



# FEMINIST Trajectories

Newsletter of the Women's and Gender Studies Department

Spring 2006

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### Rock n' Roll Girls: A New Generation

By Ingrid H. Dahl, M.A. Student, WGS

**A S A ROCK MUSICIAN** with all-encompassing interests in art, media, youth subcultures, and social change, I had the challenge of finding a rewarding practicum. I was looking for the site that would match my various interests, with academia, to complete my Masters in Women's & Gender Studies at Rutgers. With thanks to Liz Brice, the support of WGS, craigslist.org, my housemates, my mom's sky miles, and the kind invitation from Misty McElroy (Executive Director and Founder of the camp), I found myself on my way to girls Rock Camp in the city of Portland. At first, I wondered if this was all a mistake. Where was I? I was alone and the discovery was all mine. Was the risk I was taking going to be worth it? All of the anxieties of solo exploration was part of the experience – I would soon be more thankful that I chose a practicum option because it really impacted my life. When the camp began I felt like I stood on more solid ground with like-minded women who appreciated me. While at camp, my expectations were blown up. I mean way up! The experience



hit the ceiling, reached the sky, and touched forms of hope that seemed to answer the questions of female leadership, activism and compassion. It was powerful and successful – but most importantly effective. The Rock Camp offers girls a space to be heard, they recognize that they matter, that they can be active agents, and that a system of oppression exists but has yet to be determined. Female staff and volunteers work to encourage the campers' development as confident individuals with the active role-play of rock musicians, **(Continued on Page 6)**



### Entering Motherhood in Graduate School

Elizabeth Woodruff, Ph. D. Student, WGS

**D ECIDING WHETHER OR NOT** to have children is one of the most important decisions a person can make. Choosing to have a child as a graduate student is a decision that many people are surprised and even bewildered by. This was the very decision that I confronted within the first week of beginning the doctoral program in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers. Unmarried, committed to the idea of studying in solitude through sleepless nights, black coffee, and carpal tunnel, I was stunned at the realization that I was pregnant. It goes without saying that the

decision to have a baby irrevocably altered the "life-plan" I had envisioned

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## FROM THE GRADUATE DIRECTOR

**T**HIS YEAR THE GRADUATE PROGRAM welcomes 10 new M.A. and Ph.D. students. These students were selected from a highly competitive pool of 83 Ph.D. applicants and 42 M.A. applicants. 2005-06 marks the fourth year of the Ph.D. program and the tenth year in which we have offered an M.A. We currently have 22 Doctoral students and 20 Master's degree students. The competitiveness of the applicant pool and the diversity of the new student group is evidence of the Women's and Gender Studies Department's national and international reputation. Our newest students hail from such far flung locales as: Washington State, Arizona, North Carolina, Bangladesh, Belarus, and British Columbia, not to mention New Jersey. It is an impressively accomplished group. Several of the new students arrive holding advanced degrees both in Women's Studies and in other related areas, and many have already achieved a significant impact on their communities through feminist service and activism. The energy and intellectual vitality of the group was in evidence at the New Student Orientation on August 30, 2005. During this day-long event, new students had a chance to get to know one another, learn about the program and opportunities for intellectual community at Rutgers, and prepare for the Fall semester. The high point of the day was a welcoming luncheon, at which the Executive Dean of the Graduate School Holly Smith and over 20 members of the graduate faculty joined department personnel and current graduate students in celebrating our incoming class. It was thrilling to hear the diversity, creativity, and commitment of our faculty and students as they introduced themselves and their intellectual passions. The new students were immensely impressed and excited to be a part of our enterprise.



**New Students: MA and PhD**

Front Row (left to right): Melodie Hunter, Agatha Beins, Ana Androsik  
Second Row: Soheli Azad, Kristina Gupta, Kathleen Powers, Bahia Munem, Terri Wiley and Simply Merelan, Absent from the photo is Stephanie Clare

**O**N OCTOBER 20, 2005, we welcomed visitors for our second annual Graduate Open House. Prospective graduate applicants toured Rutgers, met with the Graduate Director, faculty and current students, and got a taste of the intellectual community of gender scholarship at Rutgers. The event concluded with a lecture by Professor Karen Musalo, sponsored by the Institute for Research on Women, titled "Gendered Injustice: Transcending the Male Paradigm in the U.S and Beyond." As our Graduate Program grows, the Graduate Open House serves an important function in recruiting of the most qualified and most promising graduate students in the country. Our continuing students are excelling in crafting new and creative approaches to feminist knowledge and activism. Many have sought opportunities for both domestic and international travel for research, practicum experience, or to participate in scholarly conferences. In the past year, students have traveled to Croatia, Finland, Canada, Mexico, India, Korea, and Ireland, adding international experience to the dynamic global focus of our curriculum. We hope in the future to enhance our capacity to fund graduate travel, in recognition of the significant impact global experience will have on our students' capacities to understand and impact on the local experience of women's lives in the context of globalization.

- Samira Kawash, Graduate Director



**Continuing students: MA and PhD**

The Front Row (left to right): Sarah McCoy-Harms, EunSung Lee, Jeanne Baptiste, Ariella Rotramel, Mariana Cruz

The Second Row: Sara Tornquist Charles, Laura Lovin, Anique Halliday, Danielle Phillips, Alyssa Best, Rosalie Siemon, Randy Cota  
The Third Row: Sana Khshieoun, Sonja Thomas, Elaine Zundl, Mary Durkee, Marcie Bianco, Cynthia Gorman, Amber Shipley



## FROM THE CHAIR

Joanna Regulska

**W**ELCOME TO A NEW ACADEMIC YEAR. First of all, I want to thank Barbara Balliet for doing an extraordinary job of chairing W&GS during this past year. Since coming back, I hear nothing but praises of how wonderful and effective Barbara was, including Dean Holly Smith who wrote to me saying "Barbara has done an excellent job this year". Thank you Barbara and Samira, Joanne and Margaret for a great year, which regretfully I missed. 2005-2006 promises to be an exciting year for our department as we welcome our new and returning graduate and undergraduate students, new faculty member and visitors. Let me begin by welcoming warmly Carlos Decena. We are thrilled that he decided to join us and are looking forward to his many contributions. Carlos' office will be on the 3rd Floor, room 310 of the Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building. Please stop by to visit him when you have a chance. Our excellent new graduate class includes six Ph.D. and four M.A. students, who come to Rutgers from Belarus, Brazil, France, Canada and areas of the U.S. In addition, one Fulbright scholar, Marta Kolarova from Prague and Joanna Pawelska PhD student from Jagiellonian University, Poland, a recipient of the Sasakawa Fellowship, will join us during this academic year. Ethel Brooks, Mary Hawkesworth, Phyllis Mack and myself are coming back from well deserved leaves, while Charlotte Bunch, Ed Cohen, Judith Gerson, Mary Gossy, Leslie McCall, Jennifer Morgan, Bonnie Smith and Deborah White will take their leaves this year. On a programmatic note, plans are under way to host numerous exciting events. While our Research Briefings will continue as in the past, the MA students with Nancy Hewitt's and Beth Hutchisons' are organizing a new series of workshops focusing on activism. Andy Mazzaschi is coordinating workshops for TAs and others interested

in womens studies pedagogy. In the Spring 2006 we are planning a joint conference with Duke University's Women's Studies program. We also hope that the agreement with the Utrecht University will be completed and, if time and resources permit, we will hold our first Transatlantic Dialogue meeting, possibly at Rutgers in June 2006. The Dubrovnik seminar will take place, as always, in May, during the week of May 22-27, 2006. Jointly with the IWL units we will be co-sponsoring and co-organizing various events such as Gender and Policy Forums and supporting the IRW speakers series. On November 10th, a forum was held on a special issue of Social Text focusing on queer studies with the editors and many of the contributors. A new minor in sexuality studies developed by Cheryl Clarke, David Eng, Beth Hutchison, Louisa Schein and Barbara Balliet are presented to the faculty for discussion in the fall.

**T**HESE ARE ONLY FEW of the highlights of many exciting activities forthcoming this year. As you all know by now, the Report of the Task Force on Undergraduate Education, "Transforming Undergraduate Education" has been made public. The report proposes important changes for undergraduate education at Rutgers, among them restructuring of the colleges, changes in the core curriculum and others. As these changes will have significant implications for all students and faculty, we will devote time to discuss these and to determine our responses to the Committee's recommendations. I hope your summer was relaxing and productive, and I look forward to working with you to make this year a productive one for all of us.

Joanna Regulska, Chair of the Department



Zanzele Isoke



Alyssa Best

## GRADUATE CONFERENCE TRAVEL FUND

The first grants were awarded in Summer 2005 to PhD student Zanzele Isoke and MA student Alyssa Best. Zanzele traveled to Boston for the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, where she presented her research on "The Political Spaces of Black Women in the City: Examining the Impact of U.S. Black Women's Social Networks on Political Mobilizations in Newark, NJ." Alyssa presented a paper on "Toxic Mothers: Breast Milk, the Environment, and Sites of Resistance" at the annual meeting of the National Women's Studies Association in Orlando, Florida. Alyssa enthused "the NWSA conference was a fantastic experience!" Students who participate in scholarly conferences have opportunities to connect with others who share similar interests, as well as receive important feedback to their work. The Graduate Program is proud to be able to support this important area of their intellectual and professional development.

**T**HANKS TO THE GENEROSITY of donors to Women's and Gender Studies, the Graduate Program has established a fund to support graduate student conference travel. Students presenting the results of their research at regional, national, and international conferences may apply for small grants to assist in covering travel expenses.



## IN SEARCH FOR LATIN AMERICAN FEMINISMS

Christopher Rivera, Ph. D. Student, WGS & Comparative Literature

**O**N JUNE 28TH THE 14TH ANNUAL International Summer Program in Women's and Gender Studies began at El Colegio de Mexico, one of Mexico City's finest post-graduate institutions. As a non-native Spanish speaker whose education in feminisms has come from three US institutions, I was eager, yet nervous, about entering this program. (I would like to note a special thanks to Dr. Hawkesworth for helping me obtain one of the North American Mobility Project grants). An optimist, I believed I would come back with all the answers to my many questions about Latin American feminisms. As one of few in the department focusing on Latin American voices, I had argued before that though there is unquestionable diversity between the varieties of feminisms in Latin America, some of the factors that unite them are different relationships with religion, biological sex roles, and motherhood. Since my prior experience came through reading, I hoped this hands-on experience would substantiate my beliefs. Yet, off on the ground, my experience seemed to suggest otherwise. In the class we read histories of Latin American feminisms and articles discussing the current state of Mexican feminism. One article amazingly referenced four important feminist scholars who are all part of the Rutgers community: Charlotte Bunch, Drucilla Cornell, Mary Hawkesworth, and Joan W. Scott. That in and of itself was impressive because this article was speaking of important contributions made to global feminism, but I was left with my wondering where to search for voices of Mexican feminists. Although answers to this question were alluded to through a variety of texts assigned, the overall message was that United States feminism was the definitive starting point.

**T**O UNDERSTAND THE PECULIAR ABSENCE of Mexico feminist scholarship in a Latin American feminist classroom, I began to consider my professors. To explain why I have to highlight two words imbued cultural significance in México. The word "fresa" which literally translates as "strawberry" is used to refer to lighter-complected, socially privileged individuals, who also tend to be financially advantaged. The word "naco" refers to darker-complected, socially underprivileged individuals, who tend to be in a financially disadvantaged position. It is important that skin color holds a greater social value than actual financial status. One could represent a lower economic bracket, but if s/he is lighter-skinned, socially s/he will inevitably receive advantages. The reverse holds true as well. Of the various professors, over thirty, that taught the classes there was no dark-skinned professor. The majority of the instructors were women (though two light-skinned males-from Uruguay and Holland, did teach classes) and the majority of these women were lighter skinned. I am aware that this brings up the issue of my gaze and what I understand to be lighter and darker skin. Let me briefly explain that I am referring to my experience, for example, on the metro to the university where I saw a majority of what I would call darker skinned Mexican women with indigenous features or down at the zocalo or center of town, where women similarly complected sold goods. The

fresa professors who taught us represent a certain socially and in many instances economically privileged class. It became clear that a very specific type of Latin American feminism was being taught. The homogeneity was sustained by the presence of two male professors as well. Both male instructors were heterosexual, and neither of them was Mexican. Although homosexuality was mentioned by students, in general it was a marginalized subject. Further, the fact that not a single Mexican man's voice was present in class appeared to me to be a huge cultural statement. My peers, many darker-skinned women born and raised in México, if heterosexual, appeared not having much hope of expecting that their partners would understand them or the cause they so eagerly wanted to study. Another disturbing aspect of the class was the issue of biological determinism. A good portion of the class argued consistently that women and men were "by nature" different because of biology. At moments I could not believe my ears and hoped that I was not understanding the language correctly. Though I have highlighted some of the problematic encounters, overall I met a wonderful group of women whose energy and dedication to the course shows that there are Mexican feminists. Interest in Mexican feminism is growing and more and more Mexican women and (I optimistically add) men are attempting to understand it. Perhaps what needs to be done is to find a way to incorporate a wider variety of voices, both male and female, indigenous and from the United States. My experience in the Latin American feminist classroom was of great value, for it provided me with an unforgettable encounter with a specific brand of Latin American feminism, and also drove me to reflect on my share of responsibility to generate different voices of Latin American feminism.



**35th ANNIVERSARY**  
We Celebrated 35th Anniversary of Women's and  
Gender Studies on April 29th 2005

Barry V. Qualls and Richard L. McCormick



## FROM THE GIRL SCOUTS TO FOUCAULT: EDITING A LGBTQ/Q YOUTH ANTHOLOGY

Jessie Gamble, M.A. Student, WGS

**COULD TOTALLY DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT**, this naive enthusiasm toward a new project marked the beginning of my practicum. Because my undergraduate internship involved a project to help start the first lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning youth (LGBTQ/Q) youth center in my county, I tend to look for the inclusion of LGBTQ/Q youth in projects dealing with adolescents. I approached Cheryl Clarke and she suggested I could use this idea as the basis for my practicum and agreed to be my advisor/site supervisor/coeditor. Surprised and thrilled that Cheryl took my idea seriously, we started my M.A. practicum project: an edited anthology of writing and art, by and for LGBTQ/Q youth and their allies. In order to develop the call for submissions, Cheryl and I had to determine the parameters of our project. I quickly found out how difficult it was to establish a set of appropriate guidelines. After conducting some basic research, it was evident that while there are an assortment of books that are aimed at LGBTQ/Q youth, they primarily fall into two categories: ethnographies and LGBTQ/Q adult retrospectives. Both of these categories share a striking similarity, the voices of youth either are absent or heavily mediated by the adult authors and/or editors. It's a great reflection of life! On a good day, adults mediate the lives and voices of youth, but on most other days, it is a dictatorship. Try adding youth as a marginalized group to any theory of intersectionality (...really, try it!). Isn't high school billed as the best days of one's life? Perhaps that is the experience of some, but I'd rather not surrender my drivers license and my voter registration card. I'd also be completely unwilling to check my civil liberties at the school's door each morning, need my parents' permission before I can get my belly button pierced, go on a field trip, have an abortion, have my room searched randomly, be grounded, or have my phone calls monitored! This bit of a rant is merely intended to point out that youth frequently lack physical mobility, are prohibited from entering certain spaces,

have curfews imposed, and lack a recognized political voice.

**HOWEVER, THE OVERALL PERSONALITY** of this anthology is not meant to be one that is defensive, nor do we wish to foster or perpetuate a collective sense of victimization among LGBTQ/Q youth. We wanted youth to write about anything that they feel passionate about, including obstacles and prejudice without losing the goal of a positive and celebratory tone for the anthology. It was also difficult to directly let youth (particularly under the age of 18) know about the project without some sort of adult mediation or intervention. If one of the problems that LGBTQ/Q youth face is homophobia in school, then casually posting flyers in local high schools is a bit out of the question. Emailing our call for submissions to high school Gay/Straight Alliances and college LGBTQ/Q organizations proved to be one of the most effective ways to get the word out. I also took a more aggressive approach to advertising and sent the call to every online community and social organization that I could find whose members seemed at least remotely liberal. This tactic had an unfortunate, but rather funny consequence: several communities, who were not exactly cool with the project, banned me from posting to their forum ever again. I was accused of spamming by several groups ranging from "NPR Listeners" to "Evil Lesbians with Lasers" on the Orkut.com online forum. Luckily, one of my fabulous neighbors who is a former educator and was responsible for helping his students form a high school Gay/Straight Alliance, referred me to the online community OasisMagazine.com that is the cyber-home to over a thousand talented, passionate, and (in many cases) political individuals, several of whom submitted work to our project. At this point in the project, Cheryl and I are almost finished wading through the approximately ninety submissions we received. Approximately half were submitted by teenagers and half by twenty-something year olds. Because the maximum age for contribution was twenty-two (basically undergraduate-age and younger), half of our submissions came from youth within a three year age range. The two youngest contributors are fifteen. One describes herself as a bisexual/bi-curious girl living in Milwaukee, WI, whose life "pretty much revolves around the theatre and other performing arts," as well as sketch comedy writing and volunteer work with her Girl Scout troop. The other is a boy from Cincinnati, OH, who asked us to use the pseudonym "sailor lovely petal"

**MANY OF THE YOUTH ARE ACCOMPLISHED**, educated, socially and politically conscious individuals. Their accomplishments are diverse and include "organizing a philanthropic drag show," "spearheading a campaign for gender-neutral bathrooms," "producing a grassroots feminist zine," recently graduating "summa cum laude with a double major in Computer Science and Mathematics" and currently working on 3D laser radar imaging applications, "a 16

**35th ANNIVERSARY**

Mary Hawkesworth, Jolie Cizewski and Margaret Marsh

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