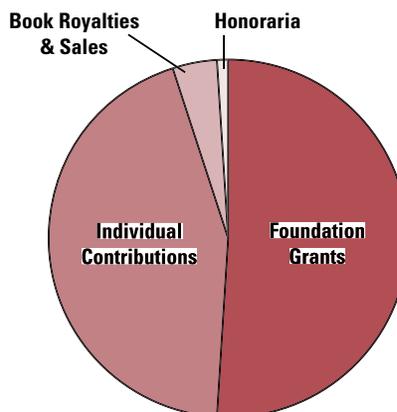
## FUNDING SOURCES

for fiscal year ending  
Sept 30, 2004

Foundation Grants (51%)	\$176,100.
Individual Contributions (44%)	149,800.
Book Royalties & Sales (4%)	12,900.
Honoraria (1%)	2,000.
Interest (<1%)	1,100.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$341,900.</b>

### SPECIAL THANKS FOR RECENT SUPPORT FROM THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONS:

Appleton Foundation  
 Conservation, Food and Health  
 Foundation  
 The Ford Foundation  
 Harvard Pilgrim Health Care  
 Foundation



## Global Editions At Home and Abroad

(continued from page 3)

rating partner; a researcher at an international health institute provides important results for inclusion in their book; a former public health student returning from the U.S. to her home country assists with adapting the text; a journalist in the region covers the book in her newspaper column; and an individual donor with interest in a particular country provides seed funds. Such networking will be essential in the start-up of a number of our new projects in 2005— in Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, the Palestinian section of East Jerusalem, Turkey and Vietnam.

It is critical this year that we secure funding both for our own Global Translation/Adaptation Program and for individual adaptations overseas. We need these funds to provide ongoing support and technical assistance, and so

that many emergent coordinating groups can take advantage of a fully updated manuscript when *OBOS '05* becomes available this spring. We are also undertaking a special fundraising drive to ensure that immigrant women in the U.S. will have access to the new French-African, Polish, Korean and Tibetan editions. Please join us in supporting women around the globe who are organizing these innovative and courageous projects and in ensuring that immigrant communities can make use of global *OBOS* editions as they navigate between cultures.

For more information on the translations and cultural adaptations of *OBOS*, see our website and an article posted at Women's eNews, 9/14/04: <http://www.womensenews.com/article.cfm/dyn/aid/1989>. ■

## Latina Health Initiative

(continued from page 5)

language appropriate health education tools can have a tremendous impact on the health and well-being of women. With more and more Latinas living with cancer, diabetes, and other serious diseases, we will be developing additional materials to reach the growing number of women in need of reliable health information in Spanish. ■

# Thank You OBOS Donors: 12/1/2003 – 11/30/2004

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## OUR BODIES OURSELVES

34 Plympton Street  
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## Our Website Grows

*By Kiki Zeldes, Webmaster*

The Our Bodies Ourselves website continues to be a starting point on the Internet for those seeking unbiased, trustworthy information from a feminist perspective on women's health and sexuality. The site offers links to hundreds of quality online resources on women's health; content from the program work of OBOS, including the Promotoras de Salud training guides and the OBOS Global Network projects; excerpts from *OBOS* and *NCNV*; and up-to-date, original content on a range of

women's health topics. The website averages 25,000-30,000 visitors each month, and is, along with *OBOS* and *NCNV*, the public face of our organization.

This past year we began a major revision of the OBOS website. The site is being redesigned to incorporate an online companion for the forthcoming 2005 edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. The companion site will include content specifically created for the web, extensive annotated web and print resources, and excerpts from the book. In an

effort to ensure that the quality of the content on the web is as high as that in the book, we are recruiting various experts in the many topics covered. We are looking forward to unveiling the new website in May, when *OBOS 2005* is published.

Finally, remember that you can donate online to OBOS at our website. Also, if you go to the [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) website from our website, a small percentage of what you spend will be donated to OBOS by Amazon. ■

[www.ourbodiesourselves.org](http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org)