



# FEMINIST TRAJECTORIES

Newsletter of Rutgers  
Women's and Gender Studies Department

Spring 2010

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## Interview: Carlos Decena, WGS Undergraduate Director

Professor Carlos Decena is the new Undergraduate Program Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Department. Doctor Decena's areas of interest include cultural studies of the Americas, migration and immigration, gender and sexuality, and interdisciplinary approaches to the social sciences. He is the author of numerous articles including "Tacit Subjects" (published in *GLQ*) and "Profiles, Compulsory Disclosure and Ethical Sexual Citizenship in the Contemporary United States" (published in *Sexualities*). His book *Tacit Subjects: Belonging, Same-Sex Desire and Daily Life Among Dominican Immigrant Men* is forthcoming with Duke University Press. Since September 2009 and as a result of his outreach efforts, more than 70 students have declared their major or minor in Women's and Gender Studies, Critical Sexualities or Social Justice. Recently, I sat down with Professor Decena to talk about his vision and projects for WGS undergraduate program.

*What is a man doing as the Undergraduate Director in WGS?*

Some students are shocked by the idea that a man is in charge of the undergraduate program in the Women's and Gender Studies department. Many students have commented "Oh, I'm all for it, a man being in Women's Studies," but they are shocked. I think that, in an important way, having a man be the Undergraduate Director, and being visible as such, will help change some of the perceptions that students have about what Women's Studies is supposed to be and who is the default audience for Women's Studies.

(continued page 6)

## WGS Graduate Students Association Projects for 2010

After a much-needed summer hiatus, the Women's & Gender Studies Graduate Association (WGSGA) is back with a bang. As part of our ongoing effort to encourage more active participation in and by WGSGA, we have initiated a diverse array of events and activities for the coming semesters. Beginning this spring, WGSGA will host a speaker/cultural performance series that Women, Culture, & Society (WGS 101) instructors can incorporate into their classroom curriculums. This allows us to support the kind of work we, as current graduate students, want to see and hear by providing a space for up-and-coming junior faculty members to present their interdisciplinary work. For the fall, WGSGA is planning to participate in a conference co-sponsored by the Women's & Gender Studies Department and Women's and Gender Studies Center, Bergen, Norway. As an offshoot of this event, we are organizing a one-day graduate student conference that will offer advanced PhD and MA students, as well as their newer colleagues, an opportunity to hear and respond to each other's work. This is of particular importance as more students complete their PhDs, enter the job market, and plan for publication. Finally, several working groups have sprouted up that include pedagogical workshops for discussions about teaching, a dissertation-writing group, and two reading groups on Critical Theory and Science Studies respectively. We're looking forward to an exciting year and will keep you posted in coming newsletters.

Sara Perryman Ph.D. Student and President, WGSGA

## A Note from the Chair

The relationship between academics and activism has been a topic of intense debate among feminist scholars over the past several decades. While some have argued that the institutionalization of women's and gender studies within colleges and universities has diverted energy from feminist activism, the record at Rutgers suggests a different story. WGS undergrads, graduate students, and faculty devote considerable energy to local, national, and transnational activism. Consider what just a few of our students and faculty have been doing in the past year:

**Nikol Alexander Floyd** not only serves on the Council of Academic Advisors for the Congressional Black Caucus, but she also co-founded an exciting new organization, the Association for the Study of Black Women and Politics, a support network for Black feminist scholars that fosters intersectional research.

**Radhika Balakrishnan** chairs the Board of the US Human Rights Network, which has been working with the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly to pressure governments to fulfill commitments to social and economic rights.

**Charlotte Bunch** serves as special advisor on violence against women for the UN Secretary General and has been working with his High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence to create new UN structures for women's rights.

**Akena Busia** has been working with Ghana's Ministry for Foreign Affairs and New Jersey educators to transform how the history of slavery is taught by designing study-tours of internal slave routes in Ghana and Benin.

**Stephanie Clare** devoted the summer of 2009 to working with low-income children of color recruited to the Rutgers Future Scholars Program, a diversity initiative that creates a pipeline between New Jersey's poorest cities and full scholarships to the University.

**Carlos Decena** donates his energies to the New York-based Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, and the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights, while also serving as Project Coordinator of the International Resource Network created in conjunction with the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center to establish international connections among sexualities studies researchers and activists.

**Magda Grabowska** is actively involved in two innovative feminist groups in Poland, "Sisterhood Street" and "Women's Alliance" and volunteers with the Federation on Women and Family Planning in Warsaw.

**Jillian Hernandez** combines her interests in art and activism by creating exciting projects for girls in low-income, minority communities to build their confidence and capabilities while helping them avoid negative encounters with the juvenile justice system.

**Marlee Kimmick, Suzan Sanal, Liz Genne-Bacon, Alan Gould, D. Brielle Nalence, and Amy Torres**, members of Radigals, the WGS undergraduate student organization, organized a session *From Our Seats to the Streets: Connecting Academics to Activism in the Feminist Classroom* for the 2009 Mid-Atlantic Women's Studies Association Meeting, which featured their activism in various campus and community groups.

**Danielle Phillips** has been working with the Mellon Mays Women's College Collaborative to investigate strategies to support Black women faculty and graduate students who are working in predominantly white higher education institutions.

**Joanna Regulska** works with local women activists in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Hungary, Kazan, Kyrgyzstan, and Poland to help them achieve their political objectives within dramatically changing political systems, while also helping to forge social solidarity networks among internally displaced persons in post-conflict situations.

**Chris Rivera's** work with *Our Youth*, a nonprofit organization designed to help LGBT youth in Jersey City survive in a hostile climate, culminated in a splendid *Carnival of Kings and Queens* at the 2009 Mid-Atlantic Women's Studies Association Meeting.

**Yana Rodgers** has been working with The World Bank Institute and the United Nations on gender equitable development and poverty reduction with a particular focus on South and Southeast Asia.

**Anna Sampaio** works with several non-profit and community-based organizations serving the Latino population including the Latina Initiative, *Escuela Guadalupe*, *Escuela Tlatelolco*, and the Mexican American Community Service Agency.

Although this list is by no means comprehensive, it provides a powerful demonstration that feminist teacher-scholars and students take their commitments to social change seriously and use their expertise to foster and support feminist activism locally and globally. At Rutgers and many other great Women's Studies Programs, scholarship and activism go hand-in-hand.

Mary Hawkesworth  
Professor and Chair



### Recent Publications

Nikol Alexander Floyd's "Critical Race Black Feminism: A 'Jurisprudence of Resistance' and the Transformation of the Academy" is forthcoming in the Summer 2010 issue of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35 (4).

Cheryl Clark's "But Some of Us are Brave and the Transformation of the Academy: Transformation?" is forthcoming in the Summer 2010 issue of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35 (4).

Ed Cohen published *A Body Worth Defending: Immunity, BioPolitics and the Apotheosis of the Modern Body* (Duke University Press, 2009).

Jillian Hernandez's "Miss, You Look Like a Bratz Doll: On Chonga Girls and Sexual-Aesthetic Excess" was published in the Fall 2009 NWSA Journal 21(3), a Special Issue on Latina Sexualities, guest edited by Lourdes Torres and Lorena Garcia.

Alexis Kennedy's "Developing the Poor: Feminist Economics Analysis of Economic Solidarity in Brazil" is forthcoming in *Gender and Development*.

Yana Rodgers with Günseli Berik and Stephanie Seguino edited *Inequality, Development, and Growth*, Special Issue of *Feminist Economics* 15 (3), July 2009, which included her co-authored essay "Feminist Economics of Inequality, Development, and Growth."

Anahi Russo Garrido's "El Ambiente According to Her: Gender, Class, Mexicanidad and the Cosmopolitan in Queer Mexico City" was published in the Fall 2009 NWSA Journal 21(3), a Special Issue on Latina Sexualities, guest edited by Lourdes Torres and Lorena Garcia.

Cheryl Wall's "On Dolls, Presidents, and Little Black Girls" is forthcoming in the Summer 2010 issue of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 35 (4).

### Faculty Honors and Awards

Nikol Alexander-Floyd, Anna Julia Cooper Award for Outstanding Teaching, National Conference of Black Political Scientists, 2009.

Mary Hawkesworth, Certificate of Merit in Recognition of Contributions to the Ho Chi Minh National Academy for Politics and Public Administration, The Government of Vietnam, August 10, 2009.

### Graduate Student Awards

Agatha Beins, American Association of University Women, Dissertation Fellowship, 2009-2010.

Kelly Coogan was chosen as an Emerging Diversity Scholar, National Center for Institutional Diversity, University of Michigan, 2009.

Anahi Garrido Russo, Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Dissertation Fellowship, 2009-2010.

Magda Grabowska, European Commission, Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship, 2010-2012.

Bahia Munem, 2010 Woodrow Wilson Women's Studies Dissertation Fellowship.

### Undergraduate Students' Accomplishments

Alexis Kennedy's senior honors thesis, "Developing the Poor: A Feminist Economics Analysis of Economic Solidarity in Brazil," received the coveted *Henry Rutgers Scholars Award*. Alexis graduated in May 2009 with a major in Economics and a minor in Women's and Gender Studies.

Mark Anthony Capetillo won *The Balliet Award for Outstanding Research in Women's and Gender Studies* for his thesis, "See the Man, Want the Man, Buy the Man: An Intersectional Analysis of Advertisements in Men's Magazines." Marc is a major in Women's and Gender Studies and a double minor in Philosophy and Sociology.

Danese Brielle Nalence won the *Eleanor Brilliant Award for Outstanding W&GS Senior*. Brielle graduated in 2009 with a double Major in Women's and Gender Studies and Psychology.

Alan Gould won *The Statewide Award for Best Paper in Women's and Gender Studies* for his paper "Can the Medusa Laugh?: A Postcolonial Critique of Cixous' *Écriture Féminine*." The prize was presented by the NJ Consortium of Women's and Gender Studies Programs. Alan is a double major in Women's and Gender Studies and Linguistics.

### Undergraduate Students' Accomplishments (continued from page 3)

Kaitlyn McGruther won a *Fulbright Fellowship* to Taiwan. Kaitlyn graduated in May 2009 with a double major in Women's and Gender Studies and English.

Rosanna Mootoo won *The Douglass Alumnae Award for Outstanding Student in Women's Studies*. Rosanna graduated in May 2009 as a double major in Women's and Gender Studies and English.

Suzan Sanal won the *Gilda Morales Award for Outstanding W&GS Student Activist*. Suzan is a double major in Women's and Gender Studies and History.

Yury Vela won a *Graduate Fellowship to Study Global Human Rights at Columbia University*. Yury graduated in May 2009 with a major in Mathematics and a minor in Women's and Gender Studies.

### Senior Honors Theses

Yuri Vela: *Bridging Boundaries: A Reconciliatory Approach for Women's & Gender Studies and Mathematics*.

Jesse P. Zatloff: *Queer Readings/Diasporic Navigations: Sexual Identity Formations Among Pakistani-American Females*.

Barbara E. Zjawin: *Senior Status?: Group Discussions and Feminist Activism's Roles in Addressing Senior Women's Negative Moods*.

Katelyn Michaud: *Viewing Femininity: A Discussion of Gender, Sexuality and the Male Gaze in HBO's Sex and the City*.

Mark Anthony Capetillo: *See the Man, Want the Man, Buy the Man: An Intersectional Analysis of Advertisements in Men's Magazines*.

Alicia M. Reaves: *To Be Woman, Gifted, and Black: The Binary Exclusion of African-American Women from Visible Leadership Positions within United States Sociopolitical Arenas*.

Heta Patel: *Queerphobi[c], Xenophobi[c] Operations: A Closer Look at the Hindu Right*.

Caitlin Flynn: *HIV as Violence: The Sub-Saharan Woman's Experience of Violence, HIV and Education*.

Alexis Kennedy: *Developing the Poor: A Feminist Economics Analysis of Economic Solidarity in Brazil*.



### 6 MA Students Successfully Defended Their Theses and Practicum Reports

Kathryn Blake: *A Contemporary Feminist Critique of Psychoanalysis Through Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari*.

Lindsay Currie: *Consciousness Raised: Women Increasing Health Literacy from Our Bodies, Ourselves to Breastcancer.org. (Digital AGENCY: Consciousness Raising, Blogging and Lay Expertise)*.

Alexandra Dick: *Transforming Witnesses to Actors: 100+ Men Against Domestic Violence*.

Katarina Loncarevic: *Feminist Epistemology and Foucault*.

Julie Salthouse: *Mark My Words: Girls' Voice Development in the High School Leadership Program*.

Cassandra Scherr: *Narratives of Beauty: An In-depth Look at How Film can Further Discussions of Narrative and Knowledge*.



## Lead, Engage, Act, Perform

The acronym "L.E.A.P" stands for Lead, Engage, Act, Perform, and these were the characteristics and actions that we wanted to pass onto young Douglass women. LEAP Now! started out as a simple project for the class Women's Activism: Locally and Globally. The purpose was to encourage Douglass students to define leadership and feminism for themselves and to act boldly in those definitions. The planning process was completely collaborative; we discussed the project in class daily. We also spoke with current leaders on the Douglass campus about the topics that they felt should be addressed, issues like leadership and activism. Throughout the brainstorming process we continued to touch upon the lack of knowledge that we had about the Women's and Gender Studies program during our first years at Rutgers. With all of this information we began to tailor the L.E.A.P Now! program to the issues, questions, and experiences that we believed were realistic to this current group of Douglass women.

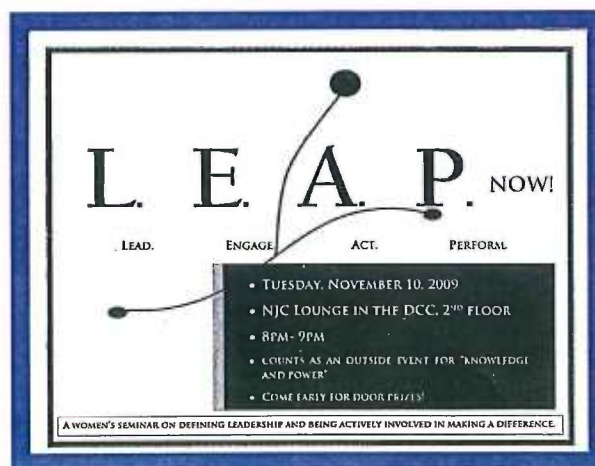
The LEAP program not only aimed to encourage these women, but to also be a tangible example of leadership. Under the guidance of Professor Joanna Regulska, we planned this program to be an example of what a small group can achieve, and demonstrated leadership qualities throughout the process.

We scheduled the program on Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup> in the NJC Lounge in the Douglass Campus Center. With the help of the Knowledge & Power mentors, 35 students were present at the LEAP program. We began the program with an interactive activity called "Theater of the Oppressed," which was developed by Brazilian director Augusto Boal and inspired by Paulo Freire. The activity used theater as a means to generate knowledge and transform reality. The participants were given different scenarios and themes, like the workplace or gender, and asked to present a negative representation of that theme. People from the audience would then take the lead by acting and the representation would be gradually changed into a more positive situation. The activity was utilized to show how one person can challenge reality by being a leader and taking action.

Small groups discussed the issues that "Theater of the Oppressed" had brought to light; the groups discussed gender roles, violence and stereotypes, among many other things. They came back as a whole to discuss how leadership, activism, and feminism could be used as a solution to these problems. The students defined leadership in many different ways and began to realize that being a leader is not limited to being the CEO of a company, feminism is not "man-hating", and that activism is more than protesting.

The LEAP Now! program was successful, because those who participated began to find a voice within themselves. Women who were at first shy and timid, began to slowly engage in our activities and led discussions. These women spoke out against sexism, defined leadership, posed positive solutions to negative circumstances, and shared personal experiences within their groups. These seemingly small acts are what translated into activism, and became the start of a feminist discourse. The end result was a group of a women, including ourselves, who were changed by the voices of others- their leadership, engagement, activism and performance.

The LEAP Now! program not only gave the younger Douglass students a chance to experience leadership and feminism, but allowed for us as seniors to recreate our own definitions of both. In doing so, we realized that leadership and feminism were not just limited to those who make monumental differences in our world, but to those who take small steps in changing it.



*Rosemary Mattan, Terese Mc Williams, and Melanie Vela, Women's and Gender Studies Undergraduate Students*

## Interview: Carlos Decena, Undergraduate Director (continued from front page)

Part of what we are trying to do as a department is show that what we do here is relevant to everyone regardless of who they are. And having a man lead the undergraduate program is part of that.

*Where are you planning to take the undergraduate program?*

There has been a shift in the institutional priorities. For the last five years, there has been an increasingly more visible emphasis on undergraduate education at Rutgers. The university is replacing a temporary core curriculum with a new permanent core curriculum. Part of what I envision is making Women's Studies an important contributor to those changes. One way to strengthen the work we already do is through more intensive advising and outreach to students. It pays off in terms of quantity and quality of recruitment if students know that we will work with them on designing the right path for their educations in the major. Some students have walked in and told me "Look, I'm majoring in another



department, but I've never been there." How is it possible to major in something and not talk to anyone for advising? A lot of the education that our students access comes directly through our departmental offerings. Dedicating time to advising and guiding them in their choices is important. Without guidance, students may take courses that they should not be taking. If you have taken one course in the introductory sequence, why do you have to take two or three more? I envision myself as someone who not only brings in more majors, but also shows them the relevance of Women's and Gender Studies to their lives, making it clear to them that a major in Women's and Gender Studies can lead to viable careers, and ultimately demonstrating how we can make this institution reach the highest quality when it comes to working with our students and grooming them to be the best they can be.

*Could you tell us a few things about how WGS interacts with the larger project of undergraduate education at Rutgers?*

Women's Studies is a very elastic field of study for students. It complements a lot of other majors and minors that students might pursue, but it also stands on its own as a field. We have faculty who teach economics, transnationalism, theories of affect and embodiment, policy and labor studies. I am particularly interested in how to recruit more science students and I think that bringing in someone who does feminist science studies is the first step. Students who are in biology, chemistry, engineering, and some other so-called "hard sciences" take our courses and they like them because these courses complement what they do. The project of Women's Studies enables people to think critically about other fields and disciplines in which they are involved. We offer a very comprehensive program of studies.

*Has your outlook on academia changed since you started your work as Undergraduate Director?*

I'm still learning to be an administrator. I think this gives me a very different vantage point from which to understand the educational process. Until I began working in this capacity, I understood teaching in terms of going to the classrooms to work with students. But now I realize that I am doing a little bit of teaching in this position too. Guiding people through their major and working through their issues in the classroom is a form of teaching. I'm also relying on the knowledge that I have about my colleagues' strengths and the work that they do. Having this administrative position will make me a stronger teacher as well as better able to understand, or appreciate why structural things happen the way they do. This is a department that has a very active research faculty. This has implications for the kind of teaching we can offer. Having said that, it becomes a real challenge figuring out exactly how to get people to continue to be very active researchers and at the same time to ensure that our students are getting the best education that they can get because they are exposed to outstanding faculty. I'm very happy to be sending students to specific courses and to know that a certain class is going to be a good group and will jive very well because they are interested in very similar issues.

*Thank you. Do you have a message for the WGS undergraduate students and for those interested or just curious about the department?*

Students should think of advising as a valuable part of their education. I try to make myself available. Students should feel free to be in touch with us about their concerns because their education extends beyond the classroom. Sometimes I think things cannot be very effective if you just send out a mass email. If I know a student, and I know that the student has particular strengths or interests, I can direct resources and opportunities specifically to that person. The more interaction there is, the better.

*Interview by Laura Lovin, Ph.D. Candidate in Women's and Gender Studies*



## War: Critical Perspectives SAS Signature Course

This semester, I am teaching a Signature Course for SAS, War: Critical Perspectives, that has drawn more than 150 students from all over Rutgers, many of whom are in their first or second year. For the course, I have three amazing TAs: Kevin Allred, Joseph Dwyer and Rachel Zaslow, and together we are developing a project that is pedagogically and intellectually challenging for us and our students. The course began by asking the formative question, "What are the lived experiences, cultures and historical contexts of war?" Over the course of the semester, we are asking students to grapple with the complex national, racial, sexual and gendered mappings of war and with reconfigurations of gendered, raced, classed, sexual and national subjectivities linked to war. The global focus of this course will cover topics ranging from genocide and gang membership to transnational labor organizing, where nation-building, urban gender practices, labor regimes and production practices are often dependent on legacies of war, terror and state terror, informing everything from shopfloor relations to economic development strategies, labor migration and neighborhood geographies to anti-labor management practices in export-oriented factory production. We compare post-September 11 migration trajectories of South Asians to earlier trajectories of Central Americans during the civil war, genocide and state terror of the 1980s; we focus on "dirty wars," in which governments (often covertly) wage wars against citizens; on anti-colonial struggles that manifest themselves both violently and non-violently; and on questions of genocide, violence in everyday life and the national-developmental state as a locus of wartime practice.

Traditional academic investigations of war seldom link armed conflict to practices of racialization or gendering. Construed as "organized violence between groups of people" (Osterud 2004, 1028), war has been studied in manifold and complex ways—but ways that offer little scope for concerns with race, gender, or sexuality. Engaging mainstream studies of war, feminist scholars have challenged constructions of war as gender-neutral or as "men's business." Illuminating the complex interplay of gender, race, nation, culture, and religion in the context of dozens of armed struggles, this course explores the raced-gendered logics, practices, and effects of war. Highlighting women's agency even under conditions of dire constraint, the course challenges traditional stereotypes of women as perennial victims, perpetual peace-makers, or embodiments of nation that men seek to protect and



defend. In the course, we examine how women negotiate their survival, enact resistance to oppressive and supposedly liberating forces, mobilize to protest war and counter its effects, participate in redefining war, and appropriate war discourses to advance their own political agendas. Incorporating cutting-edge research, the course attempts to offer new ways of understanding war. By shifting the analytic frame from a focus on war as an instrument of statecraft and a means of destruction to war as a mode of production and reproduction, it considers how nations are produced, contested, reproduced and transformed through war in ways that involve racialization and gendering. Indeed, it demonstrates that practices of racing and gendering are integral both to statecraft and to insurrection.

As a way of approaching these questions, we are using "traditional" scholarly readings in the form of articles and books as well as a number of feature and documentary films; we bring in poetry, music and songs (and sometimes I even sing—albeit not quite in tune!) and read fictional and non-fiction accounts of war. Importantly, we have also encouraged students to attend co-curricular activities sponsored by the Office of International Programs' series "Ecologies in the Balance," by the Institute for Research on Women, the Asian-American Scholarship Collective and the Douglass Dean's Office, offering extra credit to students who attend co-curricular programs and do response papers to what they saw. The course's multiple pedagogies have been somewhat of a challenge to the students, many of whom, I think, expected facts, figures and body counts as well as accounts of the "big" wars that we have all heard of. While the course is, of course, informed by our current war on terror and its multiple, global fronts—especially Afghanistan, Iraq and the US—we also focus on a number of wars that have not been as focused upon by the US media and scholarly communities. In this way, we allow students to both engage in sites about which they often know very little and to gain a critical perspective on war and violence that is often lacking when we talk solely about the war(s) in which the US is currently engaged. I have appreciated the opportunity to reach students who are not usually in WGS courses and to engage in questions from perspectives that are often surprising to both the students and to us, the four instructors.

*Ethel Brooks*  
*Associate Professor, Women's and Gender Studies*

## New Faculty



**Radhika Balakrishnan** is Professor of Women's and Gender Studies and Executive Director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership. She has a Ph.D. in Economics from Rutgers University. Before coming to Rutgers she served as Professor of Economics and International Studies at Marymount Manhattan

College. She has worked at the Ford Foundation as a program officer in the Asia Regional Program. She is currently the Chair of the Board of the US Human Rights Network and on the Board of the Center for Constitutional Rights. She has published in the field of gender and development. Her publications include: *Why MES with Human Rights: Integrating Macro Economic Strategies with Human Rights*, 2005, *The Hidden Assembly Line: Gender Dynamics of Subcontracted Work in a Global Economy*, and *Good Sex: Feminist Perspectives from the Worlds Religions*. She has also authored numerous articles that have appeared in books and journals. She is currently working on a book that examines transnational labor organizing, women's work and relations of globalization and empire.



**Charlotte Bunch** returned to faculty status after creating and leading the Center for Women's Global Leadership for twenty years. Professor Bunch's work focuses on the application of feminist theory to public policy questions, particularly at the global level. Her current investigations

center on developing an analysis of human rights that incorporates women's lives more fully and utilizes the question of violence against women as a way of exploring the parameters of women's issues both theoretically and practically. Her other public policy work has focused on issues of gender and international development. Her writings include the classics: *Passionate Politics: Feminist Theory in Action* and *Demanding Accountability: The Global Campaign and Vienna Tribunal for Women's Human Rights*; numerous articles and anthologies, among which: "Preamble: Abriendo las Copuertas," in *Declaracion Universal de Derecho Humanos: Texto Y Comentarios Inusuales*, and "Taking Stock: Women's Human Rights Five Years After Beijing: in Holding On to the Promise: Women's Human Rights and the Beijing + 5 Review."



**Marisa J. Fuentes** joined the Women's and Gender Studies Faculty in Fall 2009. Marisa J. Fuentes completed her Ph.D. in the department of African American Studies at UC Berkeley in July of 2007. She is a fellow at Harvard University in the Charles Warren Center for Studies in

American History during 2009/2010. Her current manuscript-in-progress explores the spatial, historical, and symbolic confinement enslaved women experienced in two eighteenth-century British Atlantic port cities: Bridgetown, Barbados and Charleston, South Carolina. Grounded in archival research and recent scholarship on gender and enslavement, Marisa J. Fuentes investigates how the construction of legal, architectural and historical "spaces" marked enslaved women's bodies and experiences, in life and death. Fuentes' work brings together critical historiography, historical geography, anthropology and black feminist theory in her analyses of enslaved women in the urban Atlantic. Her other research interests include studies of gender, power, and sexuality and histories of women in the early Black Atlantic World.



**Anna Sampaio** joined the Department of Women's and Gender Studies in fall 2009. She teaches and researches in the areas of Latina/o politics, immigration, ethnic/racial politics, gender politics post-colonialism, and transnationalism. Before coming to Rutgers, she served on the

faculty of Political Science at the University of Colorado, Denver. She has also served as faculty at the University of California Riverside, CSU Hayward, Santa Clara University, and at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of California at Riverside. Her work has appeared in a number of publications including the *American Political Science Review*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *New Political Science*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, *Latino Studies*, *PS: Political Science and Politics* and the *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Her most recent book is entitled *Transnational Latino/a Communities: Politics, Processes and Cultures* and highlights the shifting immigration patterns of Latinos/as in the late 20th century. Her current research centers on the impact of post 9-11 immigration policies on the lives of Latino/a immigrants.



## Reports From Our Students:

### From the Center for Research on Women and Gender, Bergen, Norway

Between May and October of 2009 I had the opportunity of living in Bergen, Norway, as a visiting student at the University of Bergen (UiB). The Center for Research on Women and Gender, SKOK (by its initials in Norwegian) hosted me during those months, and its staff, faculty, and students welcomed me, as much academically as personally. My visit to UiB was possible through an exchange agreement between SKOK and my home department of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers. This partnership has allowed several students and scholars from both institutions to visit UiB and Rutgers, to participate in jointly organized conferences and seminars, to collaborate in projects, and to sustain a conversation about feminist questions, theories, and practices across the Atlantic.

I first met some of the people at SKOK in the Fall of 2007, during the Future of Feminist Theory Conference that took place at WGS in Rutgers University. The following Spring I encountered them again when I visited UiB to participate in a seminar course taught by Professor Elizabeth Grosz. A year later, in May of 2009, I arrived in Bergen again, and for the following six months I participated of the academic and cultural life in Bergen and UiB, starting with the celebration of SKOK's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the Theory Now! conference. As it happened a year and half before at the Future of Feminist Theory Conference in Rutgers, Theory Now! featured renowned and respected scholars in the field of gender studies in both the United States and Scandinavia. Speakers included Elizabeth Grosz, professor at WGS Rutgers; Ed Cohen, director of the WGS Ph.D. program at Rutgers; Ellen Mortensen, director of SKOK; and Kari Jegerstedt, postdoctoral fellow at SKOK, amongst other guests from the US, Norway, Sweden, and Britain. During the days of the conference not only did I encounter familiar and friendly faces, but met new doctoral students at SKOK who, in the months to come, became both close friends and important colleagues.

Through the faculty and students at SKOK I was able to meet other students and scholars in departments at UiB with whom I shared research and academic interests. The research group that gathers under the name of The Caribbean: Identity and Conflict - or KIK, as it is known by its initials in Norwegian- soon became for me the most important network of scholars and students outside of SKOK. The members of KIK welcomed me enthusiastically in their group, and invited me to present some of my work as the opening talk of their series of seminars for the Fall of 2009. Through both, SKOK and KIK, I had the opportunity of meeting and attending talks with scholars and activists from different parts of the world, with different backgrounds, perspectives, and political inclinations, and of being introduced to the dynamic life of the international community in Bergen. Hosted by UiB, a weekly gathering at a local café provided the opportunity for international students and faculty to meet each other. The Cultural Center in Bergen also provided a venue for cultural activities hosted by different organizations that brought together visitors, and Norwegian and non-Norwegian Bergen residents. The residences for visiting students and scholars were also a space for making friends and for conversation and exchange amongst scholars from different ages, countries, disciplines, and fields.

Surrounded by mountains and the ocean, Bergen is a beautiful place to work in and enjoy. One of the most pleasurable things about Bergen was walking up to mountains for a hike, to enjoy the wonderful views of the city and its neighboring islands, and midnight sunsets. It rained a lot, but there was also plenty of spectacular sunshine that everyone celebrated doing everything outdoors: eating, walking, cooking, playing, reading... And the friends at SKOK were also always ready to invite me for Norwegian meals, to nice cafés, festivals, boat rides, to meet their families and friends, for trips outside the city, and even trusted me their homes when they were away so I could experience Bergen all around.

*Anel Velasquez-Mendez, Ph.D Candidate in Women's and Gender Studies*





## Women's Assistance and Business Agency: Ghana Internship 2009



Ghana was my first taste of Africa. I did not know what to expect and went with an open mind. There were situations where I was forced to be out of my comfort zone. During my first week in Ghana, I started interning at WABA (Women's Assistance and Business Agency) and I had to learn how to travel there by myself. Now, imagine commuting 2 hours without even knowing where you are going in a country that you are not even familiar with! I experienced the true Ghanaian hospitality while traveling on tro-tros, or minibuses. Everyone knew I was a tourist just by my Caucasian skin complexion and made sure that I got off at the right stops. It was during my long morning commutes that I appreciated the Ghanaian culture. I'm



sure that many wondered why an American didn't take the taxi everywhere and instead traveled like the locals. There were many things that I saw and conversations that I had with Ghanaians that I would not have experienced if I acted like a tourist. During my internship at WABA, I traveled to a village in the Eastern Region to conduct research on its microfinance initiative. I observed and helped the women make their batik fabrics, which they would sell, using the profits to lift themselves of poverty.

The women I worked with are impoverished and have HIV/AIDS or are at a high risk of contracting it. During my stay in the village, I met and spoke with the women and asked them what their goals and dreams were in their businesses. It was inspiring to see that although these women were impoverished, they were still persistent in lifting themselves and their families out of poverty. My last week at WABA consisted of writing a proposal of what I thought should be done to improve the microfinance projects. This was a truly memorable experience and I will take what I learned about myself and different cultures to reach my goal of working for a global development organization in the future.

*Parisa Kharazi*

*Senior at Rutgers College double majoring in Middle Eastern Studies and Public Health*

## From the Graduate Fair, Rutgers: Who Will Hire Me?

"What kind of job can I get with this degree?" is the question I heard over and over that morning. Sitting at the tables for the women's and gender studies department at the September 24, 2009, New Brunswick Graduate and Professional School Expo, Margaret Ervin-Willis and I did our best to respond to this query: one can work with a nonprofit organization or a nongovernmental organization, in academia or politics, and, as Margaret pointed out based on her previous work experience, in places like human resources departments of businesses and corporations.

People who stopped at the table appeared satisfied with this response. And while the question is ordinary enough—and certainly is one I ask myself often—it gives me pause. I don't want to claim that our field emerged from a pure activist moment outside capitalist economies, nor do I expect MA and PhD graduates in women's and gender studies to choose to be only and always starving activists. Moreover, by participating in this expo I was selling the department, promising passers-by that their enrollment could benefit them monetarily. What gives me pause, then, is the relation between what the department wants of and for its students and what students themselves want. Neither is static and students want all sorts of different things from an academic program. Yet, as the department prepares to revisit and possibly restructure its graduate programs I wonder how the question—who will hire me?—will shape the discussion.

*By Agatha Beins, Ph.D. Candidate, Women's and Gender Studies*



## Report from the National Women's Studies Association, Atlanta 2009

This November I had the opportunity to travel down to Atlanta, Georgia for the National Women's Studies Association's conference. My roundtable on research and memory provided an opportunity to consider how privilege influences these topics. I appreciated getting to interact with scholars across disciplines about our struggles with pursuing feminist research. I was fortunate to attend two panels featuring women's and gender studies graduate students and *Signs* staff. Jillian Hernandez and I went to Karen Alexander, Deanna Utroske, Julie Salthouse, and Cassandra Scherr's presentation on the origins and work of the online journal *Films for the Feminist Classroom*. There was a lively exchange with the audience on topics such as new media in the classroom, spreading the word about FFC to fields outside of WGS, and the central role of librarians to media collections. Karen and I later enjoyed the panel "Incomplete Pictures." Jillian's paper drew upon work by Chela Sandoval and Donna Haraway to analyze the usage of collage by contemporary artists Wangechi Mutu and Ellen Gallagher. The closing performance by Ali Prosch at the Losing Yourself exhibition of emerging women artists curated by Jillian was the perfect complement to the conference at nearby Georgia State University.

*Ari Rotramel, Ph.D. Candidate in Women's and Gender Studies*

## NWSA Conference: Bridging Generational Gaps

There are moments in one's life that are truly one of a kind. For me the NWSA 2009 conference was one of those moments. This is not to say that every minute was pleasant or comfortable, that would be impossible for a space organized around the theme of difficult dialogues. However, this conference was both empowering and an amazing learning opportunity. There are several things about this conference that made it a success. There are of course factors such as it being a large and fairly well organized event. It also had some amazing events, most notably the keynote speaker Angela Davis (on principle I try to keep embarrassing fan girl tendencies to a minimum but that truly was squeal worthy). However, the most important part of this conference was its diversity, by this I mean diversity in many senses of the word.

NWSA was a moment where people not only met across disciplines, races, and genders; but also across generations. It is not uncommon for a younger feminist scholar to complain that they feel like they don't have a place in the discipline, that our voices are not heard or appreciated. At the same time we have to acknowledge and appreciate that the only reason we are able to be where we are today is due to the work of previous generations. In short we are riding off of the hard earned accomplishments of our elders (many of whom stand before us in our classrooms); yet we need our own opportunities to speak up and be encouraged to take action. NWSA was one moment when it truly felt that people of all generations and educations levels were able to meet, converse, and learn from each other.

This was accomplished from the very start with Davis's keynote speech. Not only was she an inspiring speaker, calling on the importance of alliances across differences, generations being one of these. But she also led by example taking questions from people from all generations and education levels and answering their concerns with seriousness and respect. This example that Davis set only grew as the conference continued, when it became apparent that both the audience members as well as the panel presenters were an even mix of young scholars and the most experienced of academics and activists. I was even pleasantly surprised to see that quite a few undergrads had been able to attend, some traveling across the country to be a part of this event. Most importantly it truly felt like everyone's insights and experiences (at least as far as age difference is concerned) were taken into consideration. Yes, there were moments when the discussions did become difficult but at least in the arena of age this was truly a moment where I could see alliances being made and possibilities being discovered.

*Cassandra Scherr, M.A.*

## The 7<sup>th</sup> European Feminist Research Conference, Utrecht University

This past summer, I had the opportunity to attend the 7<sup>th</sup> European Feminist Research Conference at Utrecht University. The four-day conference was packed with presentations of cutting-edge feminist scholarship, and copious keynote speakers addressed a range of topics. For instance, Anne McClintock opened the conference with an exploration of U.S. empire through a detailed analysis of torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay detention centers. She examined both the gendered politics of torture and the complicities of women in torture. Discussing contemporary theorists' analyses of relations between humans and environments, Clair Colebrook argued that feminist theory needs to address the profound catastrophes facing the earth but without relying on an anthropocentric framework.

Threaded throughout the conference were video vignettes chronicling one undergraduate's quest to figure out what gender studies at Utrecht is all about. Put together in honor of the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Utrecht University's gender studies department, the final video clip was followed with the student's live performance of an original rap song about gender studies, called "What's up with Gender?" The nod to third-wave and hip-hop feminism was much appreciated by the crowd. Bad Brya even enticed them to join in the chorus: "What's up with gender? What's up with race? / Why always the same struggles that we face."

*Andy Mazgaschi, Ph.D. Candidate in Women's and Gender Studies*

## **Women, Culture and Society: Learning Together Through Dialogue**

How to introduce feminism in the classroom can always be a challenge. Because I imagine the common image of feminists to be rather negative in the popular culture and because I fear my students may be put off by the feminist stereotypes, in the very first meeting of the introductory course "Women, Culture, Society," I present myself as one who understands their skepticism towards feminists; a person who has some emotional distance to the "aggressive" feminist movement, a woman who shaves and does not blame shaving of others. Once I even threw a joke, "No, you don't have to burn your bras" and got some laughs. I define feminism rather broadly, and apologetically try to reel students away from their image of "angry chicks." This approach seemed to work for most of the time, until one day a student challenged my insecurity about discussing the feminist movement.

After one of the first classes, the student approached me and asked, "Did you think it was stupid?" I did not understand her question at first. What was stupid? "The women burning bras." It took me a while to understand that her question was not a question, but rather her feminist statement.

The student told me that when she was in high school, she saw a video clip of the 60's feminist movement. She saw the women protesting against what

had been constructed as natural and struggling to reclaim their rights over their bodies. "I noticed that moment, how uncomfortable my bra was." Since then, she began thinking of society's power over her body and began questioning gender "hegemony" – the first term we discussed in the class. "The history of feminist movement is very liberating to me."

The student's comment made me realize that I have underestimated the dynamic resonance of the early feminist movements. I was cajoling the students to think of feminism as an intellectual exercise about power and society. But throughout the teaching I came to realize that many of them do not need me to tell them how their bodies are controlled; my students live in the system already, and surprisingly many of them are more sympathetic about the early feminist movements than my generation of scholars is. To put it simply, "they get it." This was a moment I became a student in the classroom I teach.

This encounter made me learn an important lesson in teaching a feminist course. While I was trying to make my class friendly and enjoyable, I was reminded that what we teach in our department is what the early feminists did and did so effectively: disagreeing.

*Yurika Tamura*

*Ph.D. Candidate Women's and Gender Studies*

### **Digitalizing the Center for Women's Global Leadership's Poster Collection**

With grant support from Rutgers' Academic Excellence fund, the Margery Somers Foster Center, Rutgers Libraries, in partnership with the Women's and Gender Studies Department, is in the process of creating a digital version of approximately 300 posters from the Center for Women's Global Leadership collection. They document the past twenty years of transnational women's activism and the changing issue frames and visual fields of the global women's movement. The digital images, along with their metadata will be available as the *CWGL Collection* in RUcore, the Rutgers Community Institutional Repository, where they will be permanently preserved and made accessible for their continued use. Once all permission forms have been completed by the sponsoring organizations, this collection will facilitate new research on feminist visual cultures, aesthetics, and politics.

For more information on the *CWGL Collection* please contact Kayo Denda, Head, Margery Somers Foster Center ([kdenda@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:kdenda@rci.rutgers.edu)). Information on RUcore is available at:

<http://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/>

*Kayo Denda, MA candidate  
Women's Studies Librarian at Rutgers University Libraries*

### **WGS Ph. D. Graduates Secured Positions in a Difficult Job Market**

Kelly Coogan is Assistant Professor of Women's Studies at Eastern Washington University.

Magda Grabowska joined the Women's and Gender Studies faculty at The College of New Jersey.

Christopher Rivera joined the faculty in Comparative American Studies at Oberlin College.



## Women's and Gender Studies Department Awards Two More Ph.D.s

In April 2009, **Magda Grabowska** completed her Ph. D. in Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers. Utilizing interdisciplinary methods of feminist story telling, discourse analysis, and participant observation, Magda's work contributes to ongoing debates on transnational feminism, cultural politics, sexual strangeness and the politics of location, and addresses the question of how Eastern European feminism fits into ongoing formulation and reformulation of global gender theory. Predominant scholarship in the area of transnational feminisms focuses on the difference between "first" and "third" worlds and omits the "second" world location. Can the analysis of the development of women's experience in post-socialist context utilize the established geopolitical and theoretical frameworks, which are based on dichotomies between East and West, South and North? Or, is a new framework necessary to fully understand the specific historical processes that are at work in this region? Magda's dissertation is an attempt to answer these questions by tracing genealogies of Polish feminism and examining how feminist narratives build upon and transcend local legacies of Catholicism, socialism, and union organizing, while also engaging transnational discourses of "gender equality" and European postcoloniality. Her research investigates the new gender hegemonies and counter-hegemonies produced and employed within post-state-socialist context, and asks how the difference represented by second world locations influences transnational feminist discourses. She argues that identities emerging at the intersections local/global discourses lack steady objectives and clear-cut boundaries and thus become instances of "border" sites that exemplify the workings of scattered hegemonies and competing identity struggles at the individual and collective level.



**Kelly Coogan** defended her dissertation *Feminist Scholarship. Excavating the Archive* in September 2009. Her dissertation addresses the question of how feminist scholars define their field of inquiry. Most feminist scholars rely on a stock narrative of the history of feminist scholarship, which purportedly defines its processes and outcomes by decades—the white liberal feminist 1970s; the women-of-color, postmodern 1980s; and the poststructuralist, difference-focused 1990s. Kelly's contention is that this stock narrative fails to adequately grapple with the complicated mix of forces that came together, and continuously collaborate, to contribute to the emergence of feminist scholarship. Identifying and demonstrating the deficiencies of the stock narrative of feminist scholarship, Kelly develops several alternative accounts of feminist scholarship in its formation, contrasting the explanatory possibilities of approaches drawn from the history of ideas, the sociology of knowledge, and the Foucauldian archaeology. These three alternate accounts illuminate intricate and unexpected connections between academic feminism and geopolitical forces such as the Cold War, increased federal funding for higher education, changing priorities within philanthropic foundations, the emergence of development studies, area studies, and subfields such as Women in Development. By complicating the narrative history of interdisciplinary feminist studies, the dissertation is able to offer a fresh interpretation of the centrality to academic feminism, particularly in postcolonial and transnational feminist scholarship, of key concepts advanced by U.S. scholars of color.



### WGS Conference, Fall 2010: Affective tendencies: Bodies, Pleasures, Sexualities

This conference explores how sexuality, pleasure and bodies constitute, at least in part, affective life. Affective tendencies, orientation, trajectories have regulated how we understand and experience bodies, pleasures, sexualities. How are our conceptions of the body altered and complicated through understandings affective forces? Joy and sadness, as much as passion and desire expand and contract our worlds, while they link bodies in particular ways to living in the world. How are relations of power—those that constitute relations of oppression, whether in terms of gender, race, class, nationality, religion or sexuality—to be understood following the 'affective turn'? How is sexuality to be understood affectively? How is affect to be understood sexually? Are pleasures sexual? Are they always forms of joy? The keynote speakers will include Leo Bersani, Lauren Berlant, David Eng and Jasbir Puar.



## Partnership with Women's and Gender Studies Programs in Europe

The Department of Women's and Gender Studies has started collaboration with GEMMA—The Joint European Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies. The eight partner institutions represent seven European countries with different locations and cultures across all Europe: University of Granada (Spain, Co-ordinator), University of Bologna (Italy), Central European University (Hungary), University of Hull (United Kingdom), Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis (Slovenia), University of Lodz (Poland), University of Oviedo (Spain) and University of Utrecht (Netherlands).

The partnership will take the following forms: admission of GEMMA Master's Degree students in some parts of our courses at master's level; admission of GEMMA Master's Degree students for short periods and collaboration in the supervision of their Master Thesis; admission of European professors of GEMMA Master's Degree in our university for research activities and lectures; and setting up common research programs between European partners of GEMMA Consortium and our university.

This semester, we are delighted to welcome several research scholars from Europe who will be visiting Rutgers in conjunction with our Erasmus Mundus grant from European Union: Suzanne Clisby (University of Hull), Rosemarie Buikema (University of Utrecht), Elzbieta Olesky (University of Lodz), Adelina Sanchez-Espinoza (Granada University) and Svetlana Slapsak (University of Ljubljana).

Celia Garcia Lopez and Vanessa Cristina Vico Miranda, M.A. students from University of Granada, Spain, will be taking courses with the Women's and Gender Studies Department under the auspices of this grant.

### Spring 2010 Lectures, Research Briefings and Performances

Professor Emily Allen Hornblower, Classics Department, Rutgers

***Pain and the Sexes: An Exploration of Gender and Suffering in Ancient Greece***

Monday, February 1, Noon, Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building, 103-104

*Women's and Gender Studies Research Briefing*

Professor Joan Fujimura, University of Wisconsin

***Circumventing or Reifying Race? The Use of Ancestry Versus Race in Biomedical Human Genetic Research.***

Tuesday, February 16, 4:30 pm, Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building, 103-104

*Women's and Gender Studies Lecture Series, Co-Sponsored by Douglass Residential College and Global Initiatives*

Zetta Elliott, Ph.D., Playwright, Poet, and Novelist

***Decolonizing the Imagination: Afro-Urban Magic and the Door of No Return***

Tuesday, March 1, Noon, Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building, 103-104

*Women's and Gender Studies Research Briefing*

Professor Sarah Richardson, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

***Women, Chromosomes and Chimpanzees: Gender in Contemporary Genomics***

Tuesday, March 11, 4:30 pm, Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building, 103-104

*Women's and Gender Studies Lecture Series, Co-Sponsored by Global Initiative*

Professor Evie Shockley, Rutgers University, English Department

***Title: TBA***

March 30, Noon, Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building

*Women's and Gender Studies Research Briefing*

Professor E. Patrick Johnson, Northwestern University

***POURING TEA (A Performance Piece Based on His Book, SWEET TEA: BLACK GAY MEN OF THE SOUTH)***

Thursday April 1, 4:30 pm, Ruth Dill Johnson Crockett Building, 103-104

*Women's and Gender Studies Lecture Series, Co-Sponsored by Global Initiative*

April 21, 3:00 Women's and Gender Studies Honors Presentations, RDJC Building 103-104

May 4, 4:00 Women's and Gender Studies Year End Gathering, RDJC Building 103-104



*Mary Hartman's Celebration of Scholarship and Leadership*



*End of Year Gathering - December 2009*



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