



WALTER H. CAPPS CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF
ETHICS, RELIGION, AND PUBLIC LIFE

For immediate release:
May 1, 2012

Contact: Dr. Leonard Wallock, Associate Director
Walter H. Capps Center for the Study
of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life
(805) 893-2317 / leonard.wallock@cappscenter.ucsb.edu

N E W S R E L E A S E

Capps Forum on Ethics and Public Policy

Linda Gordon

Contraception at the Tea Party:

The Politics of Women's Health

**Wednesday, May 23 / 8:00 p.m. / Free
UCSB Campbell Hall**

S U M M A R Y F A C T S

- **Dr. Linda Gordon, Florence Kelley Professor of History and University Professor of the Humanities at NYU**
- **"Contraception at the Tea Party: The Politics of Women's Health"**
- **Wednesday, May 23 / 8:00 p.m. / Free**
- **UCSB Campbell Hall**
- **Information: Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life at UCSB (805) 893-2317**
- **Digital copies of press materials available at <http://www.cappscenter.ucsb.edu/news/press-releases/>**

Event Description:

The political fight that has broken out in the US about contraception is both surprising and at the same time traditionally American. It is also part of a global trend of rage against gender transformation, of religious conservatism, and of anxieties about sex. It also has everything to do with a smart black man as President.

Speaker Profile:

Linda Gordon, Florence Kelley Professor of History and University Professor of the Humanities at New York University, is the author of *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: The History of Birth Control in America* which remains the definitive history of birth-control politics in the US and was completely revised and re-published as *The Moral Property of Women*. Her many other publications include *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The History and Politics of Family Violence* (which won the Joan Kelly prize of the American Historical Association), *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (which won the Berkshire Prize and the Gustavus Myers Human Rights Award), *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (which won the Bancroft prize for best book in American history and the Beveridge prize for best book on the history of the Western Hemisphere), and *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* (which won the Bancroft prize for best book in US history, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Biography, and the National Arts Club prize for best arts writing). Gordon served on the Departments of Justice/Health and Human Services Advisory Council on Violence Against Women for the Clinton administration (a council abolished by the Bush administration).

Description of *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America*:

Choice Magazine's Outstanding Academic Books is the only book to cover the entire history of birth control and the intense controversies about reproduction rights that have raged in the United States for more than 150 years. *The Moral Property of Women* is a thoroughly updated and revised version of the award-winning historian Linda Gordon's classic history *Woman's Body, Woman's Right*, originally published in 1976.

Arguing that reproduction control has always been central to women's status, *The Moral Property of Women* shows how opposition to it has long been part of the conservative opposition to gender equality. From its roots in folk medicine and in a campaign so broad it constituted a grassroots social movement at some points in history, to its legitimization through public policy, the widespread acceptance of birth control has involved a major reorientation of sexual values.

Gordon puts today's reproduction control controversies--foreign aid for family planning, the abortion debates, teenage pregnancy and childbearing, stem-cell research--into historical perspective and shows how the campaign to legalize abortion is part of a 150-year-old struggle over reproductive rights, a struggle that has followed a circuitous path. Beginning with the "folk medicine" of birth control, Gordon discusses how the backlash against the first women's rights movement of the 1800s prohibited both abortion and contraception about 130 years ago. She traces the campaign for legal reproduction control from the 1870s to the present and argues that attitudes toward birth control have been inseparable from family values, especially standards about sexuality and gender equality.

Highlighting both leaders and followers in the struggle, *The Moral Property of Women* chronicles the contributions of well-known reproduction control pioneers such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Margaret Sanger, and Emma Goldman, as well as lesser-known campaigners including the utopian socialist Robert Dale Owen, the three doctors Foote--Edward Bliss Foote, Edward Bond Foote, and Mary Bond Foote--the civil libertarian Mary Ware Dennett, and the daring Jane project of the 1970s, in which Chicago women's liberation activists performed illegal abortions.

Reviews of *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America*:

"Myriad brilliant books and articles on the history of contraception and abortion have appeared ... but none offers as comprehensive ... wide-ranging and invigorating a historical analysis ..." *The Historian*

"not merely an historical interpretation of the politics of birth control, but a history of sexuality ..." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*

"... an invaluable resource ...reminds us that women's bodies remain battlefields crossed by the ideological and property relations of the societies in which we live." *Science and Society*

Sponsors:

Presented by the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life at UCSB and cosponsored by UCSB Center for Black Studies Research, Department of Black Studies, Department of Feminist Studies, Department of History, Department of Sociology, Planned Parenthood of Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo Counties, Inc., Santa Barbara Pro-Choice Coalition, and Santa Barbara Women's Political Committee.

**For more information, call
UCSB Walter H. Capps Center for the
Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life
at (805) 893-2317**

**Editor: For color images,
please call Leonard Wallock at (805) 893-2317.**