

**Mission Statement:**  
Charis Circle exists to foster sustainable feminist communities, work for social justice, and encourage the expression of diverse and marginalized voices.

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**Dear Readers,**

Looking back on the past year is always a difficult and rewarding task for an organization. We have been so busy making and promoting our programming that we haven't had as much time as we would like to look around and reflect on all the wonderful things we've accomplished since this time last year. Many things have changed for Charis since Linda Bryant stepped back from her myriad responsibilities and leadership roles. While she is still involved with both the Circle and the Store, it is to a lesser extent, and we have had some growing pains as we try to learn how to walk in her footsteps (a



Aline Jesus-Rafi & Allison White at a Charis Circle fundraiser, May 2007

daunting task for anyone!). We are deeply proud of the way we have used our feminist vision as a point of entry into broader social justice issues. Our strong presence at the US Social Forum was only one example of our continued commitment to this work. We have increasingly partnered with many of



A crowded Charis program, Nov. 2007

the other wonderful organizations in our community to bring you the best and brightest of what feminist and progressive Atlanta has to offer. We also continued our commitment to highlighting amazing authors, both local and well-known.

In this newsletter, we bring you an update on our activities in 2007, along with some of our plans for 2008. We hope you'll enjoy reading and reminiscing about all we have accomplished together this year. As always, none of our programming would be possible without you and your feedback is welcome and encouraged!

**Program Series Highlights**

2007 was a phenomenal year in terms of programs. We saw true diversity reflected in the topics explored by program presenters, authors, and facilitators. With the launching of our D.I.Y (Do It Yourself) series in the spring, Charis became a space for learning and sharing skills as well as information and entertainment. Community members shared tools and resources in the following skill-areas: Crafting with recycled bicycle tubes, zine publication, financial planning for the fiscally-challenged, and activist strategy. Seeing the D.I.Y. programs in action in 2007 helped to solidify our goals around community-building and sustainability as program priorities. Ultimately, we

saw the "Do It Yourself" mentality shift to "Do It Ourselves," as the collectivized energy of community experience became a tool of empowerment and liberation. We can't wait to see what our community brings us in 2008 as we continue this series! Please contact [kerrie@chariscircle.org](mailto:kerrie@chariscircle.org) if you have skills to share in 2008.

If the success of a program series can be measured in crowd size, community response, or life-span, then our Disability 101 series wins on all accounts. What began as a 3-part series has taken on a life of its own and has shown us that there is a sincere need for more of this kind of programming. The series originally started when Caitlin Childs,



Disability activists & allies in conversation at Charis, Sept. 2007

as an organizing fellow working with Charis Circle on behalf of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, met with local disability activists for a brainstorming session. With the help of Anne Del Bene, Jeremy Gaither, and Mia Mingus, Caitlin organized and facilitated programs on the fundamentals of understanding disability, including an analysis of disability as a social construction, advice from people with disabilities on how to be an ally, and an info-sharing session on the various kinds of disability activism currently going on in Atlanta. At



Anne DelBene (left) & Caitlin Childs, Oct. 2007

the conclusion of the third program in the 3-part series (which coincided with the end of Caitlin's fellowship), program attendees were determined to find a way to continue the series.

Since then, we have moved beyond the 101, with additional programs on disability activism, and we have more on the way. The most beautiful thing about this series is the level of community involvement—each of these programs has been organized, publicized, and facilitated by volunteers and activists who are invested in seeing

this series move forward. With the continued help of this dedicated team, we are proud to announce that the disability program series will now hold a regular spot on the Charis monthly calendar. **In March of 2008, we will begin meeting at Charis on the third Wednesday of every month for more conversations on the ways that disability impacts us all, as individuals and as a community.**

## Author events

Together with our sister organization, Charis Books & More, Charis Circle hosted over 70 published authors in 2007. We won't try to list them all here, but we do want to call attention to some local favorites and a few national ones who made Charis history this year. Locally, we were



Anne Lamott (left) with fan Jodie Talley at Central Presbyterian, March 2007

honored to play host to the following emerging and established voices that call Atlanta (and Charis) their home: Sara Mitchell Parsons, Frank Ostrowski, Alice Lovelace, Karen G., Theresa Davis, Craig Washington, Fiona Zedde, Constance Curry, and Duncan Teague, to name a few.

On the national scene, Charis hosted writers from all over, including Anne Lamott, Ellen Bravo, Myriam Gurba, Jennifer Niesslein, Rosie Molinary, Alix Olson, Michelle Tea, Catherine Friend, Purvi Shah, S. Bear Bergman, Lisa C. Moore, G. Winston James, Reggie Cabico, Ellen Hart,



Alice Lovelace, March 2007

Lori Lake, Jane Vollbrecht, Allison Hedge Coke, Janet McAdams, Frances Fox Piven, Bryant Terry, Chelsea Gregory, Rha Goddess, Katz (Athens Boys Choir), and many others. We are so grateful to all of the many writers and artists who donated their time (and sometimes altered travel plans) to make appearing at Charis a priority. Furthermore, we are endlessly indebted to those on the local scene who continue to participate in (and help curate) our open mics and group author events. These are the events that shine the spotlight on emerging writers and marginalized voices, and therefore uphold the core of our mission. Last but not least, thanks to all of you who came out and participated as an audience in making these programs successful and meaningful for all those involved.

## Charis at the United States Social Forum



Theresa Davis at 7 Stages, June 2007

As many of you will remember, Atlanta played host to the first-ever United States Social Forum during the summer of 2007. Charis Circle was honored to participate on many levels. We hosted informational programs in the months leading up the Forum, linking community members to the various ways to get involved. We sent out emails and posted flyers with information about the USSF. We encouraged our staff and board members to join working committees and to volunteer. While all of these were rewarding and exciting for us (as individuals and as an organization), probably the most

meaningful contributions Charis Circle made to the Social Forum were the workshops we sponsored. Age as a Feminist Issue, Intersexuality and Intersex Activism, & a Sex Workers Caucus were among the Charis-sponsored workshops at the USSF. In addition, Charis Circle curated a truly beautiful literary event that took place in conjunction with the USSF at 7 Stages, called "Writing the Revolution." The event showcased writers and artists whose activism occurs through words (both written and spoken). With a combination of local artists and those visiting Atlanta just for the Forum, the lineup was truly diverse, and the evening was a magical display of the artistic use of language as a tool for social change.

## Young Women\* Writers

Since 1997, the Young Women\* Writers group has brought together young women (ages 15-19) from all over metro Atlanta to share their voices and their words in a safe and encouraging environment. We believe that girls' voices are always at risk of marginalization and we seek to empower young women in all aspects of their lives by affirming the validity of their experiences and stories. The biweekly group focuses primarily on self-expression as a means of promoting self-confidence, leadership development, and community involvement.



Amanda Jordan, May 2007

As we enter our 11th year we are prouder than ever of the important opportunity we provide for young women in our community. The group, which is now facilitated by founding member Elizabeth Anderson, is currently looking to expand its collaborations with other youth organizations and to host many more of its successful community open mic events. The group always welcomes new members and encourages adults in the community who have skills to share to please be in touch. If you would like more information about the group or would like to collaborate, please email Elizabeth at [chariswriters@gmail.com](mailto:chariswriters@gmail.com).



Sara Mitchell Parsons (right) & Diane Fowlkes, August 2007

\*Trans-inclusive

## Writing With Intent

2007 marked another milestone for the Circle with the creation of a new adult writers' group called "Writing With Intent." The group, open to writers of all genres and styles, serves as a space for folks to hone their craft, ask questions and receive feedback, and enjoy the camaraderie of other writers. Though it began this spring with a very small group, word quickly spread and now over 50 members participate on the email list-serve and 15-20 members attend each meeting. The group recently took its first weekend-long writing retreat to the North Georgia mountains and enjoyed the time away from the daily grind to really get some words on paper. If you are interested in learning more about the Writing With Intent group please email Elizabeth at [chariswriters@gmail.com](mailto:chariswriters@gmail.com).

Please send feedback or comments about this newsletter to [kerrie@chariscircle.org](mailto:kerrie@chariscircle.org). We enjoy hearing from you!