

## KATHA POLLITT

## Stuff These Stockings (Please)

Another holiday season—and only a year after the last one. How did that happen? Probably you are feeling a bit tapped out just now, what with having given your savings, your house and your first-born to MoveOn, ACT and similar. The elections swallowed up huge lashings of progressive cash, leaving other causes lean and hungry. So, generous *Nation* readers, down a couple of egg-nogs and whip out that battered checkbook. Here's a list of excellent organizations, some familiar from years past, some new, with an emphasis on ones with a personal touch, a political mission and extremely low administrative costs:

*Canadian Harambee Education Society.* For 400 Canadian dollars (around \$327 US) a year, you can send a Kenyan or Tanzanian girl to high school and change her life forever. The girls CHES subsidizes (nearly 400 this year) have placed well in the national entrance exams but cannot afford the tuition, which can be the equivalent of their families' annual income. As in so much of the world, when money is scarce, parents educate sons before daughters. CHES not only pays the bills but helps the girls flourish in school and after. Donations of any size are welcome—if you mark your check “dorm project” it will go toward the \$60,000 needed to build a girl's dorm so the technical school in Katesh, Tanzania, can accept female students to be trained as mechanics, electricians, welders, etc. CHES is a secular humanist organization, which is nice. American donors should make out their checks to Humanist Society of Friends with CHES in the memo line (don't forget), and mail it to HSF at 1777 T Street NW, Washington, DC 20009 ([www.canadianharambee.ca](http://www.canadianharambee.ca)).

*Equality Now.* This organization fights some of the most flagrant abuses of women's human rights around the world—from female genital mutilation in Africa to Asian sex tours organized in the New York City area. In March it launched a global campaign against laws that discriminate against women—whether by permitting wife-beating and marital rape, tolerating rape and abduction, banning women from voting and inheriting property or, as in Afghanistan, imprisoning very young girls who run away from forced marriages. What I particularly like about Equality Now is its close connections with local groups and with the global feminist movement—including not just women but men. With the Bush Administration redoubling its efforts to undermine the international consensus supporting women's rights and advancement that emerged at the UN's 1995 Beijing conference, Equality Now's work is more essential than ever. Send your check to Box 20646, Columbus Circle Station, New York, NY 10023 ([www.equalitynow.org](http://www.equalitynow.org)).

*Afghan Women's Fund.* The Taliban is gone, but Afghan women remain among the most impoverished and least emancipated in the world. Moreover, decades of war have left millions of widows, many of whom are the sole support of their children. Run by the fearless and indefatigable Taliban refugee Fahima Vorgetts, AWF gives women and girls opportunities for economic independence: It supports schools, classes in literacy, crafts and sewing; pays



for wells and sanitation in villages; gives women in the countryside goats and chickens to generate both food and income; and provides a wide variety of material aid to poor families (blankets, clothes, medicine, money for food). With questions being raised about the profligate ways of some NGOs operating in Afghanistan, a donation to AWF insures that the money you give for Afghan women actually reaches them. Make your check out to WAW/AFW, and send it to 35-32 Union Street, 2nd floor, Flushing, NY 11354.

*Freedom From Religion Foundation.* Did you know that an organization called MatchPoint (now MentorKids USA) in Arizona got \$225,000 in federal funds to underwrite a mentorship program in which at-risk youth were told that Christ was the answer—the only answer—to their problems? When not suing the pants off the people responsible for such flagrantly unconstitutional use of your tax dollars, the FFRF spreads the secularist gospel with publications and gatherings. If you want your kids to learn in school why the theory of evolution isn't “just a theory,” and if you think it's weird that an Alabama judge wears the Ten Commandments on his courtroom robes, join this uncompromising activist group and support their sometimes unpopular but always important work. Send checks to Box 750, Madison, WI 53701 ([www.ffrf.org](http://www.ffrf.org)).

*Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.* This year, as is usually the case, Texas executed more people—twenty-three—than any other state, often after trials of routine but nonetheless scandalous unfairness. Help the good people who are trying to change that in their state and the world. They surely have their work cut out for them! Send checks to 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 312, Houston, TX 77006 ([www.tcadp.org](http://www.tcadp.org)).

*Code Pink.* This feminist peace organization, famous for unfurling an antiwar banner on the floor of the Republican National Convention, is collecting medical and other supplies for the victims of the devastating US military attack on Falluja, many of whom have lost their homes and all their possessions and are camping out wherever they can. Don't delay—this is a public health emergency, and it is our country's fault. Send checks to Help Iraqis/Global Exchange, 2017 Mission St., #303, San Francisco, CA 94110 ([www.codepinkalert.org](http://www.codepinkalert.org)).

*National Advocates for Pregnant Women.* This spirited group, headed by the brilliant civil liberties lawyer Lynn Paltrow, supports the rights of poor, often minority, sometimes drug-using women to respectful healthcare and social services, and fights punitive “fetal rights” prosecutions and legislation. The women NAPW supports are at the center of a perfect storm made of antichoice politics, racism and the “war on drugs”: They need support and treatment, not to be arrested in their beds in the maternity ward, as happened in South Carolina, and clapped into prison. Pregnant women have constitutional rights too. And remember, as with all civil liberties issues, today it's them; tomorrow it could be you. Send checks to 153 Waverly Pl., 6th floor, New York, NY 10011 ([www.advocatesforpregnantwomen.org](http://www.advocatesforpregnantwomen.org)). ■