

WOMEN'S STUDIES

Fall 2007 Newsletter

Director's Column

by *Ranjana Khanna*

Welcome to the 2007-2008 academic year. I'm really thrilled to be directing the program. I'm immensely grateful to Robyn Wiegman for her shaping of the program over the last five years and also to the impressive staff who have been instrumental in running it. We have an exciting few years ahead of us with some growth in the program both in terms of the number of faculty and in the research and teaching profile on campus and beyond.

This year, we continue to organize a number of events on campus that will be of interest to all our main constituencies. The current undergraduate students appear to have a particular interest in international reproductive politics and ideology and will be meeting as a group of majors and minors (along with Kathy Rudy, Honors Program Coordinator, and myself in my capacity as Director of Undergraduate Studies) a few times through the year to read on this topic and on other current issues relating to gender. The graduate students continue to meet three or more times a semester (with Kathi Weeks, Director of Graduate Studies) in their Graduate Scholars Colloquium, which also invites faculty visitors to participate. And the core and affiliated faculty are, as always, involved in working groups, conferences, and talks on and off campus.

This year, some of us are gathering together to discuss the concept of asylum with both a graduate course and a faculty/graduate student seminar being organized by Charlie Piot (Cultural Anthropology, AAAS, and Women's Studies) and myself, made possible through the generous support of the Provost's Common Fund (you can read more in this issue).

We are currently advertising for two postdoctoral scholars for next year researching transnational sexualities, the way we understand sexuality in different regions, global flow of ideas around the topic of sexuality across regions, understanding both the differences among these regions and forms of thinking in different periods, and in varying pre-national, national, and post-national sites. The postdoctoral fellows will each teach an undergraduate course on this topic and our new faculty member and Director of Sexuality Studies, Ara Wilson, will teach a graduate seminar. Together they will be coordinating a faculty seminar which will allow a full thematic integration of interests between the faculty, graduate, and undergraduate student bodies. This new initiative will continue for at least four years as a pilot program for a gender institute within Women's Studies, allowing us to pursue particular themes in an integrated manner. The following year, we hope to explore topics of race and gender in relation to visual culture with faculty member Tina Campt leading the way.



Director Ranjana Khanna

Next spring we will once again host the Feminist Theory Workshop. It was a great success last year with more than 170 participants from Women's Studies related programs across the country in addition to some international participants. The workshop (March 21-22) promises to be an exciting event once again (read more about it in this issue.)

I sincerely hope that our robust scholarly and pedagogical climate will help us deal with some of the egregious attacks mounted against Women's Studies scholars locally, nationally, and internationally at this time. Besides the rather vitriolic and personalized attacks on many Women's Studies faculty locally in the aftermath of the lacrosse case, a national sit-in against Women's Studies academic units and Women's Centers was promoted by the David Horowitz Freedom Center Islamo-fascism week "to protest their

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An Interview with Pamela Stone

By Jennifer Staton

Pamela Stone, a Duke alumna and Professor of Sociology at Hunter College, CUNY, sat down with Duke senior Jennifer Staton to discuss her new book, *Opting Out?: Why Women Really Quit Careers and Head Home*, which reviewers have called "fascinating," "revealing," and "engrossing." From the book jacket: "Noting a phenomenon that might seem to recall a previous era, The New York Times Magazine recently portrayed women who leave their careers in order to become full-time mothers as 'opting out.' But, are high-achieving professional women really choosing to abandon their careers in order to return home? This provocative study is the first to tackle this issue from the perspective of the women themselves."

Jennifer: Welcome back to Duke, Dr. Stone, and thank you for agreeing to meet and talk with me today. To start off, you mentioned in your book that you interviewed 54 women. Can you tell us a little bit about the interview process you conducted with these women and how you found your subjects?

Pamela: It's not easy to find women who have left the labor force. I was looking for women who were upper middle class with a husband who could support them being at home; women who were college educated and had worked as professionals and managers. Initially I had contacts at four highly selective universities and these starting points led me to other women. I also identified several women through a call for subjects I posted on the website of a group called Mothers and More. I wanted to get a cross-section of women, so I ended up traveling across the U.S. to interview women in different professions across a range of ages.

Jennifer: In your introduction you mentioned that you had always been interested in women who left professional careers to become stay-at-home mothers. Did you encounter any difficulties in dealing with the sensitive nature of this subject? After writing this book, do you find yourself more at ease with discussing women's personal choices to stay at home?

Pamela: This was the first time I had done this kind of in-depth interviewing and I was asking about a potentially contentious subject, so I did go into these interviews with some amount of anxiety. The way I solved it was not to ask pointed questions to avoid leading the witness. Instead, I had women tell me about their lives, with a focus on work and family. I think the reality is that these women feel very forgotten and misunderstood. Women don't tell their employers the stories they told me, because they feel the truth will come back to haunt them when they go back to work, which most want to do. I wrote in the book how when the interview was over, women thanked me and talked about the experience as cathartic. They felt that the prevailing image of women at home was that of improving their tan, working on their tennis game, and eating bonbons. They were really happy someone was paying attention and telling the true story.

Jennifer: Do you think that there is anything that should or could be done to raise awareness among women about opting out and to question the values and policies of the workplace?

Pamela: I went in to this study skeptical about how much choice women are exercising in quitting careers and skeptical that the answer was all about

domesticity and family, which the media portrayal tends to emphasize. Given the prevailing rhetoric, I thought I was going to hear a lot about motherhood, but in actuality, I ended up hearing much more about work. I was hearing that women had always thought they were going to be both moms and workers, I was hearing that the decision to leave [their career] was extremely difficult and painful. What I discovered was a real disconnect between the framing of their decision as a choice and the experience itself, which was that these women were effectively being shut out of their careers once they became mothers. They had very high standards on both the work and family fronts, but quitting their careers wasn't about their unique perfectionism, rather it was about an escalation of parenting and mothering standards combined with an escalation of work demands. They saw their jobs as all or

nothing, and even when they persisted in their careers, they started disengaging because they encountered mommy-tracking and classic negative reinforcement. They internalized this as being their fault that they couldn't make it work when in fact, their situation was unworkable. They were being shut out by rigid, inflexible workplaces.

Jennifer: You noted that the women you interviewed had an aversion to the term "housewife" and referred to themselves instead as "stay-at-home mothers" or by their former professions. Could you talk a little about these women's sense of identity?

Pamela: Leaving the workforce was a difficult decision for most of them. Once they were home, they didn't voice regret because they were happy to be home with their kids. The biggest issue for them was identity, because they never thought they were going to be at home. They struggled with what to call themselves. Our professions are a key part of our identity so almost all did self identify with their former professions, for two reasons.

First, they felt that's who they were and second, because they were not immune to issues of status. They saw people lose interest when they said they stayed at home. They felt like they were invisible women, so these professional references, such as saying they were a lawyer but now at home, helped them navigate their social world and have some standing in it.

Jennifer: This situation sounds pretty dismal for those of us who hope to balance both a family and a career.

Pamela: Remember, I'm talking to women who represent the roughly twenty percent of college-educated moms who are at home; the majority are working. Having said that, I think this research points to the need to be eyes wide open about the workplace. There are great workplaces out there. Unfortunately, a lot of what happens around getting family-friendly accommodations is a private deal between a woman and her supervisor. I think we need to institutionalize these policies and make them more visible so women don't have to bring them up and think "it's just me." The advice is to be proactive. Women and men need to be asking and voicing demands. I hope that books like mine start bringing attention to these issues so women feel emboldened to make these requests.

Jennifer: What are the main changes that need to be made in the workplace to allow women to balance a family and her career? Childcare is often touted as the solution to this problem.

Pamela: Obviously we need better and higher quality childcare, but one of the problems for professional workers is that they need flexibility. They are not bound by the nine to five schedule. Given the nature of the



Pamela Stone, author of *Opting Out?* and a Duke alumna

demands on their time, center-based care is not necessarily the answer because they have to travel and work long hours. It will also be hard to get women to leave their children in center-based care for eight to ten hours a day, every day of the week. But my ultimate hope is that we will stop having these fifty, sixty, seventy hour work weeks. My number one recommendation is that we have to reduce the hours of work, and if we don't, given the gendered nature of care giving, we are going to continue to see women cycling in and out of careers. The best solution is to make work more family responsive.

Jennifer: Doctor Stone, you are a Duke alumna and I'm curious about what changes you see in the University, in particular the female student body and sexual politics here on campus?

Pamela: When I read about the effortless perfection issue, that resonated and I could well understand that phenomenon here. In my generation, feminist backlash hadn't yet set in and that meant that we felt totally empowered and that our paths were onward and upward. With my own book, I do worry that women might see the struggles ahead and be discouraged, but I want them to be emboldened in the way we were. In terms of sexual politics today, men and women generally espouse more egalitarian views of relationships and marriage. On the other hand, when you ask young guys about work and family, many think that when push comes to shove, their wives will stay home. In my study, the small fraction of women who always intended to stay home once they had

children were in alignment with their husbands and there was no battle; it was the women who wanted kids and a career who had to battle. It's something that I think women have to be aware of, that part of your relationship

with your partner is constant negotiation. The goal is to pursue what you love and try to make it family-friendly and be the agent of change. We know that when you get a critical mass of women at the top it does make a difference and organizations do respond. Women at Duke are in the best position to reach the top and make changes in their own lives and the lives of other women because they have access to positions of leadership and power.

Jennifer Staton is a senior and Interdepartmental Major with Sociology and Public Policy. She became interested in issues regarding women and careers after a course she took last year with Martha Reeves called Women at Work. And she highly recommends this book!



“They felt like they were invisible women, so these professional references, such as saying they were a lawyer but now at home, helped them navigate their social world and have some standing in it.”

Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program

By Shadee Malakloul

When people ask me why I do what I do, managing high school exchange students from Iraq, I say it's because when the students smile, my world melts. These students are the innocent victims of a vicious war but despite this, they are happy, healthy, and trudge on, head held high. They also have an incredibly capacity to love.

I work at Sister Cities International, a non-profit, membership-based organization in Washington D.C. that focuses on people-to-people (cross-cultural) connections. As a Youth and Education Coordinator, I manage the Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program (IYLEP), a State Department-issued grant that allows high school students from Iraq to visit the United States for one month during the summer to learn about citizen diplomacy and grass-roots activism.

In the summer of 2007, 22 high school students from Baghdad, the north and the south, became the first set of Iraqi Young Leaders to be ushered into the program by the U.S. Department of State. I traveled with the students throughout their stay, easing them through the learning process and providing emotional and physical support.

The students who participated in the program affiliated as Sunni, Shi'a, Christian, and Kurdish, but insisted that these

differences did not matter. At the end of the day, these children were just that: children. Not only were they like each other, but they were also like Americans their own age. In their own words, "We are just like American kids. We like the same things, and have many of the same interests. We just want safety for our country and we want the killing to stop."

They describe Iraq as "a hell on earth." They add that "it does not have a strong central government to prevent crime, so smaller groups called militias take over and kill people unjustly." Many have watched their friends die in front of them and some have even received threats

on their lives. During visits with government officials (including Under Secretary Karen Hughes and Colorado Governor Bill Ritter) and community leaders, the students insisted, even begged, the U.S. troops to stay in Iraq. Against a stormy cloud of stereotypes and misunderstandings between Iraq and the United States, the students still believe that the U.S. is good and that we can help better their lives. Because I live and work in Washington, a place controlled by the big, bad world of think tanks, the news that Iraqi people welcome the presence of American troops was initially an astounding one.

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Shadee Malakloul with Palestinian children

Conference Report on the Social Change Workshop at UVA

By Tamara Extian-Babiuk

I would like to begin with sincere thanks to Women's Studies for its generous support in funding my travel expenses to the Institute of Humane Studies' Social Change Workshop at the University of Virginia. The workshop turned out to be quite different than I had anticipated. Having a certain idea of "social change", I was under the expectation that the workshop would deal with progressive social justice concerns, such as gender and racial equality, poverty, war, sexual violence, and so forth. However, I felt that these concerns were addressed only peripherally at the workshop, which instead strongly advocated a free-market libertarian approach to social and economic issues. For me, this ideological framework underlying the workshop was frustrating and alienating, as I found it deeply conservative. I found the libertarian faith in the workings of capitalism and the free market abstract and ahistorical, and their belief in deregulation dangerously inadequate as a solution to deeply-entrenched structural problems perpetuated largely by a history of colonialism, imperialism and patriarchy.

The libertarian framework did not provide an adequate structural analysis of social and economic inequality, instead attributing inequality to individual choice and motivation rather than power imbalances and structural issues concerning access to resources. Historical denials of equal opportunity as blatant as slavery, indentured labor, colonialism, and the displacement of indigenous populations and theft of their land were notably absent in this analysis. So too was the systematic denial of myriad rights for women, of which access to education, the ability to own property, and the right to vote are just a few. While I was frustrated by these glaring omissions, I was glad to be there to voice these concerns and advocate for a more critical and historically accurate analysis.

Despite its shortcomings, I nevertheless found the workshop pedagogically useful and am glad I chose to participate.

Although my perspective was marginalized overall, this nonetheless proved to be a very useful opportunity to gain a clearer understanding of an alternate perspective I strongly disagree with and concomitantly gave me excellent practice in clearly articulating my feminist and anti-racist position to an unsympathetic audience. While I generally prefer the company of more like-minded scholars, it was a challenging intellectual exercise to debate social and political issues with intellectuals who share few of my basic beliefs and view desirable social change in a radically different light. In debating libertarians who argued that affirmative action is unfair discrimination, that we should cut social programs because welfare rewards people for being lazy, and that labor standards should be abolished because they undermine competitiveness, I began to understand rationalizations that both deploy enlightened-sounding reason to maintain the status quo and their proponents' positions of privilege within it, and that laud ideals such as efficiency and competitiveness over human rights and welfare. I believe this understanding will allow me to analyze more skillfully discourse on slavery in Canada by providing a stronger critique of the colonial project. So while the Social Change Workshop was not at all what I expected, I nonetheless gained invaluable skills and I thank Women's Studies for its generous support.

Tamara Extian-Babiuk is a second year PhD student in the History Department.



Conference attendees, including Elizabeth Hordge Freeman, a Duke graduate student in Sociology, and Tamara Extian-Babiuk.

Women Migrants and Ecuador: Report of Findings

By Lorien Olive

I arrived in Quito, Ecuador early in July 2007. This was my first fieldwork experience as a graduate student and my first view of the sprawling city made it all the more intimidating. My current research interests revolve around emerging patterns of feminized migration from Ecuador to non-traditional destinations in southern Europe. Since Ecuador's dollarization in 2000, widespread economic and political instability has spurred many middle-class, urban *mestizas* to migrate to Spain seeking employment in the service sector, where they generally perform some form of domestic or affective labor. Given the intricate and often informal networks of family, friends, money lenders, NGOs, and public institutions that make the journey of Ecuadorian migrants to Spain possible, how was I to tease out the gendered dimensions of transnational migration, given the supposedly private nature of Ecuadorian family life?

Over time, I began to develop relationships with various scholars, activists and public officials and through these conversations a common theme emerged: the "crisis of the Ecuadorian family," precipitated by recent waves of emigration, was a matter of national concern. This discourse of crisis focused heavily on the lack of love and emotional security Ecuadorian children experienced due to the increasing absence of their mothers. Many I spoke to displayed concern about recent statistics, which showed that, in almost every province, women migrants now outnumbered men.

The movement of Ecuadorian women to Europe to work as domestic workers, nannies, and elder care or health care workers signals a crisis of the family, what others have termed a "care deficit." The frequent write-ups in local newspapers, literature from social service NGOs that are springing up due to injections of Spanish capital, and public education campaigns (posters displayed prominently in the airport, public parks, and many bus stops throughout Quito) reinforce this reading of feminized migration. The children of migrants are

SisterSong 10th Anniversary Conference: Let's Talk About Sex A Report Back

By Alexis Pauline Gumbs

I call it the mother/daughter special. Women's Studies paid for me to attend the 10th Anniversary Conference of Sistersong: Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective in Chicago and Sistersong paid for my mother to come along. We spent four days surrounded by midwives from around the world, butch lesbians trained as erotic birthing doulas, young mothers, sex workers, girls in middle school, belly-dancing instructors, public health students, and the founders of the movement that challenges the discourse of white middle class feminist "reproductive rights" with the creation of something more elusive, holistic, and radical under the name "reproductive justice".

Simply put, "reproductive justice" entails full self-determination for women and girls of color to create the destinies of their bodies and communities. Unlike "reproductive rights," the earlier term developed by a white-led American feminist movement, "reproductive justice" refers not only to a woman's ability to have or not have a child when she chooses, but expands to include everything that a woman, transgendered, or intersex person might create, looking beyond individual rights to community accountability. Dazan Dixon Diallo of SisterLove encouraged us to listen to each other at the conference with full respect and to allow the women we spoke with to decide whether or not they wanted their words to be repeated. Reproductive justice is at once a physical, political, and narrative framework, a structure in which storytelling, sexuality, breathing, and sharing are parts of a whole.

I was inspired by the bravery and brilliance of the speakers. However, some of the insights that I gained at the conference were deeply disheartening. For example, Luz Rodriquez (one of the founders of Sistersong) gave a workshop presentation that outlined the history

of strategic sterilization abuse in the Caribbean (including a statement from a World Bank official that 2/3 of women in the developing world should be sterilized to prevent revolution) and revealed that the pharmaceutical companies that used brutal human testing on women of color to "perfect" contemporary birth control provide much of the funding to the foundations that made the Sistersong Conference (including the fellowship that allowed my mother to join me) possible. Could it be that funding requirements and grant-based monitoring will reincorporate the reproductive justice movement into the violent machinery that it seeks to resist?

The end of the last day of the conference was reserved for tributes to warriors in the reproductive justice movement who have passed away since the last conference. The irony is that the women in the room (myself and my mother included) are healers because we have to be. Some warriors are required to heal themselves and often it is not enough. Like Audre Lorde, June Jordan, Gloria Anzaldua, and other literary/activist figures who the conference participants invoked all weekend long, many reproductive justice workers die relatively young after surviving physical violations and abuses without sufficient healthcare options or time to rest. As I saw myself reflected in the women that a thousand conference participants collectively mourned, it became clear to me that we cannot fight every battle and we cannot heal our own wounds. However, what my mother taught me applies to the community that Sistersong envisions and serves: it is necessary that we can fight for each other, because we can only heal together.

Alexis Pauline Gumbs is a PhD candidate in the English Department and enrolled in the Women's Studies Certificate program. Her dissertation focuses on the connections between radical black feminist publishing and discourses of black motherhood from 1970-1990. Alexis wrote this article with the poems "Generation," "School Note," and "Power" by Audre Lorde in mind.

consistently represented as the victims of migration, and thus as particularly vulnerable to drugs, poor performance in schools, physical and sexual abuse, gangs, mental illness, and suicide.

At the same time, the Ecuadorian state has become increasingly dependent on remittances of Ecuadorian nationals living and working abroad as a source of income. In terms of Ecuador's GDP, remittances have become second only to profits from crude oil exports. While the Ecuadorian state does not officially encourage its nationals to illegally seek work abroad, it has a stake in assuring that those who do migrate sustain the flow of money to family and communities back home.

In the end, the discourse of the crisis that surrounds the Ecuadorian family reveals a disjuncture, or at least a growing tension, between the nation and the family, two social constructions that have historically been so complementary, even analogous. The migrant family is pathologized. The failures of the family threaten to reveal the Ecuadorian state's own biopolitical failures under neoliberalism.

The family, rather than the site of unpaid labor and unconditional affect (if such and ideal construction of the family ever did hold), is transformed through the crisis of migration into the very mechanism that enables the generation of capital. Thus, the pressures of the ever-changing global economy and the steady neoliberal restructuring of the Ecuadorian state appear to have produced new arrangements (and a partial dissolution) of the boundary between reproductive and productive spheres.

As I move forward in my research, I hope to explore in more depth the nature of these tensions and contradictions between affect and capital, family, and nation.

Lorien Olive is a second year PhD candidate in Cultural Anthropology.

Health Education in Belize

By Nancy Wang

"Educating the young population is the key to the amelioration of the health status in Belize."

With an estimated 2.4% HIV infection rate, Belize has the highest HIV infection rate in Central America. As of 2003, the adult prevalence rate (age 15-49 years) of HIV/AIDS spanned from 0.8-6.9 percent. This epidemic is pervasive throughout urban and rural populations, but it is especially prevalent in southern Belize among the Garifuna ethnic people. New infections primarily affect women aged 20-24. Thus, there is special concern for younger women whose reproductive health is in grave jeopardy upon contracting HIV. Educating the young population is the key to the amelioration of the health status in Belize.



This past summer, with a group of 11 undergraduate students I taught and organized week-long health camps for children at three different villages in Southern Belize. We collaborated with Peacework, a non-profit service organization that was founded by Duke alumni Steve Darr, in picking out some of the neediest villages: San Jose, San Estevan, and

Chan Pine Ridge. We worked with around

60 kids per village, aged from eight to fourteen. The camps lasted from 9 am-1 pm, with free lunch provided for the kids. Each day, the camp was split into 5 groups divided by age and gender. We taught five different subjects: Nutrition, Water Sanitation, First Aid/Hygiene, AIDS Health, and Emotional and Physical Health. My subject was Emotional and Physical Health, which involved talking about self-esteem and coping strategies, the five different types of abuse (emotional, verbal, physical, sexual, and drug abuse), and, most importantly, puberty and sexual health.

I remember a conversation I had with Nalini, a 13 year old girl from San Jose. She told me how much she loved school and wished she could go to high school. Her family cannot afford to let her go to high school and desperately needs her to support their home and her four younger siblings, rather than continue her education. Without further schooling, her only future is to live with her family until she is old enough to marry and start her own. Nalini's simple, matter-of-fact explanation of her situation shocked me. She said that she wanted to keep on learning more than anything, a privilege that we take for granted in the United States, but her obligation to her family prevents her from pursuing her own dreams.

My experience teaching in Belize has been one of the most eye-opening experiences I have had while at Duke. During my trip, I not only learned about the culture and heart of the people of Belize, but I have also come to appreciate the need and importance of knowledge and education for young girls concerning their own body.

Nancy Wang is a Psychology major with a concentration in Neuroscience and a minor in Chinese. Inspired by her freshman year FOCUS program on Global Health, she has since been very involved in issues of bioethics and women's sexual education.

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Of the many lessons these children taught me, I hold this truth to be the most pressing: beneath the political mumbo jumbo, there exists a very simple, human problem in Iraq. People are dying every second of every minute of every day. And not just the American troops that we want so desperately to bring home, but children like the 22 who stole my heart. In a message they wrote to Americans, they said, "We have a hope that one day the Iraqi people will live in peace and equality between all kinds of Iraqi people. Our dream is to become the future leaders of a new Iraq. Our dream is to see Iraqis smiling again and living a normal life without fear."

As an American, as an activist, as a Duke graduate, and as a feminist, I hope for the same.

For more information on the Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program:

www.sister-cities.org/sci/sciprograms/other/IraqiYoungLeadersExchange

Shadee Malaklou graduated in May 2007 with a double major in Cultural Anthropology and Women's Studies.

My Work with Women with HIV/AIDS in Tanzania

By Nabihah Kara

In the summer of 2006, I participated in a study of the psychosocial effects of HIV/AIDS on women in the outskirts of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, funded in part by a Women's Studies travel award. I worked with an NGO called Tanzania Youth Alliance (TAYOA). My work with TAYOA was to assess the psychological well being of women in two villages infected with HIV/AIDS. This trip helped me to focus my area of research and led me to help create a new program in Dar es Salaam designed to assist HIV+ women in their community.

One of the greatest obstacles faced by women with HIV in Tanzania is being able to take their medication. Because they're infected, most women are abandoned by their families and their employers and they're left to fend for themselves to earn their own living. Consumers refuse to buy the oranges and handicrafts that they try to sell on the streets. Nobody wants anything to do with a *mwathirika* (victim). Because they have little income for food, they can't take their ARV medication without experiencing immense pain and discomfort. One woman explained, "Usually we don't get enough food to even take the medicine. Last time I took my medicine without food I got boils all over my body. Now I just don't take it if I don't have food." It's more than just access to medication or even affordability. One woman said "There are clinics where we get medicine for free of charge but what we really need is food and shelter and transportation to get to the clinics to collect the medicine. Sometimes you can walk by foot but it's usually very far and we get tired really easily." It's the stigma behind HIV/AIDS, the economic infrastructure, and the impoverished setting in which they live that prevents their adherence to treatment.

When I asked these women about the psychosocial effects HIV/AIDS had on them, they gave me puzzled looks. These women are concerned about whether they would be able to feed, shelter, and clothe themselves and their children. Because these issues are their primary concern, thinking about whether they are psychologically pained, depressed, or have suicidal thoughts seemed to be less relevant to them than I had expected. Sophia, the founder of a women's support group called Loveness in HIV/AIDS in Ilala, a small village outside of Dar es Salaam, said, "We need medicine, food, clothing – because many can't afford it. Many people in the group when they found out they were infected they got mixed up and were crazy and confused and they believed that if you are a victim you will die anytime. So, they sold everything. So now we have to start from the beginning." People infected with HIV are not concerned about their mental health; they are not able to fathom the idea of counseling, depression therapy, or psychological treatment. What they're concerned about is where their next meal is going to come from, whether they'll have shelter for the night, or if they're well enough to carry out daily functions. The real psychological stress factor for these women is poverty.

After coming back to Duke, it was frustrating to know what and whom I'd left behind, but my return did not end my experiences with these women. I have kept in touch with the women who started the support groups I interviewed, Loveness in HIV/AIDS and Dar es Salaam

Infected Group. I remained committed to my goal to devise an intervention that would assist these women and address the issues they relayed to me. Based on the idea that psychological stress is greatly decreased when basic human needs are met, the intervention's intention is to fulfill a basic human need in order to build security and therefore decrease psychological stress to allow for better treatment and adherence to drugs.

In Tanzania, a partnership was formed between the Tanzania Youth Alliance (TAYOA) and the Tanzanian Department of Agriculture to secure fertile plots of land for farming purposes. These plots of land are intended for HIV+ women to collectively grow corn and three forms of wheat. During the summers, a group of TAYOA volunteers have assisted in training the target population on how to irrigate the land and maintain the crops. The seeds have been provided for by The United Nations World Food Programme. Once these crops are produced, the women are then responsible for gathering them and allocating 25% to be evenly distributed amongst the workers and the remaining 75% to be sold to Shoppers Plaza for a fixed negotiated rate, with TAYOA acting as mediator between buyer and seller. This will serve to sponsor continuation of the program and to provide additional income to the HIV+ women. In addition to the agricultural side of this intervention, members of TAYOA will also offer educational workshops about nutrition.

The farming labor has helped to restore the physical and emotional strength of these women. Emotionally speaking, by being an active member of the community, women with HIV/AIDS in Mivenjeni and Ilala can slowly work towards restoring a sense of worth and lowering levels of stigma within the community by displaying a productive role. In the end, this intervention should hopefully play an important role in the development of the emotional well-being of clients by lowering the stress associated with access to food and consequently lead to the ability to better adhere to HIV treatment.

Through my experiences with these very strong, empowering women, I learned that even though I may not be able to solve poverty and change infrastructure on my own, I can mobilize for change. The act of caring and of listening was at least a start.

Nabihah Kara is a senior in Psychology.



Nabihah Kara working with women in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

A Life Changing Summer in Madagascar

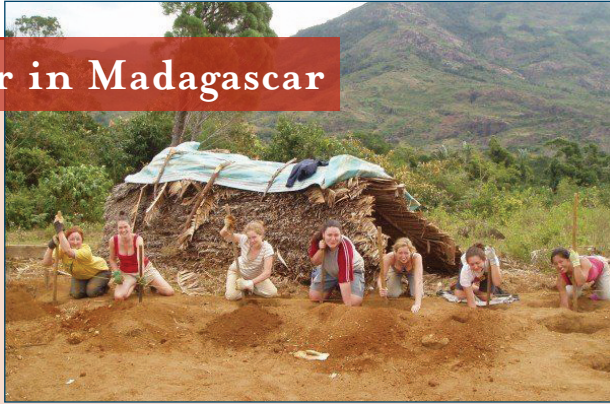
by *Babylonia Aivaz*

Every year as August rolls around, I'm inordinately captivated by my fellow Duke students' tales of summer adventure. This year I came back to Duke with a story of my own. I stepped on campus with a belly full of worms, a pocketful of medicine, and a whole lot of stories.

From June to August, I spent seven of the most life-altering weeks of my life in Madagascar. On July 1st, I arrived in Fort Dauphin in southeast Madagascar to work as an intern for Azafady, a non-profit organization. I was one of 24 volunteers who journeyed to Tsihalanga, the most remote and impoverished region of Madagascar. This is a place where the village people had never even seen *vazahas*, a Malagasy word for foreigners or, more simply, white people. Unsurprisingly, the moment we hiked into our campsite the Malagasy people watched us as if we were a soap opera.

Our project in Tsihalanga was to build a school and accompanying latrine. The village had asked the NGO for a local school, as the children had to walk over two hours everyday to get to the current school and often had to return home midday to help in the rice patty fields. Obviously, this was a great hindrance to their education and often deterred them from even attending. The latrine was built in order to teach younger generations about health and sanitation (i.e. don't defecate in your drinking water), which is often an impossible value to instill in older generations.

We soon found out that men and women had clearly delineated purposes in Tsihalanga. Those tasks that were understood to constitute hard physical labor were solely intended for men. For example since 20 out of the 24 volunteers on the project were women, we were acting against the gender norms of the village when we were sawing wood or mixing cement. Often times, men from the village would take the tools out of our hands and refuse to let us work. However, by the end of the three weeks, two local women defied these gender norms and began working with us, hammering panels and shoveling dirt. It was very rewarding to see that not only were we helping to build a school, but also to bridge gender divides.



Babylonia Aivaz and other volunteers in Madagascar.

"It was very rewarding to see that not only were we helping to build a school, but also to bridge gender divides."

Another gender inequality presented itself during bathing. A fifteen minute hike from the campsite revealed a beautiful, crocodile-infested river where we employed a shampooing technique called the "rub and run."

According to Malagasy traditions, women were not allowed to bathe at the same time as the men and had to cover themselves in a sarong, a tradition we observed as well. Men were allowed to bathe naked and were allotted the better time of day. This was just another minor gender issue in the sea of inequality in Tsihalanga.

Hevatra, the second project site, was a beach paradise. There we helped create and repair vegetable gardens for the local women. Not only would these women be able to maintain their own food source, but they would also be able to travel to Fort Dauphin and sell their cultivated extra goods for income. We also built clay stoves in their homes, which were safer and decreased the amount of wood needed by 80%. While working in one home, I learned from a local woman who just had a baby that she had to stay in bed three months to recuperate from childbirth, while her husband was allowed to sleep with other women. I couldn't possibly believe how difficult life is for the women of Madagascar. Not only are these women severely poor and malnourished, but they also are expected to birth eight to ten children while maintaining the home. All this was, of course, hard physical and affective labor.

Madagascar was a fascinating experience for me. I saw lemurs in their natural habitat, I bathed in crocodile-infested rivers, I went surfing on indescribably beautiful beaches, I ate rice and beans three times a day for seven weeks, I made some of the best friends of my life, I drank moonshine out of a gasoline bottle, I found a boa constrictor in my tent, I saw forests burning everyday, I learned that conservation must go hand in hand with development, and I found the directional compass to my life.

Without the grant that Women's Studies program provided, I would never have had confidence to pursue the educational path I am taking. Going to Madagascar amplified my desire to keep pursuing conservation biology, primatology, and women's studies. I'm not afraid to not be pre-med anymore. My priorities are set.

Babylonia Aivaz is a Junior majoring in Environmental Sciences and Policy, minoring in Women's Studies, and a certificate in Primatology.

Faculty News

Tina Campt spent the summer working in Birmingham, England digitizing a collection of photographs of Birmingham's Caribbean and South Asian communities from the early 1950s which she hopes to make accessible via the Duke University Library. The archive is part of a forthcoming book project, *Imagining Black Europe: Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora*. Campt presented her research as a keynote address at the Creolising Europe conference at the University of Manchester (UK). Beginning in August, Campt has been in residence at Vanderbilt University as the William S. Vaughn Visiting Fellow at the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities.

Tina Campt is co-organizing two conferences this year. *Reconstructing Womanhood: A Future Beyond Empire* at Barnard College on November 2, 2007 was a one-day symposium celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *Reconstructing Womanhood* and honoring the interdisciplinary contributions of feminist scholar Hazel V. Carby. The second conference will be the third event in the Diasporic Hegemonies Project at the University of Pennsylvania in February 2008. Tina Campt is also looking forward to the upcoming publication of a special issue of *Feminist Review*: "Diasporic Hegemonies: Gendering the Diaspora and Racing the Transnational," co-edited by with Deborah Thomas and featuring a series of essays from the Diasporic Hegemonies conference held at Duke in 2005.

Banu Gokariksel has been awarded a National Science Foundation research grant for her collaborative project with Anna Secor (University of Kentucky) on "The Veiling-Fashion Industry: Transnational Geographies of Islamism, Capitalism and Identity." This project investigates the intersection of Islamism and capitalism and its geopolitical and cultural implications through a multi-sited case study of the new Turkish veiling-fashion industry and its transnational connections to Berlin, Paris and Amsterdam. She is teaching two courses this semester: Gender in the Middle East and Global Issues. She has been awarded an Institute of Arts and Humanities fellowship for Spring 2008. She is also looking forward to an international conference she is organizing with Duke professors Miriam Cooke and Ellen McLarney about consumption, markets, and Muslim women in April 2008.

Mary McClintock Fulkerson (Divinity) was recently promoted to full professor of theology. Her book, *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* was published in September 2007 and is now available from Oxford University Press. Professor Fulkerson is currently working on the *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology* with co-editor Sheila Briggs of the University of Southern California. She will be co-teaching WST 162 Gender and Popular Culture this spring with Professor Kathy Rudy.

Ranjana Khanna returned to Duke after a year at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard and took over as Margaret Taylor Smith Director of Women's Studies this semester for a four year term. Her book, *Algeria Cuts: Women and Representation 1830 to the Present* appeared from Stanford University Press in November 2007. Her academic speaking engagements this semester have included invited talks at the University of Lancaster (U.K.), Michigan State University, and Princeton University,

Kathy Rudy continues her research and writing in the field of Human Animal Studies and Animal Ethics. She was a presenter at the Animals and Society Institute's five-week research institute this past summer. She also published several book reviews and an op-ed on dog fighting. This spring, Rudy is teaching WST 101 Animals and Ethics and WST 162 Gender and Popular Culture.

Priscilla Wald is teaching a graduate seminar entitled Human Being after Genocide in the spring. Her article, "Geonomics: The Spaces and Races of Citizenship in the Genome Age," is forthcoming, as is her book, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative*. She will give the keynote address for a programming series at Iowa State entitled "The Book of Life in a Genomic Age" this fall and will be Visiting Hurst Professor at Washington University for a week in January.

Kathi Weeks is teaching WST 205 Debates in Women's Studies in the spring. Dr. Weeks also recently accepted the position of Director of Graduate Studies for the Women's Studies program and will be working closely with the Graduate Scholars Colloquium. Her article, "Life within and Against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post-Fordist Politics," was published in *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* in February 2007.

Robyn Wiegman has been on leave this fall working on a book on identity knowledges. Dr. Wiegman gave talks at the Future of Feminist Theory conference at Rutgers University in October and at Berkeley University. Robyn will return to Duke in the Spring to teach WST 195 Senior Seminar: Gender and the New World Order and WST 220 Foundations in Feminist Theory.

Ara Wilson, Director of Sexuality Studies, was invited to take part in the workshop Global, Sexual, and Economic Justice at Barnard's Center for Research on Women this fall. Duke's Program in the Study of Sexualities (SXL) won a Robertson Scholars Fund award to co-sponsor a series of events on Transnational Sexualities with UNC-Chapel Hill's Sexuality Studies program. Wilson will be teaching WST 161 Gender, Sex, and Power this spring.

continued from page 1

silence about the oppression of women in Islam." Fortunately, at Duke, our students were smart enough to recognize this as a divisive and illegitimate call to action. It is obviously untrue that there has been silence about this topic in Women's Studies programs and we need only look to the publications of our local faculty to contradict the claim. Any responsible academic would balk at the blanket condemnation of Islam's attitude to women, and very few would contradict the incontrovertible fact that some forms of politicized Islam have been detrimental to women. The problem of organizing such

protests is the cynical manner in which divisive terminology is used, for example "Islamofascism," and the political basis for doing so. We surely have to decry this cynical political condemnation of intellectual pursuit encouraged in this call for sit-ins, while acknowledging the need for systematic research into the forms, reasons, and consequences of and for contemporary oppressions. There is a place for both political protest and ruthless critique on university campuses. One can only hope that the former does not rely on the willful misrepresentation of the latter.

Blessing of the Animals

On October 7th, an unusual congregation gathered outside on the lawn of Duke's Chapel. Dozens of animals and their owners came out to take part in the Blessing of the Animals, an outdoor worship service held each year on the Sunday in October closest to the Feast Day of St. Francis. Dogs, cats, gerbils, and even an iguana took part in this year's ceremony. In a sea of lawn chairs, doggie bags, and leashes, pets and their owners gathered to celebrate their kinship with each other.

This year, Kathy Rudy, Associate Professor of Women's Studies, was selected to give the sermon.

Quoting from Jeremiah 12:4 and Romans 8:20-31, Dr. Rudy explained that this love of animals must go beyond our own pets to encompass all creatures.

In reflecting on our texts today I realize that I have made the terrible mistake of limiting my own kinship only to those animals I live with. My heart goes out to the endangered wolves killed this summer by ranchers in Montana for preying on their cattle and for the docile cows who became dinner for those wolves. The great apes in Africa and Indonesia are red-listed for extinction, despite the fact that they are our closest living relatives; there is no longer room in the world for them either. From the baby seals clubbed to death in Canada, to the feral cats trapped and killed by Animal Control right here on Duke's campus, all are, in some ways a part of us. And creation groans when they are lost.

And this is the connection to global warming. If we could learn to care about wildlife in the same way we care about our pets, if we could learn to love them as our own, we could begin to protect their habitats and natural environments and, I believe, reverse this horrific trend we humans have initiated. The more protected space we have for wildlife, the healthier our planet can become. It isn't easy to support wildlife. It means feeding them and putting up with their antics. It means buying our food locally and resisting unnecessary use of fossil fuels. And most of all it means limiting our own growth to make room in the world for them.

Scientists tell us that global warming is already underway and the kind of weather extremes we've seen in this endless summer can only be expected to get worse. Creation groans. But our text today tells us differently. If we can learn to love these wild animals and the spaces they live in, Paul guarantees us that the Spirit will help us in our weakness. "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." I am certain that God is on the side of all our animals, not just our pets here but the wonderful, wild creatures we are squeezing out with our very existence. Won't you join me in helping all animals? Doing so, I believe, might just help save our planet.

Kathy Rudy is an Associate Professor of Women's Studies with Duke University. She received both her Ph.D. and her Masters of Divinity from Duke. She is working on a project entitled The Ethics of Earthlings: Animal Advocacy for the Rest of Us that proposes a new approach to animal advocacy based on feminist, postmodern, earth-friendly principles and themes. Kathy Rudy was also involved in Earth to Table (E2T), an interdisciplinary project built around principles of environmental sustainability, food justice and animal welfare.



Kathy Rudy preaching the sermon at the Blessing of the Animals



Ted Conner with Guy at the Blessing of the Animals

The New Eco-Feminism

Last year, a group of interdisciplinary faculty called E2T (Earth to Table) met in Women's Studies to discuss the politics of food production. This year, Women's Studies has decided to both expand and contract that conversation. We want to expand it by including a wider range of topics related to earth and animals (that is, not just food), and contract it by locating feminist discourse at the center of our agenda. Women's Studies scholars have been engaging questions of feminism's relationship to ecology, the environment, the cultural and economic politics of food, the patenting of natural resources, speciesism, and the gendered implications of many of the practical, economic, political, and philosophical questions arising from these. We plan, over the next two years, to have a reading group with occasional speakers and possibly a film series.

Our first event for Fall 2007 included a conversation between Susan Alberts (Biology, Duke University), Georgina Montgomery (Montana State University), and Kathy Rudy (Women's Studies, Duke University).

Gender, Empire, and the Politics of Central and Eastern Europe: A Conference Report

By Ara Wilson

To consider the emergence of Gender Studies in academic institutions in Central and Eastern Europe, Duke University's Program in Women's Studies co-organized a conference with Central European University (CEU) in Budapest and the University of Washington, Seattle. The end of the Cold War, marked by the fall of the Berlin wall and *perestroika*, created a radically transformed landscape for feminist scholarship in the region formerly known as the Second World. The aim of the conference was to stage comparative and transnational reflections about the articulation of Gender Studies in these new states. Several Duke faculty (Ara Wilson, Kathi Weeks, Ranjana Khanna, Robyn Wiegman, and Irene Silverblatt) attended the two-day conference in Budapest in May 2007.

To prepare for the conference, attendees read a series of texts regarding the contemporary intellectual landscape of the region, including parts of Susan Gal and Gail Kligman's *The Politics of Gender after Socialism* and essays by scholars in Eastern Europe and Russia. Readings from the conference can be accessed at www.duke.edu/womstud/Budapest.html. These readings provided an excellent touchstone for conference discussions.

The first day, conference panels addressed the history of gender studies and current political economies in the region. Many talks outlined the specific contingencies of institutionalizing Gender Studies, mapping the different material conditions, academic conventions, and political aspirations in different countries. Such details, in the words of the conference announcement, described

the "heterogeneity and uneven effects of transnational processes already differentiated by region." Together, these talks invoked Europe in a different way from how that region is commonly referenced in US feminist conversations. The European's Europe is self-consciously demarcated into East, Center, and Western regions and is unevenly linked by theoretical references, languages, or visions for regional political futures.

The second day combined a regional focus with discussions of empire, interdisciplinarity, and transnationalism. It became clear that approaches to such concepts as interdisciplinarity (and evaluations of their analytical promise) displayed remarkable variation across individual speakers and institutional contexts. Over the course of formal panels and informal lunches, US participants realized that "transnational," which is central to currents in US feminist thought, is conceptualized very differently across the Atlantic. For many scholars from new European states, the salient orienting axis remains what Gail Kligman in closing remarks called "the symbolic geography of East-West." At the same time, a number of participants offered critical reflections on this geographic focusing by pointing to other post-socialist contexts (such as India) or the risk of privileging national uniqueness.

This conference provided an ideal stage for our conversations on how a relatively new field was taking hold in an even newer geopolitical terrain.

NOTE: Women's Studies is offering a Spring course on gender in Central and Eastern Europe: WST 150.02 Exchange of Chains: Women in Eastern & Central Europe (Genna Miller).

Melancholic States: A Conference Report

By Ranjana Khanna

The Melancholic States Conference was organized by Gail Lewis and Anne-Marie Fortier in Women's Studies at Lancaster University, U.K. and was co-sponsored by Duke Women's Studies. It explored the psychoanalytic notion of "melancholia" as it was shaped by figures like Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Nicolas Abraham, and Maria

Torok. Taking into account feminist revisions of psychoanalysis, the conference participants focused their attention on borders: national, state, regional, sexual, and psychical. The analysis proceeded mostly through readings of cultural and historical texts, as well as political theory. Papers drew heavily on essays collected in David Eng's and David Kazanjian's edited volume *Loss* and Ranjana Khanna's *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism*. Topics varied from US border controls to the Partition of India into East and West Pakistan. The keynote addresses were by Gaye Chan (University of Hawai'i), David Eng (University of Pennsylvania), former Duke student Ayse Gul Altinay (Sabinci University, Istanbul), Yehudit Keshet (activist and writer, Jerusalem), Ranjana Khanna (Duke University), Roz Mortimer (filmmaker, London), Kavita Panjabi (Jadavpur University, Calcutta), Nandita Sharma (University of Hawai'i), M. Jacqui Alexander (University of Toronto), and Cindy Weber (Lancaster University). Duke Women's Studies graduate certificate student Kartina Amin gave a fascinating paper on Genet's *The Blacks*. Roz Mortimer showed her new film *Invisible*, a shocking documentary about pollution in the Arctic and the consequences for reproduction and the global politics of food.

Faculty Work-in-Progress Presentations

Women's Studies is starting a new of talks in Spring 2008 with faculty presenting their work in progress to each other in a seminar format. There will be two or three seminars per semester. The series will begin with a presentation by Elizabeth Davis. Check the Women's Studies calendar for updates on this series.

Report: The Feminist Theory Workshop 2007

By Britt Rusert

On March 23-24, 2007, over one hundred and seventy participants gathered at Duke's Sanford Institute to discuss the status and tenability of feminist theory in the contemporary moment. The Women's Studies inaugural Feminist Theory Workshop brought together scholars, students, and community members from across the country and beyond to interrogate feminist theory in various disciplinary, institutional, and geopolitical sites. While something called "feminist theory" is often invoked in academic conversations, this was a rare opportunity to investigate the currency of the term itself, to reflexively interrogate its limits and its possibilities for the study of gender, race, sexuality, class, nation, and all of its intersecting coordinates.

Robyn Wiegman, now former Margaret Smith Taylor Director of Women's Studies, opened the two-day event with introductory remarks on the need for such a conference in the midst of a critical milieu that wants to too-easily subjugate feminist theory under the supposed transparency and primacy of experience and practice. She foregrounded the importance of making this event a workshop to consider what it is that we ask theory to do for us and to acknowledge our desires, political and otherwise, to make feminist theory work.

The first plenary speaker of the day, Clare Hemmings (London School of Economics) expanded upon recent critiques of feminist generationality in her talk "What is a Feminist Theorist Responsible for?" Critical of traditional narratives of feminist history that rely upon narratives of progress, loss, and returns, Hemmings argued that different forms of affect might motivate the telling of other stories that challenge "the known" in feminism and increase the political valences of feminist work. Inderpal Grewal (UC Irvine) concluded Friday with a call for feminists to pay attention to mobilizations of the state around gender as a project of neoliberal governance. Recent programs of the state, including U.S. projects of "protecting women" abroad in order to figure itself as morally superior in its treatment of women, should prompt feminists to develop more nuanced vocabularies and approaches to the transnational.

Lisa Lowe (UC San Diego) started off Saturday's workshop by picking up on some similar themes of the state, sovereignty, and gender by examining how particular blind spots in U.S. political science have aided in the production of neoliberalism at the national level. Lowe endorsed recent cross-border feminist projects that appeal to a transnational community, particularly along the hybrid space of the U.S.-Mexico border. Hortense Spillers (Vanderbilt



Elizabeth Grosz, Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University enjoys a moment of collegiality with former Women's Studies Director, Robyn Wiegman

University) took the audience back to the ancient roots of citizenship in order to make some suggestions for understanding the complexities and paradoxes of newer neoliberal regimes in the 21st century. Professor Spillers argued that we need to restore the critical tension between the republican and liberalist models of citizenship, not the least because "women" are this very tension between liberalism and republicanism.

In concluding the keynote addresses on Saturday, Elizabeth Grosz (Rutgers University) offered a decidedly utopian future for feminist theory as a field of inquiry that just might produce something new: new kinds of subjects, desires, and ways of knowing. She concluded by asking for a de-centering of three major strands in feminist theory, namely the subject, the epistemological, and the category of the human. By focusing instead on

the ontological, the inhuman, and the conceptual, feminism might become other to itself, with the happy result of provoking new kinds of becoming in the realms of the social and the political.

A concluding roundtable on Saturday evening with Eva Cherniavsky (University of Washington), Karla Holloway (Duke University), and Sabine Hark (University of Berlin) offered an opportunity for panelists and audience members to summarize and expand upon the workshop's major themes. The roundtable addressed questions raised at the conference including how feminist theory may, or may not, be adequate to particular political desires and everyday struggles. How do we account for the different temporalities of feminist practice versus theory? And finally, does feminist theory need an object of study? While some herald this moment as one of "post-disciplinary" feminism, methodological differences, such as between the humanities and the social sciences, require us to continue discussions about what feminism means in the disciplines.

Streaming video of the conference have been made available on the Women's Studies website at www.duke.edu/womstud/Theory.html.

Britt Rusert is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of English and is enrolled in the certificate program in Women's Studies.

Feminist Theory Workshop: Hold the Date!

The 2nd Annual Feminist Theory Workshop will be held this academic year on March 21-22, 2008. Confirmed keynote speakers to date are Joan Copjec, who will present on the psychoanalytic concept of shame and Iranian cinema; Elizabeth Wilson, whose work currently addresses affect, gender, and artificial intelligence; Ratna Kapur, who is exploring the intersections of sexuality and law in South Asia; and Toril Moi, who is interested in questions arising in areas where literature, philosophy, and feminist theory overlap. We will once again be having a mixture of keynote speakers, a roundtable closing session, and speaker-led seminars around selected readings. Check the Duke Women's Studies website for updates and also for information about last year's event!

Forthcoming Events

- Holiday Party for all students in Women's Studies classes
Thursday, December 6th at 5:00pm in the East Duke Parlors
- In Print: A Celebration of Recent Publications by Duke Professors
January 18, 2008 at 5:00PM in the East Duke Parlors
- Graduate Scholars Colloquium
January 28, 2008 at 6:30PM in the East Duke Parlors
- Lecture with Renata Salecl
January 29, 2008. More information TBA.
- What is the Future of Feminist/Gender History
February 8-9, 2008
www.unc.edu/depts/europe/conferences/gender/
- Lecture with Dr. Dubravka Zarkov
February 15, 2008. More information TBA.
- Graduate Scholars Colloquium
February 25, 2008 at 6:30PM in the East Duke Parlors
- 2nd Annual Feminist Theory Workshop
March 21-22, 2008 at the Terry Sanford Institute at Duke University
- Graduate Scholars Colloquium
March 31, 2008 at 6:30PM in the East Duke Parlors

Representations of Sexual Politics in the Middle East

By Ara Wilson

Duke's Program in the Study of Sexualities collaborated with the UNC-CH Minor in Sexuality Studies to bring in documentary filmmaker and photographer Elle Flanders to screen her documentary, *Zero Degrees of Separation*, and participate in a panel discussion. The events were part of an ongoing effort to form links between the two programs specifically around the theme of Transnational Sexualities, a project sponsored by an award from the Robertson Scholars Program.

Elle Flanders is a Canadian filmmaker whose award-winning documentary *Zero Degrees of Separation* examines the conflict in the Middle East through the eyes of two mixed Palestinian and Israeli gay couples. The stories of these two politically engaged couples are interwoven with archival family footage that shows Flanders' grandparents visit to Israel in the 1950s, a juxtaposition that evokes larger questions of humanity, conflict, and nationalist aspiration.

On October 3rd, Elle participated in an interdisciplinary panel on Representations of Sexual Politics in the Middle East with local scholars Rebecca Stein (Duke, Anthropology), Banu Gokarikel (UNC-CH, Geography), and Negar Mottahedeh (Duke, Literature). The panel used the film as a starting point to discuss the ways that sexual politics might, or might not, be relevant to discussions of political conflict of the scale of the Middle East conflict. Panelists emphasized the need to contextualize films, scholarship, and human rights in a broader context shaped by global and Middle East political conditions. The panel represents an important direction of Sexuality Studies at Duke by using sexuality to stage broader questions about politics, representation, and scholarship. The panel enjoyed a lively period of discussion with students, faculty, and community members. SXL would like to recognize the co-sponsorship of Duke's Center for Jewish Studies, Center for Canadian Studies, and Center for LGBT Life for this event.



Ara Wilson, Negar Mottahedeh, Rebecca Stein, Banu Gokarikel, and Elle Flanders at the 10/3 panel.

Women's Studies Hosts "Asylum: Comparative Historical Perspectives" A Project Sponsored by the Provost's Common Fund



By Sarah Lincoln

Political refuge? Psychiatric hospital? Religious sanctuary? The concept of asylum is an ancient and complicated one, designating an idea or set of practices as much as it refers to a place or institution. Once a religious term marking the special legal status of a church where criminals or other refugees could claim sanctuary, "asylum" has more recently come to describe one nation-state's hospitality toward the citizens of another. The shifting meaning of the term over time and across contexts can serve as an indicator of changing ideas about political and social life, individual rights and personal dignity, and the status of outcast populations from criminals and the "insane" to displaced peoples and refugees.

Whatever space or set of relations it designates, asylum has always been a gendered concept. Women may suffer persecution simply because they are women, and governments and other "official" bodies are often especially lax in protecting women and children citizens from violence in spite of the patronizing rhetoric expressing the contrary. Women have been confined to mental asylums and other holding institutions far more often than men. Asylum applications by women, or for gender-based persecution, are often treated differently by immigration and judicial authorities in the target country with threatening consequences for human rights, international law, and understandings of the political and its relation to the family. What is the relationship between asylum and gender and what can this tell us about the concept and the spaces through which it circulates? What are the strengths and limitations of the language of human rights so often associated with that of "asylum."

This year, Women's Studies is hosting a project dedicated to unraveling some of these complex conceptual, practical, and

political issues associated with asylum. Co-convened by WS director Ranjana Khanna and Cultural Anthropology professor Charlie Piot (who also holds appointments in Women's Studies and AAAS), *Asylum: Comparative Historical Perspectives* brings together faculty and students from a wide range of departments and disciplines across campus to investigate this issue.

Along with its financial and logistical support from Women's Studies, the project is funded by the Provost's Common Fund, a program established to support "interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary activities at Duke" by providing seed money on a competitive basis for innovative scholarly research and artistic activity

that clearly crosses the boundaries of traditional departments and fields of study. We also continue to receive support from various units across campus. For the full list of sponsors please check our calendar (www.duke.edu/womstud/calendar/).

This semester, the Asylum project is offering several stimulating programs:

- In this fall's academic seminar, WST 360, some 18 graduate students, advanced undergraduates, and faculty are considering texts and cases associated with asylum through a feminist lens, trying to understand how asylum relates to fundamental ideas within law, literature, mental health, and culture.
- A separate year-long working group with faculty and graduate student participants from Law, Cultural Anthropology, English, Literature, Religion, and Public Policy, as well as Women's Studies, is meeting monthly over dinner to discuss key works and issues around asylum from an interdisciplinary perspective.
- A series of visitors, offering public lectures and lunchtime seminars, is opening the conversation to the wider campus and Durham community. Harvard University professor Jacqueline Bhabha, an expert on human rights and international law, spoke on October 4th about the problem of child asylum-seekers and what this means for understandings of citizenship, politics, and the family today. On October 10th, David Martin, University of Virginia law professor, spoke on his role in the 1996 "Kasinga" case, which saw the first award of political asylum to a woman fleeing female genital mutilation in her home country of Togo. On November 14th, Barbara Hines, University of Texas, considered the detention of family asylum-seekers in U.S. custody and the legal defense of asylum applicants.

For more information, visit www.duke.edu/~sl11 or contact Sarah Lincoln at sarah.lincoln@duke.edu.

"What is the relationship between asylum and gender and what can this tell us about the concept and the spaces through which it circulates?"

Spring 2008 Schedule

WST 49S	<i>1st Year Seminar: Sex and the Global Citizen – Caroline Light</i>
WST 90	<i>Gender and Everyday Life – Jonna Eagle</i>
WST 101	<i>Animals and Ethics – Kathy Rudy</i>
WST 116	<i>Gender, Science, Technology, and Society – Rashmi Kudesia</i>
WST 150.01	<i>Women at Work – Martha Reeves</i>
WST 150.02	<i>Exchange of Chains: Women in Eastern and Central Europe – Genna Miller</i>
WST 150S.01	<i>Aging, Sex, and Popular Culture – Erin Gentry</i>
WST 150S.02	<i>Native American Women: Religion and Colonization – Angela Tarango</i>
WST 161	<i>Money, Sex, and Power – Ara Wilson</i>
WST 162	<i>Gender and Popular Culture – Kathy Rudy and Mark Fulkerson</i>
WST 163	<i>Interpreting Bodies – Ranjana Khanna</i>
WST 164	<i>Race, Gender, and Sexuality – Caroline Light</i>
WST 195S	<i>Senior Seminar: Gender and the New World Order – Robyn Wiegman</i>
WST 205	<i>Debates in Women's Studies – Kathi Weeks</i>
WST 220	<i>Foundations in Feminist Theory – Robyn Wiegman</i>
WST 271	<i>Feminist Film Theory – Jonna Eagle</i>

New Women's Studies Program Coordinator

Erin Norris is our new Program Coordinator. She joins us after five years at Duke University Press where she worked in the Books Marketing department. Erin has a BA in English with a Minor in History from North Carolina State University and is currently working on her thesis to complete her degree in Graduate Liberal Studies from Duke University. Her personal area of research involves the role of gender and media in adventure narratives, particularly Mount Everest. When not working or writing, Erin can be found wandering Duke Gardens with her camera or critiquing contemporary film and television.



Graduate Scholars Colloquium

By Leah Allen and Fiona Barnett

At the beginning of the fall semester, the Graduate Scholars Colloquium acknowledged Calvin Hui for his two years of impeccable colloquium organization from Fall 2005 to Spring 2007. The GSC also welcomed Leah Allen as incoming co-coordinator and Fiona Barnett began her second year of co-coordination.

The first meeting of the Colloquium was a great success and generated much conversation both at the event and afterwards. Kathi Weeks, the new Director of Graduate Studies in Women's Studies, presented on her article "Life Within and Against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post-Fordist Politics." The resulting dynamic and interdisciplinary discussion engaged questions about working against work, what it means to get a life, and whether or not an academic can (or really wants to) have a life.

The October meeting was presented in a new format for the Colloquium. Structured as a student roundtable titled Collective (Re)Production: Genres of Black Women's and Feminist Writing 1970s-1990s, the meeting gave Alexis Gumbs (English), Serena Sebring (Sociology), and Aisha Peay (English) the opportunity to engage in constructive conversation about their ongoing work. Instead of presenting finished pieces, Alexis, Serena, and Aisha circulated articles relevant to their work in advance. This provided a space to further their thinking amongst each other, while obtaining the always thought-provoking input of our Graduate Scholars.

At the third meeting in November, Britt Rusert (English) presented a chapter titled "The 'Peculiar Soil' of Slavery: Race, Climate, and Plantation Eugenics" from her in-progress dissertation. We always look forward to reading graduate student work and Britt has been an active member of the Colloquium. We'd like to especially thank her for sharing this interesting and absorbing piece.

In the spring semester the Graduate Scholars Colloquium will host another faculty presentation, a student presentation, and a works-in-progress student roundtable. The meeting dates for the spring are January 28th, February 25th, and March 31st. We look forward to replicating the success of these events this fall semester!

If you are interested in participating in the colloquium as a presenter or a member, please contact Leah Allen at leah.allen@duke.edu or Fiona Barnett at fiona.barnett@duke.edu. To RSVP for a future meeting, contact erin.norris@duke.edu.

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