

# FEMINIST TRAJECTORIES

Newsletter of Rutgers  
Women's and Gender Studies Department



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## Summer in Peru

By Kaylin Padovano, WGS major

During summer break I worked at a *wawa wasi*, an early childhood education center focusing on primary development and nutrition in the heart of Villa el Salvador, Peru, where I helped to feed and wash anywhere from ten to twenty-two children daily as well as provide them with vital language strengthening skills and early educational principles. The *wawa wasi* played a vital role in the lives of community members, as can be seen through the turbulent history leading up to its inception. The story begins roughly in late April 1971, when more than 50,000 people from inner city Lima, Peru, fed up with overcrowding and squalid conditions, invaded lands on the outskirts of the city originally designated for residential houses of upper-class people. Although they met violent resistance from the local government, they later were permanently relocated in a desert area without any services about 19 kilometers from the capital city. Villa El Salvador formed as a shantytown or "pueblo joven", in the resourceless desert, without any external governmental or NGO assistance. (Continued on page 8)

## Women's and Gender Studies Awards First Ph.D.s



Academic year 2007-2008 was a milestone for the Department of Women's and Gender Studies as two of our doctoral students, Zenzele Isoke and Rama Lohani Chase, successfully defended their dissertations.

In July 2007, Zenzele Isoke became the first student to complete a Ph.D. in Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers. Her dissertation draws upon African American experience, Black feminist theory, and original research to examine the practice of politics within low-income communities of color in urban environments. Through interviews and focus groups with a wide array of African American women who are politically engaged in the poorest neighborhood of Newark, New Jersey, Zenzele documents distinctive forms of political activism within African American communities. Focusing on black nationalist and LGBTQ organizations as well as the National Hip Hop Convention, she illuminates dimensions of political life that have been neglected by mainstream scholars. Zenzele currently has a postdoctoral fellowship in women's and gender studies and political science at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. (Continued on page 3)

## A Note from the Chair

The department has been in the midst of transition this fall. We are deeply grateful to Professor Joanna Regulska for the wonderful leadership she provided the department over the past six years, to Professor Samira Kawash for her sterling performance as Graduate Program Director for three critical years in the program's development, and to Professor Josephine Diamond, who provided superb support for the graduate students this fall. Beginning in January 2008, Yana Rodgers will serve as the Director of the M.A. Program and Ed Cohen will assume the responsibilities as the Ph.D. Program Director. Barbara Balliet will continue as Director of the Undergraduate Program.

At the forefront of Rutgers global initiatives, WGS has expanded its international programs this year. Through the generosity of Wendy Lee and the leadership of Professor Abena Busia, the department created a summer internship program in Ghana in 2007, which enabled three undergraduate students to work with women's NGOs for two months. Under the leadership of Professor Joanna Regulska, four graduate students and two faculty members participated in the Dubrovnik Interuniversity Centre Seminar on Feminist Critical Analysis. Professors Elizabeth Grosz, Sue Cobble, and Yana Rodgers participated in a research exchange with the University of Bergen in Norway. And faculty and graduate students from thirteen countries participated in the Conference on the Future of Feminist Theory that Professor Elizabeth Grosz organized in October.

Women's and Gender Studies has also launched several new initiatives in New Brunswick this fall. With the approval of the School of Arts and Sciences and the support of many departments across campus, WGS introduced its new interdisciplinary minor in Critical Sexuality Studies. Drawing upon the expertise of Professor Beth Hutchison and with financial support from the Vice President for Undergraduate Education, WGS is sponsoring an international film series, "Resisting Images,"

which examines the works of women film makers from around the world. The department's 2007-2008 Lecture Series features feminist scholars of national and international renown, including Professor Adriana Garcia Piscitelli (Sao Paulo, Brazil) on "Tropical Sex in First World Countries;" Professor Jyl Josephson (Rutgers, Newark) on "Sexual Citizenship;" Professor Oksana Kis (Lviv Research Center on Women and Society, Ukraine) on "Beauty Will Save the World: The Case of Julia Tymoshenko;" Professor Selma Leydesdorff (University of Amsterdam) on "The Layered Memories of the Women who Survived Srebrenica;" and Professor Anna Sampaio (University of Colorado, Denver) on "Terrorizing Citizens: the U.S. PATRIOT ACT at Home." Our research briefings have featured our eminent colleagues: Bonnie Smith, Cheryl Wall, Chris Clark, Julie Rajan, Angelique Haugerud, and Abe Busia.

We are also celebrating several important milestones this year. Zenzele Isoke, the first student to complete her Ph.D. in our program, has been awarded a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Minnesota. Five faculty and one doctoral student published seven path-breaking books in 2007, an impressive record that few departments could match. And ten of our undergraduate students will represent Rutgers at the 10<sup>th</sup> International Women's Worlds / *Mundos de Mujeres* Conference to be held next summer in Madrid.

We look forward to continuing and expanding these vibrant initiatives for students and faculty in 2008.

Mary Hawkesworth  
Professor II and Chair

## Women's and Gender Studies Awards First Ph.D.s

Continued from page 1

Rama Lohani Chase was the second doctoral student in Women's and Gender Studies to successfully defend her dissertation. Rama's dissertation explores changing gender dynamics during crisis and armed conflict to see how global trends in movements of people, labor, and capital impact the appropriation and production of gender at the local level. Her work focuses on the decade long (1996-2006) "People's War" in Nepal and the effects of three key processes -- militarization, displacement, and gender embodiment -- on Nepali women. Through the study of women's position in Nepali political and cultural history and multi-sited ethnographic research on the Nepali crisis, she examines how crisis induced displacement and violence shape gender dynamics at the local level and Nepali men's and women's mobility at the transnational/global level. The "call to arms" for women in Nepal raises important questions for the feminist politics of representation *vis a vis* other movements around the globe for peace and social justice. To that end, her dissertation explores the ways in which the bio-politics of body, gender, and sexuality are enmeshed with nationalism, ideology and economics and work in the production of the "military woman" and the "revolutionary woman" in contemporary times of transnationalism and globalization.

## Publications

**Nikol Alexander-Floyd** published *Gender, Race, and Nationalism in Contemporary Black Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

**Ethel Brooks** published *Unraveling the Garment Industry* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

**Ethel Brooks** and **Dorothy Hodgson** edited a volume of the *Women's Studies Quarterly* titled "Activisms" (Volume 35, Numbers 3&4, Feminist Press 2007).

**Anahí Russo Garrido**, WGS Ph.D student, with Lydia Alpízar Durán and Noël D. Payne edited *Building Feminist Movements and Organizations: Global Perspectives* (Zed Books, 2007).

**Judith M. Gerson**, with Diane L. Wolf, edited *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas* (Duke University Press 2007).

**Mary Hawkesworth** and Karen Alexander co-edited *War and Terror: Feminist Perspectives* (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

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

**Bonnie Smith** published *Europe in the Contemporary World: 1900 to Present: A Narrative History with Documents* (Bedford 2007) and edited *Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History* (Oxford 2007).

**Jessica Valenti**, WGS Masters alumnae '01, published *Full Frontal Feminism: A Young Woman's Guide to Why Feminism Matters* (Seal Press 2007).

## Meditating in and on the Archive

Agatha Beins, Ph.D. Student, WGS

The Sophia Smith Collection is housed in the Smith College alumnae gymnasium, where the first women's basketball game was held. Still reflecting some of its gymnastic aura, the reading room is spacious and airy with exposed beams across the ceiling. Posters from the suffrage campaign, human rights campaigns, the U.S women's movement, and other social justice movements decorate one of the walls and large windows flank another. It was a room in which I enjoyed spending time.

Each morning I signed in at the front desk and then divided my stuff between the cubby locker and the research room. Everything except my laptop, scrap paper, and a pencil went into the cubby. Thanks to funding from Rutgers and the Sophia Smith Collection I was able to spend nine days in August in the archive, looking through their Valley Women's Center records, the Women's Liberation Collection (1959-1998), the Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, and the extensive collection of feminist periodicals. As part of my predissertation research, the purpose of this trip was to start figuring out what might or might not eventually become a part of my dissertation.

Although this was a working trip, it was also a break at the same time. I found something meditative and relaxing about being in the archive, starting with the process of shedding all the things I normally lug around and continuing with the process of shedding mental preoccupations. The only work I needed to do was page through newspapers, mimeographed essays, letters, meeting minutes, pamphlets, and other ephemera from the U.S. feminist movement in the 1970s. The only things I had during those hours in the reading room, I could carry in one hand. My time at the archive had a singularity about it that is so rare in the rest of my life, which is filled with distractions and different demands for my attention.

I began this research knowing that I was interested in newsletters and newspapers published by feminist collectives in the 1970s,

but without any real agenda, my time at the archive had a freeing quality. There was nothing I needed to find, no product I needed to display at the end of the trip. On the other hand, it was a little overwhelming: almost everything seemed to have potential, to be the inspiration for a different dissertation chapter. I took almost fifty single-spaced pages of notes, much of which I haven't revisited yet. But I am revisiting the archive. This January I plan to forget the rest of the world for another week and learn a little bit more about the women whose activism is such a significant part of my academic life not only because it is the topic of my dissertation, but also because it enabled academic work like mine to become possible.

## Ghana Internships, 2007-2008

Thanks to funding from Rutgers alumna, Wendy Lee, three undergraduate students spent two months in Ghana in summer 2007, working and learning about women's lives, struggles, and dreams, as well as their efforts to organize for social justice and change. This pilot international service-learning program, co-sponsored by Women's and Gender Studies and the Center for African Studies, selected three outstanding students, Jessica Akunna, Karina Martinez, and Marta Zuleta for field placements in Ghana. Following preparatory work under the supervision of Professor Abena Busia during spring 2007, the students went to Africa, where they completed internships with women's organizations focusing on economic empowerment, peace building, health, and political participation. The work undertaken by the students ranged from strategic planning to developing educational materials for children to help them understand the concept of rights, and interviewing women at refugee camps on the Cote D'Ivoire border.

In summer 2008, Professor Busia will arrange the field placements, accompany and supervise the second cohort of student interns to Ghana, including Awo Dede Mankatah, Hawwa Muhammad, and Chinyere Ojini.

## Student Accomplishments



WGS Ph.D. students celebrating their completion of qualifying exams: Stephanie Clare (left), Danielle Phillips, Agatha Beins, and Laura Lovin

**Anahi Russo Garrido** (WGS Ph.D.) presented two papers: "The Challenge of Multigenerational Leadership in the Global Women's Rights Movement" at New Directions in Feminist Scholarship at Emory University (March 2007); and "Chicana Feminism and Spirituality: A force of mobilization" at Constructing Knowledge: A Graduate Student interdisciplinary conference at Rutgers University (October 2007), in addition to publishing "And We Were Mexicanas": Notes on the Use of National Symbols by Lesbian Groups in Mexico" *WSQ: Activisms*, vol.35, nos. 3-4 (Fall/Winter 2007).



Visiting Scholar Claus Halberg (left), with recently graduated WGS MA students: Morgan McLoughlin, Kathy Blake and Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen

**Jillian Hernandez** (WGS Ph.D.) organized the panel "Ego Trippin: Addressing Self Esteem and Providing Tools for Resistance for Girls of Color" for the National Women's Studies Association conference (June 2007) in which she presented the paper "Because I Finally Had Freedom: An Educator's Journey from Feminist Art to Girls' Studies." Jillian also curated a show that opened in Oct. 2007 at the Bas/Fisher Invitational alternative art space in Miami titled "MOD 11: Discourses with Incarcerated Girls", for which she organized and moderated a panel discussion with the artists.



IWL Leadership Scholars Alexis Kennedy (left), Ruchi Pandya and Christie Irizarry at the WGS holiday party

**Danielle Phillips** (WGS Ph.D.) presented "Who wants to be a 'mother'? Lessons from English and African American domestic workers" in Dubrovnik last Spring. She also presented "(Re)Shaping Race, Class, and Gender in the 'home': Irish, African American, and Afro-Caribbean domestic workers in New York City, 1880-1940" at a Caribbean Studies conference at the University of Miami in June.



Anahi Russo Garrido (left), Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen, Anel Méndez Velázquez & Stephanie Clare

**Christie Irizarry** (WGS Minor) received the 2007-2008 Latina Leadership Potential Award from The Associate Alumnae of Douglass College.

**Ashley Falzetti** (WGS Ph.D.) presented "Working with What We've Got: Reconceptualizing Agency" at the Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) Conference on Civic Discourse in Little Rock Arkansas (October 2007); and "Performativity and Social Kinds: Constructing Philosophical Notions of 'Race'" at the Constructing Knowledges Conference hosted by the Rutgers Sociology Department (October 2007).



WGS MA students: Lana Sacks, Somer Phegley, Jessica Mertz and Zara Rapoport

## Rutgers Delegation to Mundos de Mujeres/Women's Worlds Conference in Madrid, Spain

With the support of the Vice President for Undergraduate Education, the Dean of Douglass, the Institute for Women's Leadership and the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, the Department of Women's and Gender Studies is providing funding to support the participation of 10 undergraduate students in the 2008 International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women in Madrid, Women's Worlds / Mundos de Mujeres. The motto of the Congress is "Equality: No Utopia" and the general theme is "New Frontiers: Dares, Challenges and Changes." The conference will attract thousands of feminist activists from all parts of the world, presenting workshops on feminisms and women's movements, women's history, economics, political and legal action, education, health, science and technology, communication and media, creativity and art, dislocations and frontiers, violence and migration, territories and environment.

Students selected through an open competition include: Sara Afayee, Ayana April, Desiree Ficula, Candace Irabli, Christie Irizarry, Sophonie Joseph, Corinne Kleinman, Samantha Liu, Julia Moon, and Kaylin Padovano. The students will be accompanied by Institute for Women's Leadership Director Mary Hartman, Associate Director Lisa Hetfield and WGS faculty Joanna Regulska and Mary Trigg. In addition to presenting papers at the conference, students will participate in the cultural, social, and tourist programs associated with the Conference.

### *Feminist Memoir Project October 18, 2007*

*The Feminist Memoir Project* (Rutgers University Press, 2007) captures the energy, excitement, challenges and frustrations of the U.S. Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s and 1970s through the thoughtful reminiscences of 32 feminist activists. Internationally renowned scholars and activists, *Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Ann Snitow, Barbara Emerson and Meredith Tax*, celebrated the book's release with a panel discussion that explored the vibrancy and the challenges of contemporary feminism. The panel was followed by a book signing and reception at the Eagleton Institute of Politics.

## Dubrovnik

By Danielle Taylor Phillips, Ph.D. Student, WGS

Nervousness made it difficult for me to imagine that I would have such rich experiences in Dubrovnik when I boarded the plane at Newark's Airport enroute to the "Feminist Critical Analysis: Race, Discourse, and Biopolitics" Seminar. My nervousness quickly diminished during the first day of seminar presentations as I found myself engrossed with many of the participants' research projects. I was intrigued by the range of topics, from the oppression of Romani women throughout Europe, labor migration between Japan and Brazil, to gendered medical discourses that serve as barriers to effective drug treatments for women in Eastern Europe. The profound interest shared among the seminar participants created a supportive atmosphere where learning and discussions could take place outside of the pretentious performances that sometimes shape classrooms and conferences. Such an environment also created special opportunities for participants to get valuable feedback about their work.

Deeper connections between the participants were fostered through the activities we planned together after the seminar. Toward the end of the trip, we would meet in the vibrant downtown area lined with ancient city walls and monasteries to talk about politics in Eastern Europe, our plans for the future, and life in general as we drank wine and listened to the local jazz band and gospel choir. Connections between the participants from Rutgers also strengthened over the course of the trip. If the walls could talk in the hotel room that Kathleen Powers and I shared, they would say that there was never a dull moment between us. (*Continued on page 10*)