

Feminist Trajectories

DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES NEWSLETTER **SPRING 2013**

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Why Feminism?

Letter from the Chair

- Dr. Abena P. A. Busia

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to another spring semester: as always it is not quite spring when we begin the semester but the promise of its arrival is one that always makes these few chaotic weeks bearable. Spring always comes and marches toward Summer in the weeks that we are working together again towards the conclusion of another academic year.

As you all know by now, the start of this semester has been a little more chaotic this year as we have begun this semester with Monique Gregory on extended medical leave. We wish her all the best in her recovery. As you can imagine having 50% of our senior office staff absent, challenges us all, and I ask you to bear with us as Suzy, our GA, and work-study students work valiantly to meet all our demanding needs.

We have a busy semester in front of us both of our own making and as a consequence of the radical changes taking place at this University. Those things of our own making, give us much to look forward to. Brittany Cooper has at our request organized the two workshops on digital pedagogy, the first of which occurred on Monday, February 11. The

second will be in early April; please look out for the announcement of the date once confirmed. Much thanks to Brittney for her enthusiasm and diligence in helping us all master innovative ways of communicating amongst ourselves, and with our students. In addition, in the second week of February, ACLS Fellow Caroline Whittington's much anticipated seminar "Re-Membering Native America:

Archives, Bodies, and Communities", co-sponsored with American Studies, took place on Friday, February 15, in the Alexander Library Teleconference Lecture Hall.

One glance at our IWL and IRW calendars will confirm that March is an over busy month. I would, however, like to single out two WGS co-sponsored

events: on March 8, The Center for African Studies holds its annual spring seminar, this year on "Writing through the Visual Virtual: Inscribing Language, Literature and Culture in Francophone Africa and the Caribbean (<http://ruafrica.rutgers.edu/wvv/program.html>) which brings together a wealth of filmmakers, choreographers, scholars, and artists working on or from the Francophone world to campus. The conference highlights the work and concerns of women artists including a performance by Senegalese



choreographer Gnagna Gueye, creator of the solo dance “Ni Blanch Ni Noire” interrogating the cultural preference for light skin in certain African societies, on Thursday night, and a screening of the documentary by Khardiata Pouye on skin bleaching, “Cette couleur qui me derange,” which will be shown on Thursday afternoon.

The second event, also on March 8-9, is one of our two bittersweet farewells of this academic year. In a well deserved symposium in her honor “Other Lives, Other Voices: Bonnie Smith and the Mirror of History,” we help the Department of History bid farewell to one of the stalwart founders of women’s history, not only here at Rutgers, but around the world.

The second bittersweet farewell will be occasioned by the imminent retirement of Cheryl Clarke from the University after about 40 years of service in various capacities, ending up as the Dean of Students for Livingston Campus and as Director of Social Justice Education — one of the core people responsible for the creation of our Minor in Social Justice. Watch this space for the announcement of festivities in her honor.

Of the things that have affected us as part of the Rutgers community, we are all getting to know a new President, brought in to supervise the acquisition of the new medical school, who is therefore, wanting to implement very quickly a new strategic plan. We are happy to be part of this conversation. The individual faculty

surveys have already been sent out to us and I encourage all of us to fill them out and submit them. Our Executive Committee is also working out how to respond to questions posed by both the President and the Executive Dean of SAS to ensure how we can forward our own departmental discussions and have our vision be incorporated into the larger vision of the University. We are determined that as a community of feminist scholars interested in the rights of all individuals, our voices and ideas which have transformed Rutgers in the past will continue to help shape the new Rutgers. We have much work ahead of us, let us help each other do it.

With all good wishes for a successful semester.

News from the Graduate Director

- Dr. Yana Rodgers

The Graduate Program in Women’s and Gender Studies started the 2012-13 academic year in the wake of some excellent news earlier in the spring. Our department had two winners among the recipients of the Graduate School of New Brunswick’s Awards for Excellence in Teaching and Dissertation Teaching. **Ed Cohen** won the graduate faculty teaching award, in recognition of his history of effective and creative teaching; and **Bahia Munem** won a Dissertation Teaching award based on a proposal for an upper level undergraduate class to be developed over the summer. They have both made outstanding contributions to the success of our Graduate Program, and the Department is honored that their efforts are being recognized. We also learned that PhD candidate **Jillian Hernandez** was awarded a Dissertation Fellowship from the American Association of University Women for her research on “The Politics of Sexual Aesthetics: Women and Girls Crafting Bodies.” She also received an offer of a tenure-track assistant professor position in Critical Gender Studies and Ethnic Studies at the University of California – San Diego. Congratulations Jillian!

In Fall 2012 we welcomed a wonderful

new cohort of entering MA and PhD students. Their intellectual interests and scholarly backgrounds are as diverse and rich as their living experiences and practical training. And just as our new cohort started their fall coursework, we have begun the new recruiting season,



highlighted by a strong presence of our graduate student volunteers at the MA and PhD reception at the November meeting of the National Women’s Studies Association Conference. This fall we also saw several students in the earlier cohort pass their written comprehensive exams. Congratulations to **Max Hantel**, **Carolina Alonso Bejarano**, **Stephen Seely**, **Nafisa**

Tanjeem, and **Kathe Sandler**.

Congratulations also go to three of our graduate students who have earned competitive fellowships and seminar positions for next year. **Miriam Tola** and **Max Hantel** both were awarded one year of fellowship support to participate in the 2013-14 seminar at the Rutgers Center for Cultural Analysis. **Anel Mendez Velazquez** has earned a spot in the Institute for Research on Women 2013-14 seminar.

The Fall 2012 semester has already seen several of our graduate students complete their degrees. In October, **Kate Slider** defended her practicum report and finished her MA, and **Anahi Russo Garrido** defended her dissertation and completed her PhD. Three more students defended their MA theses later in the fall semester in order to graduate in January 2013: congratulations to **Laura Mingers**, **Anastasia Hardin**, and **Samantha Bobila**. And many kudos to **Jeanne Roach-Baptiste** and **Debotri Dhar** for defending their PhD dissertations in December 2012, and also for a May 2013 diploma.

Some exciting news from **Julie Rajan**, our MA Director. Thanks to Julie’s hard work,

Rutgers University has joined the GEMMA European Exchange Program. The GEMMA Program in Women's Studies features a Consortium of European Universities that offers a Masters in Women's Studies. This Consortium is sponsored by the European Commission. The Program is two years in length. MA students in our department may visit two European Universities in which to complete coursework and benefit from scholarly mentorship. In their fourth term they will return to Rutgers to complete their thesis. The participating European universities are: Lodz, Poland; Oviedo, Spain; Granada, Spain; Hull, UK; Utrecht, Netherlands; and Bologna, Italy. Julie will be providing a workshop on this exchange in February 2013. Details to come by email.

Also in the works are continued professional development workshops. Professors **Kyla Schuller** and **Julie Rajan** have again proven instrumental in offering their expertise in a number of workshops for PhD and MA students in the past year. Topics have included preparing for the job market, thesis writing, practicum experiences, and crafting a good CV and

cover letter. In January, we offered a workshop on preparing for the oral comprehensive exam. Professor **Mary Hawkesworth** offered a professional development workshop for both graduate students and assistant professors on publishing in feminist journals on Wednesday, February 27, 2013. Several more topics will be covered in the spring.

We also continue to hear good news from our MA and PhD alums. Among our MA alums, **Neha Kagal** was accepted to the PhD program in Development Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. It is a three year program and she began last September. She received a three-year scholarship and will be studying with Professor Naila Kabeer as her advisor. And **Jessica Valenti** — called one of the Top 100 Inspiring Women in the world by The Guardian — continues to make headlines. She has authored three books, she is the founder of Feministing.com, and her writing has appeared in The Washington Post, The Nation, The Guardian (UK), The American Prospect, Ms. Magazine, Salon, and Bitch magazine. She has won a Choice USA Generation award and the 2011 Hillman

Journalism Prize for her work with Feministing. She has appeared on The Colbert Report and the Today show, and was profiled in The New York Times Magazine under the headline "Fourth Wave Feminism."

Our recent PhD alums have also sent us some good news. **Sonja Thomas** accepted a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor at Colby College in Maine, and she began teaching in Fall 2012. Also, **Anahi Russo Garrido** accepted a one-year Postdoctoral Fellowship at Carleton College in Minnesota; **Ariella Rotramel** accepted a visiting assistant professor position at Connecticut College; and **Catherine Sameh** has been working as Associate Director of the Center for Research on Women at Barnard College. Congratulations to our wonderful alumni.

Finally, this newsletter contribution would be remiss without thanking, profusely, all the hard work of **Monique Gregory**, **Suzy Kiefer**, and **Nafisa Tajeem** in supporting the graduate program. Collectively we are that much more organized, informed, strengthened, and encouraged by their efforts and grace.

New Faculty Profile

Welcome Professor Brittney Cooper!

Professor Brittney Cooper joined the Departments of Women's & Gender Studies and Africana Studies last Fall after serving as Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the Rutgers Center for Race & Ethnicity in 2011-2012. Her research focuses on historical and contemporary iterations of Black feminist thought. In Professor Cooper's first book project *Race Women: Gender and the Making of a Black Public Intellectual Tradition, 1892-Present*, currently in-progress, she traces the historical trajectory of Black women's intellectual theorizing of Black identity, gender politics, and the role of knowledge production in shaping public opinion. She argues that a group of women known as "race women" were among the first Black public intellectuals, and that they exposed the ways in which knowledge production is neither a race, nor gender neutral project. Professor Cooper is also



interested in contemporary feminist theorizing and movement building and representations of race and gender in popular culture. She is co-founder of the Crunk Feminist Collective, a women-of-color hip hop feminist blogging group, whose blog was named one of the top 25

"Lady Blogs" by New York Magazine in 2011. The CFC is playing a significant role in the emerging conversation about digital feminisms and online feminist movement building. The CFC also has a range of community projects designed to extend feminist outreach to non-academic communities. Two of their most notable projects include their Feminism 101 Workshops for Girls, and their dispensation of "Feminist Care Packages," in support of people who are being attacked in a sexist manner, and to call to account celebrities and public figures who engage in sexist acts. In 2013, the CFC will launch a monthly web-based video chat series with feminist and social justice activists. Professor Cooper teaches courses on Black Feminisms, Hip Hop, African American Intellectual History, Feminist Theory and Practice, and Race and Gender in Popular Culture.

Faculty Research Report

Do Romani People have a Right to the City?

- Dr. Ethel Brooks

The search for a good stopping place, for a *kushti atchin tan*, as we would say in Romani, is what brought me to London and to the CCW Graduate School. I began my tenure as the US-UK Fulbright Distinguished Chair at the University of the Arts asking, "Do Gypsies—Romani people—have a right to the city?" With an emphasis on shifting notions of citizenship, belonging, and global integration, and an examination of racial regimes and land tenure practices in a global city, I proposed to explore post-war to neo-liberal practices of racialization, gendering and land tenure through the prism of Romani productivity and occupation of urban space. I set out to investigate the relation between city planning and the maintenance of Romani populations as constitutive outsiders to modern city spaces, and, by extension, to contemporary citizenship regimes. I pondered the questions: Are Romani people simply "out of place?" Is there a Romani right to and history of place in the city? What kinds of practices go into the search for a *kushti atchin tan* in London?

During my time in London, and my residence at CCW and TrAIN, I found a good stopping place in every way imaginable. I arrived in the wake of the London Riots, in the midst of the Occupy protests, and in the lead-up to the 2012 Olympics. It was a critical moment to be in London, studying the question of who belongs in the city and whose histories are told. I was able to carry out research on

the Roma, Gypsy and Traveler families who were shifted from what is now the site of London's 2012 Olympics, and to be part of a greater creative project of imagining the city in the midst of its transformation. Over the course of last year, as the US-UK Fulbright Distinguished Chair at UAL, I made connections with researchers who were working on identity formation, artistic practice, and



transnationalism; I connected with artists, activists, and scholars and have created networks that have pushed me to think in different ways, to take my research in unforeseen, absolutely transformative directions, and to engage in practice—scholarly, artistic and political—in ways that I had never before considered. I have learned so much from this community of artists, scholars, teachers, and curators; my own work has been transformed through my year at UAL. I am continuing my connection with CCW and TrAIN as a Tate-Train Transnational Fellow at the

University of the Arts—London, even though my Fulbright year has ended.

I am currently working on a book project coming out of the research I did at TrAIN, which looks at the Romani right to the city and political practice manifested through visual culture and artistic practice. I have also been doing digital humanities-focused work on Holocaust narratives by Romani women, and have been in residence at USC in both the Shoah Foundation Archive and the Institute for Multimedia Literacy to carry out that work. Finally, I have been working with a number of organizations in London and am instituting a project on Romani visual culture that will be launched in 2013. Last year, I presented my work all over the UK—from St. Andrew's to Cardiff to Sussex to Edinburgh and London—as well as in various places in Europe: Graz, Budapest, Granada, and Jaén, among others. I am part of a growing network of Romani

scholars that spreads across Europe and into the Americas. In 2011 and 2012, I served as a public member of the US Delegation to the OSCE Human Dimension meetings in Warsaw, and presented the US statements on Roma and Sinti issues. In January 2013, I spoke at the UN Holocaust Commemoration Ceremony as the first Romani. It was a very moving ceremony, and afterwards, many Holocaust survivors came to speak to me about their experiences. I will be following up and talking with them at more length in the next months.

Why Feminism?



Dr. Ethel Brooks received the prestigious 2011-2012 Fulbright – University of the Arts, London Distinguished Chair award. She was the Editor of Comparative Perspective Symposium on Romani Feminisms for *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Fall 2012. She also served as the Mellon Fellow in Digital Humanities at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, in August 2012.

Conference Updates

Exploring the Politics of Gender in North Africa

- Dr. Mary Hawkesworth

Dr. Mary Hawkesworth, a founding member of the International Social Science Council Research Committee on Gender, Globalization and Democratization, was one of four scholars from North America who participated in the Conference in Fez.

Women's militant activism during the Arab Spring, the scope of democratic consolidation, secular versus Islamist governance, and the invention of "tradition" to sustain contemporary sectarian projects were just a few of the topics addressed in a one-day conference on "The Politics of Gender in North Africa" convened on July 16, 2012 in Fez, Morocco under the auspices of the International Social Science Council Research Committee on Gender, Globalization, and Democratization. Organized by Professor Souad Slaoui of the Faculty of Letters Dhar EL Mehraz at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, the conference examined changing economic, political, and social structures and their effects on gender relations in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. Featured speakers included Professor Amal Grami (University of La Monouba, Tunisia), Professor Soumaya Belhabib (Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Ibn Toufail,



Kénitra), Professor Malika Benouda (University of Blida, Algeria), Professor Fatima Sadiqi (ISIS Center for Women and Development), Professor Souad Slaoui, Professor Moha Ennaji (International Institute for Languages and Cultures), Professor Fatima Rorchi (Faculty of Social, Economic and Political Sciences, Moulay Ismail University, Meknèz), and Professor Mohammed Yachoulti (Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University). Each of the speakers provided fascinating analyses of women's complex negotiations of challenges created by the competing forces of

globalization (often construed as "Americanization" in North Africa) and Islamization. As Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Western nations launch major media initiatives to promote their own foreign policy goals, women's rights activists devise strategies to reduce autocratic and arbitrary power within their nations, to resist new modes of colonization, and preserve their cultures while pressing for equal power. As in other regions of the world, the issue agenda remains packed, ranging from converting political rights into full economic participation, seeking equality in governance (Algeria has established a 27% quota for women in the Parliament compared to Morocco's 15% quota in the Assembly and 30% quota in local government), politicizing and eliminating domestic violence, and creating alternatives to marriage to fostering feminist knowledge production and dissemination within universities and civil society organizations.

Rutgers, Barnard, and Spelman Explore Women's Leadership

- Dr. Mary Trigg

"Desperately Seeking a Feminist Approach to Women's Leadership Studies," a one-day mini-conference held at Barnard College last May, considered the state of research, theory, and practice on women's leadership. The Institute for Women's Leadership joined forces with Barnard College's Athena Center for Leadership Studies and Spelman College's Women's Resource and Research Center to host this lively conversation. Rutgers' Alison Bernstein, Barnard's Kathryn Kolbert, and Spelman's Beverly Guy-Sheftall convened the conference, which Mary Trigg organized. One of the goals of the gathering was to begin to build a collaborative network of scholars, graduate students, and practitioners whose research and work investigate

activist practice, and to expand scholarly definitions and analysis of women's leadership — what it is and how it can be taught.



Some ideas taken up at the conference included best practices in teaching feminist leadership to students, individualistic leadership versus collective leadership, and the role of structure,

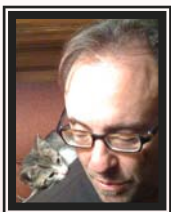
power, and agency in leadership. Speakers included Judith Brodsky, Ruth Mandel, Mary Hawkesworth, and Charlotte Bunch from Rutgers; Kimberly Springer from Ohio State University; Flora Davidson and Jacqueline Olvera from Barnard, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall from Spelman. The three centers/institutes hosted a second symposium in January 2013 at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. This gathering focused on women's leadership in higher education and reflected on whether progressive feminist leadership can be operationalized in higher education. The gathering also considered model pedagogy and practices for teaching women's leadership. For more information on the initiative, contact Professor Mary Trigg at trigg@rci.rutgers.edu.

Faculty Honors, Awards, and Accomplishments

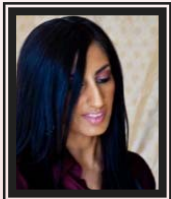


Carlos Decena completed a three year term as Undergraduate Program Director, Department of Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers University. He also completed a two year term as part of the program committee for National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference. He fundraised and organized the

Conference *Transnational Hispaniola* held at Rutgers University in April 2012. His first book, *Tacit Subjects*, was awarded Honorable Mention for the Latino Section Book Prize from the Latin American Studies Association (LASA).



Ed Cohen won the Graduate Faculty Teaching Award, in recognition of his history of effective and creative teaching, from the Graduate School—New Brunswick.

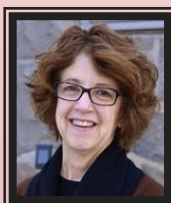


Jasbir Puar was appointed Edward Said Chair at the American University of Beirut 2012-13 and was awarded Northeast Universities Association of Graduate Schools Teaching Award.



Joanna Regulska has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the Tbilisi State University, Georgia in Gender Studies for "the outstanding contribution in the development of teaching, research, expertise, and internationalization of disciplines," and was appointed member of the Academic Advisory

Council of the Academic Fellowship Program (AFP) of the International Higher Education Support Program (HESP), Open Society Institute (Hungary).



Judith Gerson received the Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences Award for Distinguished Contributions to Undergraduate Education. She served as a visiting scholar at the Department of Gender Studies at Utrecht University, Netherlands in Fall 2012. She published "Family Matters: German Jewish Masculinities among

Nazi Era Refugees," a chapter in *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History*, edited by Benjamin Maria Baader, Sharon Gillerman, and Paul Lerner (Indiana University Press).



Marisa Fuentes has been awarded The Association of Caribbean Historians' Ramos Mattei-Neville Hall Article Prize for the best article written between 2008 and 2011. The prize was awarded for her article "Power and Historical Figuring: Rachael Pringle Polgreen's Troubled Archive" published in *Gender &*

History (2010). She has also received two prestigious

fellowships: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture for the Fall of 2012 and a Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship for 2012/2013 academic year.



Mary Hawkesworth participated in the International Political Science Meeting in Madrid July 7-12, 2012, giving a paper on theoretical issues in gender and politics research in the 21st century, and organizing a workshop on innovative approaches in the teaching of feminist theory around the globe.

Her new book, *Political Worlds of Women:*

Activism, Advocacy and Governance in the 21st Century, published in February 2012, was featured in a special "Author Meets Critics" session at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association in Portland, Oregon, March 22-24, 2012.



Nancy Hewitt was the keynote speaker at the Seneca Falls Dialogue Conference, a biennial gathering of scholars, students, and activists to discuss issues critical to women. The theme for the October 2012 conference was The Politics of Leadership and Civil Rights, and her talk focused on "Race, Region, and Rights: Recasting

the U.S. Women's Suffrage Movement, 1865-1965." She was presented with the second biennial Women's Institute for Learning and Leadership Award for "fostering collaboration between traditionally disconnected groups dedicated to the education, leadership, and empowerment of women and girls for positive societal change" (The first was given to Beverly Guy-Sheftall in 2010). Dr. Hewitt was also added to the National Women's Hall of Fame Life and Legacies Book.



Nikol Alexander-Floyd is serving as Chair of the American Political Science Association's Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession. She also completed a two year term as Program Co-Chair for the Annual Meeting of the National Women's Studies Association.



Radhika Balakrishnan was asked by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to moderate a panel discussion on women's economic, social, and cultural rights at the 21st session of the Council on September 20, 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland. On June 21, 2012, she served as a speaker at the plenary on

"Creating Economic Opportunities for Women" at the National Council for Research on Women Annual Conference. She also spoke at the IAFFE conference roundtables: "Social Movements Dealing with the Crisis – Feminist Economics at a Crossroads" and "UN Women: Women's Economic Empowerment" on June 21, 2012.

The Livingston Social Justice Learning Community

- Cheryl Clarke, Livingston Campus Dean of Students

Social Justice Learning Community is sponsored by the Department of Women's and Gender Studies, the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities, and the Office of Academic Engagement, Rutgers, New Brunswick/Piscataway Campus.

Planning for the Livingston Social Justice Learning Community (LSJLC) began in 2007, when the director of the Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities (SJE; Cheryl Clarke) and former chairperson of the Women's and Gender Studies Department (WGS; Mary Hawkesworth) collaborated to develop a co-curricular program for first year students that combined the curricular goals of the new Social Justice Minor (WGS) and those of an activist learning community. The overarching goal of the LSJLC is to produce the next generation of social justice advocates, activists, and educators through credit-bearing, co-curricular, and community engagement experiences. The "Introduction to Social Justice" and "Practicing Social Justice" courses were specifically developed to link to the Learning Community. The Alternative Spring Break, a weeklong activity, is also an attractive feature of the LSJLC.

The legacy of Livingston College reminds us of the time in our country when radical change seemed possible and imminent. Indeed, Livingston, founded in 1969, was one of the first colleges to provide radical alternatives — in a public university context — to the traditional liberal arts education and the first co-educational liberal arts college of Rutgers University's New Brunswick/Piscataway campus. Livingston College brought together students, faculty, and staffs who committed themselves to learning and activism that sustained a generation of social change agents. Often the faculty were more radical than the students, according to Peter Klein, a former Livingston College faculty person.

In concert with the Office of Undergraduate Engagement (Ghada Endick and Rosanna Reyes), WGS (Barbara Balliet) and SJE (Jenny Kurtz) recruited the first cohort of LSJLC members in the Fall of 2009. For the first three years of its existence, LSJLC was housed in Quad 1,

House 21 and was strictly a residential program. Since 2011, LSJLC enhanced its community diversity by including commuter, SEBS and RBS undergraduates. Alternative Spring Break trips to social justice retreat sites like the Highlander Research and Education Center in Knoxville, Tennessee, Stone House in Mebane, N.C., and most recently Pendle Hill Quaker Center for Study and Contemplation in Wallingford, Pennsylvania have served as mobilizing



points for the LSJLC Alternative Break experience. Students have gained social justice practice skills in community centers, non-profit and non-governmental organizations, urban and rural gardens, and food cooperatives. All Alternative Spring Break trips have been funded by the Office of Academic Affairs. LSJLC students are from California, Maryland, Washington, Virginia, D.C., as well as from all over the great state of New Jersey. They are first generation college students, first generation U.S. citizens, upper middle class; African-American, Nigerian, Liberian, Caribbean, Latina/o, Euro-American, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Chinese, Korean backgrounds; women, men, queer, straight, allies. Students' social justice concerns are as varied as their backgrounds: including, environmental, gender, food, immigration, race, and economic justice concerns. Students are encouraged and required to participate in group social

action projects, community service, campus and community activism, lectures, talks, and special class sessions.

The LSJLC, like most Learning Communities on campus, promotes a more coherent and communal experience for undergraduates. They also serve as gateways to other academic and student leadership experiences. Former members of the LSJLC have served as Peer Academic Leaders and Resident Assistants to succeeding LSJLC cohorts; others have joined the Leadership Scholars at the IWL; interned at the Center for Women's Global Leadership; founded the student organization SOCS (Students Organizing Change in Society). Twenty-thousand-twelve marked the first LSJLC graduating class.

Lastly, "social justice" is a broad rubric for concepts of power, privilege, institutionalized and internalized oppressions, modes of resistance, community building across differences, the interactions and intersections among the constructs of gender, race, class, sexuality, citizenship; the histories of liberation struggles and of empire, decolonization, neo-colonization, and post-colonial assertions. Students in LSJLC are given the opportunity and experience to tease these concepts into practice. Please contact Cheryl Clarke at 848-445-4088 for more information .



Why Feminism?

Postdoctorate Profiles

Dr. Nadia Guessous

Nadia Guessous received her PhD in Anthropology from Columbia University in 2011. Her research interests include gender and feminism; the anthropology of progressive politics; religion and secularism; modern subjectivity; affect and viscosity; postcolonial feminist theory; and the Middle East, North Africa, and Islam. Prior to joining Rutgers, Dr. Guessous was a Faculty Fellow at the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at NYU, where she taught graduate courses in Anthropology and Gender Studies while directing the MA program. She was also a Five College Fellow in the department of Women's and Gender Studies at Amherst College, where she taught on the anthropology of women and gender in the Middle East. She is the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships, including a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Award, an American Institute for Maghrib Studies Long Term Research grant, a Woodrow Wilson Foundation Women's Studies Dissertation Fellowship, and a Five College Fellowship. She has published articles and book reviews in *Confluences Méditerranée*, *The Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, and *Jadaliyya*; and has forthcoming articles in *The Review of Middle East Studies* and *Arab Studies Journal*.

Dr. Guessous is currently working on a book project that describes the sense of anxiety, exhaustion, and disorientation that prevails among older leftist feminists

in the wake of the Islamic Revival in contemporary Morocco. The book raises questions about the faith in the promises of secular modernity that undergirds this anxiety and argues that it gives rise to an exclusionary politics of avoidance which comes in the way of intergenerational exchange. The book contributes to thinking about feminism in non-teleological ways by highlighting some of

her time at Rutgers so far.

Dr. Guessous is teaching an undergraduate course that uses key texts and debates in Middle East and Islamic feminist studies to think about the politics of feminism, feminist subjectivity, and the relationship between feminism and modernity this spring. The course explores a number of interconnected questions,

including: 1) How are feminist texts from the Middle East and/or the Muslim world interpreted in translation? How are these texts made to speak in their transnational circulation? What are they heard as saying? What circuits of power do feminist texts and discourses about women's rights in the Middle East and the Muslim world get inserted into? 2) What does it mean to inhabit a feminist subjectivity? What goes into the making of a feminist subject?

How have Middle Eastern and Muslim feminists been called upon to construct and inhabit a

particular kind of feminism? 3) What is the relationship between feminism and modernity? What normative assumptions (about the past, about tradition, freedom, the body, etc.) tend to underlie feminist aspirations, critiques, and politics? What possibilities are opened up and/or foreclosed when speaking in the name of feminism? What ways of being are disavowed in the name of feminism and progress? What are some of the current debates taking place amongst feminists on the question of religion and secularism?



Postdoctorates from Left: Nadia Guessous, Ikuko Asaka, and Yanoula Athanassakis

the tragic consequences that can accompany the search for its realization. The project also seeks to think about the affect of politics and the centrality of embodiment to questions of modern subjectivity. As a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Dr. Guessous has been grateful for the opportunity to focus on her writing and has most appreciated being surrounded by a dynamic and inspiring interdisciplinary feminist and gender studies community. The weekly seminar at the Institute for Research on Women has been one of the highlights of

Why Feminism?



Postdoctorate Profiles

Dr. Ikuko Asaka



Currently, I am working on a book project, titled *Geographies of Freedom: Race, Intimacy, and Empire in the Anglo-American World, 1775-1879*. It connects African American history to studies of British and U.S. imperial and colonial orders, with an analytical emphasis on the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality in the formation of hierarchical geographies. The book illustrates

how spatial regulation of free black populations in North America was a central dynamic of British and U.S. territorial and labor designs that extended to different parts of the Atlantic (and South Asia and Oceania in the case of Britain) and how free black men and women alternatively defined their own terms of belonging in their respective empires, employing diasporic politics and representational tools of mobility. Ultimately, *Geographies of Freedom* argues that the contests over the place of black freedom in Britain and the U.S. took shape as conflicts over the racial boundaries of continental settler expansion in North America and that ideas about normative gender and sexual relations constituted such contestations.

I have also launched a new project which investigates various discourses on Asian sexuality and gender in the nineteenth-century United States. In much of the current literature on the history of Asian/Asian American sexuality, discussions center on the process of racialization and exclusion based on notions of deviance. My work, by contrast, seeks to illuminate heterogeneous racial discourses about Asians formed in connection to divergent ideas about Asian sexual and gender relations. The variety of racial, gender, and sexual figurations, I hope to show, coincided with various and changing visions of U.S. engagement in the Pacific.

On the teaching side, I have designed three courses for this year. In the Fall 2012, I taught a course aimed to deepen and complicate students' understandings of important feminist questions by using the lens of historical analysis. Comparing and connecting U.S. contexts with examples from Iran, Japan, Africa, Europe, and Latin America, the course examined diverse gender and sexuality systems from the classical to modern era as well as the historical processes by which Western dichotomous paradigms have crossed borders and generated contests and negotiations over the reconfiguration of social relations. Students also learned how race, gender, and sexuality as modern categories have intersected with one another in their construction of differences and hierarchies. I am teaching a survey course on women, gender, and sexuality in U.S. history and an upper-division course on race, gender, and sexuality in U.S. imperialism this spring.

Dr. Yanoula Athanassakis



An ACLS Faculty Fellow (2012-2014), Yanoula Athanassakis received her Ph.D. in English (American Literature), with a Global Studies emphasis, from the University of California at Santa Barbara. Following her Ph.D., she held a one-year postdoctoral appointment as the College of Creative Studies Literature Fellow at UCSB and there she taught courses on border culture, war, and

environmental literature. Her interests include the politics of environmental justice, representations of immigration, and the body in contemporary U.S. multi-ethnic literatures, global and transnational approaches to "American" texts, and theories of corporeality. Her book project dovetails with the transnational turn in American Studies and with emerging concerns of environmental justice. In her roles as Managing Editor for Special Forums for *The Journal of Transnational American Studies* (JTAS) and as Co-director of the UC Summer Study Abroad to Greece Program, she works to keep her teaching and research relevant to an international audience. Her publications include poetry translations from English to demotic Greek of both more traditional and experimental, digital projects. She has published articles on psychosomatic trauma in U.S. literature, the intersection of postcolonial politics and transnational studies in the writing of Kiran Desai, and on filmic and literary representations of human rights violations on the U.S.-Mexico border. She is currently working on two articles, one on labor rights in the San Joaquin Valley and the other on Asian American literature and the environment. At Rutgers, Yanoula is teaching courses on gendered representations of consumption, gender and violence, and environmental justice and women's literature.



Why Feminism?

Graduate Research Highlights

The Power of Sexual Aesthetics: Women and Girls Crafting Bodies

- Jillian Hernandez

PhD candidate Jillian Hernandez was awarded a Dissertation Fellowship from the American Association of University Women for her research on *The Politics of Sexual Aesthetics: Women and Girls Crafting Bodies*. She also secured a tenure-track assistant professor position in Critical Gender Studies and Ethnic Studies at the University of California – San Diego. *Congratulations Jillian!*

In my dissertation "*The Power of Sexual Aesthetics: Women and Girls Crafting Bodies*," I am talking to young women about the way they dress and style their bodies and am analyzing the work of women artists who explore issues of sexuality and body image in their work. I think about the women artists and the young women as "crafting" female bodies. I study both living female bodies in society and female bodies that are represented in culture visually through art, video, and performance. I study different practices of crafting to understand how aesthetics and embodiment contribute to the politics of sexual power relations that mark some female bodies as protected, beautiful, and glamorous and others as "slutty", low-class, threatening, and improper. My research draws from an understanding of how these ideas about style and female embodiment affect the lives of women and girls everyday and can make them subject to harassment, violence, judgment, celebrity, or adulation. I am looking at the power dynamics that are at play in these body practices. I focus on women and girls of color (African American, Latina, Black Caribbean) in my work as their bodies have been historically associated with hypersexuality in U.S. visual culture and because their styles of embodiment have been appropriated by celebrities and contemporary artists. Artists and performers can achieve critical acclaim for crafting hypersexual embodiments in their work. However, when everyday girls embody hypersexuality or masculinity, they become subject to negative judgment, attack, and disciplinary interventions. There is a very narrow range of embodiments that are considered acceptable for women and girls and there are significant negative consequences for those who stray from the norm. The ultimate goal of my work is

to challenge norms that police the embodiments of women and girls.

I conducted participant observation of hundreds of girls for over one year through my work as director of the Women on the Rise! program at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Miami, Florida. Women on the Rise! is an art outreach program for girls that teaches them about the work of artists who



challenge norms of gender, race, and sexuality in order to engage them in critical conversations about body image, social relationships, and expressive culture. In

addition to this, I conducted focus group discussions with 61 girls; about half of the girls were Latina and the remaining were mostly African American and Black Caribbean. I talked to the girls about what their ideal embodiments are and what they think about the bodies crafted by women artists and performers. The women artists and performers I discuss in the dissertation are Wangechi Mutu, Shunda K., Yo Majesty, Zanele Muholi, Shoshanna Weinberger, Heather Benjamin, Nikki. S. Lee, Iona Rozeal Brown, Luis Gispert, and Rachel Lachowicz.

I am using the American Association of University Women (AAUW) fellowship to complete the writing of my dissertation. Some things that are emerging are that Euro-American beauty ideals still have a lot of power, even in the "post-race",

"post-civil" rights context of the contemporary U.S.. Many girls in my study expressed desire for features such as lighter skin and eye color, straighter hair, and slimmer noses. This points to the need for more critical education for girls about the social and racial politics and history of beauty ideals.

Another interesting issue that has emerged is that of black young women who embody masculine styles. I had this conversation with a group of African American and black Caribbean women who identified as lesbian and bi-sexual and participated in programming at a non-profit that serves LGBTQ Youth in Miami. The girls discussed how dressing in masculine fashions expressed their identities and made them more successful in attracting women but also talked about how their masculine styles created problems with family members and made them targets of harassment. The fact that none of the other girls in my study mentioned masculine styles outside of this particular group made it clear how much pressure there is on girls to embody a normative feminine style. The murder of masculine girls of color like Sakia Gunn in 2003 in Newark, New Jersey points to the precarious positions these girls are placed in when they risk defying gender norms with their bodies. This conversation has inspired me to talk to professionals who work with girls (both heterosexual and LGBTQ) about engaging them in critical conversations about gender non-conformity and masculinity and I plan to introduce these topics myself in *Women on the Rise!* workshops with girls. In order for gender non-conforming girls to be safe in society, we need to engage in a social discourse that takes girls' styling practices seriously and exposes the constructed nature of gender norms.

A Glimpse of Post-Mubarak Egypt – Susana Galan



Street graffiti of Samira Ibrahim, one of the protesters who was subjected to "virginity checks" by the army and later filed a lawsuit against the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces for sexual assault.

Last summer I had the opportunity to spend a month in Cairo learning Egyptian Colloquial Arabic, thanks to a Special Study Award of the Graduate School-New Brunswick. Besides the intensive language course, my stay in the megacity was also intense at both the academic and the personal level. Throughout my research on female personal blogs in Egypt, I had been following the development of the political situation in the country since the start of the uprisings through the narratives of Egyptian bloggers. The visit allowed me to complement the online perspective I already had with an offline first-hand insight into the discussions that are taking place on the streets, to meet bloggers and other Egyptians who participated in the revolts and learn about their disappointment with the current regime and their conviction that the revolution continues.

My arrival in Cairo coincided with a moment of high volatility, just after the election of Mohamed Mursi as the country's new president, with the Parliament dissolved by the Supreme Court and amid a wave of sexual assaults against women in and around Tahrir Square. Interestingly, the socio-political instability generated a mushrooming of activism that exploded in every corner of the city, in the form of graffiti or as exhibitions, film screenings, concerts, and discussions in cultural centers and on the streets. I was especially affected by a series of events that took place around the question of sexual harassment, a phenomenon that — after its temporary disappearance during the 18 days of uprisings — has returned with renewed force to the streets of Cairo. In particular, an exhibition on sexual harassment in the Contemporary Art and Culture Center Darb 1718 and the open mic session that followed led me to reflect on the central role that women's bodies are playing in the post-Mubarak era, both as revolutionary subjects and as objects of repression and (in alleged need of) protection. Snippets of these experiences have accompanied me on my way back to Rutgers and are now shaping the thoughts on my future dissertation. I hope I can continue reflecting on these questions next summer in Cairo.

Archival Research on Édouard Glissant in Paris – Max Hantel



Thanks to a Pre-Dissertation Award from the Graduate School, I spent a month in Paris this past summer. I performed archival research on the work of Édouard Glissant, a Martinican philosopher who spent his formative intellectual years in Paris. He passed away in February of 2011 and his transformative effects on French and Caribbean

thought are only beginning to be felt, not least of all in terms of the very geographic boundaries between these respective philosophical traditions.

I focused on the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* and the *Archives Nationales*, looking for unpublished or untranslated poetry and essays from Glissant's early years in Paris (1946-1965) as well as state documents concerning Charles de Gaulle's dissolution of the *Front Antillo-Guyanais*, an anti-colonial political group co-founded by Glissant, and the subsequent enforcement of a house arrest order. Through this research, I hope to challenge the problematic periodization of Glissant's work into the "early political" and the "late philosophical" phases, a break primarily demarcated by Glissant's "turn" to the French philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

First, a more thorough reading of Glissant's work during his years as a student at the Sorbonne suggests his philosophical innovations were always intertwined with decolonial praxis. This narrow intervention, moreover, will point to broader philosophical questions about the relationship between ontological theorizing and the urgency of ethico-political projects. Second, cataloguing the multi-decade conversation between Glissant and his Parisian contemporaries — like his close friend Felix Guattari — illustrates Glissant's insight, "The intellectual journey is destined to have a geographical itinerary." That is to say, tracing the movement of concepts across colonial cartographies brings into relief the political-economy of scholarly influence and the, often unstated, geographical coordinates of what counts as knowledge.

I hope to turn this research into at least one chapter of my dissertation on Caribbean philosophy, as well as setting up a longer stay to more fully apprehend the radical intellectual scene of post-war Paris. Most importantly, however, this trip proved an incredibly valuable methodological moment for me, working through the Parisian archives beyond the idea of a "peripheral" subject who comes to the colonial "center." Instead, following Glissant's movements revealed Paris as a seam of colonial history, a heterogeneous space of decolonial contestation.

“One Every Minute”: Some Thoughts on Birth and Death - Rachel Zaslow

Every minute, somewhere in the world, a woman dies in childbirth. This may sound abstract and slogan-esque, but the reality is most of these deaths are entirely preventable and entirely wrapped up in stuff that Women's and Gender Studies departments talk about every day. Issues of race, class, gender based violence, lack of access to nutrition, and medicine and healthcare layer upon themselves to create a perfect storm for bad outcomes. I am Executive Director of a non-profit called Mother Health International. We have birth centers in Uganda, Haiti, and soon to be Senegal and Kenya, that aim to address some of these disparities. Maternal mortality is the largest crisis affecting women around the world, including the US which has one of the highest death rates among industrialized nations. Women are dying and the international solutions generally fail miserably because they do not take into account the complexity of women's situations. When women cannot control when or with whom they have sex, they cannot avoid multiple pregnancies in a short amount of time, the transmission of STI's, or violent sexual experiences. When abortion is illegal, desperate women endanger their lives to find alternative solutions. When women live 20 miles from the nearest health facility, they end up delivering alone at home or along the side of the road while trying to get help. This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to challenges that women face around reproductive health.

Adding to this complexity is the impact that NGOs and other “well-intentioned” western organizations have had upon the birthing realities of women who are, let's face it, not white and in countries that are not “developed”. The slogan “One Woman Every Minute” has fueled campaigns around the world that aim to reduce mortality but effectively also reduce “women” to victims of their own poor bodies. For the last 30 years, medical non-profits have focused an enormous amount of energy and resources on “training” birth attendants to serve these “poor” women around the world. This training has largely been in unsustainable western obstetric practice without grounding in “cultural competency” or sustainability. The result has been the eradication of traditional midwifery and in its place, a dangerous set of under resourced medical protocols that radically diverge from the needs of women in the communities they serve. My research in Northern Uganda addresses these gaps and looks at some of the ways that women are located within larger discourses around “global health”; that end up translating to control and coercion when it comes to actual life events, like birth. As both an aspiring theorist and a midwife who runs an organization that goes up against every single issue that I address in my writing and research, I am constantly challenging, reflecting, and seeking to find different ways. I have found that being transparent about privilege, access, and ultimately the potential that any western organization has to do more harm than good, is the only way to straddle both worlds and hopefully work collaboratively with women to find practical solutions to what is arguably the most dangerous moment in our lives.

Signs Virtual Issue on “Visibility and Visuality: Reframing Gender in the Middle East, North Africa, and Their Diasporas.”

- Andy Mazzaschi



Negar Ahkami,
The Source
(2009).
Acrylic and
glitter on
gessoed
panel, 48 x
54 in. Photo
by Adam
Reich. ©
Negar
Ahkami.
Courtesy of
Jasanna and
John Britton
and the
artist.

With the launch of the new website for *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (www.signsjournal.org), the editorial staff knew that we wanted to create a virtual issue — an issue composed of previously published content organized around some theme. The fact that the Rutgers Institute for Women and Art was launching their extraordinary and ambitious “Fertile Crescent: Gender, Art, and Society” project provided the impetus to focus the issue on the complexity of women's lives, livelihoods, and circumstances in North Africa, the Middle East, and their diasporas. The generous cooperation of artists participating in the Fertile Crescent project, as well as the institute's directors, Ferris Olin and Judy Brodsky, allowed the issue to feature beautiful works of art that complemented the themes addressed in the issue. The inclusion of these works also influenced the issue's title, “Visibility and Visuality: Reframing Gender in the Middle East, North Africa, and Their Diasporas.”

In editing the issue, I drew from over two decades of scholarship, organizing it into four overarching themes: Cultural Production and Translation; Migration and Mobility; Islam and Secularism; and Political Engagement, Citizenship, and the State. These themes cut across geographical, temporal, and disciplinary divides, allowing resonances and tensions among the texts to emerge. The issue reflects the depth and diversity of the *Signs* archive, including articles that address political engagement and protest; sexuality, marriage, and family life; the politics of resistance in public and private spheres; labor and class within and across nations; agency and identity; and conflict and postconflict situations. As a compendium of sophisticated feminist scholarship on the Middle East, North Africa, and their diasporas, we at *Signs* hope this issue will be a vital teaching tool and scholarly resource.

Graduate Teaching Highlights

Have You Met Japanese Women Writers? Teaching in East Asian Studies with WGS Background

- Yurika Tamura



Last year I was contacted by Rutgers East Asian Studies department for a teaching position. They were looking for someone who had a women's and gender studies and literature background, and some knowledge of Japanese culture. The course title was "Japanese Women Writers." I did grow up in Japan, but I have been away for almost two decades. What do I know about Japanese women? As I was developing the syllabus, I felt self-conscious about my possibly illegitimate acceptance of this position.

To teach Japanese women writers, one would most likely begin with Sei Shonagon and Lady Murasaki. Japan may be known for its patriarchal and chauvinistic social system, but it also had many famous female writers from as early as the 10th century. I named the first section of my class, "Sex and City — Heian Style." Indeed, women writers in the ancient Japanese elite society had some distinct attitudes. Their sassy and defiant writings were filled with critiques and

mocking of masculine power figures and their egoistic ruling of society (and even their lousy love-making manners) and were also rich with poetic celebrations of their own sexuality. As a high school junior, I never appreciated these expressions. It was not until I read with my students who analyzed these sarcastic and scandalous works and compared them to the Western women's writings in the wake of early feminist movements that I appreciated how these writers used their words as a tool of power.

The middle section, "Manga to Eiga" (which can be translated as either "Graphic Novels and Films" or "From Comics to Films," depending on whether one reads "to" as the Japanese word *toh* (and) or leaves it as the English word "to") was created, thanks to the advice of our beloved Women's and Gender Studies librarian Kayo Denda. While I grew up shunning Manga comics as brainless, Kayo pointed out that in no other culture does the genre of Shojo Manga (girls' comics) exist. "That girly stuff," I contested. But Kayo reminded me, if such a form of expression flourished phenomenally in Japan, then why would we not find Japanese girls' agency and their particular worldviews in their creation and consumption of the genre? She was right. Out of this exploration, the class also read ethnographies on girls' cultures in Japan, including purikura, a self-photographing trend among girls. Their tongue-in-cheek

cute, sexual, or obscene images show that girls are writing a new culture, challenging their subjectivity, and pushing the boundary of deviancy.

The last two readings of the class, *Out* by Natsuo Kirino and *Snakes and Earrings* by Hitomi Kanehara, still haunt me today. Both have descriptions of gruesome murders, shocking rape cases, and body mutilations; but strangely the endings leave the reader with a fresh and breezy aftertaste of triumph as the heroines disentangle themselves in drastic manners from the subjectivity of (good) women. A good woman is a hard place to be, but to step out from it is even harder — it sometimes costs lives as the novels insist.

At the end of the semester one of the students told me, "I realized there is so much more I need to learn about what it means to live as a woman." We thought we were learning about foreign women's writings, but after all it was about our own gendered living that we were faced with in our reading.

Have you met Japanese women writers? I highly recommend looking into what they have to say about our gender consciousness.

And have I met the Japanese women writers? In some ways, yes. I imagine we meet writers finally when we actually teach their works in class.



Recent Publications of Debotri Dhar

Debotri Dhar, ed., *Education and Gender* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), forthcoming.

Debotri Dhar, "Mad Adulteress, Moral Wife: Sen, Sin, and Psychiatry in Aparna Sen's *Parama*," in *Portrayal of Women in Media and Literature*, eds. Arvind Nawale, Shivani Vashist, and Pinaki Roy (New Delhi: Authorspress, 2013), forthcoming.

Debotri Dhar, *Postcards from Oxford: Stories of Women and Travel* (London: Roman Books, 2013), forthcoming [Book of short stories].

Debotri Dhar, "Radha's Revenge: Feminist Agency, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Desire in Anita Nair's *Mistress*," accepted in *Postcolonial Text*.

Debotri Dhar, "The Concept of Death in Tagore's *Gitanjali*," in *Contemporary Literary Review India*, eds. Khurshid Alam, December 2012, pp. 44-54.

Conference Highlights

The Art of Organizing Panels that Fall Apart (and Yet Succeed!)

- Miriam Tola, Stina Soderling, and Carolina Alonso

Our National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference panel "On the Politics of (Minor) Commons" – featuring Miriam Tola, Stina Soderling, Carolina Alonso, and Sara Perryman – was close to burning in flames when both Sara and Carolina's flights were canceled due to the snow storm that hit the East Coast a week after hurricane Sandy barreled over the Tri-state area.

The panel had emerged from a reading group on the commons we started last year. By focusing on writings on the commons by feminist and left thinkers, we wanted to explore different alternatives for going beyond the realms of the nation-state, private property, and global capitalism. Drawing on our previous work and shared interests, we came up with the idea to present a panel at Left Forum and the NWSA conference

to highlight opacities as well as significant differences in various interpretations of the commons. Instead of conceptualizing the commons as a monolithic Other to the global market economy, we were interested in historically specific modes of being-in-common that have been confronting Empire in a plurality of ways. The Left Forum panel fell apart – and not

due to a blizzard. In January 2012, being confronted with the funding cuts our department has been going through and feeling the pressure to finish her dissertation as soon as possible, Caro decided she needed to focus on papers that would turn into a feasible dissertation instead of writing about her various interests. Thus, the Left Forum

collective political project, and even have it serve political purposes. This question is still haunting us: how to play the game without "selling out," how to begin with the spirit of the struggle that resulted in the creation of Women's Studies departments in the face of constantly needing to fit into the job market? We hope we can always hold each other accountable to that.



*Graduate students at NWSA Conference 2012.
From Left: Miriam Tola, Andrew Mazzaschi,
Carolina Alonso, Stina Soderling, and Nafisa Tanjeem.*

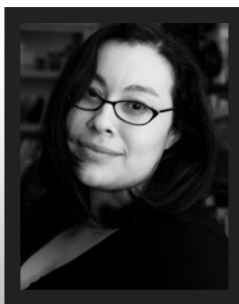
panel was canceled and Caro modified her submission for the NWSA conference so that it would resonate with her dissertation research. The failure of the first panel was productive in that it made us wonder how/if, given the increasing constraints we encounter, we can maintain integrity in our work, take time for experimenting and engaging in a

After our failed Left Forum panel, the specter of another fiasco loomed over the two panelists who made it to the NWSA conference. And yet, they were strangely relaxed. Stina's presentation explored the relationship between commons and enclosures articulated by intentional rural queer communities. Miriam's paper focused on the limits of the distinction between natural and artificial commons. At the end, the session was low key but full of energy. A small, friendly audience offered much needed comments and questions. Organizing panels that fall apart and yet, mysteriously, succeed can be an exhilarating experience, and we look forward to further collaborations and commons-making with each other and our department as a whole.

Cyber Aesthetics and Narrative Graduate Conference

- Rachel Aparacio

On October 20, 2012, Rachel Aparacio was invited to give a presentation at the *Cyber Aesthetics and Narrative Graduate Conference* at the University of Miami at Coral Gables. Her talk was titled "'Because We're a Family': Care (Inter)networks and the Fictive Kinship of Online Fandom." The paper analyzed a successful online charity effort known as the "Savings for Sashi" campaign, which was organized by the *Supernatural* fandom to fund a necessary, costly surgery for one of its members who happened to be without medical insurance. Historically, fandom has been academically analyzed mainly through the lens of active/subversive readership. This paper was designed to elucidate the ways in which fandom is also a community building practice



which results in the production of fictive kinship networks that regularly care for members in important and material ways. It highlighted the significance of fandom as a deeply gendered practice engaged in primarily by young women and often dismissed by the broader culture as vapid and silly largely on those grounds. Fandom as an arena where overwhelmingly young women create cyber kinship networks which often work to provide for members' emotional and sometimes dire physical needs, is an under-analyzed aspect of this practice. Bringing visibility to that facet of fandom was the fundamental goal of this paper and an extended version of it is slated to be published in a forthcoming volume based on the conference.

Updates from the Ph.D. Alumni

From Trinidad and Tobago with Love

- Jeanne Roach-Baptiste

In September 2007, I made my first field trip to Trinidad and Tobago to gain access to my research site, the Jammal al Muslimeen and Madressa, a small Muslim community responsible for staging an insurrection against the government of Trinidad and Tobago in 1990.

In 2008, while still engaged in my fieldwork, I began teaching as an Instructor at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine (the UWI, STA). At present I am an Assistant Lecturer and have also been the IGDS Graduate Studies Coordinator since June 2011.

At the IGDS, I teach undergraduate courses such as Feminist Theoretical Frameworks; Sex, Gender, and Society; and Gender, Ethnicity, and Class: Issues of Nation and Citizenship in the Anglophone Caribbean. At the Graduate Level, I teach Contemporary Feminist Theorising; Feminist Epistemology and Methodology; and Key Issues in Gender and Transformation in the Caribbean.



There are several challenges when working full-time and doing a PhD, especially in as demanding a place as the IGDS where teaching, research, publishing, activism, and outreach are the order of the day for each faculty member whether full-time or part-time. Fortunately, my experiences as a RU WGS PhD student — which included being a TA, an RA with *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, and an Adjunct — all

congealed to hone me theoretically, epistemologically, and methodologically; so as a product of North American feminist scholarship, I can employ and resist simultaneously hegemonic and inherited knowledge as I try to build upon indigenous Caribbean feminist, as well as gender and development, theorizing. Many WGS graduate courses taught me to think critically and as many encouraged me to love my work and my students passionately. For example, Feminist Pedagogies with Harriet Davidson continues to give me insight, creativity, and the heart to work tirelessly as the IGDS Graduate Studies Coordinator, amid persistent budget cuts and limited resources, to ensure graduate throughput. My dissertation team comprising Abena Busia, Ethel Brooks, Belinda Edmondson, and Aisha Khan buoyed me up when I felt overwhelmed and disillusioned during the arduous PhD process, yet nudged and then pushed me when I lost momentum. I will continue to follow their roles as educators and nurturers.

Greetings from Connecticut College!

- Ari Rotramel

Greetings from Connecticut College! I am currently serving as a visiting assistant professor in Gender and Women's Studies and as a Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE) fellow. I am happy to report that I have been building on my formal training as well as the wide range of teaching opportunities and mentoring I gained while at Rutgers. In my work as a CCSRE fellow, I am helping with strategic planning and working with student leaders organizing around issues of race across campus. Teaching and related programming are key areas of my work at Connecticut College, and I appreciate having had the time to sharpen my skills in these areas before entering the job market. This fall I taught a freshman seminar entitled Race, Gender,

Sex. I built on my past teaching of Women, Culture, and Society and Dynamics of Race, Class, Sex as I developed the course. Coming into my freshman course, I was able to anticipate the difficulties many students face when being introduced to perspectives that disrupt status quo assumptions about identity, inequality, and justice. Drawing on the guidance I had received from WGS faculty, I had the necessary preparation to help my students engage course content despite its challenging nature. Similarly, for my Introduction to Queer Studies class, I reflected on my experience of teaching Introduction to Critical Sexuality Studies last fall. While the two courses departed from one another in terms of their emphases, I felt far more confident

as an outside professor engaging a host of topics related to sexuality. In addition to my research focus on community organizing, teaching social justice courses and working with the Institute for Women's Leadership prepared me for my upcoming course, Training for Transformation. It combines class sessions with community-based learning. I am pleased to be working with members of the New London group, Hearing Youth Voices, to build a curriculum around the school-to-prison pipeline. My Rutgers WGS training gives me the breadth and depth necessary to successfully balance the multiple roles I hold at Connecticut College. Thanks and best wishes for the coming year!

Updates from the M.A. Alumni

Jennifer Parker

*Case Management Billing and
Administrative Specialist at
The Arc of the Capital Area, Austin, TX*



Since leaving Rutgers in May, I have relocated to the beautiful city of Austin, TX. Thankfully, I was quickly hired for a position at an organization whose mission I wholeheartedly support and of which I am a former volunteer, The Arc of the Capital Area. The Arc is a national non-profit that advocates and provides services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In the last few months, I have learned a great deal about the inner workings of the non-profit world (and local politics) as well as various dynamics at play in providing services for these populations.

My time in the MA program of the Women's and Gender Studies department prepared me for my position at The Arc by building upon my ability to approach problems from multiple angles and by fostering a greater awareness and passion for issues of difference and issues of ability. My job itself is multifaceted and requires the kind of flexible thinking that WGS programs nurture. I work between/within multiple departments and my range of tasks is widely varied: planning participant events to accounts receivable tasks and learning about state contracts with Medicaid waiver programs.

And, although these issues are not currently addressed by the organization, my thoughts and ideas about sexuality and individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities have been brewing. In the future, I hope to work out a way to create new projects out of these interests, either at the Arc or wherever I go in the future. Away from my time at the Arc, I have participated in reading groups related to the Occupy movement, sought out involvement with queer groups in Austin, and have generally been decompressing after graduating while exploring the possibility of seeking out PhD programs.

Neha Kagal

*Ph.D. Student at
School of Oriental and African Studies,
University of London, UK*



My Master's degree in Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers was probably one of the most exhilarating experiences ever! I completed the course in little under a year, which meant that I was taking four classes each semester — which in effect translated into reading tomes every week and writing almost daily. As exhausting as that might sound, it was also a brilliant learning experience. My classes in feminism(s): theory and praxis, feminist methodology, human rights, and gender and development allowed me a space to reflect on the work I had done as an activist in India, and to link theory with praxis. Having a background in developmental work, I initially found it hard to find relevant courses (we need more courses in gender and development!); but once I did, the courses gave me a theoretical and historical understanding of how global inequalities as well as inequalities within nation states are structured and how this may lead to the subordination of certain sections of society. It provided me with the lens that I need to critically approach women's issues, including violence, from a perspective that emphasizes gendered power relations as well as the intersection of gender with other dimensions of social stratification, including caste, class, sexuality, religion, location, and socioeconomic status. Most importantly, it enabled me to understand development as an outcome of complex social, economic, and political processes at micro- and macro-levels. This entire process was invaluable when it came to applying for a PhD in Development Studies to SOAS, London. On a personal level, at the Women's and Gender Studies department I met some wonderfully supportive colleagues and faculty members. The staff of the CWGL were especially helpful. Over the year, I developed deep friendships, found supportive mentors, and created some superb memories!

Updates from Undergraduate Students

Jessica Kerley — Alumni

M.A. Student at School of Visual and Performing Arts in Syracuse University



After the first day of my Women, Culture, and Society class, I knew my bewildered days of indecisiveness over where I belonged had come to an end. I quickly declared a Women's and Gender Studies major and I never looked back. I received wave after wave of unending support and encouragement from my professors not only

towards my academics but towards my future and personal happiness as well. The classes offered, the unique research interest of my professors and peers, and the chance to write a thesis and gain necessary skills for my continuation in academia and beyond were all imperative to shaping my truly outstanding undergraduate education and the person I am today.

I am currently applying the tools provided to me through this incredible education as I pursue my Master's degree in Communication and Rhetorical Studies in the School of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University and simultaneously working as a teaching assistant. My research interests lie in the rhetoric of bodies and the ability to use the movements of bodies as a communicative device to understand and advance social justice goals, specifically those of gender, sexuality, and ability.

My research interests clearly still have a feminist twist — I could never be complacent with spending two years away from a gender studies education. Besides just my master's degree I am also in the process of obtaining certificates in both Women's and Gender Studies and Undergraduate Teaching in hopes of advancing to a Ph. D program in Disability Studies, Cultural Studies, or Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

My passion for advocacy and social justice was immediately sparked at Rutgers and will remain with me as a driving force in overcoming the obstacles and challenges of academia. I want to personally thank all of the people who contributed to my success and challenged me to broaden my horizons during my time at Rutgers. I could not have asked for a better education and am truly grateful and privileged for the tutelage gifted to me from this wonderful program. 162 Ryders Lane will always feel like a little slice of home.

Sara West — Intern

Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University



Being proactive and advocating for oneself are essential to finding your niche at an institution as large as Rutgers University. However, being a part of Douglass Residential College has given me the chance to thrive in a small, close-knit community of inspiring women leaders. In the spring of my freshman year, I applied for an

internship at the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), an organization that works to protect human rights of women around the world.

During my time as an intern for Lucy Vidal, the Director of Communication and Information, I was responsible for managing CWGL's large selection of international publications authored by non-governmental and community-based women's organizations and research groups, independent writers, researchers, and the United Nations. I also assisted in redesigning the resource center, digital filing system, and website content management system.

In addition to working with Lucy, I got a chance to work with Marcela Olivera, CWGL's Visiting Global Associate, an inspirational woman activist from Cochabamba, Bolivia, who is working to secure water as a human right. I located Spanish translations of certain sources she cited in her report for the publication of a Spanish translation of her piece, "Right to Food, Gender, Equality, and Economic Policy." I also assisted the Program Coordinator, Margot Baruch, with the logistical aspects of the UN CSW training program and post-program assessment.

Through my experience of interning at CWGL, my decision to become a Women's & Gender Studies and Planning & Political Science double major was reaffirmed. I hope more students can have such an empowering and life-altering experience. I feel so fortunate to have had this opportunity and to be part of such an encouraging and inspirational community of women at Douglass. Interning has not only enhanced my academic life, but also has impacted the awareness I carry outside the classroom about humanity, my relationship to it, and my goals for the future.

Photo Gallery

2012 End of the Year Celebration



To recognize his extraordinary contributions to feminist activism and scholarship as Rutgers Vice President for Undergraduate Education and as Dean for the Humanities, WGS Chair Abena Busia inducted Barry Qualls into the Rutgers Chapter of the National Feminist Hall of Fame and named him the first recipient of the Women's and Gender Studies Golden Slipper Award.



From left: Kathleen McCollough, Suzy Kiefer, Professor Fakhrolmolouk Haghani, and Professor Ousseina Alidou

From left: Snezana Otasevic, Professor Nancy Hewitt, Professor Judith Gerson, Kayo Denda, and Ashley Falzetti.



From left: Evan Seehausen and Snezana Otasevic

From left: Louise Tam, Jenna Brager, and Professor Zakia Salime

Photo Gallery

WGS Tidbits



Professor Yana Rodgers thanks the WGS community for their words of encouragement in racing up the steps of the Empire State Building. Thanks also to the many people who made donations. Professor Rodgers was able to achieve her fundraising goal for the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation.



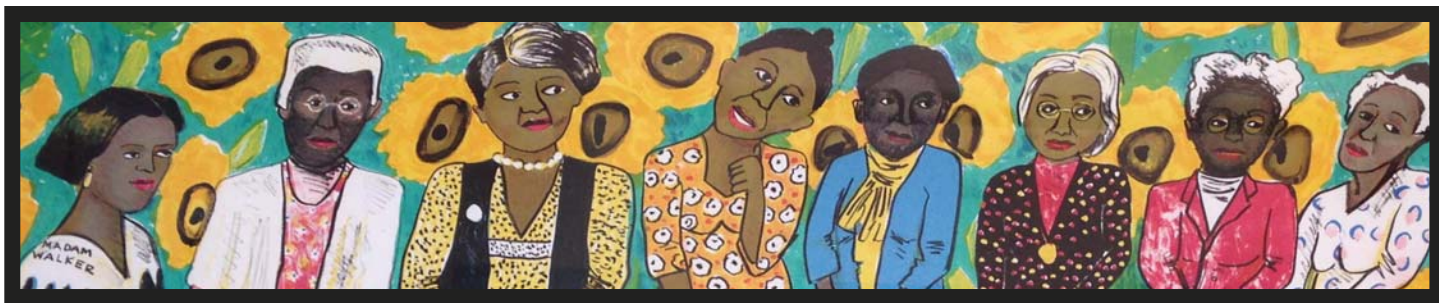
Suzy Kiefer, Administrative Assistant, and Nafisa Tanjeem, Graduate Assistant, represented Department of Women's and Gender Studies at the Fall 2012 Undergraduate Major Fair.



Our Amazing Work-Study Students
From Left: Alison McFadden, Princess Haynes, and Natasha Payano



Yanoula Athanassakis's Spring Research Briefing on
"Natural Disasters: Gender and Environmental Justice"



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Enclosed is my generous gift of \$ _____ towards:

☐ Mary S. Hartman Endowed Doctoral Fellowship in Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Travel Fund

☐ Undergraduate Education through Transformative Learning (international leadership, community partnership, advanced research, honors)

☐ Graduate Summer School in Dubrovnik

☐ Graduate Education through Fostering International Feminist Networks (international MA practicum, research fund for international field work, travel fund)

☐ Please contact me about my donation.

☐ Please contact me about departmental programs.

Thank You!