



# FEMINIST TRAJECTORIES

newsletter of the rutgers women's and gender studies department

Spring 2007

## Developing Leadership as a WGS Graduate Student and Beyond

**Alyssa Best**

One week after I graduated from the Master's Program in Women's and Gender Studies last May, I had a really fortunate experience: I accepted a great job offer after my first and *only* in-person interview. It was with the Center for Progressive Leadership (CPL) for the position of Outreach Coordinator. I was relieved to be spared a potentially lengthy, grueling process of searching for a meaningful, mid-level career in the non-profit sector. In addition to a fresh graduate diploma in hand and a new, snazzy business suit, I can attribute my successful job hunt and transition to the professional world to the overarching theme of women's leadership development that emerged during my two years at WGS.

At every turn of my graduate career, I brought a passion for feminist activism and considered how the theories we read and discussed might apply and translate to real life and real people. I was lucky to

have many colleagues who shared the same interests, and professors who engaged those kinds of conversations, both within WGS as well as in cognate courses I took in other departments. As a result, I was able to craft a theoretical focus in reproductive politics and social change movements that was mutually informed by my continued involvement in reproductive rights activism. In addition, I took advantage of opportunities within WGS to professionalize myself, presenting papers at conferences, publishing a scholarly paper, and being an active member of



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## Summer Internships in Africa

This summer, three undergraduate scholars will have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to live, work, and study in Ghana. Chosen by a faculty committee from a competitive field of over 20 students, **Jessica Akunna**, **Karina Martinez**, and **Marta Zuleta** will be working with three women's organizations in Accra, the capital.

Jessica, a Public Health/Africana Studies double major, will be working in a health organization. For Marta Zuleta, who is interested in becoming a doctor and eventually working with Doctors Without Borders, the summer in Ghana will deepen her knowledge about African culture. She is an Anthropology major minoring in WGS. Karina Martinez, a Criminal Justice major with minors in Africana Studies and WGS, is excited that her internship will allow her to learn more about how the legal system works for women. Under the supervision of Professor **Abena Busia** (English and WGS), editor of the four-volume collection *Women Writing Africa*, students will study the history and culture of Ghana. They

will take another Africa-related course this spring to prepare for their summer experience. Students will live together in Accra and work four days a week at their internships. They will meet once a week with Professor Busia, who will take them on several trips to other areas of Ghana. This experience will teach them about how African women are working to solve social, economic, political and legal issues. They will also explore African feminist thought.

The internships are made possible by a generous donation from **Wendy Lee**, a graduate of Rutgers College and member of the School of Arts and Sciences Dean's Council. Lee notes, "It is an increasingly important educational experience for students to spend time abroad living and working among peoples of different cultures, ethnicities, and religious beliefs. I am delighted to provide the opportunity for students to travel

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## From the Chair

Joanna Regulska

This academic year has been an exciting and busy one for the faculty and students in the Women's and Gender Studies Department. We have initiated a new Critical Sexualities minor that brings together departments who already have been offering related courses, but were excited to join us in this new curriculum initiative.

Our new initiative, "Knowledge and Action: Putting Women to Work in the World" attempts to introduce to our friends, donors, and alumni the exciting work of our faculty and graduate students. The first event, "International Global Engagements," took place in Fall 2006 while the second, "Motherhood, Children, and Poverty" was held in February 2007. Future events are being planned.

On March 8, 2007, we will welcome to Rutgers the co-founder of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, Jerry Greenfield, who will speak on "Social Responsibility, Radical Business Practice, and Free Ice Cream." Rutgers President Richard L. McCormick will provide the introduction. We are inviting many of New Jersey women's and minority-owned businesses, and we are looking forward to developing many new contacts and relationships with New Jersey communities.

We are also very pleased to be host on April 16, 2007 to many feminist contributors to the collection, "The Feminist Memoir Project," co-edited by Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow, published by Rutgers University Press.

For the eighth time, from May 21-25, 2007, a group of graduate students and faculty will participate in Dubrovnik summer school. "Feminist Critical Analysis: Race, Discourse, and Biopolitics" is this year's theme. The seminar is co-sponsored by the Center for Women's Studies in Belgrade, Serbia. (Continued on page 7)

## Developing Leadership (continued)

the WGS Graduate Student Association. During the M.A. Program, I also worked part-time at the Institute for Women's Leadership (IWL), where I conducted public relations, program support, and curriculum development for the Leadership Scholars Program, a certificate program for undergraduate students in women's leadership and social change.

The opportunity to work at IWL while doing my coursework provided a wonderful balance of developing practical skills in communication and program coordination with theoretical skills in women's studies. Working at IWL also inspired a new academic passion for studying women's leadership development, which I began to incorporate into my graduate work. I conducted my Master's practicum at Pro-Choice Public Education Project in New York City, where I focused on the development of young women's leadership in the reproductive justice movement. At last, my evolving academic and activist interests merged in a smooth, productive way while I wrote and defended my practicum report. My current position at CPL in Washington, D.C. builds upon my theoretical and practical skills in new ways. I have had to shift my lens from a narrowed focus on the feminist movement to a broader look at the

progressive movement while still maintaining the ever-important filter of gender analysis.

I have also had to transition from working at a local to a national level where I provide support for offices in Arizona, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Although my immersion in the political landscape often feels far removed from academia, I am frequently reminded of facets of life in WGS. In fact, I sometimes feel the familiarity of graduate seminars—and appreciate the stamina they helped me develop—when I am faced with long staff meetings spent thoughtfully debating our use of language or approach to a set of methodologies.

By developing expertise in a few core areas of interest and expanding my practical skills in a non-profit setting while honing my critical thinking skills in the classroom, I was able to develop a pragmatic focus on leadership development that shaped me into a good job candidate. I also owe my growth to some powerful mentors I had the pleasure of learning from during the course of my studies. Overall, the Master's Program and the various opportunities I had to fuse theory with practice during my time at WGS ultimately shaped me into a leader and helped prepare me for the challenges of the "real world."

## Project on Economics and Children

The Project on Economics and Children brings together the scholarly activities of theoretical and empirical social scientists dispersed across Rutgers. The project will conduct and disseminate cutting-edge research about child well-being and apply it to the design of useful programs that help underserved children within and beyond New Jersey. Project activities will focus on four principle areas:

### **Children in the Global Economy**

child labor; migrant families; social policies affecting children; child welfare in developing countries; and child poverty in the macro-economy.

### **Children and Conflict**

children in conflict countries, violence against children, and child trafficking.

### **Children and Health Economics**

health care policy, food assistance programs, child health and school performance, and child health across demographic groups.

### **Economics Education**

pedagogical strategies, social studies content standards, and evaluation of programs that empower children to gain economic and financial literacy.

The primary activities of the project include development of joint faculty-student research opportunities; support for grant-writing activities; organization of workshops and conferences; publication of an on-line working paper series; internet-based research dissemination to practitioners; provision of training opportunities for teachers, community leaders, and policy makers; design of innovative programs that serve children in need; and, creation of a top tier scholarly journal on economics and children, with the editorial home at Rutgers. The project has a virtual presence at <http://econkids.rutgers.edu>; the website focuses on economics education and was created through joint work between Professor **Yana Rodgers** (WGS) and **Michael Esmail**, a Rutgers undergraduate. A Google search on "economics and children" finds the EconKids website has received 60,000,000 hits. This successful pilot project has yielded an implementation model for the other three proposed research areas. For further information, contact Professor Rodgers ([yrodgers@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:yrodgers@rci.rutgers.edu)).

## Social Responsibility, Radical Business Practices, and Free Ice Cream



Jerry Greenfield, co-founder of Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream, will speak at Rutgers to invited business community guests in support of WGS. Greenfield and his business partner, Ben Cohen, are very active with the "Business for Social Responsibility" group, which promotes alternative business models based on social responsibility. The Ben and Jerry Company has used its company's reputation and profits to promote social awareness as well as to fund charities such as LifeWorks, a community organization that helps at-risk youth and families. The event will bring together members of the New Jersey business community who are interested in hearing about the business case for social responsibility. Rutgers University President Richard L. McCormick will introduce Mr. Greenfield. For additional information about the event, please contact Joanne Givand at [givand@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:givand@rci.rutgers.edu) or call 732-932-9331.

### Special Thanks to our Alumni Donors:

Numa Balliet  
Dr. Valerie B. Barr  
Sarah B. Berkowitz  
Audrey Casper-Naumes  
Alice Kawash  
Wendy Lee



Dubrovnik 2006 class

## Reflections on Dubrovnik

Sonja Thomas

Absolutely wonderful seminar, beautiful city, and delicious food. Our seminar was a five day event with students from all over Europe. From roughly 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m., we would hear papers, have discussions and/or a workshop, have a nice break for lunch, and then re-convene for a later afternoon session. Works presented by graduate students, faculty, and invited scholars were all attentively listened to and discussed among the 34 participants.

Judith Halberstam's paper, "Transgender Politics in a Global Frame," was a great start to the second day of the conference, and a paper that I really enjoyed. She began with a very funny anecdote of Judith Butler at the Queer poetry reading. She discussed ways in which Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender* was a defensive work trying to accommodate for the transgender critique of *Gender Trouble*. She went on to discuss transgender politics in a global frame, the split between transgender and feminist movements, and three films that are worth checking out: "The Aggressives," "Fremde Haut," and "Paper Dolls."

My paper was entitled, "Sexual Difference/Group Difference: Justifying Genocidal Sexual Violence through the Process of 'Othering'." While it may seem like jam packed days and stress to give a paper, I would encourage all students to apply. The atmosphere at Dubrovnik and the students and faculty involved make it more than worthwhile. I received very helpful and productive questions and critiques of my paper. Many times, we were able to have some beach time during our long lunches, all seminar participants went on an island tour, and the participants also informally discussed the seminar at night. And if you like seafood, you will love the eats! Apply to Dubrovnik!

## Dubrovnik 2006

**Feminist Critical Analysis:  
Differences, Sexualities, Con/texts  
Inter-University Centre, Dubrovnik, Croatia  
May 22-26, 2006**

Ethel Brooks

Last year's post-graduate course, "Differences, Sexualities, Con/texts," was a great success. The seminar was organized by WGS, Belgrade Women's Studies and Gender Research Center, the Center for Women's Studies, Zagreb, and Zenske Studije, Belgrade. Guest participants included **Juliet Mitchell** (Cambridge University) and **Judith Halberstam** (University of Southern California). The course drew 34 participants from Croatia, Serbia, and the U.S., as well as Bosnia, Italy, U.K., Spain, Portugal, Macedonia, Estonia, Bulgaria, and Netherlands. The financial support for graduate students was provided by the Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic and Public Partnership in the Arts and Humanities and by the generous support of WGS alumni.

Students were able to draw from faculty expertise in the areas of sexuality, difference, gender practices and formations, translation, and transnationality. The course lasted five days, with some breaks in between for sightseeing and networking. Over the course of five days, faculty and guest participants offered presentations, as did graduate students from three universities: Belgrade, Zagreb, and Rutgers.

Rutgers was represented by three Ph.D. students, **Laura Lovin, Andrew Mazzaschi, and Sonja Thomas**, as well as by two WGS faculty, Professors **Josephine Diamond** and **Ethel Brooks**. We had the opportunity to engage with the exciting intellectual work presented by the participants and to enjoy the beauty of Dubrovnik, with its walled city, beaches, and surrounding islands. The seminar was marked by intense, animated discussions of the various presentations, and it provided a real opportunity for graduate students and faculty to present their work in an international professional environment, get substantive feedback on their research, and engage with the scholarship of others in sustained ways. Participants in the seminar gave positive feedback at the end of the course. And many participants have developed and maintained professional contact and collaboration over the course of this past year that promises to be long lasting and productive.

## Around WGS...



New and continuing WGS Students



2006 WGS M.A. students



Pat Dooley (left) and Joanne Givand



Laura Lovin (left) and Sonja Thomas, Dubrovnik 2006

### WGS Spring 2007 Calendar of Events

#### April 16, 5:00 p.m., RDJC

WGS will host several contributors to the collection, *"The Feminist Memoir Project,"* co-edited by **Rachel Blau DuPlessis** and **Ann Snitow**, which was published by Rutgers University Press. The book signing will begin at 5:00 p.m., followed by a panel discussion at 5:30 p.m.

### 2007 New Directions in Feminist Scholarship Graduate Conference

The second New Directions in Feminist Scholarship Graduate Conference will be hosted by Emory University, March 21-April 1. Several WGS Ph.D. students will attend the conference and present their work. The conference is the first-ever collaborative feminist graduate conference and was founded in 2006 by **Sonja Thomas** (WGS, ABD).

## Conferences

**Stephanie Clare** (WGS, Ph.D.) will participate in a roundtable discussion at the Cultural Studies Association conference in Portland, and will present her paper, "Agency, Affect, and Performativity: Saba Mahmood's Politics of Piety" at the Ontario Institute for Studies of Education in Toronto, both in April 2007.

**Ashley Falzetti** (WGS, Ph.D.) presented her paper, "For Those Who Dare: Working Through Contradictions of Practical Identity and Political Agency," in February 2007 at the Race, Gender, Class, and Sexuality Conference at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

**Zenzele Isoke** (WGS, ABD) will present her work on queering black political space at the Western Political Science Association in March 2007 in Las Vegas. She will also present at the National Conference of Black Political Scientists in San Francisco, and at the National Women's Studies Association conference in St. Charles, Illinois in June 2007.

**Andrew Mazzaschi** (WGS, ABD) will attend a graduate student conference at City University New York on March 30, 2007 entitled "Wide Open Spaces." He also plans to present at the National Women's Studies Association conference in St. Charles, Illinois in June 2007.

WGS students **Anel Mendez Velaquez, Catherine Sameh, Stephanie Clare, Agatha Beins, and Morgan McLoughlin** will participate in a roundtable discussion, "New Feminist Thought on Difference, Representation and Interdisciplinarity" at the Cultural Studies Association annual meeting in Portland from April 19-21, 2007.

**Sonja Thomas** (WGS, ABD) presented several papers in 2006, including the New York Asian Studies Association Conference; WGS Graduate Conference; "Knowledge and Action: Putting Women to Work" seminar and South Asian Studies Conference at Rutgers; and, the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual South Asian Studies Conference at University of Wisconsin-Madison.

## Publications

WGS Professor **Ethel Brooks**, *Unraveling the Garment Industry: Transnational Organizing and Women's Work* (University of Minnesota Press, March 2007).

WGS and School of Labor Studies and Employment Relations Professor **Dorothy Sue Cobble**, *The Sex of Class: Women Transforming American Labor* (Cornell University Press, March 2007).

WGS Professor and editor of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* **Mary Hawkesworth**, *Globalization and Feminist Activism: From Political Conviction to Methodological Innovation* (Rutgers University Press, 2006); and, *Women, Democracy, and Globalization in North America* (Palgrave, 2006).

**Anahi Russo Garrido** (WGS, Ph.D.), co-editor, *Building Feminist Movements: Global Perspectives*, in conjunction with the Association for Women's Rights in Development (Zed Books, May 2007).

WGS Professor **Jasbir Puar**, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, (Duke University Press, Spring 2007).

WGS Chair Professor **Joanna Regulska**, co-editor, *Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe* (Ashgate, 2006).

## From the Chair (continued)

As you will notice from several articles in this newsletter, our faculty and students have been very busy traveling to do their research, presenting their work, organizing conferences, and publishing many new books. For the most current news about happenings at WGS, please visit our website at <http://womens-studies.rutgers.edu/>.

## Summer Internships (continued)

this summer to Africa. I have been fortunate enough to visit this continent with its rich history, natural beauty, and warm and welcoming people. I wish our three young students—Jessica, Karina, and Marta—an enriching experience that will have an enduring influence over the course of their lives."