

September 5, 2018

TO: The Women's and Gender Studies Community

FROM: Mary Trigg, Chair

### **Fall Welcome Back Letter**

Welcome to the new members of our community, and welcome back to those who are returning. I hope your summer was productive and relaxing, and that you are gearing up for an excellent year ahead. There is much to anticipate. I am delighted to welcome internationally recognized scholar, journalist, and author Naomi Klein, who will be part of our community and working with our students over the next three years. Naomi Klein's most recent books include *The Battle for Paradise: Puerto Rico Takes On the Disaster Capitalists* (2018), and *No Is Not Enough: Resisting the New Shock Politics and Winning the World We Need* (2017).

I am also happy to welcome Fulbright Visiting Scholar Manjula Bharathi, who is visiting our department this year (with her daughter and husband) from Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, India. Manjula Bharathi's areas of research include gender and local governance and gender and micro-credit, and she will be working on a project titled "Engendering Power Spaces for Rights Based Development: Understanding the Local Governance and Gender in USA and India." Radhika Balakrishnan is serving as the faculty sponsor for her visit.

I also want to welcome Yana Rodgers as Undergraduate Director and Jasbir Puar as Graduate Director: they have assumed the reins and will be in these positions for the next two years. Please join me in thanking them for their important service to our department, along with Ethel Brooks, who served as Interim Undergraduate Director, and Ed Cohen, who served as Interim Graduate Director, both last year. We also welcome two new Ph.D. students, Milton Achelpohl and Rawshan Fatima, and four new MA students, Desiree Amboree, Ghermawit Berhane, Caitlin Brown, and Alii Londres.

Two celebratory notes: in June the Board of Governors approved Abena Busia, who is currently on leave as Ghana's ambassador to Brazil, for promotion to Professor. In addition, Jasbir Puar's book *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Duke University Press, 2017) has been selected as one of two winners of the NWSA 2018 Alison Piepmeier Book Prize. The prize is awarded for groundbreaking scholarship in women, gender, and sexuality studies that makes significant contributions to feminist disability studies. Please join me in welcoming and congratulating our new, and continuing, colleagues.

### **WGS Fall Events**

It is shaping up to be another busy fall. We begin with our annual fall welcome and barbecue lunch, which we are co-hosting with the Institute for Women's Leadership, on Monday, September 10<sup>th</sup> at 12:30, after our first faculty meeting of the year. Please join us! On Friday September 14<sup>th</sup> the faculty are holding an all-day retreat at the Rutgers Club on Livingston Campus.

Mark your calendars for Friday, September 21 at 2:00, when Gloria Steinem and Naomi Klein will join together for a conversation moderated by journalist Farai Chideya as they think about

the ways that information technology and new media are reshaping culture and power relationships, as well as the challenges ahead for progressive movements in the United States and beyond. The conversation will be in room 2125 in the Rutgers Academic Building, 15 Seminary Place.

We are looking forward to our daylong graduate student conference, “Bodies of Power/Theory in the Flesh,” on Friday, October 5<sup>th</sup>. The conference will bring together graduate students from departments both within Rutgers as well as from universities across the tri-state area to address the relations between embodiment and power through lenses including Chicana and Black feminist and critical theory.

On Thursday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at 4:00, WGS is sponsoring “Dink Dykes: Lesbian Culture at Douglass College, 1967-1977,” a roundtable discussion moderated by Kay Turner ’71.

On Thursday, November 29<sup>th</sup> at 4:00, Women’s and Gender Studies is sponsoring “Disaster Capitalism: A Panel with Naomi Klein, Jasbir Puar, and Ethel Brooks.” This will be a roundtable discussion on disaster capitalism as it pertains to Puerto Rico, Palestine, and Roma dispossession.

Finally, Deb Vargas will be organizing book talks for our own recently published authors, which we will be announcing shortly.

I close by thanking each of you for your hard work, commitment to our students or to your studies, and for all you give to Women’s and Gender Studies. At a moment when gender studies is under attack in some locations (the Hungarian government has proposed a law which would cancel an accredited, well-performing MA program in gender studies), our political investment in this field is crucial. I look forward to an exciting and productive year ahead.