

# Persistence is Resistance

Celebrating 50 Years of Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies



**Edited by Julie Shayne**

Illustrator and Art Editor, Nicole Carter

PERSISTENCE  
IS  
RESISTANCE:  
CELEBRATING  
50 YEARS OF  
GENDER,  
WOMEN &  
SEXUALITY  
STUDIES

JULIE SHAYNE

University of Washington libraries

Seattle



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**As always, dedicated to my  
beloved father Barry  
(1945-2001)**



The night I received my MA in Women's  
Studies. Photo taken before the San  
Francisco State University graduation. 1995.

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Bothell

Introduction: Fifty Years of Women's Studies ~ Beverly  
Guy-Sheftall, Spelman College

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Photos from SDSU library exhibit

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Teaching Women's & Gender Studies: Teaching Tools for Life ~ Elena Tajima Creef and Rosanna Hertz, Wellesley College

From Theory to Content: Feminist Publishing Makes Women's Studies Powerful ~ Carmen Rios, American University, alumna

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The Struggle Continues: Women of Color Faculty and Institutional Barriers ~ Lourdes Torres, DePaul University

En La Lucha (student art) ~ Veronica Eldredge, Seattle University

Turning a Feminist Lens on Administration ~ Judith Howard, University of Washington Seattle

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Students answer: Why Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies? ~ Michael Castro, Santiago Canyon College and Lauren Raimunde, Smith College

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Writing Social Justice: Thoughts from a WGSS Major ~ Sarah Valdez, State University of New York at Albany

Not Your Beauty (student art) ~ Madeleine Jenness, University of Washington Bothell

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Hometown (student poetry) ~ Talia Heyman, Smith  
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The Power of Words: A Discussion of Chanel Miller's  
*Know My Name* ~ Melinda Chen, University of Kansas

Sins of the Skinny Body (student art) ~ Meranthy Meza,  
Santiago Canyon College

## **Section four: Wrapping Things Up**

Conclusion: Damn Straight We Persisted ~ Julie Shayne  
and Nicole Carter, University of Washington Bothell

Artist statement: Interior Intimacies Series ~ Kandace  
Creel Falcón, University of Kansas & University of  
Minnesota, alum

A Lesbian Marriage (student art) ~ Kandace Creel Falcón

Kitchen Top (student art) ~ Kandace Creel Falcón

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About our programs

Praise ~ Stephanie Y. Evans, Georgia State University  
and Doreen Mattingly, San Diego State University

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happy50thws

PART I

WELCOME

# Acknowledgements

This book would not have come to be without a lot of peoples' help and support. Thank you, Janelle Silva for planting the idea of a book into my head; I did not know I had another one in me but apparently you did. Thank you Denise Hattwig for sowing the Pressbooks seed in me and making me think I was capable of this project, long before I knew I was. Mary Schibig, thank you so much for troubleshooting my many technical issues as I got deeper and deeper into the book and all of the hands-on work, especially at the end. Larin McLaughlin, thank you for your enthusiasm about the project and ideas about how to promote it.

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Sarah Cannon, thank you for working as my copy

editor; I have never worked with one so enthusiastic about everything she read! Hopefully your rekindled love of GWSS will wear off on Liza as she begins college.

Thank you to all of the contributors for putting up with my emails requesting this or that and committing your time to this non-traditional publication. Special thanks to the Black contributors who kept pushing through even after Breonna Taylor's and George Floyd's murders, the ensuing police brutality against the mass protests, and the collective trauma that lingers in the air. I hope this project provides more resources for us to teach about Black and Africana feminism and why GWSS is fundamental for understanding and dismantling the carceral state.

Finally, to my family. My parents, dad (Barry), mom (Lynda), and stepdad (Frank) who combined are the perfect lefty-feminist-hippy-Jewish parental cocktail of unwavering support. To Barrie and Aaron for lifting me out of my pandemic induced funk, by sharing TikTok dog videos and English Premiere League goals on YouTube (in lieu of our Sounders) so I could get my energy back and start working again. And thank you Dave, my everything, for everything. You have way too much faith in me.



# About the cover

The cover was designed by Nicole Carter. The art which is at the center of the cover is by Veronica Eldredge. The image is called “Besando” and this is Veronica’s artist statement.

## “Besando” (2016):

This is a digital illustration I created based on a photograph that was circulating on social media in the summer/fall of 2016. The original photo is by Alejandra Sánchez, for a street/public art project called “Beso de Chola” in La Paz, Bolivia, with the artists Adriana Bravo and Ivanna Terrazas portraying the kiss. I loved the image and what it represented for indigenous women in expanding the visibility of lesbians, queers, and two-spirit people. More info about their project, found here: [besodechola.wordpress.com/](http://besodechola.wordpress.com/).

Adriana Bravo/Besando de Chola artist statement: “*Dos mujeres vestidas de pollera besándose, tratando de encarnarse y mimetizarse, ambas experimentando un proceso performático/transgresor; siendo este el material en bruto que asienta una imagen, la inoculación de un ósculo que hackea, y se viraliza en la configuración binaria de la sexualidad. La construcción de identidad es una situación líquida, cambiante, que depende de las decisiones que construyen el aliento de nuestro presente.*”

JULIE SHAYNE

English translation by Veronica Eldredge: “Two women dressed as Bolivian cholas kissing, trying to embody/ personify and mimic each other, both experimenting with transgression and performance; this being the raw material that establishes an image, the inoculation of an osculum that hacks and makes viral the binary configuration of sexuality. Identity construction is a fluid, changing situation, which depends on the decisions that build the breath of our present.”

Veronica Eldredge, she/her/hers

Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies minor

Seattle University, class of 2016

@vmearte on instagram

# Preface: Context, Organization, and Non-traditional publishing

By Julie Shayne,  
University of  
Washington  
Bothell

GWSS is now officially a half-century old, just a little younger than me.<sup>1</sup> The first US program would have celebrated its birthday in April 2020 had much of the world not been put on pause due to

COVID-19. Fifty years is a significant amount of time for tremendous development, change, reflection, and growth. *Persistence is Resistance* is meant to capture some of this



Julie Shayne by Nicole Carter

1. I would like to thank Kandace Creel Falcón for their feedback on an early draft of this Preface

vibrant feminist history, expand the current documented conversations, and move us into the future.

This project is the result of a lot of things, not the least of which is being a Women's Studies student at San Francisco State University in the 1990s. (BA, 1993 and MA, with the second cohort of grad students, in 1995.) I entered SFSU on the heels of my own involvement in the Salvadoran solidarity movement, a slight detour from my first attempt at college, and then was drawn straight to Women's Studies. The majority of my professors were women of color: Angela Davis, Donna Hubbard, Chinosole, Merle Woo. There were influential white women as well, but they felt like the minority: Mina Caulfield (my mentor in grad school) and Ruth Mahaney. The majority of the assigned texts were written by women of color, including those assigned by the white faculty. When I started at SFSU I had no career goal in mind, but it didn't take long to realize I wanted to be a Women's Studies professor.

After I decided I was interested in the history of GWSS in the US, I checked out books, and quickly became confused. I was taken aback by the largely white narrative, given SFSU's deep roots in Black and Women of Color feminisms. So, this book is in part about correcting the historiography of US academic feminism. I hope eventually *Persistence is Resistance* is a centerpiece in conversations that started in some of the earlier canonical texts, yet in my estimation, are overly white and US centered.

*Persistence is Resistance* is also the result of leaving the tenure track for the teaching track (with impeccably good timing), and ending up in the School of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences (IAS) at the University of Washington

Bothell. As a Principal Lecturer (“Teaching Professor” starting 9/16/20), I ultimately chart my own research path and ended up pursuing the public scholarship route; this book is my most recent passion project. *Persistence is Resistance* also looks the way it does as a result of me being submerged in IAS for over a decade, a School that values undergraduate student-faculty creative collaboration. As you move through the pages (starting on the cover), you will see the words and images of GWSS student artists and creative thinkers. GWSS belongs to all of us and our undergraduates are the ones to carry it forward – I felt it very important to put them front and center in this project. (See Sarah Valdez’s essay.)

As a white editor, it was very important to me that we tell an intersectional story, and not by simply adding the word “intersectional,” and letting it land there, devoid of historical and analytical force. Rather, I worked hard to recruit Black feminists, feminists of color, and folks trained in those schools of thought. Intersectionality, though articulated as such by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), has its roots in Black feminist pioneers like the Combahee River Collective (1978), Audre Lorde (1984), and women of color feminists like Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, and all of the contributors in *This Bridge* (1981). By assembling a truly diverse collection of scholar-activists trained in this history, that represent a cross section of social locations, to speak of their own communities’ histories and futures, we are collectively able to tell the intersectional story that is GWSS. Thus, the authors of *Persistence is Resistance* are far from a homogenous group. We are young and less young; we are cis, trans, and nonbinary. We are straight and queer. We are racially and ethnically diverse, with more authors of color than white.

We are undergraduate students, retired faculty, and all over the place in between. We are teaching track and tenure track faculty, affiliated with all types of schools: community colleges, private universities, HBCUs, state schools, women's colleges. A handful of us have PhDs or are working on PhDs in GWSS, almost all of us teach primarily in GWSS departments or programs, while a few of us are completely outside of academia. All this variety aside, the one thing we all share is our commitment to a feminist university. That means feminism at the bedrock when it is time to start programs from scratch, which still happens today. That means feminism in the classroom with respect to what we assign our students, how we teach and support them. (See Creel Falcón; Tajima Creel & Hertz; Siddiqui; Chen essays.) That means feminist administrating so that when minoritized faculty are targeted, they have allies with power. (See Torres and Howard essays.) And so much more, as you will see in the pages that follow.

*Persistence is Resistance* is organized into three sections: The history of GWSS, the Praxis of GWSS, and Doing GWSS. Section one's essays discuss: the history of the first program (SDSU); the first and only Africana Women's Studies program; GWSS in the Global South; the GWSS name change; an annotated bibliography for other researchers, and why GWSS still matters. Section two is about mobilizing, or, the praxis of GWSS. Two of the essays are about pedagogy, one about feminist publishing, two about feminist administrating and/or the need for it, and one about what GWSS students do after they graduate. Finally, section three begins with an undergraduate student's reflections and then looks at the implementation of GWSS in Ghana; feminism in Latin

America; community colleges in the US; Indigenous feminisms; ecofeminism; and Chanel Miller's *Know My Name*. All of the essays are punctuated with student art or student answers to "why GWSS?" Despite its richness, this collection is incomplete. There were many topics I wanted to include in this collection that I was not able to because I could not find available authors. In my estimation, the two most conspicuous and honestly painful absences are pieces about disability studies and GWSS and trans studies and GWSS. I also hoped to have a piece on the evolution of the National Women's Studies Association, and something about GWSS's importance in understanding popular culture. The short of it is, we simply cannot capture fifty years of this dynamic field in one book.

A note on terms, formatting, and other stuff that matters differently when you publish in non-traditional platforms. I have written/edited three books, not including this one. After completing the last two, both of which I finished in the Seattle area, I said I wanted to take a ride on a Washing State Ferry (one of my favorite ways to spend an afternoon in the pre-COVID-19 era), attach a brick to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, and toss it over the side of the boat once I got into the center of the Puget Sound. For those of you who have written academic books, I suspect you know the feeling. Since I do not litter, and understand the environmental damage that it would do, I have never followed through on that. For this project, my copy editor (Sarah Cannon) and I decided to break a lot of the rules since we are quite confident few feminists, if any, were consulted in writing that manual. So, there are inconsistencies and things that are technically "inaccurate" as per the style guidelines. But

from a feminist knowledge production perspective, we decided we want to have the final say about capitalizing titles and the like because there is more behind every “style” decision than simply format and consistency. As a result, we ask you to roll with the inconsistencies. You will also see that the authors vary in our use of “Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies” to “Women’s and Gender Studies,” and most commonly the acronyms. The variety of course reflects the thirty-plus programs that the thirty of us represent.

Finally, this was an ambitious project, one punctuated by Black lives lost to state violence – either directly in the cases of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and Rayshard Brooks or through structural violence enabled by the state, in the cases of Ahmaud Arbery and all of the Black lives lost to COVID-19. Being “productive” as one navigates trauma, especially when your own community is targeted, is something that is unfortunately all too common for many of the authors in this collection (McCoy 2020). I thank the authors and artists for taking the time to contribute to this project, given this backdrop. I think the amount of time everyone dedicated to this non-traditional publication is an indication of our commitment to a feminist university and in this case, the feminism shows itself in open access publishing.

The success of this book is in part up to you, the reader, so please help us circulate it and share a sliver of the amazing GWSS story. If you are a student, reading it outside of a class, share it with a professor to teach in their class. If you are a professor, suggest reviewing it for your journal, newsletter, or blog. If you are neither, share it in your circles: Feminist scholarship is meant to travel



outside the academy, so help us disseminate it! Please elevate the feminist scholarship and creativity in these pages so that we can bring more visibility to fifty years of GWSS history and the scholars who documented it. And don't forget, always #CiteBlackWomen.

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# Introduction: Fifty Years of Women's Studies

By Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Spelman  
College

Women's Studies, as a distinct entity within US higher education, made its debut in 1970 with the establishment of the first program at San Diego State University.<sup>1</sup> (See Russell et. al, this collection.) Fifty years later, there are more than nine hundred programs in the US, boasting well over ten thousand courses and an enrollment larger than



Beverly Guy Sheftall by Nicole  
Carter

1. I would like to thank Estephania Guzman for locating the updated statistics for me and Sarah Valdez for transcribing the magazine article version back into a word document for me.

that of any other interdisciplinary field. And Women's Studies<sup>2</sup> has gone international in a big way: Students can find programs and research centers everywhere from Argentina to India to Egypt to Japan to Uganda, to Ghana – more than fifty countries in all, from nearly every region of the globe. (See Darkwah and Ernstberger essays, this collection.)

As it has developed on individual campuses, Women's Studies has also reached out to a wider audience by creating a wealth of scholarship in print. The US can now boast more than eighty-eight refereed Women's Studies journals, and hundreds of monographs in the field have been published by university press and trade houses.

Want to earn a doctorate in Women's Studies? You have twenty-two choices of programs in the US, plus those in Canada, Australia, and England. Want to teach? Colleges and universities across the nation routinely advertise faculty searches in Women's Studies programs and departments, and award prestigious endowed professorships in the field. Want to put your degree to work outside of higher education? There is a growing domestic and international market for Women's Studies graduates in government, policy and research institutes, foundations, and nonprofit organizations. (See Radeloff and Berger, this collection.)

During the 1970s, the pioneers of Women's Studies focused on establishing the field as a separate discipline with autonomous programs. In the 1980s, the focus expanded to include "mainstreaming" Women's Studies

2. Many programs and departments have since changed their names to some version of "Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies." (See Bhatt essay, this collection.) To remain consistent with the field's history I use "women's studies" in this essay.

throughout the established curriculum, incorporating feminist scholarship within many academic disciplines. In that way, Women's Studies wouldn't remain in an academic ghetto, but could begin to transform and gender-balance every aspect of the curriculum.

Also in the '80s, women of color began to critique both Women's Studies and gender focused curriculum projects for their relative lack of attention to questions of race, ethnicity, class and cultural differences. One of the hardest-hitting examinations of the insensitivity of Women's Studies to difference can be found in the pioneering work of feminist theorist bell hooks, especially her book *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (1984), in which she illuminated the impact of employing a monolithic conception of women's experiences in the new scholarship on gender and sexuality.

Responding to such critiques, a new field of study emerged—Black Women's Studies, which now provides a framework for moving women of color from the margins of Women's Studies to its center. (See Sears and Stevenson et al. essays, this collection.) The 1982 book *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (edited by Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith) helped catalyze this transformation of Women's Studies, providing a theoretical rationale for incorporating “minority women's studies” and “intersectional” analyses into all teaching and research on women.

In the fifty years since its inception, Women's Studies has revamped and revitalized major disciplines in the academy. It has challenged curricular and pedagogical practice. It has disrupted the male-centered canon. It has altered or blurred the boundaries between disciplines. It

has introduced the social construction of gender and its intersections with race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality as a major focus of inquiry. And it has experienced phenomenal and unanticipated growth, becoming institutionalized on college and university campuses, spurring the hiring of feminist faculty, adding graduate courses of groundbreaking content, generating a large body of educational resources and providing the impetus for the establishment of feminist research centers. It has stimulated the development of *other* academic fields as well: queer studies, cultural studies, gender studies, men's and masculinity studies, disability studies, peace studies, and more.

Even more compelling, perhaps, are the profound changes that have occurred over the past fifty years as a result of the feminist activism, teaching and research stimulated by Women's Studies. There is heightened consciousness and advocacy around rape, incest, battering, sexual harassment, sex trafficking, the feminization of poverty, and health disparities related to race, gender, and class. In addition, there is more intense dialogue about government-subsidized child care, health-care reform, gender equity in education, and spousal leave. It is unfortunately still the case that empowerment strategies for women do not necessarily address the particular experiences and needs of women of color or poor women, but this just gives Women's Studies scholars and activists a challenge for the future.

Because of its potential for societal transformation, Women's Studies should be supported more than ever during this paradoxical period of assault or backlash, on the one hand, and increased demand from students plus the growing imperatives of diversity and inclusion on the

other. A well-organized right-wing movement, emboldened by the president and his education secretary, both inside and outside of higher education, continue to employ outmoded racist, misogynist, and homo/transphobic schemes to try and reverse progressive reforms. We cannot let that happen. We need to advocate even more loudly and clearly for the revamping of mainstream curricula that remain insensitive to racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual, and class differences—a campaign in which Women’s Studies plays a crucial role. (See Shayne, 2020.)

Women’s Studies must also work more closely with other interdisciplinary programs, and provide expertise—along with ethnic studies—to the important multicultural initiatives taking place on many campuses. Feminist scholars must continue to conduct research and generate data to inform public policy debates and decision-making that will affect women and families in the US and around the globe.

This is the greatest challenge for our field: to transcend the boundaries of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, geography and language in the interest of a feminism that is expansive and responsive. After fifty years, we know that Women’s Studies is more than up to it.

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An earlier version of this Introduction appeared in *Ms. Magazine*. It is edited and reprinted by permission of *Ms. magazine*, © 2009.

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JULIE SHAYNE

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## PART II

# SECTION ONE: THE HISTORY OF GENDER, WOMEN, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

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1.

The History of San  
Diego State  
University's  
Women's Studies  
Program

JULIE SHAYNE

By Temperance Russell & Lori  
Loftin, San Diego State University,  
and Julie Shayne, University of  
Washington Bothell



Lori Loftin (L) and Temperance  
Russell (R) by Nicole Carter



Julie Shayne by Nicole Carter

This essay is about the  
development of the first  
US Women's Studies  
program: San Diego State  
University (SDSU).<sup>1</sup> Every program's history is no doubt

1. Julie would like to thank Doreen Mattingly, Susan Cayleff, Emily Saap,

unique, including SDSU's, but after reading many histories of different programs and testimonies from different founders it has become strikingly clear that there were many parallels. (See annotated bibliography by Shayne and Guzman.) We start this essay with some national trends in the development and early years of the programs and then move onto the specific case of SDSU.<sup>2</sup> In *Women's Studies: A Retrospective*, Beverly Guy-Sheftall describes the field as going through four phases, marking the beginning with the 1960s Civil Rights movement and development of Black Studies. Guy-Sheftall goes on to identify the four phases as 1: the development of Women's Studies as a new interdisciplinary program; 2: movement of Women's Studies into the mainstream; 3: challenges to Women's Studies by women of color and particular efforts to move women of color to the center from the margins; and 4: the internationalization of Women's Studies in the US and emergence of Women's Studies and global feminism throughout the world (1995, xiii-xiv).<sup>3</sup> Keeping this backdrop in mind, we share a few trends that appear to run through most programs.

Simply put: "This history of women's studies in the 1970s is ... a complex story, interweaving the hard daily

and Amanda Lanthorne at SDSU who all gave her their time through interviews and/or email exchanges to help her understand the development of SDSU's Women's Studies program.

2. In this introductory section we do not cite every single source that speaks to these individual trends because there are literally too many to cite; if we mention a pattern here, it was something we came upon in many different readings.
3. Of all the histories I (Julie) read for this project I found this one to be the most helpful. Needless to say, it only gets the reader to 1995, but it tells a much more complete story than what one gets in most of the other collections.

work of institution building, the magic of individual growth and transformation, the subtlety of intellectual discovery, and the defiance of a grass-roots movement for change” (Lapovsky Kennedy 2000, 244). The labor was non-stop, often unremunerated, including the teaching, and always done collaboratively, though not harmoniously, with students. There was also an inordinate amount of professional precarity on the part of the faculty involved, in part because they were feminist activists, and most higherups on their campuses were not (at least initially) happy to hear from them. Additionally, administrators frequently put untenured, even part time and/or doctoral candidates, in positions of power, which meant they sat at the same tables as people (read: white men) with significantly more clout, power, and experience than themselves.

The founders of Women’s Studies—students, staff, faculty, and community activists—mostly saw themselves as members of social movements of which Women’s Studies was a natural outgrowth. Most white feminists talked about Women’s Studies coming from and remaining a part of the women’s movement (Boxer 1998; Howe 2000), whereas, as noted, Guy-Sheftall identifies the Civil Rights movement being the catalyst. Women of color feminists took white feminists to task, by asking: Which women’s movement? Who was being represented? And from a curricular perspective, how did white women’s hegemony translate to conspicuous absences in the curriculum and field writ large (Moallem 2002, 372; Sandoval 1990). Related to this, Barbara Smith explains, “I do not remember anyone else I knew using the term *Black women’s studies* during the early 1970s, but I had a clear

sense that was, in fact what we were creating” [*italics in original*] (2000, 198).

Other commonalities that cross all the programs are their tiny budgets, yet the overwhelming popularity of their courses, as well as the snail’s pace at which it takes to get from idea-to-course-to-BA-degree-housed-in-a-department. For example, the University of Colorado Boulder had a Women’s Studies program approved in the fall of 1974, but it was not until April 1998 that they won final approval for their BA degree (Westkott 2002, 293-94). These timelines and uphill battles, both internal and external which accompanied the process, were in no way unique to Boulder. Indeed, San Diego State experienced its own version of most of these trends, to which we now turn.

Founded in 1970, the San Diego State University Department of Women’s Studies was the first program in the nation. The department celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2020.<sup>4</sup> Temperance and Lori both received our MAs in Women’s Studies from San Diego State University in 2020. During our tenure in the Women’s Studies department we were actively involved in the planning of the 50th anniversary celebration in many capacities, including: co-producing a short commemorative film on women’s studies; creating an online-timeline of the program; and overseeing an oral-

4. Sadly, the grand celebration that had been in the making for nearly two years had to be postponed due to COVID-19, so the public and collective celebration is still to come. The department planned a Gender and Social Justice Festival for April 25th, 2020, a time for Women’s Studies students, faculty, alumni, friends, and community members to come together and celebrate the accomplishments of the past 50 years with panels, lectures, exhibits, and activities. The Festival has been postponed until the 2020-21 academic year.

history project for which we interviewed twenty three important figures from the department's past and present. Our involvement with these projects serves as the data for the remainder of this essay. However, our efforts were more than data gathering or logistical support—rather, our involvement demonstrates a core value of SDSU's Women's Studies: a commitment to provide concrete opportunities to empower students as leaders. This is particularly important given the role of students in creating the program from the outset.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, faculty and students at San Diego State College were actively involved in many social movements. From this activism, new academic departments were formed—Africana Studies, Chicana and Chicano Studies, and American Indian Studies. Additionally, the Women's Liberation movement began to take shape nationally and on San Diego State's campus (Orr 1998, 50). Gatherings of women in consciousness raising or "rap groups" became a place for women to talk about their shared experiences of sexism in their lives and in academia. One of these consciousness raising groups at San Diego State, composed of about twenty students and faculty, launched the Center for Women's Studies and Services (CWSS) to provide a more formal space from which to address sexism on campus.

The first project of CWSS was the creation of a Women's Studies program. In the fall of 1969, CWSS offered free classes, taught entirely via the voluntary labor of students and faculty in other departments. The leadership and involvement of students and the multi-disciplinarity of faculty proved integral to the long term survival of the program. CWSS found their eventual success by following the model used by student and



faculty activists who created the Mexican American Studies (now called Chicana and Chicano Studies) at SDSU the year prior. CWSS pushed the university administration to offer courses for credit, bringing a petition signed by over 600 students, to the University Senate (Orr 1998, 59).

By the spring of 1970, the activists were successful. San Diego State College established a Women's Studies Program which offered classes for credit, becoming the first university in the nation to do so. In its first year, there were two full-time professors hired and five courses offered (Salper 2011, 662). Professors took on their work in Women's Studies above and beyond their contractually required teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities, doing so without pay. The first years were turbulent. Debates over ideology and funding led to a split between the Women's Studies Program and the Center for Women's Studies and Services (CWSS). CWSS eventually moved off campus and evolved into The Center for Community Solutions, which continues to do feminist advocacy and anti-violence work in San Diego County. In the 1973-74 school year another conflict erupted, changing the makeup of the program. A dispute with the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters led to the mass resignation of all staff, faculty, and members of the Women's Studies Board (Foulkes 2007, 134). The Dean mandated that Women's Studies stray from its liberatory teaching and decision making style, stripping community members, non-tenured faculty, and students of their decision making power in the department. A sizable amount of the Women's Studies stakeholders vehemently disagreed with that mandate and resigned in protest (Foulkes 2007, 133). In fall of 1974, the Women's

Studies program received new direction under the leadership of Chair Marilyn Boxer, with two new full-time and four part-time faculty offering twelve classes. At the time, Boxer was still a doctoral candidate herself, originally hired as a part time faculty member, who was more or less told she would be the chair (Boxer 2000, 234). The faculty developed an eighteen-credit minor, which was approved by the University Senate in May of 1975. That same year, the university officially established Women's Studies as a department in the College of Arts and Letters. Classes taught included "Women in History", "Contemporary Issues in the Liberation of Women", "Women in Comparative Cultures", and "Human Sexuality" (Self Study 1979).

Since its inception, the department of Women's Studies has had to prove itself against outside conceptions that it was not sufficiently rigorous as a discipline or that research on and about women was a passing fad. To legitimize their work, the Women's Studies faculty took great care to ensure academic rigor in their courses, collaborating with other departments and guest lecturing across campus to build faith in the department. Their efforts ultimately led to the university including Women's Studies courses in the General Education curriculum, an important step in the institutionalization of the program. The "New Views of Women" lecture series was launched in 1977, further expanding the impact of the Women's Studies department by bringing students, faculty, staff, and community members together to hear lectures from feminist faculty in disciplines across the university. By 1989, faculty from twenty-eight departments at SDSU (representing every college except the College of

Engineering) had presented lectures in the “New Views of Women” lecture series (Self Study 1989). In addition, the department hosted talks by well-known figures of the women’s movement, including Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, and Bella Abzug (Self Study 2014).

In 1982, the SDSU Senate approved a major in Women’s Studies, making SDSU one of fifty-five universities in the US at that point with such a major. The major fueled the growth of the department and by 1989 there were eight full-time faculty. In 1995, the department achieved a long-standing goal, launching a 30-credit, two-year MA program (Self Study 2000). Today, the MA program remains an extremely important part of the department.

From its founding, Women’s Studies faculty have been active in university governance, serving in leadership roles in the College of Arts and Letters, the University Senate, the California Faculty Association, and numerous university committees. Additionally, throughout the history of the department, faculty members have moved into administrative positions at SDSU and other campuses in the California State University system (Self Study 2000). The Women’s Studies Department has also been actively supportive of student organizations throughout its history, including the Women’s Resource Center (WRC), the Women’s Studies Student Association (WSSA), Graduate Women Scholars of Southern California (SCALLOPS), the Andrea O’Donnell Womxn’s Outreach Association (WOA), and many others (Self Study 2014).

Women’s Studies also has a rich history of involvement in the local and global community. In 1996, the Hoover High School Young Women’s Studies club was founded,

providing an opportunity for SDSU students to mentor local high school students through service learning. The 2002 founding of the Bread and Roses Center for Feminist Research and Activism extended the involvement of SDSU students, faculty, and staff in community organizations and projects. Bread and Roses projects include an annual themed colloquium series, community partnerships, and annual student activist research fellowships. As Women's Studies in the US continues to be ever more committed to transnational feminist theory and scholarship, faculty have begun teaching numerous travel study courses, conducting research in and about communities around the world, and presenting their research at international conferences.

Another major accomplishment and source of pride for the department is the creation of a major and minor in LGBTQ Studies. Women's Studies has been a leader in transforming SDSU into a campus that actively supports the success of LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff (Self Study 2008).

The curriculum of Women's Studies has continued to grow in response to student interest, historical changes, and developments in the discipline of Women's Studies. One thing, however, which remains the same is the name. Even as many programs around the country move to change their names from "Women's Studies" to some version of "Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies," SDSU has not followed that trajectory. (See Bhatt essay, this collection.) As a department the debate happens periodically, often prompted by new hires, and not surprisingly, feelings are strong on all sides of the debate.

Retiring faculty Susan Cayleff explains her commitment to keeping “Women’s Studies”:

I am adamant on this point that we must remain women’s studies. Adamant. I feel most strongly about this than almost anything. Here’s the reason why we have to honor history. We were first in the nation. We are not post-feminist. Someone said, I forget who... “we’ll be post-feminist when we’re post patriarchy and I’m not holding my breath.” I am not convinced that gender...studies programs are feminist. I am not convinced that they centered the experiences of female identified people. I think that there are unique experiences and circumstances and oppressions that come with being female identified. I am 1000% trans and queer inclusive. And yet I think that trans, nonbinary, queer politics must have feminism at the center. And I am not convinced that that is the case ... in many places. And I think that whether one is born female or identifies as female, uh, that there are bodily issues that impact female identified people that need examination and remediation, and I’m talking about reproductive justice and that includes trans and nonbinary people. I’m talking about sexual violence that includes trans non-binary people. ... 1,000 ways that female identified people experienced the world uniquely because they are female bodied and or identified and that cannot be erased. It took an entire women’s movement... and the birth of women’s studies to get this acknowledgment put into human consciousness that, that femaleness matters (personal interview with Russell, 2019).

Younger scholars, especially students, tend to see all sides

and it seems likely that SDSU will remain “Women’s Studies” for the foreseeable future.

In 2020, the SDSU Women’s Studies Department has eleven full-time and eight part-time faculty and offers close to fifty courses. Graduates of the MA and BA programs serve as professionals in a range of fields and continue to fight for social justice and women’s and queer folks’ empowerment through their activism, community, and academic service. The collaborative and coalitional nature which launched the program is still central to its mission which means battles happen. That said, SDSU made it for a half a century using that model and we are excited to see what SDSU’s faculty, students, and staff will bring to the academic and community feminist movements during these next fifty years.

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# Photos from SDSU library exhibit



JULIE SHAYNE



Curated by Doreen Mattingly and Ariana Aritelli. Photos by Julie Shayne (January 2020)

2.

The Praxis of  
Africana Women's  
Studies: Lessons  
from Clark Atlanta  
University

## By Stephanie Sears, Clark Atlanta University

It is an all too common exchange. An uninformed student stumbles into treacherous terrain during a class debate, searching for that proverbial origin story which supposedly introduced massive, perhaps even dysfunctional, change into society. Invariably, that student will announce blunderingly, “it all started when women left the home to

enter the workplace.” To such a comment, I offer my standard query, “Which women are you talking about?” I consider exchanges such as this serviceable because they invite fruitful discussions which, for me, validates why teaching Africana Women’s Studies in a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) is so vital. Most students are confounded when reminded that Africana women have historically worked outside of the home and that their political activism anticipated the 1848 gathering of women at Seneca Falls. Students need only to be prodded a small measure to think about their own family histories to find evidence for Africana women’s labor, creativity, and advocacy in both public and private domains. As students grow in awareness, they are confronted by the ways in which they have accepted and



Stephanie Sears by Nicole Carter

internalized a dominant narrative about women (Matias et al, 2019). They eventually grasp how dominant narratives eclipse aspects of their own histories and their newly awakened consciousness compels them to acquire alternative narratives. In this essay, I discuss the significance of the Africana Women's Studies (AWS) program at Clark Atlanta University by highlighting its role in correcting for the marginalization and erasure of Africana women's narratives. I maintain that AWS's presence contributes to HBCUs and Women's Studies in general, and Africana women's scholarship in particular.

The Africana Women's Studies program at Clark Atlanta University is the only of its kind. In 1982, in collaboration with faculty, students, partner HBCUs, and funding agencies, Dr. Shelby Lewis founded the AWS program. Its nascent objective was to identify the intellectual history, activism, and contributions of Africana women. In 1985, as director of the Africana Women's Center, Lewis edited a four-volume series entitled "Africana Women's Studies Series" which included course syllabi, bibliographies in Africana Women's Studies, and assessments about teaching and researching in Africana Women's Studies. In addition, the Series incorporated documents that highlighted themes in Africana Women's Studies in literature, business, health, history, media, music, political science, psychology, sociology/criminal justice, and social work. Lewis intended the Series to be a resource for the planning and development of Africana Women's Studies. As such, the Series represents one of the earliest examples of formal curricular conceptualization and organization dedicated to the graduate study of Africana women. Today, the Africana Women's Studies program

remains “the only degree-granting women’s studies program located in a historically black college in the United States, the only women’s studies program in the United States which offers the doctoral degree in Africana Women’s Studies and the only Africana Women’s Studies program in the world.” To be clear, Clark Atlanta University claims this distinction because it is the only program that contains the term Africana in its program name. Not only does the qualifier set the program apart from other Women’s Studies programs, but it also prioritizes its unapologetic sole focus on the experiences of Black women.

As an unparalleled curricular destination, the AWS program offers important conceptual and theoretical resources to graduate students and plays a critical role within an HBCU superstructure. Motivated by research on social problems, AWS is poised to draw attention to black affirming spaces that seek to address racial disparity, but may also obscure its neglect of issues such as sexism, heterosexism, and other social problems deemed marginal to its institutional focus. HBCU campuses draw a variety of students from diverse backgrounds, many of them not having been exposed to Africana culture in their previous educational experiences. Therefore, many of the students come to our program seeking what they feel lacking in other institutions—occasions for cultural affirmation and identity validation as a complement to their educational training (Campbell et al, 2019). Thus, students enter the program receptive to a black affirming space but not always prepared to critique it.

1. Clark Atlanta University, 2020. Department of African American Studies, Africana Women’s Studies and History. Accessed 7/14/2020 from <https://www.cau.edu/school-of-arts-and-sciences/aawh/index.html>

The relationship between AWS and HBCUs mirrors the historic relationship between Black Feminism and black men—a relationship fraught with both love and frustration. While acknowledging the solidarity black men claim with black women in the continuing struggle against racism, black men have not always acknowledged their role in sexism within hegemonic masculinist systems (Johnson, 2010). AWS teaches the critical tools necessary for identifying intracommunal problems such as these, and requires that students grapple with all the ways in which cultural membership within Africana communities does not preclude scrutiny from within. In fact, AWS strikes a delicate balance between cultural affirmation and critique, preparing students to identify and challenge problematic institutional and cultural practices. In these ways, students learn how to deconstruct idealistic and romantic notions about their own culture in order to champion for its improvement. Students gain the necessary analytical tools in the AWS program to tackle systemic bias within communal contexts as well as without. Because many AWS students resonate with the need for praxis-oriented activism, they incorporate into their research questions a self-reflexive drive to see solutions to both internal and external forms of oppression.

As a problem-solving discipline, AWS also equips students to question the largely singular narrative often associated with Women's Studies generally, e.g. one-dimensional narratives centering White middle class, heterosexual women desiring to escape the limitations of domestic life for a world of work. Even as Women's Studies has always been about more than this one narrative, popular culture has played a role in

mythologizing this narrative, further obscuring the realities of Africana Women's experiences and the need to focus upon them. As such, AWS serves to redress dominant narratives which marginalize Africana women's stories. White women's narratives have influenced the academic landscape of Women's Studies, rendering white women's experiences of oppression with white men and systemic patriarchy as representative for all women's struggles (Garcia-Rojas, 2017). Too often, Africana experiences are relegated to token acknowledgement in curriculums, textbooks, college/university courses and course syllabi. AWS extends Women's Studies discourse not only by including Africana women's experiences but also emphasizing that women are not monolithic. As a critical discourse, AWS demonstrates how observing phenomena through the lens of particular standpoints adjusts views of reality, favoring the multiple over the so-called universal. For instance, examining social circumstances through the lens of black women's unique standpoint facilitates critical examination of social structural forms of institutional oppression predicated upon multiple social identities in hegemonic systems (Hill Collins, 2000). Because curriculum choices are often political ones, AWS prepares students to deconstruct embedded power structures of institutions, including colleges and universities. As such, students take note of the ways in which academic institutions minimize the contributions of Africana women via offering very little coursework and opportunities for research relevant to Africana women. As a constructive platform dedicated to amending such institutional oversights, the AWS program encourages research that highlights unique epistemologies of freedom, resistance, activism, and



creativity. In these ways, AWS documents the tremendous contribution that Africana women make to Women's Studies and serves to help broaden the world's collective capacity for social activism and change.

Despite its seeming marginalization in black men's and white women's movements, the AWS program's existence cannot be reduced as reactive. It is not merely a corrective for erasure and devaluation of identity in other intellectual spaces. It is important to emphasize that AWS has always been exceptional in its own right. The AWS program nurtures ongoing research which centers Africana women's distinct experiences because such insight is interesting and compelling. In particular, the concentration upon Africana women enables the AWS program to institutionalize Africana women's history, intellectual achievement, creative contributions, scholarly work, and cultural content. By institutionalizing the work of Africana women, AWS creates its own canons, theories, and critical frameworks. Africana scholars, activists, and artists become sources onto themselves and for one another. This point cannot be stressed enough. When using the canonical sources and theories espoused by peripheral frameworks, analyses about Africana women fail. Africana women, as seen through the lenses of external analytical structures, are woefully conceptualized as deviant, difficult, and defiant, to name a few unflattering stereotypes (Davis et al, 2018). However, when using foundational texts and theories endemic to Africana women's experiences, students are equipped to not only critique and challenge the negative stereotypes written against them, but also to document more representative ontological and epistemological frameworks.

As a resource, AWS provides the fitting context for nurturing innovative, interdisciplinary research for its graduate students. AWS encourages developing researchers to reach for solutions to systemic social problems that affect Africana communities generally and Africana women particularly (See Stevenson et al, this collection). The benefit of AWS to graduate students within the wider HBCU experience is intellectual license to propose research studies of relevance to them. AWS dissertation, thesis, and capstone projects range from Black Girlhood studies, Black motherhood, Africana women in social media, Black transwomen, Sexual Assault, and Black Cultural Criticism, to name a few. Expansive in its scope, the research projects developed through the AWS program engages canonical black feminist and womanist works as well as extends the discourse through innovative and unique scholarship. As we look to the future of the AWS program at Clark Atlanta University, we expect to expand our offerings on gender and sexuality, contributing to ongoing conversations which seek to promote greater equality, justice, and social transformation.

As Graduate Advisor and Assistant Professor in the program, I see myself as a committed steward of Africana Women's Studies at Clark Atlanta University. Just like the devoted stewards occupying their roles prior to me, I see myself as primarily doing my share to maintain this prestigious program while adding to its value. During my tenure, I have sought to strengthen student research by direct mentorship, modeling both curiosity and creativity in scholarship. By creating aligned coursework, I have helped facilitate not only an increase in the number of students completing their conceptual capstones, theses,

and dissertations, but I have also endeavored to reengage the historic CAU legacy of excellence in engaged and relevant research. It is my hope that my contributions will leave the Africana Women's Studies program better than I found it. In an ongoing process of evolution and innovation, future stewards will add their constructive enhancements to the program, ensuring it persists for the benefit of future generations. I am grateful to be forever bound together with past, present, and future stewards in an AWS tapestry woven by our collective labor of love.

All in all, AWS does not exist in a vacuum. It has a unique relationship to GWSS. The history of the intellectual and activist traditions of African diasporic women incorporates the history of GWSS, especially as it relates to US-based activism. Afterall, Black women and white women worked together towards abolition and the women's right to vote. However, the political, racial and structural justifications for the necessity of the separate agenda of AWS continues to echo larger societal traumas of systemic racism, sexism, and economic oppression. Because of its particular focus on the ubiquity of sociocultural and political trauma, AWS can play a larger role in shifting consciousness away from oppressive ruling systems. As a result, GWSS can only be strengthened by ensuring that programs and curriculums similar to AWS be implemented at other institutions. The earnest inclusion of Africana and Indigenous voices in GWSS departments beyond token efforts augurs well for continuing relevance of GWSS generally. It is important everywhere that GWSS programs teach that difference does not mean deviance (Lorde, 1984). GWSS programing might learn from AWS how better to appreciate, respect, and celebrate ontological and epistemological differences

in ways that root praxis at the heart of every strive toward equality, justice and social change.

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3.

The Enduring  
Struggle: Findings  
from the History of  
Women's and Gender  
Studies in the  
Global South

JULIE SHAYNE

**By Adrianna L.  
Ernstberger,  
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*“Feminism has taught many of us to value the enduring sense of being in struggle, which makes the struggle today within Women’s Studies a project of possibility in a strange utopian sense”*

*~ Robyn Wiegman (2002, 2).*



Adrianna L. Ernstberger by Nicole  
Carter

Women’s and Gender Studies (hereafter referred to as WGS) is an interdisciplinary academic field that interrogates the social construction of gender, the lived experiences of women, and how identity, power, and privilege impact our lives.<sup>1</sup> WGS arose in response to the growing need to further understand the nature of women’s oppression and uncover methods to resist sexism, gender-based violence, and economic inequalities. It evolved to challenge systemic social injustices across intersectional identity markers such as race, class, sexual orientation, and physical ability to name but a few. The history of the discipline’s emergence warrants continued exploration, not only in the name of archival record keeping, but also given that fifty years

1. “What is Women’s Studies?” National Women’s Studies Association, <https://www.nwsa.org/page/About-NWSA?&hhsearchterms=%22is+and+women%27s+and+studies%22>

after WGS entered US colleges and universities, its legitimacy and necessity are *still* challenged—both in and outside of the academy.

The history of WGS has almost exclusively been written using the nation-state as the unit of measure and, in most of those cases, focused almost exclusively on the Global North.<sup>2</sup> The result is an imprecise history that features the lives of WGS pioneers and the institutional histories from the Global North as the dominant narrative of the birth and coming of age of this ever-evolving discipline.<sup>3</sup> More troubling still, depending on who writes the histories, often the “pioneers” are identified as predominantly white. The focus on WGS framed within the context of the Global North—mostly analyzed country by country—has prevented a genuinely global analysis of WGS from coming into view. Moreover, a bias towards histories of the Global North has also served to cast the history of WGS programs in the Global South into its shadow, reifying the neo-colonialist impression that WGS and feminism are

2. A very small number of regional histories of WGS outside North America and Europe exist, see for example Philip Bergstrom, ed. *Women's Gender Studies in Asia-Pacific* (Bangkok: UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, 2004). More commonly, continent-wide histories have focused on Europe. See for example Harriet Silius, “The Professionalization of Women's Studies Students in Europe: Expectations and Experiences,” in *Doing Women's Studies: Employment Opportunities, Personal Impacts and Social Consequences*, ed. Gabriele Griffin (London: Zed Books, 2005).
3. The terms “Global North” and “Global South” are geopolitical terms that have been utilized in numerous fields to replace more problematic terms such as “Third World” and “Developing World.” While this terminology is not without critique, it acts here as an ordering system and a conceptual apparatus to help place the world in a manageable framework for analyzing power structures and systems of oppression and liberation.

products of a modernity imagined as wholly or predominantly “Western” in nature.

It is very difficult for Global North scholars to pinpoint an exact number of current or former WGS programs in the Global South due to a combination of factors, including: Political instability, lack of access to non-digital records, loss or destruction of records, and language barriers. Regardless of these challenges, it is clear that WGS has deep and far-reaching roots throughout the region, with WGS degree-granting programs currently operating on six continents and in no less than fifty-three countries.<sup>4</sup> In order to explore these histories, I traveled to eight countries (Cuba, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Uganda) to speak with WGS founding pioneers and learn about the birth of the discipline in the Global South.<sup>5</sup>

Several key findings emerged from my research which indicate the significant impact that WGS has had in the region socially, politically, and economically. Herein this essay I focus on just one of them: transnational feminism. In each of the aforementioned countries, transnational feminism was intrinsically tied to the conception, development, and institutionalization of WGS. That may not sound particularly groundbreaking, as “transnational feminism” is a widely used concept and phrase at this point in the discipline’s history. However, the history of

4. The scope of my initial research focused exclusively on degree-granting undergraduate and graduate programs. As such, this number does not account for the numerous WGS research centers, certificate programs, and community-based learning initiatives that are very much a part of the larger WGS legacy.

5. Adrianna L. Ernstberger, “A History of Women’s & Gender Studies in the Global South” (Doctoral Dissertation, Purdue University, 2017).



WGS in the Global South clearly indicates the centrality of transnational feminist ideology, pedagogy, scholarship, and activism from its inception. This trajectory is in direct contrast to WGS in the Global North. According to Beverly Guy-Sheftall, WGS in the US did not start to “internationalize” until the early 1990s, in what she considers the third phase of the field.<sup>6</sup>

WGS in the Global South is firmly entrenched in transnational feminist networks to incorporate local, regional, and international partnerships. Regional and international conferences serve a vital role as a site for transnational feminism and for the development of transnational feminist networks, both of which have been central to WGS in the Global South from its inception. The significance of such sites as initial fomenting grounds for the establishment of WGS programs became clearer as I spoke with each new founder and researched each new program, be it in Africa or Latin America. For example, Professors Deborah Kasente and Maxine Ankrah, pioneers of WGS at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, both reflected on the 1985 Third United Nations Women’s Conference in Nairobi, Kenya as the place where WGS in Uganda, or at least the dream of a Ugandan WGS program, was born. Almost thirty years later and Ankrah’s excitement about the conference and the events that followed was evident when she stated, “We came out of Nairobi on fire!”<sup>7</sup>

Likewise, after attending the Second United Nations

6. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Women’s Studies: A Retrospective (A report to the Ford Foundation)*, (New York: Ford Foundation, 1995), 19.

7. Adrianna L. Ernstberger. 2020. “A Room, A Chair, and A Desk: Founding Voices of Women’s and Gender Studies in Uganda,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies*. 21(2): 4-16.

Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1980, Latin American feminists sought to develop a transnational feminist network of scholars and activists in Latin America and the Caribbean to better understand and combat women's oppression. Thus, in July of 1981, the first Latin American and Caribbean Feminist *Encuentro* was held in Bogotá, Colombia.<sup>8</sup> Participants in the 1981 *Encuentros* became WGS pioneers throughout Latin America and the Caribbean in places such as Chile, Trinidad and Tobago, and Mexico. In November of 2017, the Fourteenth *Encuentro* took place in Montevideo, Argentina, where over twenty-two hundred people from all over Latin America and the Caribbean gathered to continue working towards the realization of women's human rights using the mantra, "Diverse but not Dispersed," to highlight the multiple identity markers contributing to this work.<sup>9</sup>

8. For a succinct analysis on the role of the Encuentros within a larger view of Latin American Feminisms see Stephanie Berruz Rivera, "Latin American Feminism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta. (Stanford University, 2020). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-latin-america/>. "Encountering Latin American and Caribbean Feminisms," first published in 2003 remains a canonical text on the emergence of Latin American transnational feminist networks and the First Latin American and Caribbean Encuentro. See Sonia E. Alvarez, et al. 2003. "Encountering Latin American and Caribbean Feminisms." *Signs* 28(2): 537-79. To access Alvarez's more recent work on the role of transnational feminist networks in Latin America see: Sonia E. Alvarez, "Translating the Global: Effects of Transnational Organizing on Local Feminist Discourses and Practices in Latin America," in *Women, Gender & Politics: A Reader*, eds. Mona Lena and Sarah Childs Krook (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2010): 63-70.
9. Claudia Koral, "Feminists: Diverse but not dispersed," last modified December 18, 2017, <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/feminists-diverse-not-dispersed>.

In addition to acting as foundational locations, transnational feminist conferences were also platforms to launch newly established WGS programs at various universities throughout the Global South. In 1987, the inaugural act of the newly created “Women’s Studies Unit” in the Center for Extension and Continuing Education at Universiti Putra Malaysia hosted the first transnational conference on Gender and Technology in South East Asia.<sup>10</sup> This commitment to transnational feminist dialogue continues in the Middle East and North Africa with the 1st International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women: Women’s World hosted by the newly established Women’s Studies Program at Haifa University in 1981. This pattern continues throughout the Global South, with an understandable surge in the year following the 1985 United Nations Conference on Women in Nairobi.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to utilizing international and intraregional conferences as opportunities to open dialogue and inform WGS development throughout the Global South, we can see that WGS students, scholars, and activists have strong ties to transnational feminist networks and have since the inception of their programs. In each of the eight countries where I spoke with WGS scholars and activists, it was clear that their work was informed by their affiliation with both local and transnational feminist networks in a way that differentiated them from their

10. Shanthi Thambiah. 2000. “Trends in Women’s Studies and Gender Studies in Malaysia,” *Journal of Asian Women’s Studies* 9: 86-93.

11. For more examples of the connection between emerging WGS programs and international conferences see: Adrianna L. Ernstberger. 2020. “A Room, A Chair, and A Desk: Founding Voices of Women’s and Gender Studies in Uganda,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 21(2): 4-16.

Global North compatriots. In Cuba, Norma Vasallo Barrueta, one of the founding pioneers of the “Women’s Studies Group” established in 1987, and current President of the Women’s Studies Program at the University of Havana, pointed to the significance of these affiliations, and their resultant relationships, in the development of WGS in Cuba. I heard this echoed repeatedly, often going so far as to mention the same organizations regardless of whether the conversation took place in Manila, New Delhi, or Beirut. Some of the organizations that came up most often were Development Alternative with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Women’s Learning Partnership, the Association of Women in Development (AWID), and the Asian Association of Women’s Studies.<sup>12</sup> These networks have informed and supported the development and growth of WGS throughout the Global South.

WGS scholars continue to create new programs in the Global South. In 2015, Kabul University in Kabul, Afghanistan, launched the first course of their new WGS master’s degree program, Gender and Women’s Studies. In a nation known more for its history of denying girls access to education than for progressive women’s rights, this program has amazing potential to educate about and combat gender-based inequalities. The program has not

12. This is a very miniscule list of the myriad transnational feminist networks around the world, starting with Association of Women in Development (AWID) founded in 1982. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and Women Living Under Muslim Rule, both began in 1984. Followed by Women’s Learning Partnership 2000, and the Association of Asian Women’s Studies in 2007. For a more comprehensive list and analysis of transnational feminist networks, see Val Moghadam’s *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

come about without controversy, as at least one male professor is on record stating he does not approve of the program because “women are not, in fact, equal to men.”<sup>13</sup> Zheela Rafhat, an inaugural student in the program, sees a definite need for WGS in Afghanistan: “This gender program is really needed in Afghanistan, because many women do not know about their rights, so through this program, we can make women aware of their rights, which enables them to work and study in this society, and we also want to tell women that you are not only made for housework.”<sup>14</sup> The initial class includes twenty-eight students—eighteen women and ten men—and intends to address issues such as women’s political and social rights, women and conflict, and gender and poverty.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, as the United Nations Development Program explains, “the courses are tailored to the Afghan context and based on best practices in promoting gender equality in Islamic countries.”<sup>16</sup>

Kabul’s example highlights the reality that the history of WGS is far from static. In fact, the discipline is in constant motion, responding to specific political, social, and economic realities. Some WGS challenges are globally universal, such as patriarchal resistance,

13. Zheela Rafhat, “Afghanistan’s First Women and Gender Studies Program Now in Session,” interview by Megan Thompson, PBS News Hour, October 25, 2015, Accessed 6/10/2020, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/afghanistans-first-women-gender-studies-program-now-session>.

14. Ibid.

15. “Gender and Women’s Studies at Kabul University,” United Nations Development Program, July 10, 2016, Accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/successstories/AStepTowardsAddressing-GenderGap.html>.

16. Ibid.

disciplinary legitimacy, and relying heavily on—often women’s—unpaid labor to facilitate departmental leadership. Yet some challenges are regionally specific. WGS in the Global South faces the constant challenge of capacity building, which is why most programs begin at the graduate level rather than the undergraduate level; a new contingent of WGS scholars must be trained in order to more widely develop the discipline in many areas.

Despite the contested terrain in which WGS operates, WGS scholars in the Global South have successfully institutionalized the discipline through the creation of WGS programs in at least sixty-four countries. The discipline continues to be strengthened and expanded through courses and curriculum that are rooted in local realities, indigenous feminisms, and the voices of local social justice activists. Research Centers throughout the region continue to support faculty, student, and community WGS scholarship through access to resources, mentorship, community programing, political activism, and the physical space needed to host conferences. In spite of limited funding, high teaching loads, and in some cases a significantly smaller pool of publishers, WGS scholars across the Global South continue to contribute to historiography of WGS, while at the same time bringing together people, theories, and primary materials across borders in an effort to further a global dialogue about WGS. (See Darkwah, this collection.)

Nawal El Sa’dawi once reflected that she was accused of being a savage and dangerous woman, to which she replied, “I am speaking the truth. And the truth is savage

and dangerous.”<sup>17</sup> As we continue to document the history of WGS, as we continue to assert our rightful place in the academy as a legitimate space of intellectual inquiry, and as we continue to challenge systemic oppression in all its guises, we cannot ignore that we do so in the midst of the violent debacle that is 2020. Sadly, like other moments in history, this is a time filled with the dangers of fascist leadership, a global pandemic, and increasingly virulent anti-Black racist and gender-based violence. As we seek community and strength, we cannot forget to turn to the pioneers of our discipline. The histories of the academic feminists, the social justice warriors, and grassroots activists that have always been the backbone of Women’s and Gender Studies. When truth is savage and dangerous...we must stay savage, we must stay dangerous.

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# Untitled (student art)



I am a first-generation student and this piece pays homage to my heritage and identity, lo mexicana y indígena. By combining the words of Gloria Anzaldúa and the image of Yalitza Aparicio, I welcome my indigenous identity and my Spanish voice, using feminist discourse. It is my hope

PERSISTENCE IS RESISTANCE

to communicate my identity, empowered between and by  
two beautiful, intersectional cultures.

**Maria Chi-Chable, she/her/hers**  
Sophomore, Wellesley College  
Future Women's and Gender Studies major

4.

Women's-Gender-Sex  
uality-Feminist  
Studies: The  
Politics of  
Departmental  
Naming

**By Amy Bhatt,  
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County**

As universities and colleges commemorate the founding of departments and programs dedicated to the study of women, gender, sexuality, and feminism, these celebratory moments have also been a time to reflect on the many years of



Amy Bhatt by Nicole Carter

struggle and solidarity that led to the establishment of dedicated spaces within existing institutions. As we consider this long history, we must also contend with the ways in which the field has changed and how the names of departments and programs mark that evolution.

One marker of our evolution has been in the curricular focus of departments and programs and theoretical conceptualization of the field. Most Women's and Women Studies programs have since changed their names to some variation of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies as a way to signal those changes. While each of these department name changes may seem necessary from today's vantage point, in truth, they are emblematic of questions and debates that still resonate in the field today.

At the time that many units were founded, even the idea of creating spaces for women within the patriarchal

structures of the traditional academy was a radical act. In 1970, the year that the San Diego State University's Women's Studies program was started, which is considered the first US Women Studies program, universities such as Johns Hopkins, Brown, and Duke were still denying entrance to women students. Having an entire field of study dedicated to women, especially amid ongoing fights for child care centers, family leave, pay equity, access to abortion, and a host of other feminist issues, provided a locale for opponents to target. Many departments were born directly from such activist struggles that spilled well beyond campus. Rather than seeing themselves in the mold of traditional disciplines, some opted for structures that included community members and faculty across fields who helped shape and teach curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

While these programs were unfolding, one key issue emerged: What to call these new spaces? Campuses had been central to the evolution of the "women's movement" and the term was gaining traction in the popular press. The publication of seminal texts such as Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) brought white feminism into the mainstream. Recounting the founding of University of Washington Seattle's department, Shirley Yee notes, "its founders were adamant about naming it 'Women' Studies and avoiding the possessive, reasoning that the subject matter was about women but not owned by them"

1. There are many sources that speak about these early years. An oft cited one is *The Politics of Women's Studies: Testimony from 30 Founding Mothers*, edited by Florence Howe (2000). *The Politics of Women's Studies* includes testimonies from founders of many of the programs represented in this collection, including Beverly-Guy Sheftall. See also Shayne and Guzman's Annotated Bibliography essay in this collection for more sources about the history and evolution of GWSS.

(Bach 2015). Others adopted Women's Studies (with the apostrophe) and soon programs across the world were using similar nomenclature as the field began to establish itself. With a curricular focus on women's historical erasures and ongoing exclusions from the public sphere, Women's Studies became the name of choice for the new constellations emerging on campuses.

In the same period, however, women of color feminists pushed back against the whiteness and middle-classness of the women's movement. Maxine Williams and Pamela Newman's *Black Women's Liberation* (1970) pushed for a stronger race and class analysis in the movement and burgeoning scholarship. The Combahee River Collective's Statement (1974) and Audre Lorde's (1984) *Sister Outsider* articulated an intersectional vision of feminism that went beyond focusing on gender as the primary source of oppression. Debates grew about how, exactly, "Women's Studies" was defined? Who were the "women" at the heart of the field? Where did lesbians, women of color, working class women, and other non-white, non-heterosexual, non-middle-class women fit in?

These debates emerged as programs were proliferating through the 1970s and 1980s. Not only were programs being created, but they were becoming legitimated in the structures of the academy. By the 1990s, universities and colleges began converting programs to departments, offering dedicated faculty lines, creating graduate training opportunities, and creating new centers of knowledge production across units. As a field marked by contestation since its inception, Women's Studies also faced an identity crisis as it grew—was Women's Studies a discipline in the traditional sense, or was it a chance to rethink how knowledge has been constructed and

organized?<sup>2</sup> Wendy Brown's (1997) infamous essay on whether or not Women's Studies should remain a separate space launched a series of heated conversations over where the field was headed next—and whether it should exist at all.

Amid these debates, another set of deeper questions emerged: Was “women” really the center of the field or did other markers, such as gender, sexuality, or even difference, power, or identity better capture the lasting contributions of feminist scholarship?<sup>3</sup> As Alice Ginsberg has noted, the move toward “gender” over or in conjunction with “women” was born of the recognition that “we need to be paying attention to the relationships between men and women rather than focusing predominantly on women's experiences and knowledge itself” (2008, 28). Moreover, as research on sexuality and gender grew central to the field, scholars began to raise concerns over the exclusions created by maintaining a cis-gendered and presumptive focus on women or the attempts to disaggregate LGBTQ studies from Women's Studies.<sup>4</sup>

I began my own journey in Women's Studies as many of these debates were rupturing. I graduated with a B.A.

2. See *Women's Studies for the Future: Foundations, Interrogations, Politics*, edited by Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Agatha Beins (2005) for some of these discussions.

3. See Wiegman, Robyn. 2002. “The Progress of Gender: Whither “Women”?” In *Women's Studies on its Own: A Next Wave Reader in Institutional Change*, ed. Robyn Weigman, 106-140. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

4. See Joseph, Miranda. 2002. “Analogy and Complicity: Women's Studies, Lesbian/Gay Studies, and Capitalism.” In *Women's Studies on its Own: A Next Wave Reader in Institutional Change*, ed. Robyn Weigman, 267-292. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.



from Emory University's Women's Studies program (now the department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies), which went through its own battle for departmental status while I was an undergraduate there. Soon after, I joined the University of Washington Seattle's Women Studies department. In the time that I worked on my doctorate at UWS, the department worked through its own name change. Defenders of retaining a focus on "women" pushed back by arguing that dropping "women" could depoliticize the important work that Women's Studies has done to center women's experiences. The argument being that if patriarchy exists, so too must spaces that explicitly push against it. Therefore, Women Studies must remain relevant, named, and present. Others made the case that using "gender" as a central analytic did not necessarily translate into feminist scholarship or teaching.<sup>5</sup>

After going through an exhaustive process that involved students, faculty, community members, and alumni, the department was renamed Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, with a doctoral degree in Feminist Studies. After accepting a tenure-track position at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, I again found myself in the midst of a name change—this time from Gender and Women's Studies to Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies. In both cases, students and faculty felt that it was important to explicitly recognize sexuality and gender as key organizing concepts in the field and to move beyond women's experiences in the naming of the department.

5. See also the essay by Russell, Loftin, and Shayne in this collection about the founding of SDSU's Women's Studies program where they too discuss the naming issue.

Today, there is certainly more consensus on the importance of aligning departmental naming<sup>6</sup> with the complexities and evolving understanding of gender, racial, class, ability, and other axes of difference and power that structure our social and political lives. However, the debates are far from settled and as the field evolves, how we communicate, imagine, and name our scholarship will continue to shift as well.

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6. If you look through the thirty-three departments/programs represented by the authors of this collection—that is, where we teach and where we earned our GWSS degrees—you will see a cross-section of names mostly combining Gender, Women, Sexuality Studies; very few remain only "Women's Studies."

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5.

An Annotated  
Bibliography on the  
History of Gender,  
Women, and  
Sexuality Studies  
in the Americas

By Julie Shayne and Estephanie  
Guzman, University of Washington  
Bothell



Julie Shayne by Nicole Carter

This essay is an annotated bibliography about the field of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies (GWSS).<sup>1</sup> It is



Estephanie Guzman by Nicole  
Carter

1. We would like to thank Penelope Wood, GWSS librarian at UW Bothell,

meant to serve as a resource for others interested in the development of GWSS as a field, predominantly in the US, but with additional resources in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>2</sup> With respect to US sources, we only include books and one online source. We chose books which 1) offer a history of the field, 2) offer theoretical conversations of the field, at least at the time of publication, and/or 3) are canonical texts still shaping the field. We were partial to anthologies and works by historians because they tend to provide better bibliographies thus serve as sources for more sources, especially the journal articles we do not discuss. Interestingly, many of the anthologies we annotate that were originally meant to be theoretical discussions are now historical texts which tell the story of GWSS with respect to the theoretical, ideological, administrative, curricular, discursive, etc development. For example, Wiegman (2002).

Next, we provide a variety of types of sources related to GWSS programs and scholarship in Latin America and the Caribbean. We chose this region due to our shared interest in those histories and Estephanie's fluency in Spanish. We were less systematic in the types of sources we chose and opted for breadth over depth with respect to countries included. We only included open-access sources, and several are Spanish only. Julie collected,

for helping us launch our research and moving us forward when we got stuck! You rock and we love working with you!

2. This annotated bibliography also serves as a literature review of sorts for this entire project. As Julie read the many edited collections and histories to write this short essay, they also helped her frame the project and guide the contributors. She sees this book as a continuation of the dialogues begun by most of these authors, benefiting from their decades of research and theorizing.

read, and annotated the US sources, and Estephanie the Latin American and Caribbean ones.

We make no claims that what we provide here is exhaustive nor that our summaries of the sources, especially the anthologies or digital collections, do them justice. We are thrilled that there are more resources than we are capable of annotating and sharing; that means researchers are busy documenting academic feminism and our important work. We hope what follows will be of value to begin to piece together a mosaic-like history of the development of GWSS in the Americas, and, inspire more researchers to keep digging and documenting.

**THE UNITED STATES: Print sources + one fantastic exception**

Bambara, Toni Cade, ed. 2005 [1970]. *The Black Woman: An Anthology*. New York, NY: Washington Square Press. (327 pp). This book is a primary source and a fundamental part of the Black Women's Studies canon. According to Toni Cade Bambara, "it is a collection of poems, stories, essays, informal, reminiscent, that seem best to reflect the preoccupations of the contemporary Black woman in this country" (6). Bambara explains that the collection grew out of impatience: "Especially out of an impatience with all the 'experts' zealously hustling us folks for their doctoral theses or government appointments. And out of an impatience with the fact that in the whole bibliography of feminist literature, literature immediately and directly relevant to us, wouldn't fill a page" (5).

Bell, Roseann P., Bettie J. Parker, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, eds. 1979. *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday. (422 pp). According to Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Sturdy Black Bridges* is "an anthology ... [of] critical essays

on black women writers, interviews, and short literary selections of fiction and poetry that included positive, complex images of black women. ... [It was] the first anthology of black women's literature published in the United States" (in Howe 2000, 221).

Berger, Michele Tracy and Cheryl Radeloff. 2015 [2011]. *Transforming Scholarship: Why Women's and Gender Studies Students are Changing Themselves and the World, Second Edition*. New York, NY: Routledge. (324 pp). This book is written to GWSS students with the goal of helping them maximize their studies and focus themselves so they can be successful post-graduation in their careers and lives in general. It helps students with "elevator speeches" to cynics, be they in their own families or potential employers. The book is written to students, but it is also an amazing resource for GWSS faculty, advisors, and Career Services staff who seek to support our students to maximize their education, find jobs, and learn how to talk to people who do not see the value in GWSS.

Bowles, Gloria. 2009. *Living Ideas: A Memoir of the Tumultuous Founding of Berkeley Women's Studies*. Self-published: Gloria Bowles. (309 pp). This memoir tells the author's personal feminist story as intertwined with the development of UC Berkeley's Women's Studies. Bowles discusses many themes common in most program founders' stories: An initial motivation being the androcentric nature of her own graduate studies; close and not always harmonious collaborations with students; curriculum building from scratch; non-stop meetings; and the pains, pleasures, and limits of consensus decision-making. Additionally, institutional struggles and debates were constants, and on-the-job learning par for the course.



Boxer, Marilyn Jacoby. 1998. *When Women Ask the Questions: Creating Women's Studies in America*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press. (360 pp). This is a thoroughly researched book, with Boxer's training as an historian clearly benefiting the reader and the field. Though old, the bibliography is a wonderful resource. As far as we know, it remains the only monograph about Women's Studies as a field. Boxer was the first chair of the first Women's Studies program (SDSU) and writes with authority of experience and her extensive research. The book offers an overview of the field, as it existed in 1998, including early debates about pursuing department status; pedagogy; curriculum; publishing; "diversity;" administrative struggles; theory; methodology; epistemology; and dealing with the proverbial critics. The book tells a predominantly white Women's Studies story without sufficiently problematizing the racism that women of color had been writing and organizing about for decades by the time the book was published.

Braithwaite, Ann, Susan Heald, Susanne Luhmann & Sharon Rosenberg. 2004. *Troubling Women's Studies: Pasts, Presents and Possibilities*. Toronto, Canada: Sumach Press. (258 pp). A co-authored, meta-analysis of Women's Studies (past, present, and future), based on autobiographies and autoethnography as both texts and subjects. Each chapter approaches the topic from a different angle, addressing self-reflexivity as central to Women's Studies knowledge production and pedagogy. The authors are "troubled" by the construction of a single narrative and maintain that "*how* we come to know something that is, *how* we construct narratives of Women's Studies, is as important as, if not more important, than, *what* we tell" (28).

Butler, Johnella E. and John C. Walter, eds. 1991. *Transforming the Curriculum: Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. (341 pp). The editors maintain that both Women's Studies and Ethnic Studies use, in the words of Audre Lorde, "the master's tools," (racism and patriarchy of Western scholarship, respectively) and both are class-blind. This collection reflects on those flawed traditions and attempts to rectify the errors. The editors envisioned the collection as generative and hoped to invite debate. Researchers of GWSS should pay close attention to Guy-Sheftall's chapter "A Black Feminist Perspective on the Academy," for definitions of Black Women's Studies and canonical texts.

Evans, S. Y. February 2019. *The Black Women's Studies Booklist: Emergent Themes in Critical Race and Gender Research*. Retrieved from <https://bwstbooklist.net/> [accessed: 5/15/2020] "The Black Women's Studies (BWST) Booklist connects foundational texts of critical race and gender scholarship to newer publications. This comprehensive bibliography identifies long-term trends and places recent contributions in historical context. Beyond a 'generative' project, the BWST Booklist identifies past, present, and forthcoming work to create a robust, regenerative discussion. ... The BWST Booklist is an open access, online resource that contains over 1,400 entries." (<https://bwstbooklist.net/>). Make sure to share this resource with your librarians.

Ginsberg, Alice E. 2008. *The Evolution of American Women's Studies: Reflections on Triumphs, Controversies, and Change*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. (239 pp). This is an accessible discussion of Women's Studies. Like many stories of the field, the essays trace personal and

professional histories from the beginning of US Women's Studies to the mid-2000s. Authors include leaders in the field like Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Ann Russo, and Nancy Naples, who self-consciously invoke their social locations with respect to class, culture, race, and of course gender. In the context of each author's personal story, her own expertise, and thematic point of departure, she also speaks to two points: the question of integrating the multiple identities of women, and whether it is appropriate to move toward the creation of Gender Studies. The Introduction provides a useful history of the discipline, though it reads more like white Women's Studies, failing to credit the women of color who also built the field.

Guy-Sheftall, Beverly. 1995. *Women's studies: A Retrospective (A report to the Ford Foundation)*. New York, NY: Ford Foundation. (45 pp). This is a thoroughly researched and documented report that tells the history of US Women's Studies from its inception through the mid-nineties. Guy-Sheftall provides the reader a Women's Studies history distinct from those in the Introductions of other books referenced here in that she makes clear that Black feminists and women of color in general were central to Women Studies scholarship from the beginning. Researching the history of the field? Start here.

Howe, Florence, ed. 2000. *The Politics of Women's Studies: Testimony from 30 Founding Mothers*. New York, NY: The Feminist Press. (422 pp). This is a collection of first person narratives of "founding mothers of Women's Studies." The essays are a combination of personal history and how those histories influence the development of all things Women's Studies on the respective campuses. The book

is divided into six sections: “Naming the Problem;” “Overcoming Barriers;” “Inventing Successful Strategies;” “Providing Feminist Scholarship;” “Building Women’s Studies Programs;” and “Looking Back?” I (Julie) was confused as to why “Building Black Women’s Studies” by Barbara Smith and “Other Mothers of Women’s Studies” by Beverly Guy-Sheftall didn’t end up in the “Building Women’s Studies Programs” section. By separating them out, Howe creates a narrative that Women’s Studies is white and Black Women’s Studies is Other.

Howe, Florence. 2011. *A Life in Motion*. New York, NY: The Feminist Press. (587 pp). This is a lengthy memoir by Florence Howe, best known in GWSS as a co-founder of the The Feminist Press which, like Women’s Studies, is also celebrating its 50th birthday. Part three of this book speaks to the development of GWSS as a field.

Hull, Akasja (Gloria T.), Patricia Bell-Scott & Barbara Smith, eds. 2015 [1982]. *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies, 2nd Edition*. New York, NY: The Feminist Press. (413 pp). This classic text by Black women, about Black Women’s Studies, known as *Brave*, was originally published in 1982 and begins with the powerful words: “Merely to use the term ‘Black women’s studies’ is an act charged with political significance” (xvii). The editors created *Brave* to provide examples of recent research and teaching by Black women and they hoped it would be a catalyst for greater gains in the future (xxviii), including similar collections by different groups of women of color (xxxi). *Brave* also includes an annotated bibliography and syllabi because the editors knew their project was bigger than one book. They maintain, “only a Black *and* feminist

analysis can sufficiently comprehend the materials of Black women's studies: and only a creative Black feminist perspective will enable the field to expand" (xxi). The book communicates agency, autonomy, and intellectual leadership.

James, Stanle M., Frances Smith Foster & Beverly Guy-Sheftall, eds. 2009. *Still Brave: The Evolution of Black Women's Studies*. New York, NY: The Feminist Press. (444 pp). The editors of *Still Brave* describe it as "an anthology that provides a retrospective on the state of Black Women's Studies since the publication of *Brave*" (xx). They explain, "we believe that each selection is a classic, a benchmark, a turning point, or a moment of startling clarity in Black Women's Studies" (xxi). The editors make clear that they do not see *Still Brave* as a "sequel" to *Brave* but rather, "it is a praise song to those who gave us that gift, that garland of flowers. *Still Brave* recognizes the courage it takes to respond to, yet not imitate, a major political and academic achievement" (xxv).

Kennedy, Elizabeth Lapovsky and Agatha Beins, eds. 2005. *Women's Studies for the Future: Foundations, Interrogations, Politics*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. (347 pp). In this book the authors collectively ask: "Is Women's Studies ok with who we are, and, if not, how do we change?" This is a pioneering collection because a lot of the conversations that the authors initiated, including feminist pioneers like Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Evelyn Hammonds, and Bonnie Zimmerman, have since been integrated into the National Women's Studies Association and GWSS programs nationally. The Introduction, though somewhat dated (2005), has an excellent literature review for any student mapping out

the evolution of feminist theory and Women's Studies scholarship. Another noteworthy chapter, especially for our essay is "The Institutionalization of Women's and Gender Studies in Mexico," by Lorena Parada-Ampudia (pp. 262-271).

O'Barr, Jean Fox. 1994. *Feminism in Action: Building Institutions and Community Through Women's Studies*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press. (301 pp). *Feminism in Action* was written by the founding director of Duke's Women's Studies Program and former editor of *Signs*. The essays explore the process of "building feminist institutions and community through women's studies" (pg 1) through discussion of her efforts in adult education, program development, fundraising, journal editing, teaching, and consciousness-raising. Many of the chapters were originally talks and by now are quite dated but useful for a different part of GWSS history telling. Relatedly, O'Barr's experiences do not necessarily translate well to public schools given Duke's elite status.

Orr, Catherine M., Ann Braithwaite, and Diane Lichtenstein. 2012. *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies*. New York, NY: Routledge. (376 pp). This collection is a critical engagement with key concepts in GWSS meant to complicate earlier meanings by asking new questions, looking at linguistic lineages, and pushing GWSS scholars to not let the terms dissipate into vacuous buzz words. Some of the concepts that remain most salient today are: 1) feminism; 2) queer; 3) intersectionality; 4) identity (politics); 5) interdisciplinarity; 6) sexuality; and 7) trans. The editors and authors ask GWSS practitioners to rethink many of our most basic assumptions and stock narratives (329).

Scott, Joan Wallach, ed. 2008. *Women's Studies on the Edge*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. (223 pp). This book's first incarnation was a 1997 special issue of the journal *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 30(2). Scott retained the most "topical and controversial" (8) essays and added some in direct response to the original ones. Collectively the essays offer conflicting interpretations of the field. This collection includes Wendy Brown's now infamous "The Impossibility of Women's Studies," and a response from Robyn Wiegman. There are three essays that take up various aspects of Othering that happen within Women's Studies and Western feminism by students, colleagues, and even foreign policy makers (Najmabadi; Mahmood; Salamon). There are conversations about knowledge production as related to Cultural Studies (Rooney) and Black Women's Studies (Guy-Sheftall and Hammonds), and Biddy Martin's concluding thoughts about the fine line between success and institutional stasis.

The University of Wisconsin System Women's Studies Consortium. 1999. *Transforming Women's Education: The History of Women's Studies in the University of Wisconsin System*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. (162 pp). Like all histories of Women's Studies, even when they are local, they are telling part of a national story because trends were strikingly similar throughout the US. This book is unique however in that it traces women's education in the University of Wisconsin system. *Transforming Women's Education* is based on archival research and oral history interviews with 80+ individuals. The Consortium intentionally structured each chapter with additional sources to encourage readers to continue

the research, knowing the story they were able to document is partial.

Wiegman, Robyn, ed. 2002. *Women's Studies on its Own: A Next Wave Reader in Institutional Change*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. (502 pp). A collection of essays about academic feminism as it stood in the early 2000s. The essays are a combination of reflective, scholarly, and/or theoretical, written by mostly senior and leading Women's Studies professors. They tell stories of programs built, administrative struggles, lessons learned, and labor unevenly divided, as well as theoretically engaging questions regarding discourse, framing, curriculum, and knowledge production. Like all of the collections in this bibliography, some chapters "aged" better than others.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:  
Archives, articles, and webpages

#### BARBADOS

Archive: "Past Caribbean Women Catalysts for Change Lecture Series and Specialist Workshops" (2003-2020) <https://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/gender/News-and-Events/Archives.aspx> This archive includes lectures and workshops which have occurred since 1995. The lecture series was started in 1995 by Dame Eugenia Charles of Dominica. Some of the lectures have been published in the Working Paper Series and can be found in these archives which are housed in the Institute for Gender & Development Studies website. These archives and workshops inform readers about gender issues, research, and interdisciplinary approaches and gender in the Caribbean.

Hamilton, Marlene. 2015. "Women and Higher Education in the Commonwealth Caribbean: UWI: A



Progressive Institution for Women?” In *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*. 9: 245–286. Marlene Hamilton was the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies (UWI) from 1998 to 2006 and the first woman to serve at this level. Her article, based on a speech, “Women and Higher Education in the Commonwealth Caribbean: UWI, A Progressive Institution for Women?”, focuses on the status of women at UWI. In her speech she focuses on 1948 through 1997. In short, she argues that there has been improvement in women’s enrollment: in 1998 UWI increased to 64% of female students.

The Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS), The University of the West Indies at Cave Hill, Barbados: <https://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/gender/About-Us/History.aspx> This is a goldmine of information for researchers interested in gender and development in the Caribbean. According to the webpage, the IGDS “was initially established as the Centre for Gender and Development Studies (CGDS) in 1993, as a result of key recommendations emerging from the Women and Development Group. CGDS was later institutionalized through the groundbreaking work of the Women and Development Studies Group and a Project of Cooperation in Teaching and Research in Women and Development Studies between the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) at The Hague. ... The Institute’s regional coordinating unit is based at the Mona Campus in Jamaica, with units located on UWI’s two other campuses.” Don’t miss the “Research & Publications” link.

Sidney Martin Library collection (2003-2020): <https://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/mainlibrary/20244/collections.aspx> This is a collection at the University of

the West Indies (UWI). Within the Caribbean Studies section a researcher can find information about the Gender Studies program, including undergraduate students' past research projects.

### COLOMBIA

Biblioteca Digital Feminista Ofelia Uribe De Acosta:  
<http://bibliotecadigitalfeminista.bogota.unal.edu.co/> This is a digital collection which provides researchers access to Feminist and Women's Studies projects from Colombia, and throughout Latin American, and the Caribbean. Contents include artifacts about women's and feminist movements, research about violence against women, and gender rights legislation and political publications.

Orozco, Carolina Marrugo. 2019. "Agencia, mujeres y pintura: la experiencia de Débora Arango Pérez, 1950-1954," in *La manzana de la discordia*. 14(1): 65-74. *La Manzana de la Discordia* is a publication from the university that shares research findings on gender and women in the arts in the mid-twentieth century in Colombia. This article featured the artist Débora Arango Pérez.

Puyana, Yolanda. 2007. "Los estudios de mujer y género en la Universidad Nacional de Colombia," in *Colombia*. 1: 115-152. <http://bdigital.unal.edu.co/1387/10/o8CAP1o3.pdf> This article is an overview of Gender Studies in Colombia in the 19th-20th century. Puyana explains that in 2005, Universidad Nacional de Colombia started to focus more on Gender and Women's Studies projects, with growing numbers of gender-focused studies and publications. She also speaks about the field in Latin America more broadly, explaining that it did not really start until after the 1980s.

**Universidad del Valle Colombia, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios de Género, Mujer y Sociedad (CIEGMS):** <http://genero.univalle.edu.co/> The CIEGMS has 25 years of experience working on projects and researching topics like gender and its intersection with ethnicity. CIEGMS researchers believe it is essential to learn from LGBTQ perspectives so they can incorporate more insights in their programs and apply them to local policies and projects. A collection of interest on their site is their materials addressing their commitment to teacher training with respect to Gender Studies.

**Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Escuela de Estudios de Género:** <http://www.humanas.unal.edu.co/2017/unidades-academicas/escuelas/escuela-de-estudios-de-genero> The National University of Colombia started its Gender Studies and interdisciplinary research in the late 1970s. This very well organized, up-to-date, and robust site has links to their research and faculty publications, including digital scholarship, and three publications specific to the Center: “Feminismos y estudios de género en Colombia” by Franklin Gil Hernández and Tania Pérez-Bustos; “Género y cuidado” edited by Adira Amaya Urquijo, Luz Gabriela Arango Gaviria, Tania Pérez-Bustos, and Javier Pineda Duque; and “Los dedos cortados” by Paola Tabet.

### THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

**Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo: “Gender”** tagged articles: <https://www.intec.edu.do/en/notas-de-prensa/tag/Género> There is a cross-section of articles here that deal with gender, including masculinity. Collectively the pieces address how gender power arrangements relate to educational, occupational, health, political, and social barriers. The articles take different

forms: analyses; summaries of workshops; seminars; conversations; reflections; conference proceedings; etc.

### MEXICO

Centro de Estudios Asia y África; El Colegio de México: Investigaciones <https://ceaa.colmex.mx/investigacion/investigaciones> This is a list of individual and collectively done research projects, including three GWSS themed ones: “Género y arte verbal africano” by Rosenberg Methery Aaron Louis; “La condición de la mujer en aspectos sociales y culturales dentro de la sociedad swahili del siglo XIX” by Saavedra Casco and José Arturo; “Acciones y pensamientos del feminismo japonés” by Tanaka Nishishima Michiko.

### VENEZUELA

Maestría en Estudios de la Mujer, Universidad Central de Venezuela: <http://www.ucv.ve/organizacion/vrac/gerencia-de-investigacion-cientifica-y-humanistica/centro-de-estudios-de-la-mujer/docencia/maestria-en-estudios-de-la-mujer.html> This major uses gender and feminist theories to understand different perspectives and transform social realities. An interesting piece of research available on their page is a paper by Profesora Jessie Blanco called, “El cuerpo como discurso de resistencia: subjetividad, cuerpo y práctica contrahegemonía desde una mirada feminista del transgenerismo” which focuses on the need to explore the relationship between the body and feminist theoretical proposals and anti-discrimination agendas.

# Untitled (student art)



The belief that “sex sells” is one of the oldest ideas in the advertising world. Historically in the fashion world, women have been pictured next to fragrances or alcohol as a symbol of lust and desire. The objectification of women is still present in our daily lives—from food

JULIE SHAYNE

advertisements to shampoo commercials—and exposes women to impossible beauty standards. I created this piece in hopes of reflecting upon the history of women in the media and bringing awareness to an issue that is still present in the international advertising world today.

**Hailey Cho, she/her/hers**

Sophomore, Wellesley College

Women's and Gender Studies curious

@haileycho

# Students answer: Why Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies?

“Gender Studies welcomed me in a way that nothing ever has. It spoke my inner-most contradictions into existence and assisted me in becoming a person I am proud to be. I learned that Gender Studies is not one thing, but rather everything. It provided me with a framework through which to analyze and imagine a world that is better. ... A major in Gender Studies was the best decision I made as an undergrad!”

**Yuval Schnitkes, she/her/hers**

University of California at Los Angeles, class of 2020  
Gender Studies & Political Science double major

“You can speak without being heard; exist without being seen. 108 billion people have inhabited this earth, but how many of their stories were told? Whose names were remembered? GWSS shines light on a dark history and like a shovel, unearths a new perspective. I major in

JULIE SHAYNE

GWSS to uncover buried truths and bear witness to  
those in the shadows.”

Elisabeth Schnebele, she/her/hers  
University of Washington Bothell, junior  
Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies major



6.

## Why GWSS Still Matters

By Carrie N. Baker, Smith College

The Trump administration has made it clearer than ever how much we still need strong GWSS programs in the US and abroad to produce informed feminists to



Carrie N. Baker by Nicole Carter

fight for women's rights.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I'll give a few examples of the rollbacks in women's rights and the erosion of the US civil rights infrastructure since Trump took office in January 2017. While this has happened in many areas, I will focus on reproductive rights, violence against women, and employment. I maintain that GWSS plays a critical role in providing students important tools and perspectives to combat these rollbacks.

The Trump administration's appointment of anti-choice Supreme Court Justices Neil Gorsuch<sup>2</sup> and Brett Kavanaugh (Turner, 2019) to the US Supreme Court has inspired conservative states to pass abortion restrictions that directly violate *Roe v. Wade*—the long-established Supreme Court precedent that abortion is a Constitutional right (Carter, 2020; Nash et al., 2019). Abortion rights advocates immediately challenged these laws. Anti-abortion advocates hope that one of these cases will make it to the Supreme Court, giving the Court's conservative majority the opportunity to overturn the *Roe* precedent.

In addition to undermining abortion access, the Trump administration is steadily chipping away at contraceptive access as well. For example, the Trump administration has issued rules allowing any employer to gain an exemption to federally required coverage of birth control in employee health insurance plans by claiming that contraception violates their religious beliefs or their "non-religious moral convictions," vastly expanding

1. "Women" and "girls" refer to anyone who identifies that way, including transgender women.
2. Trump was able to appoint Gorsuch because Mitch McConnell refused to allow a vote in the Senate on President Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland (Pieklo, 2016).

earlier exceptions for religious organizations (Baker, 2017; Baker, June 2019). They have also issued a “conscience exemption” policy granting broad rights for anyone working in the health care industry to refuse reproductive health care to women, even in emergency situations when a woman’s life is in danger (Baker, November 2019).

In March of 2019, the Trump administration issued a domestic gag rule that prohibits health centers receiving Title X funds from even referring patients for abortion. Further, the rule mandates Title X clinics refer all pregnant patients to prenatal care even if they have decided not to continue their pregnancies. The rule outright blocks the availability of federal funds to family planning providers that also offer abortion care such as Planned Parenthood and encourages participation by “non-traditional” organizations (Sobel et al., 2019). The Trump administration has already granted \$5.1 million over three years of Title X funding to the coercive Obria Medical Clinics, a Christian, anti-abortion organization that opposes hormonal birth control, and other FDA-approved contraceptives and only offers training in the notoriously unreliable rhythm method (Campaign for Accountability, 2019).

Title X has provided \$286.5 million annually to reproductive health care centers to serve over 4 million people, including 600,000 teens. Half the people served at Title X clinics are women of color. Trump’s new rule is aimed at cutting off Planned Parenthood and other reproductive health care centers from receiving Title X funds and opens the door for funds to flow to faith-based, anti-abortion clinics. As a result, Planned Parenthood, which has over 600 clinics nationwide, lost the approximately \$60 million a year of Title X funds it had

been receiving (Belluck, 2019). Experts say that the rule fundamentally undermines the purpose of Title X and violates the law (Baker, Fall 2019, 8-9). Nevertheless, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has upheld the law by a vote of 7-4 (*California v. Azar*, No. 19-15974 [9th Cir. Feb. 24, 2020]). As of March of 2020, Trump has appointed 193 federal judges to lifetime appointments, including two Supreme Court Justices and 51 Circuit Court judges. These judges are now overturning established precedents and upholding Trump's conservative policies.<sup>3</sup>

Many Title X clinics have decided not to comply with the new rules. Planned Parenthood, which has 13% of Title X health care centers but serves 41% of the approximately 4 million Title X patients, has withdrawn from the program, which will cause them a 19% budget shortfall and reduced services. According to the Guttmacher Institute, Planned Parenthood is the only Title X provider of publicly funded contraceptives for low-income patients in many areas of the country (Frost, 2015). Other providers would have to increase their caseloads by an average of 70 percent to serve all the patients currently seen by Planned Parenthood, which they are unlikely to be able to do any time soon (Hasstedt, 2017). The domestic gag rule has slashed the Title X network's capacity by half, reports the Guttmacher Institute (Dawson, 2020).

In 2016 alone, health clinics used Title X to fund 720,000 pap smear tests, more than four million STD tests (including HIV tests) and nearly one million breast exams, and they prevent one million unintended

3. See, e.g., *June Med. Servs. LLC v. Gee*, 814 F.3d 319 (5th Cir. 2016), in direct contradiction to *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, 136 S. Ct. 2292 (2016).

pregnancies each year. Without these health services, patients are likely to experience increased levels of sexually transmitted diseases, increased breast and cervical cancers, and more unintended pregnancies, which would likely drive up the abortion rate. Low-income women and women of color are particularly harmed by the gag rule (Baker, Fall 2019, 8-9). The Trump administration is upending a decades-long bipartisan consensus that all US Americans, including low-income and young people, are entitled to comprehensive reproductive health care and access to all FDA-approved contraceptives (Rodberg, 2011).

The Trump administration is also eroding Title IX protections from sexual assault for students in colleges, high schools, middle schools, and even elementary schools. Young women and girls in the US experience extremely high rates of sexual assault and harassment in educational institutions. Title IX requires schools to provide equal educational opportunity to women and girls, including protection from sexual assault and harassment. During the Obama years, the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Education strengthened these protections, but the Trump administration has reversed these protections and undermined the safety of women and girls in schools. Indeed, even before he was elected we learned that Trump is proud that his fame provides him what he sees as a right to sexually assault women, so it's no surprise his administration has undermined protections from similar violence for students (Victor, 2017).

Education secretary Betsy DeVos proposed new Title IX guidelines that eliminate time deadlines for resolving complaints and allow schools to refuse to provide interim

measures to keep survivors safe while their case is ongoing. They also allow schools to require that sexual assault survivors meet a higher burden of evidence—they have to prove their cases by “clear and convincing evidence”—than that required in most other cases, which require proof by a “preponderance of the evidence.” The new guidelines allow alleged perpetrators to directly cross-examine survivors—even about their sexual history. As a result of the DeVos guidelines, some schools are not responding promptly, or at all, to student complaints and others have weakened their Title IX enforcement procedures, citing the Trump administration’s new guidance (Baker, 2018).

The Trump administration is also rolling back protections for victim/survivors of domestic violence, and defunding programs that help survivors and prevent violence. Former Attorney General Jeff Sessions eliminated domestic violence as a ground for asylum and axed funding for legal assistance to sex trafficking survivors to clear their criminal records from charges related to their trafficking experience. Congress has yet to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which funds programs to address sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking across the country. The Act expired in September 2018 for the first time since VAWA was first enacted in 1994 (Baker, 2018). As with reproductive rights, the Trump administration has abandoned a decades-long bipartisan consensus that women and girls have the right to live their lives free from violence and rape.

A third area in which the Trump administration has rolled back federal protections is in employment. In 2016, the Obama administration created a pay data initiative

requiring large businesses to collect and report wage data on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, and job category. With this data, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) could track and address these disparities. But in August of 2017, without any public notice or opportunity to weigh in, the Trump administration blocked the pay data collection initiative, claiming that it was “unnecessarily burdensome” for businesses (Baker, 2020). Trump’s EEOC has now issued a proposal to permanently stop collecting pay data from employers. The EEOC proposal would allow employers to continue to hide the fact they are paying women/people of color less than white men.

The Trump administration has also rolled back protections for LGBTQ people in education, employment, the military, housing, health care, public accommodations, and prisons (Gessen, 2020; Woodward, 2020). In fact, the administration has put in place policies to protect people who discriminate against LGBTQ people, particularly if the person claims to be motivated by religious beliefs (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2020).

These rollbacks of women’s rights—and the many others I don’t have space to list—make GWSS more important than ever. Students need to understand our history, our rights, and acquire the tools to challenge these rollbacks. In the GWSS classroom, students learn about past organizing for social justice, which offers lessons in perspective, strategy, and inspiration. They learn about present activists and organizations, which opens up possibilities for students’ future (and present) activism and teaches them innovative strategies for social change. Finally, students learn the importance of

envisioning a better future, especially through the creative arts, which can offer them hope (Baker, 2018). GWSS students learn about interconnected systems of oppression based on gender, race, class, sexuality, nationality, and disability, and how these systems negatively impact people marginalized by these systems. The GWSS classroom offers students pathways to empowerment by engaging them with histories of feminist movement organizing and knowledge about current feminist activists and organizations, as well as encouraging them to envision futures based on social justice (see Creel Falcón; Tajima Creel & Hertz; and Valdez essays in this collection). In this political moment, when the Trump regime is dismantling reproductive rights, protections from violence and employment discrimination laws, GWSS offers students important tools of resistance (Shayne, 2020).

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## PART III

# SECTION TWO: THE PRAXIS OF GENDER, WOMEN, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

### **Essays:**

Bridging the Academy and the Community, One Breath  
at a time: The Healing Power of Africana Women's  
Studies ~ Brea Stevenson, NaTasha Robinson, Sonja  
Andrews, and Donielle Pace, Clark Atlanta University

WGS Changes Lives: A Meditation on Feminist Praxis  
~ Kandace Creel Falcón, University of Minnesota, alum  
Teaching Women's & Gender Studies: Teaching Tools

JULIE SHAYNE

for Life ~ Elena Tajima Creef and Rosanna Hertz,  
Wellesley College

From Theory to Content: Feminist Publishing Makes  
Women's Studies Powerful ~ Carmen Rios, American  
University, alumna

The Struggle Continues: Women of Color Faculty and  
Institutional Barriers ~ Lourdes Torres, DePaul University

Turning a Feminist Lens on Administration ~ Judith  
Howard, University of Washington Seattle

Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies: A Degree and  
Perspective for 'Essential Workers' in the 21st Century ~  
Cheryl Radeloff, College of Southern Nevada and  
Michelle Tracy Berger, University of North Carolina  
Chapel Hill

7.

Bridging the  
Academy and the  
Community, One  
Breath at a Time:  
The Healing Power  
of Africana Women's  
Studies

**By Brea Stevenson, Sonja Andrews,  
NaTasha Robinson, and Donielle  
Pace, Clark Atlanta University**

Introduction

Africana Women's Studies (AWS), as an academic field, emerged because Women's Studies and Africana/Black Studies failed to address the unique needs of Black women.<sup>1</sup> (See Sears's essay in this collection.) By centering Black women's

lived experiences, AWS creates a safe space that promotes positive mental health.<sup>2</sup> In these spaces, Black women's standpoints and epistemologies (Collins 2000) are affirmed, and we define ourselves outside of a white patriarchal gaze. Furthermore, the goal of AWS research and theory is to improve the lives of Black women.

In *The Black Woman Anthology*, one of the earliest canonical texts of AWS, editor Toni Cade Bambara writes of the book's contributors: "Some are mothers. Others are students. Some are both. All are alive, are Black, are women. And that, I should think, is credential enough to



From Left to Right: Sonja Andrews, Brea Stevenson, Donielle Pace, and NaTasha Robinson by Nicole Carter

1. We would like to send a big Black woman thank you to Dr. Stephanie Evans! Thank you for your mentorship, belief in our work, and commitment to saving Black women's lives. We would also like to thank Dr. Shayne for providing us with a platform to share our work as we begin our journey as Black Women's Studies Scholars! [
2. Throughout this writing we will use the words Black and Africana to refer to all people of African descent.



address themselves to issues that seem to be relevant to the sisterhood” (1970, 7). Bambara dismantles academic and community divisions and establishes AWS as a field created by and for all Black women. Fifty years later, AWS is providing us the space to BREATHE.

In *Black Women’s Mental Health: Balancing Strength and Vulnerability*, Evans, Burton, and Bell argue, “the modern Africana woman just wants to breathe... get some air...release... Refresh and feel anew...love...and be loved... and she does not want to be made to feel guilty about it” (2017, 4). Breathing allows Africana women to exhale, be free from expectation, realize our humanity, and find healing. The BREATHE Model is a set of principles that, when utilized, develop positive mental health and well-being.<sup>3</sup> This essay will use the BREATHE model to examine how AWS concepts translate into practical tools for Black women’s healing inside and outside of the academy. We conceptualize AWS as a movement, and it is our intention that this writing will inspire its growth.

**Balance:** Evans et al. define balance as “engaging in the purposeful repositioning of one’s commitments such that all priorities are addressed” (2017, 4). Similarly, according to Audre Lorde, for Black women, self-care is an act of political warfare (1988). Centuries of systemic oppression have resulted in the internalization of the Eurocentric image of the strong Black woman. Internalization of this image complicates our ability to practice balance and manifests itself in deleterious health consequences for Black women (Hoytt and Beard, 2012).

3. As an acronym, each of the letters contained in the word represent one principle that, when focused on, can improve Black women’s mental health. The letters in word BREATHE stand for Balance, Reflection, Energy, Association, Healing, and Empowerment.

The practice of balance for Black women, therefore, begins with deconstructing ideas of strength. Because of the strength required to survive the daily onslaught of discrimination, micro-aggression, and oppression, total annihilation of Black women's conceptualization of ourselves as strong does not improve Black women's mental health. On the contrary, it deprives Black women of a critical tool needed to live in an anti-black society (Brown and Cochran, 2003). Black women, then, cannot afford to deny our strength, but we must define it for ourselves. The Black Women's Health Imperative<sup>4</sup> promotes health and wellness while honoring Black women's strength. Self-preservation of Black women is directly aligned with the goals of AWS. Barbra Smith writes, "the bias of Black Women's Studies must consider as primary the knowledge that will save Black women's lives" (2000, xxv), and BWHI is fulfilling this AWS legacy by causing us to reflect on our strengths and vulnerabilities.

**Reflection:** For years, Black women have been conditioned to endure trauma, suppress our feelings, and just move on. This contributes to the failing of our physical health and our spiritual well-being (Walker, 1983). Therefore, we must develop methods and practices that provide us the space to evaluate and examine our lived experiences. Evans et al. defines this as reflection, to "set aside time for contemplation and performing emotional and cognitive audits" (2017, 5). Reflection, then, is a self-analytical praxis that must be done carefully so we do not recapitulate our own trauma and abuse. We

4. The Black Women's Health Imperative was founded by Byllye Avery with the goal of ensuring the health and wellness of Black women and girls. <https://bwhi.org>.

must be intentional with the reflective methods we choose to implement.

Anna Julia Cooper (1982) states, “reflection looks backward for wisdom, looks inward for strength, and looks forward in hope and faith” (in Evans et al, 2017). Evans proposes writing, especially poetry and memoirs, as one coping mechanism used to alleviate anguish of trauma survivors (2015). For example, Charlotte Pierce-Baker invited rape survivors to share their stories for her book *Surviving the Silence* (1998). Pierce-Baker explains, “*Surviving the Silence* is the mapping of a new space. A space in which black women can learn to trust and speak to ‘one other’ and then to ‘one another’ in a sharing recovery of memory, of sanity” (18). Although Black women’s trauma is often unspeakable, writing our stories provides us with a safe space to convey our lived experiences. As a result, when Black women participate in reflective practices, we not only shift the narratives about ourselves; we (re)gain ownership of our narratives and *selves*.

**Energy:** Evans et al. defines energy as “one’s ability to reinvigorate goals and set upon a path to achieve them” (2017, 5). For Africana women reinvigorating goals involves challenging the dominant narrative about Black women’s lived experiences. Often times Black women must navigate systemic oppressions that devalue our worth and limit our opportunities. When we are successful, we overcome barriers of racism, sexism, and classism that seek to keep Black women at the bottom of the socio strata. AWS helps Africana women reimagine our lives, and thus renews our confidence in our ability to affirm our own ways of being and definitions of success.

Decentering dominant ideologies of success frees Black

women to achieve goals previously thought impossible. For example, Michelle Obama, who grew up on the Southside of Chicago, rejected the notion that applying to Princeton University was overreaching for a Black girl. She eventually graduated from Princeton University and Harvard Law School. Michelle Obama's story is one of countless stories which affirms the limitless potential of Black girls and women. Despite a barrage of messages communicating our worthlessness, affirmation, in the form of representation, allows Black women and girls to understand their value. By defining her own success, Michelle Obama helps deconstruct the Black woman in the white imagination. This deconstruction helps Black women break the barriers to our collective progress.

**Association:** For years, Black women have been the subjects of a false narrative that imagines Black women's relationships as spiteful, manipulative, and hostile. We have determined this is a lie! According to Evans et al. Black women need "association" in order to "create and maintain social networks that promote, affirm, and encourage wellness" (2017, 6). Similarly, Clenora Hudson-Weems argues that sisterhood is a key component for our survival, and, when we are in unison, it strengthens us (Black women) and (Black) communities. Having a solid association is vital to AWS (2001). As The Combahee River Collective argued, Black women need spaces that allow us to be vulnerable, transparent, and authentic (1978, 9-10). Sisterhood provides us with the inclusiveness that is essential for our mental health and wellness.

In *The Crunk Feminist Collection*, Cooper, Morris, and Boylorn, affirmed sisterhood is a practice (2017). My cohorts and I (Pace) put this ideology into practice when we began our doctoral program at Clark Atlanta

University. Beside the rigorous workload of the program, each of us had to adjust to living in a new city without family. Even worse, we were experiencing a lack of support from our loved ones. The disconnect we felt from our families increased our desire for association with one another. Eventually, an authentic sisterhood was formed, where we found ourselves crying, venting, laughing, engaging in healthy discourse, holding each other accountable, and just *being* with one another. Through our safe space, we have learned the value of sisterhood and its necessity to sustaining our mental health while navigating through this challenging program. For Black women, sisterhood encourages us to remove the walls that were meant to divide us.

**Transparency:** Oftentimes, Black women are not provided with a safe space to voice our opinion, be vulnerable, share our experiences, and speak our truths. As a result, Black women are being silenced, experiencing anxiety and depression, and, not accessing the healthy practices necessary to ensure mental wellness. However, AWS provides Black women with the necessary space, language, and practices to break our silence and be transparent.

Evans et al. describes transparency as “actively avoid[ing] remaining silent about painful experiences” (2017, 6). Transparency is an imperative component to AWS and for Black women achieving mental wellness. Audre Lorde expounded on this concept within *The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action*. Lorde expresses how speaking our truth leads to self-revelation, connection with other sisters, bridging differences, and transforming silence into language and action (2007, 42).

In other words, transparency is revolutionary, and we need it to survive!

These revolutionary acts are not only implemented within AWS classrooms, but scholars are also using these acts within Africana communities. For example, my sister scholars and I (Tasha) often share AWS content on our personal social media pages as well as our cohort page. When we share content, it allows the digital community to have a space where we practice transparency and share our stories. Thus, AWS is a movement that not only provides the space and tools to achieve mental wellness, but those tools also reach the community to provide healing for all.

**Healing:** Africana Women's Studies encourages Black women to challenge Eurocentric epistemology and embrace an Afrocentric epistemology. This includes the way we understand mental wellness and healing. Black women traumas take up residency in our bodies and influence how we interact with ourselves and our communities. If we do not intentionally consider our well-being and actively contribute to our own healing process when addressing traumas and experiences as Africana women, we will not physically, emotionally, and spiritually thrive. Evans et al. describes healing as "Look[ing] for ways to nurture wellness in self and others" (2017, 6).

Africana women implement healing through acts of self-care. According to Cooper et al., self-care consists of intentional acts aiding towards a person's, or community's, mental, physical, and spiritual care (2017, 297). Black women have been discovering different avenues to practice self-care. For example, there are several programs that provide the space for Black women

to workout together. Within these programs, not only are they creating ways to improve their physical health, but they are also having motivational conversations to improve their mental and spiritual health. Personally, when I (Tasha) attended “A New You Wellness Center” sessions, the attendees and I prayed before and after the sessions, meditated, and gave tips on how to survive for the week. Healing is an ultimate act of self-love. As Africana women discover self-love, the journey to recover Afrocentric practices, used by our ancestors to achieve healing, will prevail.

**Empowerment:** Audre Lorde said, “...if I didn’t define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people’s fantasies for me and eaten alive” (2007, 137). Through this proclamation Lorde acknowledges that we have to (re)define and (re)claim ourselves. Black women have been defined based on hegemonic, dehumanizing stereotypes, and, as a result, we have been disempowered and dissociated. Evans et al. argue that Black women must have agency over our empowerment by reclaiming our history, accessing our “internal power,” and obtaining authority over our own well-being (2017, 7; 14-16).

In addition, Evans argues that in order for Black women to achieve transformative change, we must control our personal power. For instance, I (Pace) decided to let my sons live with their dad while I pursued my PhD at CAU. After making this decision, I endured criticism. The dominant ideology insists that the mother, seen as the most significant parental figure, must live in the same household as their children. My decision, however, challenged this ideology about motherhood and affirmed African value systems that believe it *takes a village to raise a child*. As we have noted, becoming active agents in our

own movement begins by renaming and reclaiming our history, defining our experiences, and determining our futures as Africana women.

### Conclusion

The incorporation of the BREATHE principles in the curriculum and culture of the AWS program support Black Women's health and well-being. AWS, then, is more than an academic program; it is a healing space that puts Black women on the path toward self-discovery and wholeness. Its visionary principles should be utilized to practice bridging the gap between community and academy. As scholar-activists, we understand the necessity of AWS in Black communities, and we accept the responsibility to revitalize Black consciousness. The existence of Black women depends on us making, taking, and being provided with the space, language, and practice(s) to write, speak, and create our own identities. By disrupting the silencing of Black women's voices, specifically pertaining to intra-racial concerns, AWS is revolutionary!

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# Students answer: Why Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies?

“WGS is a major that has inspired me to learn about myself and where I stand in the world as a Black woman. Having influences in psychology, sociology, history, black studies and so much more, the major gave me the freedom to take on topics that I was most interested in for the last four years making my time in undergrad exceptional.

When people ask me, I often say I majored in Black Women’s Studies with a focus in Pre-Law, as my focus was on the history of Black feminism, Civil, and Human Rights. I firmly believe that WGS is the way of the future for any and all students interested in social, political, and legal work. In an everchanging world, it is of the utmost importance that we understand the things around us which shape our individual life experiences. WGS not only gave me the choice to customize my education to fit my goals as an undergraduate student, but it gave me a sense of self.”

Laurel Alice Berryman, she/her/hers

JULIE SHAYNE

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, class of 2020  
Women's and Gender Studies major

“Gender, women and sexuality studies brought me home to myself. And once I discovered I could have in essence, the validation of my identity printed on that last piece of paper I would receive, there were no decisions to make. I knew my path, and it was a brief 30ft walk across that stage to collect my empowerment.”

**Gabrielle Fox, she/her/hers**

University of Washington Bothell, class of 2019  
Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies major

8.

WGS Changes Lives:  
A Meditation on  
Feminist Praxis

JULIE SHAYNE

**By Kandace Creel Falcón,  
University of Minnesota, alum**

*A theory in the flesh means  
one where the physical  
realities of our lives – our skin  
color, the land or concrete we  
grew up on, our sexual  
longings—all fuse to create a  
politic born out of necessity –  
Cherrie Moraga, This  
Bridge Called My Back:  
Writings by Radical Women  
of Color (1983, 23).*



Kandace Creel Falcón by Nicole  
Carter

I have always felt a particular connection to this feminist collection first published in 1981. Not only have I seen it as the roadmap leading me to my understanding of my Chicana feminist politic, but the first edition was birthed the same year my mama bore me. We have come of age in the same era of contestation of gender, racial, and sexual politics. To recognize *This Bridge* as formative for WGS means articulating a different starting point of the field. So often in undergraduate courses my fellow WGS students and I were taught that women of color feminisms were additive—in addition to—the “trailblazing” work that white Western women laid out for the rest of us. This is certainly one way of understanding and writing the history of WGS. However, I concur with Chicana feminists like Aída Hurtado, that our mamas and abuelas,

our ancestors and community members *did* feminism even if they did not name it as such. This enactment and embodiment of feminist values reflects a root of the necessary political project of Women's and Gender Studies that requires a decolonial approach instead of the assimilable one too often written by white historians. This project requires an understanding of how action shapes theory and theory shapes action (feminist praxis), giving us all an opportunity to contemplate feminist praxis that purposefully engages a multiplicity of trajectories. In this essay I trace my connections to feminist praxis from WGS student to professor and beyond, to meditate on the power of WGS as one committed to evolving practices for liberatory possibilities.

I became a feminist scholar through teaching peers and middle-school aged students about intimate partner violence (IPV), reproductive health, and consent as an intern at the Albuquerque Rape Crisis Center (ARCC) my last year of high school. Under my Chicana femme supervisor Andrea's leadership, we offered trainings for young people that manifested powerful conversations which changed peoples' understanding about the world around them. I saw feminism in action. Andrea not only made space for me to grapple with shifting notions around my gender and sexuality, she also suggested that I take a Women's Studies class when I went to college. Working for the Albuquerque Rape Crisis Center launched the trajectory I would spend the next two decades following. I found my way into the Women's Studies classroom through good luck (and good advice). Though luck opened my mind to the field, I found so many times I also had to fight to remain there. I struggled

with how my program's curriculum in the early 2000s normalized white feminism. Despite these challenges, I also fought to pursue a degree in the field because my parents did not support it. I appeased them by picking it up as a minor, and then later as a double major that was only legible to them because they could see a career trajectory with my other major – psychology. I felt most alive when I worked alongside other WGS majors to host Take Back the Night rallies in our community, or to protest sexism as it operated on our campus. I thrived as a student when I lived what we theorized in our classroom out in the community. The practical applicability of the discipline keeps me committed to feminism, even after changing my relationship to the academy.

It is incredible how many of my undergraduate experiences would come to mirror similar experiences of the students I mentored as a graduate student pursuing a PhD in Feminist Studies and then later as a faculty member. And yet, feminist praxis connects our similar experiences to enable shared commitments to WGS. Chela Sandoval's "methodology of the oppressed" provides a useful lens on how antiracist and feminist ideologies must contend with the contributions from those of us who live subjugated or situated knowledges as a means of achieving equitable interrelationships between theory and practice (2000). Feminists of color facilitate this co-constitutive relationship between theory and practice within the space of our classrooms *and* in our communities. Just like I first encountered WGS in community, feminist praxis does not belong to the academy alone. The interdisciplinary fields of WGS and Ethnic Studies born out of demands for inclusion, require us to contend with the roots from where we come.



(See Russell, Loftin, and Shayne's essay about SDSU's program in this collection.) Feminist praxis also requires us to continue to shape new iterations of our disciplinary relationships to the academy. In my estimation, the institutionalization of the field perpetuates systemic violence on the individual scholar-activist and marginalizes contributions of activist-scholar communities when the academy divorces feminist action from theory.

This tightrope feminist practitioners must walk within the academy makes feminist praxis necessary to WGS as a disciplinary field, and also contributes to our departmental/programmatic precarity. While I served as faculty at Minnesota State University Moorhead in the Women's and Gender Studies Program, feminist praxis was a key consideration for course outcomes even as administrative demands did not always see the value of or labor required for this work. In a two-hundred level course for WGS majors and minors, designed as an introduction to the discipline, called "Perspectives and Intersections," I intentionally integrated an activist project for feminist praxis purposes. Within the class, we pitched ideas to each other for projects we could accomplish in one semester for the local community. Students had the opportunity to work in small groups or individually on a project of our collective choosing. During class time we worked to define what we meant by "local;" sometimes that was the city in which our campus was located, sometimes campus itself, or other times the entire state of Minnesota or North Dakota. After a collaborative discernment process involving all students, they broke into working groups to begin researching and strategizing how to take direct action. I assigned books by

inspiring authors, including Adrienne Maree Brown's *Emergent Strategy* (2017) and Berger and Radeloff's (authors in this collection) *Transforming Scholarship* (2015) which guided our reflections about processes of making social change, and our responsibilities as WGS scholars. We thought about how theories we learn inform our activism and how our experiences as activists inform the theories we make about the world. In short, we reflected on our experiences as theory in the flesh: what we learned from lifetimes as queer people, as Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), as white women, and all of the intersections represented in the room. We purposefully reflected on the important dimensions of our lives as an entry-point to deeply engage how our feminist praxis could reflect our experiences.

One end result of these processes was that students decided they wanted to collectively work on a series of short videos raising awareness about Women's and Gender Studies for the broader campus community. That class included a couple of students who were also filmmakers, so they used their skills to create these fun animations highlighting the sorts of things WGS can teach. In *Still Rufflin' Feathers*, Ravn Thor Hegland (in his capacity as project leader) juxtaposed feminist theorists represented as chickens alongside the hatching of eggs that turned out to be the students themselves. In a beautiful turn of about two-minutes of run time, the video helps connect the students to theorists and their role as learners while simultaneously articulating a vision of how they see WGS operating in their lives and for the good of the broader campus. In the second video, *WGS BLAScT Off*, the students pun the university's liberal arts and sciences curriculum (LASC) general education

requirements in the title of the video. The video again features the feminist chickens who had become a mascot of the WGS Program at MSUM. The chickens, which can be read as the students from the first video of the series, are abducted into space and shown what LASC classes WGS offers for the campus community. Upon completing their education, the chickens return back to earth and highlight the many ways students can engage with WGS on campus. The ending of both videos shows a hen laying an egg accompanied with the words “Rufflin’ Feathers Since 1971... and beyond” when the chick hatches. In linking past and future while grounding their needs in the present, WGS students created a tangible feminist praxis. Through highlighting classes on campus, these videos honored the legacy of WGS on campus while simultaneously protecting it. Their creation of the video as a cultural product—shareable and broadcastable (they ran on the video screens across campus for months)—represented the values we learned in the classroom. The animations connected our theories and values to our practice.

Feminist praxis takes many forms and shapes, though the most successful practices require purposeful reflection and a tailored approach to the conditions in which it operates. At MSUM, we worked hard to help others not involved with WGS understand how WGS might impact their lives. This was important because despite the program existing on campus since 1971, it remained precarious within the institution forty years later. Promoting the program helped students connect meaningfully to the history of the program on their campus and allowed them to be a part of the legacy of fighting for its survival. So much has changed since the

creation of these videos: students have graduated and are working to make change in their corners of the world. The attacks on WGS—like the elimination of faculty positions which left me the only faculty line in WGS; my administrative appointment as WGS Director prior to earning tenure; the endless need to justify our curriculum’s relevance to LASC goal areas—became too heavy a burden for me to carry alone. As a queer Chicana femme, juggling all of this, on top of the emotional labor of supporting marginalized students, led to my eventual departure from the institution in 2019. (See Torres’s and Howard’s essays in this collection about the importance of supporting minoritized faculty.) The state of the program at MSUM remains uncertain with news of the firing of thirty-four faculty members in Spring of 2020, the elimination of Ethnic Studies, and no public administrative efforts to replace the line which I left vacant. Regardless of my position in relation to the academy, feminist praxis continues to guide my thinking and my contributions to social justice. Feminist praxis shapes the community work I undertake, the reading lists I work through, and the creative work I pursue. No matter where I am, or what I am doing, I carry with me the legacy of Chicana feminist praxis. My work aligns my values with my actions the best I can. Currently, this looks like exploring visual narratives to expand my storytelling toolbox. I am creating. Just as I was struck with the awe of the possibility of understanding how feminist praxis can change lives at 18, I remain committed to these possibilities two decades later, wherever I land.

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9.

Teaching Women's &  
Gender Studies:  
Teaching Tools for  
Life

By Elena Tajima Creef and Rosanna  
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Elena Tajima Creef by Nicole  
Carter

In almost four decades  
as a department, Women's  
and Gender Studies  
(WGST) has become  
critical to Wellesley's



Rosanna Hertz by Nicole Carter

mission as one of the leading historical women's colleges in the US.<sup>1</sup> Today, Wellesley students come to believe they need to take at least one Women's and Gender Studies course before they graduate, in part as a way to explain why they came to Wellesley in the first place. As senior WGST professors, we see ourselves as intellectually focused on intersectional and transnational analyses that provide students with critical tools to face, and hopefully, change the world.

We have always seen our mission as three-fold. First, as historian Nancy Cott so eloquently noted about US American feminism, we have sought to understand how gender has and can be made to "matter and not matter" at the same moments in time (1989). Second, we have always taught that the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality, ability and ethnicity in a transnational context shape social realities. Third, we engage pedagogical strategies that address the complexities of human identity as we expand the theoretical basis for Women's and Gender Studies as arenas for scholarship, service, and teaching. Fast forward to 2020. We are grateful for the opportunity to revisit what happens in our classrooms and how our students take what they are learning with them after they graduate from college.

One of our departmental traditions has been to give every newly declared WGST major a small double-headed screwdriver with the inscription, "WGST: Tools for Life." This portable toolkit is both a highly useful everyday object as well as an abbreviated salute to Audre Lorde's famous essay, "The Master's Tools Will Not

1. We are proud that College Magazine recently ranked us as the top place to study Women's and Gender Studies in the country. (September 24, 2019): <https://www.collegemagazine.com/top-10-college-for-womens-studies/>



Dismantle the Master's House" in which she so eloquently argued for the dismantling of systems of oppression and racist patriarchy. Like WGST departments everywhere, we are committed to helping our students translate what they learn inside the classroom into activist contexts that can change lives in the world outside of the university.

The tools we give our students are not simply conventional ones found in theory and methods (though we do teach those as well), but rather are what we consider empowering life lessons for how to take their knowledge outside the classroom as critical thinkers and activists who are learning to see the world in new ways—through an intersectional lens of race, class, gender, sexuality, and social justice. Or, our interpretation of feminist praxis.<sup>2</sup>

Over the years, we have been able to create a range of experiential learning opportunities consisting of faculty-led student trips that have had a profound impact on our majors. Experiential trips like these are a pure labor of love on the part of our WGST faculty and go far beyond the expectations of our work at the college. We feel fortunate to teach at a campus that has the resources to support these kinds of trips. Our students are meeting a range of social justice activists who embody compassion, charisma and resilience in their humble style of leadership. We consider passion and compassion to be the foundational bedrock for what we do in our department as we strive to create a future generation of activists.

2. The concept of praxis comes from Brazilian education philosopher Paulo Freire (1970) which feminist educators have built on over the decades since.

### The United Nations Trip<sup>3</sup>

Our department has taken its graduating seniors five times to the United Nations in New York for the annual Commission on the Status of Women. This unique gathering consists of delegates, invited panelists, and a regularly scheduled side event featuring Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Prior to attending the trip, students attend several departmental meetings to discuss readings about the UN and human rights.<sup>4</sup> While attending these events, our students have been able to listen to a diversity of women leaders from all over the world share how they are trying to create equity for women and girls as they look to each other and to the United Nations for support. Attending the meetings and the like, listening to the women's demands, ultimately make visible and concrete the intricacies of the patriarchal system under which we all live. For example, while many countries have laws against domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence, the UN is a space in which delegates discuss how to

3. We would like to thank our WGST colleagues, Sealing Cheng, Susan Reverby, Charlene Galarneau, Irene Mata, Jenny Musto, Dulce Natividad, and Betty Tiro who have been instrumental over the years in leading and preparing our students on the trips to the United Nations. The Centers for Research on Women at Wellesley College generously gave us their UN passes that made our participation possible.

4. For instance, students read several chapters from Sally Merry, *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice* (2006). In the early years of our travels to the UN, our senior capstone seminar, "Transnational Feminisms," was a requirement for participating on this trip. Since the capstone is rotated among the faculty with different thematic emphases, "Transnational Feminisms" is one option among several other courses offered by colleagues in other departments.

implement these laws to provide women and girls with safety and justice.

Although the UN is not always effective for implementing long term change, this rare gathering of women from all over the world inspired our students to shift their perspective on their own position vis-à-vis the world. For example, our students have said at evening check-in meetings at the UN and then in a follow-up lunch meeting after we returned, that some of the most powerful and eye opening stories they heard were from women who shared how obtaining something as basic as a small gas cook stove made a radical difference between safety and danger in their lives. Women who owned a portable stove no longer had to walk for miles each day in the rural areas of Tanzania, Uganda, and Nigeria, among other African nations, searching for firewood, thus putting themselves at risk of physical attack. Similarly, during the year that focused on “The Girl Child,” our students were stunned to learn about systems of oppression surrounding the expectations for early marriage, sex, and reproduction that exist in many parts of the world. Most moving to the students were those panelists who traveled from their villages to garner support to increase marriage age for girls back home. The activists came to New York with the goal of returning home with a UN backed resolution that set a higher age for marriage and our students ultimately felt empowered by the women’s determination.

After the UN trip, students wrote a short paper based on the following prompt: “What are the possibilities and challenges of building alliances and relationships between the global South and global North in relation to women’s and gender issues?” This assignment was

designed to help our students reflect on what they learned about forming alliances with women in different locations and how the UN offers one possible space for advancing human rights. From a WGST perspective, our students were able to observe real world challenges and solutions advanced by the activists themselves that previously had only been experienced as intellectual exercises in the classroom. At this particular meeting, we discussed the little known issue in the US that the federal government does not have a universal minimum age for marriage. Rather, each state sets its own laws. Approximately thirteen states do not have any set minimum age for marriage. The US did not sign on to a UN resolution in support of a minimum age because this would contradict its stance allowing states to determine and regulate matters related to family. A byproduct of the UN trip was that our students came to discover not only the challenges and complexities of international resolutions, but the hidden problems of these same issues here at home.

### **Alternative Spring Break Trip to Standing Rock**

In November 2016, during the height of the #NODAPL protest that was unfolding on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota (home of the Lakota Sioux Tribe), Elena Creef (co-author of this essay) asked students in her WGST seminar on “Representations of Women, Natives, and ‘Others’”<sup>5</sup> if they were interested in learning more about the Lakota communities. If so, they could travel with her to Pine Ridge, Standing Rock, and Cheyenne River where she has been doing research and

5. The title of this course pays homage to the work of feminist filmmaker Trinh T. Minh Ha’s *Women, Native, Other* (2009).

volunteer work within the horse communities for the past six years.<sup>6</sup>

Three students of color took up the invitation to travel with her to the Dakotas in March 2017—and again in March 2018—on an alternative spring break service trip. While visiting these communities, students had the privilege and opportunity to learn about the many contemporary issues that the Lakota face.

Elena and her students volunteered at the Cheyenne River Youth Center, met with Standing Rock activist LaDonna Bravebull Allard, and visited several of the Water Protector peace camps devoted to creating community shaped by traditional Lakota spiritual values of respecting Mother Earth and the sacredness of Water.<sup>7</sup> They also spent a day in the small district of Bridger where United Church of Christ lay pastor Byron Buffalo shared his work in a “healing with horses” youth program. These students had never ridden before but were invited to saddle up and ride alongside Byron’s youth and experience for themselves the special bond between humans and horses.

In preparation for these trips, students wanted to

6. Elena is a lifelong horse woman who has been involved as a volunteer and a participant in several of the sacred horse rides that take place throughout the year. Her long term relationship with members from the community has made it possible for her to take students there in order to give them, as a beloved Oglala elder Chubbs Thunderhawk put it, “a real education” where they can see and experience reservation life firsthand. Mr. Thunderhawk’s comment and invitation paved the way for Elena to begin bringing small groups of Wellesley students to the Dakotas where they were warmly welcomed by all those they met.
7. To learn more about the role of Native women leading the peaceful protest at Standing Rock in 2016-2017, see Mikki Halpin (2018), T.M. Lane (2018), and Meridith Privott (2019).

donate to the community organizations they visited. They held a fundraising campaign (by designing and selling their artwork) and gathered an impressive collection of prom dresses from friends and faculty eager to support the Youth Center's annual "Passion for Fashion" fashion show and prom night clothing collection.

Students were able to witness the complexities of how race and gender intersect with indigeneity, poverty, environmental racism, and the legacy of US settler colonialism; topics they had studied in Elena's class. What moved the students more than anything were the countless examples of resilience, generosity, and cultural pride that were visible, even foundational, in these communities. Not only were their individual experiences transformational for the students, but they brought back to the Wellesley community a new context for social change and action. Indeed, several of the students have returned to these communities where they forged strong connections, made new friendships, and even accepted teaching positions after graduating with the Teach for America program in Pine Ridge.

These are just two examples of the kinds of experiences that our WGST department has offered its students in order to help them think outside the box of conventional classroom learning. Michele Tracy Berger and Cheryl Radeloff (authors of another essay in this collection) call this sort of civic engagement, "learning that benefits both the student (by expanding his or her abilities to apply knowledge across multiple contexts) and the community beyond campus (by providing volunteer labor and cultivating the next generation of community-minded individuals)" (2015, 63). While perhaps the skeptic who reads this might say that students could learn these

concepts without leaving the classroom, in our estimation we became teachers in order to facilitate our students' understanding of the injustices in the world and the legacies of those determined to challenge them in the name of social change and activism. Further, Berger and Radeloff remind us that WGST civic engaged courses are unique in that they demand that students analyze the historical circumstances and structures that necessitate their "service in the first place, as well as interrogate their own motivations to 'help others'" (2015, 64). What could be a better feminist goal for a liberal arts education than to provide ways for our students to make a difference in the world?



Standing in solidarity with water protectors on the Standing Rock Lakota Sioux Reservation. Esa Tilija, LaDonna Bravebull Allard, Teena Pugliese, Elena Tajima Creef, and Irina Chen with “Not Afraid to Look Big Oil in the Eye” (by Lakota artist Charles Rencountre) at Sacred Stone Camp, Cannonball, North Dakota. March 2018.

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10.

From Theory to  
Content: Feminist  
Publishing Makes  
Women's Studies  
Powerful

## By Carmen Rios, American University, alumna

I made some of my earliest feminist declarations online—the same year I began my journey in Women’s Studies.

I was 16 when Hillary Clinton announced she was running for president, living at home in New Jersey with my single mother and near my aunt and my grandmother.

2007 was the year I finally got my own computer, and when the clamor of the Clinton/Obama race became too painful, I sought solace in my dedicated Internet connection. I scoured the nascent Facebook for groups of Clinton supporters and embedded myself in them, sharing and collecting links about Clinton’s policies or history in an attempt to make my way through the misinformation and sexist myths that were alive in the mainstream media coverage of her campaign. I published impassioned letters and essays in the void of a community blog run by the Democratic party.

That urge—to connect, to share, and to be in community with other people who felt as strongly as I did about the misogyny I saw during that election cycle—was what led me to my first Women’s Studies course that same year, at the community college where students from



Carmen Rios by Nicole Carter

my high school took their final year of classes. I voraciously read for the class, sometimes folding pages to mark academic evidence I could use for my online arguments. I asked questions about the election openly in class, finally feeling safe to do so in physical space, and began grappling with the depth and nuances of the situation that were often lost in digital space.

Within a decade's time, I would publish a series with the digital magazine *Autostraddle*, the world's most popular website for queer and trans women, on women's history and feminist theory, translating theory into popular language; I would also walk feminists from theory to praxis as a contributor at *Everyday Feminism*; and I would land in the same world as feminist scholars once again as managing digital editor at *Ms.*, where we set out to mainstream women's studies concepts through the popular press.

Mine is a modern version of a tale as old as this discipline: Feminist media has long sought to make the concepts explored by feminist scholars more salient, and feminist scholarship has often shaped conversations in the feminist press. In this essay, I will trace the interconnected histories of feminist scholarship and feminist publishing—and examine how modern technology has helped disseminate Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies (GWSS).

Since Women's Studies founding as a discipline, there has always been a powerful relationship between scholarship and feminist/social-justice oriented media platforms. In her book *When Women Ask the Questions: Creating Women's Studies in America*, Marilyn Boxer identifies feminist publishing as one of two "institutions through which Women's Studies exists outside the

campus” (1998, 176)—the other being the network of national women’s organizations who agitated to bring the concepts recorded by scholars into political conversations.

GWSS in the classroom examined and explained the concepts women/minoritized writers explored in the pages of magazines like *Ms.* through personal essays and reporting; today, feminist scholars, bloggers, and scholar-writers have leveraged the feminist press to, for better or worse, mainstream concepts like “privilege,” (McIntosh 1988) “intersectionality,” (Crenshaw 1989) and “misogynoir ” (Bailey & Trudy 2018).

In 1970, when San Diego State University established the first Women’s Studies program, it opened the doors for feminist publishing. Academic journals devoted to the discipline, Boxer observes, provided a powerful blueprint for feminist knowledge production: *Feminist Studies*, founded in 1972, was the earliest model, followed in 1975 by *Signs* and *Frontiers* (1998, 176), and then in 1983 *SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women* (James et. al. xiv) hosted by the Women’s Research and Resource Center at Spelman College, and nearly two decades later *Meridians*. The publishing efforts of feminist scholars paved the way for a popular press that amplified their perspectives and translated their concepts, ultimately integrating GWSS discourse into larger conversations happening across the country.

Feminists also began building their own popular press in 1970 with the launch of *Off our backs*, once the longest-surviving feminist newspaper in the US; and *Ms.*, which launched in 1971 as a special *New York* magazine insert and in earnest as a full magazine in 1972. Before the end of the decade, in 1976, *Sinister Wisdom* was launched by its two

founding editors in North Carolina, providing a distinctly lesbian voice in pursuit of similar aims. Endeavors like these explicitly set out to make feminist perspectives and voices louder, and both set a standard for embracing academic principles from Women's Studies in print.

The relationship between popular feminist media and academic feminist publishing was intertwined from the start: some of *Sinister Wisdom's* editors were GWSS faculty and feminist scholars, including one of its cofounders and its current editor; Ms. worked regularly with feminist scholars and, in 2001, even created the Ms. Committee of Scholars to advise on the magazine's content and strategy—including Carrie Baker, author in this collection; *Off our backs* was intent on discussing topics which appeared in academic journals like *Feminist Studies*, just as *Feminist Studies* sought to keep its content legible to readers outside of the academy.

Academic and popular feminist publishing may have been divided in discourse, approach, and audience, but they shared a singular mission to make feminist thought viable in spaces where knowledge production had been almost exclusively white, masculine, and heteropatriarchal. Journals like *Feminist Studies*, *Signs*, *Frontiers*, *Sage*, and *Meridians*, legitimized the academic examination of women's, femme's, and queer lives and experiences, including communities of color, and transnational women/femmes. These journals also explored the ways in which institutions and power structures had disadvantaged and harmed their communities, in all senses of the word. Ms., *Off our backs*, *Sinister Wisdom* and the countless big and small print endeavors they inspired in the ensuing decades—like *Bitch* and *Bust* and the feminist zine movement of the

nineties (Piepmeier and Zeisler, 2009)—mainstreamed their observations, mobilized everyday women and their allies in order to address them, and made feminist perspectives popular in broader cultural conversations.

Collectively, these efforts in feminist publishing made the concepts in Women's Studies tangible, applicable and of popular interest—in the classroom and beyond it. Along the way, they also extended the mission of GWSS to not just reinforce academic structures, but to challenge them, and to break down the walls, sometimes literally “paywalls,” that academics had built around knowledge.

*Feministe*, which calls itself the first feminist blog, was launched in 2001 as a personal blog and was re-launched in 2005 by its founder, Lauren, with a growing slate of co-bloggers. One year before, in 2004, *Feministing.com* was founded by sisters Jessica and Vanessa Valenti. Like their foremothers before them, feminist blogs like these tied academia to activism—and brought feminist theory to praxis. *Feministe* prided itself as publishing “in defense of the sanctimonious women's studies set,” and *Feministing* sought to offer “sharp, uncompromising feminist analysis of everything from pop culture to politics and inspiring young people to make real-world feminist change.”

They also kicked off a movement of digital feminist publishing that has, in the nearly two decades since, become a powerful vehicle for cultural transformation—and made more room for intersectional feminist thought in public. In 2010, a group of black feminists whose “academic day jobs were lacking in conversations they actually wanted to have—relevant, real conversations about how race and gender politics intersect with pop culture and current events” began publishing a blog called *The Crunk Feminist Collective*. In

December 2011, blogger Mia McKenzie launched *Black Girl Dangerous* “to, in as many ways as possible, amplify the voices, experiences and expressions of queer and trans people of color.” Today, many feminist blogs have been redesigned and re-envisioned as full-scale online magazines, like *Autostraddle* (founded in 2009), *For Harriet* (founded in 2010) and *Jezebel* (founded in 2007). Others have since stopped publishing or continued in less formal structures. But altogether, the feminist blog boom of the 00’s and 2010’s made feminist thought pervasive.

No longer did feminists need to rely on a friend to hand them an issue of *Ms.*, and feminist publishing was no longer solely reliant on costly physical presences on newsstands to spread the good word. The feminist blogosphere, in some ways, helped fulfill that founding mission of Women’s Studies—it made concepts in feminist theory and feminist organizing more accessible than ever, often with few, if any, financial barriers to accessing content or geographical limits on who could create content and participate in conversations. Due to major differences in the time, energy, and expense of content production online and in print, in fact, digital publishing made feminist perspectives available at what felt like light-speed.

Digital publishing also helped empower individual voices, and further removed control over feminist discourse from publishing gatekeepers. *Feministing* had a slate of regular contributors and editors, but also allowed members to log on and publish their own pieces to a community portal. Because digital publishing was nascent and often seen as a “passion project,” feminist writers did not need to have the same formal credentials—academic or professional—to become citizen



journalists online. This was a double-edged sword, of course—because uncompensated labor will often be done by those with the most economic privilege—but it also opened the door to content creation steered by the feminist movement at-large, instead of its de facto leaders. Many of the writers shaping websites like *Feministe*, *Feministing*, *Jezebel* and *Autostraddle*, as well as the dozens of partner efforts taking shape across digital space, would later become acclaimed feminist voices, but when they first started blogging, many were articulating perspectives rooted in personal experience, without an organizational agenda and beyond academic constrictions on their language and subjects.

The Internet also expanded the possibilities for feminist content creation and served as a space for “supplemental” media production by the major journals and magazines that were the Feminist Internet’s predecessors. *Ms.* publishes quarterly in print but nearly 10 times a day online; *Bitch* and *Bust* would go on to launch a series of podcasts in the digital age.

GWSS itself also began seeing the digital space as rife for expansion. About a quarter of all GWSS departments offer fully online courses (and this was prior to COVID-19) and have at least one faculty member who specializes in digital humanities (AAA&S 2017, 7). Similarly, digital content—articles, videos, podcasts, online zines, and more—have become popular in syllabi across the country. Additionally, digital space (like this book) facilitates feminist teaching beyond the classroom, allowing informal exploration of the same issues with fewer barriers to entry, and for many more “students,” as long as they have access to devices and hotspots. Websites like *Everyday Feminism*, launched in 2012, seek to make

feminist issues accessible to anyone curious about feminist thought, offering courses as well as a steady stream of content that walks people through how to live more in line with their feminist values and how to mobilize for feminist progress. Their writers, in some ways, became *de facto* professors themselves—breaking down complex issues and becoming a source of guidance and support for up-and-coming activists who may never have been able to pursue feminist knowledge in a classroom, or struggled to apply the lessons they learned to their real lives—but their content reaches “over 4.5 million monthly visitors from over 150 countries,” making their classroom much larger than those in your standard university hall.

Social media has also changed the context of feminist knowledge. Links about feminist issues, primers on feminist theory, and opinion and analysis pieces by feminist thinkers are now situated on websites like Facebook and Twitter, between links by mainstream media outlets, and found in streams of links amidst pop culture hot takes, and mainstream news coverage. Feminists are no longer simply having conversations within their movement, only talking to each other; they are now in a position to shape the much larger conversations happening on our timelines.

Individual feminists can now make feminist voices go viral, sometimes overpowering perspectives by people who hold institutional power, just by sharing links from feminist websites to their circle of friends. Feminist perspectives can now be woven into every conversation—and in response, feminist perspectives have become more widespread. Those feminist magazines which lit the way for feminist blogs also helped raise a

generation of writers “infiltrating” old-guard newspapers and magazines to lift up feminist voices, or steer coverage of women’s issues that was once invisible in the popular press. In this way, social media has the potential to fully democratize Women’s Studies ideas—to make the ideas from our discipline not only accessible, but *widely accessed*; and to remove feminist thought not only from the ivory tower, but from every silo in which it was originally documented and preserved. Social media makes feminist thought into much-needed public property and challenges the structures which have kept it from claiming that space for so long. It also allows women without the financial means to shape academia or the media landscape to participate wholeheartedly in feminist movement-building. The feminist press has always been a critical source of community and conversation—and social media has made the possibility of connection even greater. Feminist scholars can now engage in real-time with their subjects as issues evolve in a news cycle; feminist journalists can confront detractors or put their work in new context with the click of a button; and feminist readers and organizers can forge relationships with feminist scholars, writers and editors with a simple “like.” The Internet has created new space for organizing, which feminists have attempted to seize with great success, but it has also allowed feminist knowledge to be created, shared, and commented on in real time.

Fifty years after the founding of Women’s Studies and what we now see as the feminist press, we are finally seeing the realization of the aims that guided our foremothers. Feminist theory now shapes collective discourse—not just in academia, but across communities—and feminist knowledge is now accessible

to the women/marginalized communities who need it most, and who for too long could not afford entry to the spaces where it was being produced and disseminated. These victories, of course, are not meant to erase the real risks many feminist voices have taken—especially bloggers like Anita Sarkeesian, who was one of the major targets of the #GamerGate movement—in speaking out online or elsewhere in the media.

The next generation of Women's Studies scholars have tools at their disposal that their foremothers never could have imagined. While the future of GWSS has yet to be written, one thing is clear a half century into this work: The future is feminist, and much of it will ultimately unfold online.

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## Stifle (student art)



*Stifle* examines the complex journey in practicing feminism beyond proclamation. I want the viewer to question “choice” feminism and its relation to both internalized misogyny and hierarchies in general. Any relationship, whether self, personal, or social, has the ability to repress feelings. A hand intrudes the mouthpiece...But whose hand is it? And what does your reading reveal about your own relationships?

**Lauren Raimunde, pronouns**

PERSISTENCE IS RESISTANCE

## **undisclosed**

Smith College, class of 2020  
Study of Women and Gender major

11.

The Struggle  
Continues: Women of  
Color Faculty and  
Institutional  
Barriers



## By Lourdes Torres, DePaul University

It is no secret that the academy continues to be a bastion of white male supremacy. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2017, 76% of all faculty in institutions of higher education were white (41% males, 35% female). People of color (Asian, Blacks, Latinxs, Native Americans) accounted for the other 24%.



Lourdes Torres by Nicole Carter

White women and women of color are denied tenure at much higher rates than white males. At my institution, DePaul University, this problem came to a head several years ago when, from 2008 to 2010, almost all of the faculty denied tenure were white women and women of color. Following contentious attempts at negotiation, a number of these women sued the university for sexual and racial discrimination (Isaacs 2011).

And while men and women of color are both severely underrepresented in higher education, given the compounded burdens of misogyny and racism, this article focuses primarily on factors that hinder the success of women of color across all fields, while acknowledging that

underrepresentation is even more alarming in the sciences and engineering (Ginther and Kahn 2012).

The data is incontrovertible. Women of color are more likely to be denied tenure than others. A recent study of tenure and promotion outcomes at four large, land grant institutions, confirms that women in general are more likely to leave their jobs before achieving tenure and women of color are less likely to be promoted (Durodoye Jr. et. al. 2019).

Two recent high-profile cases serve as reminders that this is a persistent problem even at a time when “diversity” is touted as essential for universities particularly as the demography of the United States shifts. Lorgia Garcia Peña’s tenure denial at Harvard earlier this year drew the condemnation of hundreds of students and scholars due to her cutting-edge record in research, teaching, and service. The Executive Committee of the National Women’s Studies Association wrote a letter protesting this unfair decision and asking for a reconsideration of her file, as did numerous other scholarly associations. Garcia-Peña is an Associate Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and a leading scholar of interdisciplinary research. She won multiple awards for her book, *Borders of Dominicanidad: Race, Nation, and Archives of Contradiction*, including the NWSA’s prestigious Gloria E. Anzaldúa Book Prize, awarded for her significant contribution to women of color/transnational scholarship.

Likewise, this year, at the University of Colorado Boulder, students and faculty continued to protest the tenure denial of Lupita Montoya, a popular Latina engineering professor, who has been fighting this decision for several years and requesting a review of her

tenure case. This Stanford graduate, who was the first Latina to be hired as faculty in the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences at the University of Colorado, was supported for tenure by her department but not by the higher administration. She recently filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, charging that she has been subjected to racial and gender discrimination.

In these cases, and many others, the research women of color undertake is deemed to be inadequate or insufficient. Montoya stated that administrators in the engineering college determined that her work and publications on public health qualified as service rather than research. Montoya's research focused on air quality in low-income communities that suffer chronic health issues from the toxins in the air they breathe. As a first-generation scholar, her research was quite consciously focused on work that made a difference in the lives of marginalized communities often ignored in much scholarship and research.

Similarly, Namita Goswami, who was hired to teach feminist theory and critical race theory by the philosophy department at DePaul University was later found by some of her colleagues to be untenurable because her work was deemed to be insufficiently grounded in philosophy. This decision was reached despite a stellar research record and significant teaching awards.

Women of color faculty are challenged to establish their competence and legitimacy in an academic context where their work is often undervalued and misunderstood, but they confront other obstacles as well.

The issues faced by all women, including the responsibilities of childbearing and childcare, lack of

networks, and lack of mentors, are exacerbated by systematic racism endemic to all institutions of higher education. These factors impact the lower tenure and promotion rates for women of color and help explain why women of color often leave academic positions.

Quite often faculty of color take on invisible labor. This means they formally and informally work with students of color who show up at their doors because they seek mentors who look like them and understand where they are coming from. Many faculty of color, especially women, feel that it is their responsibility to mentor students of color, especially in predominantly white institutions where students of color may be challenged to find people to whom they can relate. Women faculty of color know that such mentoring can mean the world of difference to students of color and they are committed to serving them.

Another aspect of this invisible labor is that women of color are often invited to serve on all types of university committees, sometimes as window dressing and tokens, since committee chairs feel pressure to show diversity on their committees. However, universities rarely understand the toll that such numerous demands may have on the productivity and mental health of women faculty of color. Too often this “diversity work” is unseen or, at best undervalued, especially when it comes to faculty evaluation and tenure. Or worse yet, said work takes time away from research required for a competitive tenure file, thus women of color are ultimately punished for this sort of work to which they often cannot say no.

The burdens women of color face in academia, doing their best to meet and often exceed tenure requirements as they also struggle to survive in a context of white

supremacy, macro and micro aggressions, sexism, and classism, can be overwhelming. It is imperative that all of us do our part to acknowledge and fight to dismantle the racist and misogynist structural barriers which continue to impede women of color faculty. These issues need to be addressed at every level of the university particularly in terms of “color blind” and “gender blind” policies and procedures governing the tenure and promotion practices at most institutions.

A good place to start is to educate ourselves about the intersectional factors hampering the success of women of color. Books like *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (2012/2020), *Counternarratives from Women of Color Academics: Bravery, Vulnerability, and Resistance* (2018/2020), and *Written/Unwritten: Diversity and the Hidden Truths of Tenure* (2016) collect the narratives of women of color faculty and make clear the often traumatic experiences they continue to endure in universities across the US. Patricia A. Matthew, editor of *Written/Unwritten*, explains that she decided to undertake the project of her book when four women of color were denied tenure in one year at her institution, the University of Michigan, in 2007. She invited women across the country to write about their experiences. She notes in the introduction to her book,

...what I've found is that there are codes and habits that faculty of color often don't know about because those unwritten practices are so subtle as to seem unimportant until something goes wrong, and then the assumption is that the person of color is incompetent, lazy, or lying. In my case, the assumption was that I was dishonest or disorganized, though neither of those things is true. The

fact that I am a Black woman played some role in that tangled-up process, and I still see the same patterns that were in play in my reappointment and tenure reviews whenever I am assessed. More important, I now know that those patterns are at work all over the country. It's not just me. It's not just us. This is happening everywhere.

Dismantling the misogynistic and white supremacist foundations of higher education requires that we all become educated, engaged, and committed to challenging oppressive structures wherever we encounter them.

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## En La Lucha (student art)



In honor of the womxn in the struggle for farm workers' rights and dignity, and all those who turn the world order upside down. In 2018, I was part of an International Working Women's Day celebration in Eastside San Jose, where Dolores Huerta made a last-minute appearance and



speech. This painting is partially inspired by photos of Dolores as a young woman, but also dedicated to the many Xicanas and women who dedicate their time, energy, and resources to fighting for social justice.

**Veronica Eldredge, she/her/hers**

Seattle University, class of 2016  
Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies minor  
@vmearte on instagram

12.

Turning a Feminist  
Lens on  
Administration

**By Judith A. Howard, University of  
Washington Seattle**

The values of the administrators with whom GWSS departments work are absolutely critical to our field's success. Having administrators who define themselves as feminist and actively promote feminist goals can make all the difference. That difference goes beyond the success of GWSS departments and programs; having feminist administrators is also critical for promoting



Judith Howard and Dubs by Nicole  
Carter

social justice goals throughout the academy. In this essay I offer some reflections on what feminist administration means, offer concrete examples, and suggest its impacts. I draw in part on my term (2001-2005) as the Chair of the Department of (then) Women Studies, now Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies, at the University of Washington Seattle (UWS), but more fully on my twelve years (2005-2017) serving as the Divisional Dean of Social Sciences in the College of Arts & Sciences at the UWS.

I begin with a few thoughts about administration in higher education more generally. Faculty tend to dismiss administration as tedious; an alternate pathway for those who are no longer active scholars. Some see

administrators as sell-outs. In contrast, I believe that performing administrative responsibilities can be extraordinarily fulfilling. Administrators can make a significant positive difference in the lives and careers of the faculty and in the welfare of their academic units. Effective administrators have a deep understanding of, and appreciation for, the structural organization of the institution. They also need a deep knowledge of the relationships and networks among those in the higher administration. At the same time, administrators need to be politically aware and astute. Emotional intelligence is absolutely key. Administrators need to be able to inspire, build trust, be sensitive to relationships, and employ leadership styles that emphasize collaboration and collective responsibility.

These characteristics can certainly be found in administrators who do not define themselves as feminist, but I would argue that to be a feminist administrator one has to have these qualities. To have endured as an active feminist in the academy, one has almost certainly experienced all sorts of patriarchally-rooted institutional practices and is therefore better equipped to be a proactive ally to GWSS and other units that focus on scholarship about and education of disenfranchised populations. Why would a feminist faculty member want to pursue an administrative position? Because ideally an administrative position allows one to work toward feminist goals and institutional change—not just individually, but more broadly and systematically. To illustrate concretely what I mean by feminist administration, I address some of the core situations where a feminist administrator can have an impact. There are a number of critical processes for departments and for

their faculty: departmental recruitment and faculty searches; faculty promotion; and departmental climate. I address each of these in turn. But first I address the question of priorities.

**Influencing priorities:** In some ways the impact of feminist administration is most powerful in the establishment of priorities. Who gets to hire? What fields will grow and what fields may shrink? What new initiatives are most important; what ones will not gain traction? What new directions of faculty research are valued, and by whom? Effective feminist administrators will find ways to bring attention and respect to fields, departments, and to scholars whose work may have been ignored in the past. In some ways this has been the greatest challenge over the past fifty years of GWSS. In its early years, the field was neglected. Through five decades of feminist scholarship and more recently, feminist administration, GWSS is now recognized and respected.

**Recruitment:** Faculty hiring is a critical opportunity for any department. Through hiring, feminist values can be deepened—or overturned. Most academic institutions these days assert their commitment to “diversifying” the faculty. Feminist administrators make sure that recruitment practices actually do promote that goal. A feminist administrator will argue that positions need to be allocated across departments in such a way that diversification of the institution is indeed promoted through hiring plans and practices. When a search is authorized in Arts & Sciences, we require that every committee member of every search committee participates in a training on “best practices.” The Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement and Diversity, together with the relevant Divisional Dean,

provides an in-depth training in best hiring practices. This has been more successful in some units than others. While GWSS has made significant progress in deepening the diversity of its faculty on a number of dimensions, there are certainly other fields in which these efforts have been markedly less successful. And success in hiring is only a true success when these newly hired faculty remain at the institution for the long-term.

Another point at which administrators can make a significant difference is how the campus visit is structured and handled. Beyond the departmental meetings and talks, we also try to ensure that candidates have opportunities to meet with relevant faculty and communities outside the department (and sometimes outside the university). One critical part of the campus visit is the meeting of the candidate with the Divisional Dean. One of my main goals in those meetings was to make sure candidates know our values and understand who we are. I tried to create an atmosphere in which a candidate could feel comfortable talking with me about any factors, both personal and professional, that might affect their decisions. As one example, at one point we were attempting to recruit an advanced Assistant Professor from a peer institution. The candidate had indicated to me that she had a female partner. Her current institution was in a red state that did not recognize LGBTQ couples. I made sure to communicate to the candidate that Washington has a domestic partner policy and would provide partner health care. This is of special importance for LGBTQ candidates, of course, but is also important to communicate to any candidate, as a statement of the values of the institution—feminist values.

Sometimes a search will generate multiple superb candidates. A feminist administrator will do what they can to take advantage of such opportunities, perhaps authorizing appointments that were not anticipated in a hiring plan. Depending on the depth of resources, this might mean postponing additional hires for the next several years in order to do multiple hires from one search. Moreover, multiple departments might be conducting searches that generate candidates whose collective hire would generate more than the sum of their individual impacts. A feminist administrator will keep the broader campus intellectual community in mind in such situations. Going back to my earlier point about the importance of relationships, having strong relationships across schools and colleges—and with the Provost's Office—can be critical to finding a suitable position for the partner of a candidate one is trying to hire. Some of our strongest appointments have come out of such situations.

**Promotion:** A feminist administrator can make a tremendous difference in how faculty experience key transitions such as promotions. Arguably, the importance of feminist administrators is most critical in the arena of promotion, where they exert particular influence on the fairness of promotion decisions for women/minoritized faculty. Despite decades of efforts, the proportions of women and minoritized faculty are still markedly lower at the higher levels of the academic hierarchy. (Lourdes Torres addresses this in her essay in this collection.)

From the transition from graduate student to Assistant Professor (indeed, even as a graduate student), administrators are well advised to encourage faculty to always keep both short-term and long-term goals in mind.

Most schools mandate an annual review for untenured faculty. While this is important, more informal check-ins with faculty (by both Chairs and Deans) is critical in being well-informed about how they are doing. At the college level, it is useful to offer workshops to ensure that faculty understand the key components and timelines of promotion processes. Our college offers a workshop for all junior faculty who have been recently reappointed, focusing on how best to use the remaining several years before their tenure review.

When the promotion process is at hand, feminist administrators will make sure they and their departmental colleagues play their part in a timely and thorough manner by composing promotion committees and ensuring the thoughtful evaluation of each case. In instances where the candidate does interdisciplinary scholarship, they may reach beyond the department for members of the promotion committee to ensure a well-informed reading of the file. They will also recognize the stress this causes for those going through these reviews and treat them with compassion. It is important to add that feminist administration sometimes means communicating difficult messages. It is important to show faculty, students, and staff the respect to be honest about their performance and progress.

Feminist administration also entails facilitating colleagues' own recognition of who they want to be professionally and personally. Sometimes this means a change, of course. If an Assistant Professor is increasingly focused on activities that may not earn them tenure, a feminist administrator will talk with them honestly, but not with a prescribed agenda. If a graduate student is pursuing jobs that are outside academia, a feminist



administrator will give them the space and freedom to figure this out and help them to be successful.

**Climate:** Good administrators are not just bureaucrats. They can play a key role in creating a welcoming and supportive climate both within departments and beyond. At the collective level, climate is important not just within a specific academic unit, but also across a division, a college, and the institution. Feminist administrators can build a sense of community among the chairs in their division/college. Encouraging collaboration, sharing best practices, and providing mutual support among department chairs can yield all sorts of benefits, both expected and unexpected.

Feminist administrators are also attuned to the climate for all members of the institution—staff, students, and faculty. A personal touch can make all the difference. For example, learning the names of staff in all the relevant departments and knowing the student leaders go such a long way. As a Divisional Dean, I tried to have regular coffee or lunch dates with all new faculty in the division—typically fifteen to twenty times per year.

More generally, it is important to create a climate of opportunity and possibility. Administrators are in positions that filter many and varied opportunities. It is critical and deeply feminist to make sure these opportunities are brought to the attention of those who might profit from them and to provide support wherever needed: financial, temporal, or symbolic.

I do not mean to sound naively optimistic. There are obstacles to every action I have mentioned here. It is critical to create and sustain community among feminist administrators in order to accomplish these goals meanwhile keep one's self going. When I first became

department Chair, there was only one other woman among the fifteen or so Chairs present at our divisional meetings. By the time I retired from the Divisional Dean position, there were more women than men in the room. Moreover, we moved from three Chairs/Directors of color to six Chairs/Directors of color. The gender and racial balances profoundly change the conversation.

In a newsletter article for the Sex & Gender section of the American Sociological Association (October 2009), I wrote: “We are currently experiencing the most fiscally challenging times most of us have ever witnessed, both in higher education and globally. The present moment is an almost unprecedented opportunity to contribute both to public service and to public solutions in a time of global crisis.” These words are more prescient of our current moment than I could possibly have known. It is times like these in which it is all the more important to bring our feminist values and commitments to higher education administration.

**COVID-19 Epilogue:** I wrote this piece just as the COVID-19 pandemic was gaining steam. As the months have passed, it has become increasingly clear that the impact of the pandemic is being felt in the academy in ways that are aligned with enduring racialized and gendered dynamics—dynamics that are shaping the effects of the pandemic in virtually every other realm of life as well. Articles in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Times Higher Education*, and *Inside Higher Education* all report that having to move a workplace from the campus to one’s home has meant that women are picking up more of the housework, child care, and home schooling for their children; in general, more of the responsibility for making sure their family members are doing as well as

possible, both physically and emotionally. One predictable consequence is that their academic productivity has suffered. Journal editors are now reporting reductions in submissions from women. Overloads of service work are becoming even more disproportionately assumed by women, especially women of color.

Feminist administrators need to pay very close attention to these patterns and proactively implement policies to address and ameliorate the effects of these gendered and racialized impacts. Tenure clocks can be suspended. If this is done, future reviewers need to be informed about what years are being evaluated, so years off the clock are not taken into account. No instructors, whether tenure-track, contingent faculty, or graduate students, should have their teaching evaluated in the traditional ways. Indeed, this is an opportunity to address the long-standing problems with those traditional teaching evaluation methods. These are just a few ideas. The key is that feminist administrators need to do everything they can to make sure the effects of this worldwide pandemic do not deepen and entrench the already profound gendered and racialized inequities in the academy.

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13.

Women, Gender and  
Sexuality Studies:  
A Degree and  
Perspective for  
'Essential Workers'  
in the 21st Century

By Cheryl Radeloff, College of  
Southern Nevada and Michele Tracy  
Berger, University of North  
Carolina at Chapel Hill

The Never-ending  
Question

The question, “So what can you do with a degree in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies?” has been one that Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGS) majors have been facing long before we penned the first edition of *Transforming*

*Scholarship: Why Women’s and Gender Studies Students are Changing Themselves and the World*, published in 2011. For the book, we surveyed over 900 WGS graduates (1995-2010) from around the globe about their experiences as a student and their career paths. As we write this essay, this question is pressing for many WGS majors/minors/graduates and working professionals as we have been thrust into uncertain times. Globally, most of us are being encouraged to self-isolate in order to protect ourselves and others from COVID-19, and are subsequently encountering economic uncertainty the likes that has not been seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s. We are experiencing personal and societal loss on many levels. During times of great societal upheaval, opportunities emerge that challenge the status quo and what we perceive as “normal.” WGS graduates will need to ask



Cheryl Radeloff (L) and Michele  
Tracy Berger (R) by Nicole Carter

different kinds of questions as they navigate a changing employment landscape.

Rather than ask what type of job or career I might get with a WGS degree, you might reframe the question and ask the following: What jobs fit into my worldview that I'm not even aware exists? What might my degree help me to do? How can I make a difference in the world? How can my degree help me find a career that makes me feel good about myself? How can my WGS knowledge and perspective be utilized by my community to promote social justice and equity?

In this essay we will discuss practices you can do to prepare for entering the job market. We will review employment sectors and discuss where WGS graduates have experienced employment and satisfying careers. We conclude by exploring the changing landscape of what now constitutes “essential work” in the United States and the possibilities and challenges it provides for WGS graduates.

### **Preparatory Work: Know Yourself and Do Your Research**

Exploring career fields and thinking outside the proverbial “box” has always been a reality for WGS students. While some WGS majors and minors take coursework that translates into immediate job placement, WGS students have often had to educate others about the critical thinking skills they honed through their WGS coursework. Therefore, it is important to do some brainstorming about yourself and your abilities before, during, and after visiting your campus's Career Services office. For example, you might want to do some research about careers on your own WGS website, university's

Career Services webpage, and/or other WGS webpages such as Rutgers University's "Job Market Resources".<sup>1</sup>

Challenges to entering the job market is a concern for most college graduates. Kathryn Dill and Patrick Thomas capture concerns for those entering the current job market in their March 29, 2020 *Wall Street Journal* article "The Class of 2020 was Headed into a Hot Job Market. Then Coronavirus Hit," While discussing the disenchantment of 2020 graduates, sage advice is given by Stacey Moynahan, Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Programs and Business Career Services at Chapman University who recommends not holding out for the "ideal job," rather, "there are going to be opportunities that surface. They may not look like you thought they were going to look. This is not the time to stop your search or stop networking." This sentiment is echoed by Alexa Shoen (2020) in her article for *Business Insider* "I'm a Career Coach Who Found Her First Job at the End of the 2008 Recession. Here's My 5-Step Guide for College Grads Looking for Their First Careers Now." Some of her recommendations include 1) Start on-line networking now, as 70 to 80% of jobs never get posted online. Use the time to introduce yourself to someone you admire or want to work with and arrange a virtual coffee meeting, and 2) Create your own internship. Given that organizations are having to adapt due to local 'shelter in place' ordinances, you might find opportunities to work with organizations that are serving the community in new ways. While many employees are working off site, you might propose a project to support a "spring cleaning" of

1. For a more extensive list of resources and exercises, please Chapter 5 "So, What Can You Do with Your Degree? Exploring Various Employment and Career Pathways," in the 2nd edition of *Transforming Scholarship*.



an organization's physical space. Interested in politics? Can you help local campaigns adapt to hosting political events through Google Hangouts or Facebook live? Brainstorm how your skills and interests might help solve immediate challenges facing nonprofits and businesses.

### **Employment and Career Pathways: Historical, Contemporary, and Trending Careers**

Your journey in finding employment and a career may be radically different from others, not only in different degree specializations but other WGS students as well. We found in our survey that there are several professional areas that graduates clustered in over the past decade and half: higher education administration, entrepreneurship, law, the health professions, and nonprofit work. From these responses and seven interviews, we identified three career pathways to illustrate the types of employment fields WGS students tended to gravitate toward and the type of change agents they embodied. We labeled the categories **sustainers**, **evolvers**, and **synthesizers**.

**Sustainers** tend to pursue careers in fields that are directly involved in sex/gender/sexuality issues and the knowledge and skills associated with WGS are considered not only complimentary, but innately required. Activism is also an expected part of their positions. Sustainers may be employed with local or national domestic/sexual violence organizations, coordinators of Women's or LGBTQ Centers, and/or trainers for social justice organizations. They may also be in traditional "feminine" dominated fields such as nursing, teaching, and other "helping professions" such as social work. **Evolvers** take their WGS knowledge into careers and professions that have not specifically employed WGS graduates, create positions within more

traditional fields that help the organization thrive and ‘evolve’, or take risks and propose new career opportunities for themselves and others. For example, evolvers may take their knowledge of gender and sexuality and develop different types of products for reproductive and sexual health, such as underwear specifically designed for folx on their menses, a sexual lubricant that is designed to address pH-balance of different mucous membranes, or challenge traditional business models with “pop ups” or inclusive community work spaces. **Synthesizers** move back and forth between these two categories.

### **Employment Worlds**

In *Transforming Scholarship*, we described several “worlds” of employment.<sup>2</sup> Our research has demonstrated to us that WGS students are best served by thinking broadly about their interests and to investigate many career sectors. We highlight two worlds below.

### **The Health and Medical World**

The Health Care and Social Assistance sector comprises establishments providing health care and social assistance for individuals. (U.S. Census. “North American Industry Classification System.” 2017).

Like the corporate world, WGS students may have some concerns about having a position in the medical-industrial complex, an arena that many feminist science scholars and feminist health advocates have critiqued as being discriminatory and exclusionary (on early critiques

2. The career ‘worlds’ include ‘corporate’, ‘health and medical’, ‘social and human services, criminal justice, and legal, science and technology, government and politics, nonprofit, information: broadcasting/journalism/new media, nonprofit, small business/entrepreneurial, and education/academic.

see Baxandall and Gordon 2011; on using feminist theory to reform medical education see Sharma 2019). Yet historically, healing, health, and medicine have been areas where disenfranchised groups have been able to hold some positions of power and authority (e.g. midwives, herbalists, nurses, etc.). It is also a field that has seen a lot of radical change in terms of the diversity of personnel who occupy positions within the field. For example, pharmacy, dentistry, and veterinary medicine have become female-dominated fields within the past several decades. While this does not necessarily equate into gender parity at all levels of the field, it does translate into increasing diversity in the ranks. The health field is constantly evolving, so if this is an area of interest, it would be good for you to read about current micro and macro-level trends. For example, an exciting and emerging area within this industry is tele-medicine/tele-health. Opportunities are emerging that are expanding access for providers and the patients and clients, such as birth and death doulas (for what a death doula does see Fischer 2018). Also, the labor movement and unions like SEIU have been quite active within this industry in organizing its labor.

Many Women's and Gender Studies graduates who responded to our survey worked in the health and medical world; some examples include:

- Health Center Assistant at Planned Parenthood
- HIV Counselor/Educator/Phlebotomist
- Editor and Project Coordinator at a breast cancer nonprofit

## The Information World: Broadcasting/Journalism/News Media/New Media Online

Activities of this sector [Information] are distributing information and cultural products, providing the means to transmit or distribute these products as data or communications, and processing data. (U.S. Census “North American Industry Classification System.” 2017).

Positions in this world can include managing the public information for a company, working as a radio producer, or working as a proofreader for a book publishing company. The blogosphere is booming and WGS graduates are making an impact on the subjects that are studied and the way they are presented. (See essay by Carmen Rios in this collection.) Podcasts have a visible feminist presence and represent both well-established brands like Feminist Frequency Radio and emerging voices. WGS graduates are also represented in the film and media industry. As long standing visual media companies continue to produce resources for the WGS classroom and beyond, such as “Women Make Movies,” WGS grads will also continue to work in the documentary/feature, and independent film industry, the music industry, comics and graphic novels, the television and film industry, satellite/radio, and the gaming industry.

Another area of the Information World that WGS students can impact are the development of apps. For example, food delivery apps are playing a vital role in supplying food to vulnerable people who cannot easily leave their homes, while supporting businesses who employ fair labor practices and hire a diverse workforce. Liao (2019) discusses a food delivery app “Cavier” for *The*

*Verge* that was developed to showcase restaurants owned by women.

WGS graduates who responded to our survey worked in the information world. Some of the positions held included:

- Internet Entrepreneur
- Marketing Associate/Graphic Designer and Editor for a garden store
- Research Analyst for an HIV/AIDS policy and economics research group

### Essential Services and WGS

In the context of COVID-19, many jobs and occupations in the United States are being separated into “essential” and “non-essential” services.<sup>3</sup> You may want to consider how your WGS training and existing skills and interests fit into these categories. Also, as we are at the precipice of a global cultural shift, it is important to consider how jobs are rated in terms of importance, and which careers will be needed as our societal needs change and adapt. According to the website [mass.gov](https://mass.gov) COVID-19: Essential Services, jobs that have been deemed “essential” include broad categories of employment sectors that range from health care to transportation services.<sup>4</sup> The

3. In the United States, each state gets to define essential work differently. We would imagine that a version of this phenomenon is happening in many countries.

4. The full list is: Health Care/Public Health/Human Services, Law Enforcement/Public Safety/First Responders, Food and Agriculture, Energy, Water and Wastewater, Transportation and Logistics, Public Works and Infrastructure Support Services, Communications and Information Technology, Other Community, Education, or Government Based Operations and Essential Functions, Critical Manufacturing,

magnitude of different jobs in each category is immense and may give you new ideas about occupations that you might not have ever considered or even knew existed.

### **All Jobs are Essential Jobs**

This shift over the next few years about what is “essential work” raises many feminist questions and concerns. COVID-19 has reminded us what WGS scholars and feminist activists have known all along: jobs that are often undervalued, lower paid, and low status are proving to be the bedrock of families, communities, and the country, and these jobs are typically performed by women and/or minoritized communities. These are today’s “essential jobs.”

This moment calls for immense creativity and adaptability in your search for meaningful work. Given the history of Women’s and Gender Studies and our research, we believe that WGS students are well-suited to meet these current challenges given the self-reflexivity, activist orientation, and leadership skills that are developed during one’s academic career.

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# Students answer: Why Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies?

“As a non-binary queer person, I find it imperative to study oppression through a feminist lens. Being a GSWS major and studying the experiences and perspectives of women, POC, and queer individuals allows me to recognize the ways in which oppressive systems affect these groups. By doing so we are able to explore ways to dismantle these systems.”

**Michael Castro, they/them/theirs**

Santiago Canyon College, class of 2020

Gender, Sexuality, & Women’s Studies major

“Gender, Women, and Sexualities Studies gave me the power to take control of my narrative in life and undo years of systemic gaslighting.”

**Lauren Raimunde, pronouns undisclosed**

Smith College, class of 2020

Study of Women and Gender major



## PART IV

# SECTION THREE: DOING GENDER, WOMEN, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

### **Essays:**

Writing Social Justice: Thoughts from a WGSS Major ~  
Sarah Valdez, State University of New York at Albany

Gender Studies Work at the University of Ghana ~  
Akosua Darkwah, University of Ghana

Parar para Avanzar: Feminist Activism in 2019 Latin  
American Mobilizations ~ Erika Márquez Montaña,  
Universidad Icesi, Colombia

Disrupting Systems of Oppression by Re-centering

JULIE SHAYNE

Indigenous Feminisms ~ Luhui Whitebear, Oregon State University

No One is Disposable: Ecofeminism and Climate Crisis ~ Nicole Erin Morse and Daniella Orias, Florida Atlantic University

Women's & Gender Studies at Community Colleges: Breakthroughs and Challenges ~ Shereen Siddiqui, Santiago Canyon College

The Power of Words: A Discussion of Chanel Miller's *Know My Name* ~ Melinda Chen, University of Kansas

14.

Writing Social  
Justice: Thoughts  
from a WGSS Major

## By Sarah Valdez, State University of New York at Albany

I love studying social justice more than most things.<sup>1</sup> I love critical thinking and anything that forces me to interpret the physical and conceptual world. I love discovering new things. I love uncovering profound truths about myself and my surroundings. I love to read and write; I can feel my mental library expanding when I do.

Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

(WGSS) has allowed me to pursue all of these interests, and the "Introduction to Feminisms" class showed me that I could combine my passion for writing with my personal investments in social justice. Before that class, I was curious about sociopolitical issues, but I never looked too much into them because I was afraid of being too inflammatory or controversial. I became interested in active resistance, but only what I consider to be a "safe" amount; I hesitated often because I knew that my community would not approve.

I came to college. I entered classrooms where I was surrounded by people who wanted to talk about their



Sarah Valdez by Nicole Carter

1. This piece is a revised and adapted version of a longer essay published on Medium (<https://medium.com/@sarahvaldez>)

perspectives. My classmates came from all walks of life—they were Black, white, rich, poor, conservative, and progressive. I took “Introduction to Sociology,” “Feminist Pedagogy in Theory,” “Feminist Pedagogy in Practice,” “Classism, Racism, Sexism.” I began to learn in-depth about the physical, emotional, socioeconomic, medical, and generational consequences of racism, antiblackness, queerphobia, gender inequality, neoliberalism, and countless other things. I watched Ava Duvernay’s documentary *13th* on Netflix—I watched it four times. I read *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. I read parts of *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander. I began to feel deeply invested in antiracist activist work but, at some points, I had to stop myself and take a step back—it was too much to process all at once and I could physically feel my mind working harder than usual.

In spite of how overwhelming the topics often are, my WGSS classes have become some of my favorites because they force me to think. These new lessons are significant to me not just because they are interesting, but because they enable me to link what I learn in class to what I see happening around me every day.<sup>2</sup> For example, I walk back to my apartment and I notice, viscerally, that a university police officer is parked right in front of my building. I think back to what I learned about the historical development of policing as a modern-day iteration of racialized and socioeconomic control, and I think back to the many times that my friends of color and I were pulled over in my very white, very middle-class hometown, seemingly for no reason. I wonder if my white

2. Editor’s note: Sarah completed this essay before Breonna Taylor and George Floyd were murdered.

classmates experienced it as frequently or aggressively as we did. I am suddenly so much more ... aware. That feeling of finally being awake is what compelled me to become a WGSS major. My personal investment in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies are drawn along the lines of pro-Black feminism, and the idea that although I experience sexism and misogyny, many of my interactions with the Western establishment are the result of being a Black-identified "other," not solely because I am a woman. For this reason, I have become primarily focused on tapping into what Layli Maparyan calls the "liberation impulse," or the instinctual pursuit of freedom that comes as a result of learning about the many different types of progressive feminisms (2012, 31).

My engagement with Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies helps me better understand that in a world like ours, it is okay to be enraged, tactful, and articulate all at once. I love feminist research papers that have big, complicated words in them—the ones that demand my attention, the ones that obligate me to "Google" them. But I also love non-academic writing that puts me in touch with other people and communities. I love learning about the many lived experiences. I could spend forever talking to other people about their positionalities, journeys, concerns, and points of view. My studies only serve the purpose of bridging my understanding of the world with my daily human interactions. After all, what is the point of studying equity and justice if I do not bother to apply what I learn in a meaningful, impactful way?

For all of these reasons and many more, I am proud to say that I am a double major in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and English. Whatever job

opportunities or career paths might be ahead, I know that being invested in social justice work is my true purpose.

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## Not Your Beauty (student art)



This piece envisions what *Beauty and the Beast* would have been like had Belle been empowered by feminism. It breaks the expectation of docility imposed upon women, and the trope of complacency seen in some Disney



princesses. Belle takes violent action to change her situation, rather than being complacent.

**Madeleine Jenness (she/her/hers)**

University of Washington Bothell, second year

Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies major

15.

Gender Studies  
Work at the  
University of Ghana

**By Akosua K.  
Darkwah,  
University of  
Ghana**

On March 14 2006, a number of feminist colleagues and I at the University of Ghana participated in the formal launch of the Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA). This Centre was set up as one way of



Akosua K. Darkwah by Nicole  
Carter

institutionalizing the University of Ghana's commitment to gender equality in all aspects of life at the University. For those of us present at that ceremony, this launch marked a dream fulfilled. In the early 2000s, four events cumulatively made it possible to institutionalize Gender Studies at the University. First was a study of public universities in Ghana which focused on a range of issues including gender. The second was the adoption of a strategic plan for the University of Ghana and the amendment of the statutes of the university, both of which gave explicit support to the promotion of gender equality policies and measures in the university. Third, Vice-Chancellors of the public Universities in Ghana signed the Swedru Accord that committed them to institutionalizing gender in the public universities. Finally, Carnegie Corporation, a major funder of the University, was interested in among other things,

promoting gender equality in the Ghanaian universities it supported.

Although CEGENSA was set up in 2006, feminist work at the University preceded the establishment of the Centre by almost two decades. In the 1987-88 academic year, a small group of feminist scholars at the University, formed the Development and Women's Studies (DAWS) group. It was housed at the Institute of African Studies because one of the key members, Takyiwaa Manuh, was working at the Institute. DAWS members worked with other feminist scholars at the University of Liverpool and Birmingham, such as Lynne Brydon, to build Gender and Women's studies in Ghana. Seminars and workshops were held where scholars were given space to share their work and receive feedback. Slowly, a body of feminist scholarship was built on the university campus. These scholars also infused their teaching with their feminist scholarship. Key publications during this period sought to provide nuanced perspectives on Ghanaian women that often challenged Western perspectives on African women. Feminist economist Abena Oduro pointed out that Ghanaian women did not only perform reproductive roles but were also key actors in the productive sector of the economy as well. Those ideas developed and discussed at gender analysis workshops held by DAWS served as the foundation of Abena Oduro's lifelong work on women's productive work and its links to assets and empowerment more broadly, a number of which have appeared in the journal *Feminist Economics*. Similarly, the feminist legal scholar/anthropologist Takyiwaa Manuh discussed the complementary political role of queenmothers in traditional Akan society in a seminal publication titled "The Asantehemaa's court and its

jurisdiction over women: a study in legal pluralism” published in the journal *Research Review*.

DAWS members were also part of a pan-African initiative hosted by the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town between 2000 and 2009. This initiative aimed to build feminist consciousness on the continent and ensure that feminist intellectual work on the continent was grounded in African reality. As part of this initiative, DAWS members contributed to debates over curricula at universities, participated in an African feminist project on sexuality and wrote for the pan-African journal, *Feminist Africa*, Africa’s first feminist scholarly and activist open access digital publication.

As a result, when CEGENSA was established in 2006, there was already a core group of interdisciplinary scholars at the University of Ghana who self-identified as feminist and were conducting research on different topics of concern to feminist scholars. Key among them were Takyiwa Manuh, Dzodzi Tsikata, Akosua Adomako Ampofo and Audrey Gadzekpo as well as myself. Akosua Adomako Ampofo, a sociologist by training and recipient of the 2010 Sociologists for Women and Society’s Feminist Activism Award, was the founding Director of CEGENSA.

The Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy’s (CEGENSA) mandate was much broader than that of the Development and Women’s Studies Program (DAWS). The founding members of CEGENSA, myself included, many of whom had been part of DAWS, were not only committed to teaching and conducting research on gender issues, but were also keenly interested in supporting the work of civil society and the state in the promotion of gender equality. In addition, they were of

the view that it was important to work towards policy reform and institutional change within the university and to support both students and faculty to promote gender equality. CEGENSA thus has a 7-point mandate: academic planning and curriculum development; the development of a resource centre; policy planning; the creation and maintenance of a sexual assault and crisis centre; mentoring junior female faculty and graduate students; and research as well as extension work, which is work with the non-academic community.

Perhaps the biggest achievement of the Centre since its inception is the fact that it has ensured that all second-year students enrolled at the University of Ghana take a basic course in Gender Studies. In the early years of the Centre, two curriculum development workshops were organized to, among other things, develop an introductory course as well as two elective courses: Gender and Culture and Gender and Development. A sociologist by training, I developed the Gender and Culture class and continue to update the teaching material for this class. These courses have been taught at the University of Ghana every semester since August 2011. Faculty members who teach these courses come from different departments in the College of Arts and the College of Humanities. All the faculty members who teach this course are trained in feminist pedagogy to ensure that the political goal which underpins this project is not lost on the faculty. A survey conducted on the student population has shown that this course has a positive impact on a good number of the students.

The Centre also hosts a resource unit which provides professors, students, and the wider public a wide range of materials on gender theory and analysis, a good amount

of which is focused on African realities and written by African scholars. The unit also serves as a depository for diverse materials produced by faculty, students and civil society organisations in the country. The holdings of the unit, which numbers in the thousands, can be accessed online as well. To make the film collection more easily accessible to students, in some semesters, the Centre has held a regular film and discussion series. A popular film for discussion has been Ousmane Sembene's (2000) "Faat Kine" which tells the story of the success of a Senegalese single woman with two children and a couple of ex-husbands. Another has been Adama Drabo's (1997) "Taafe Fanga" which is a gender bending farce set in Mali.

As the university has grown, some of its statutes lost relevance, necessitating a review which subsequently led to reform of the old and development of new policies which addressed the concerns. CEGENSA members actively contributed to the review of the university's policies, practices and governance structures to ensure that they promoted gender equity and equality. The first policy the Centre worked on was the sexual harassment policy. Developed over a two-year period, it was adopted by the University Council in 2011 and an amended version adopted in 2017. Since its inauguration, the Committee has addressed a number of cases which have led to various punishments including outright dismissal for faculty members who have been found to have violated the policy.

Linked to its policy work has been the creation of a sexual assault crisis and counseling unit. This unit responds to the needs of those who have been sexually assaulted by providing professional counseling and where necessary, legal aid. Sexual assault hotlines have also been

set up in collaboration with the Counselling and Placement Centre. Counsellors are available at all times to speak with survivors of sexual harassment. In addition, the Director of the Centre works closely with the public health unit of the university hospital and the Head of Security Services to provide support to survivors of sexual assault.

Since its inception in 2006, the mentoring committee of the Centre has undertaken a series of programs designed to help junior women faculty and postgraduate students overcome some of the challenges that make it more difficult for them to rise through the ranks at the university. These have included public speaking and time management seminars as well as weekend writing retreats for junior faculty after which they are paired with senior faculty as accountability partners to ensure that the papers written at these retreats are eventually published.

CEGENSA has undertaken a number of large-scale research projects with international partners since 2006. Between 2006 and 2012, CEGENSA served as the West African research hub (coordinating work done in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Ghana) in partnership with colleagues in Latin America, North Africa, and Asia to research the pathways of women's empowerment. This Research Project Consortium (RPC) was funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) UK. The project culminated in the publication of a number of articles and books as well as contributions to a 2013 UN Women's publication. Between 2008 and 2011, with funding from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada, the Centre carried out a study that sought to understand the ways in which employment agencies were formalizing/informalizing work in the



domestic and banking sectors respectively. Between 2009 and 2012, the Centre received funding from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to undertake a study of the nature and extent of sexual harassment in selected tertiary institutions in the country. Between 2012 and 2013, the Centre received funding from the Partnership for African Social Governance Research (PASGR) to study non-state social protection services available to vulnerable populations in the Central Region of Ghana. In 2014, the Centre received 2 three year grants; one funded by IDRC explored the impact of large scale land acquisitions on women while the other funded by DFID investigated the measures beyond a domestic violence bill that would reduce the incidence of domestic violence in Ghana. Between 2016 and 2019, the Centre was also involved in exploring the gendered implications of sustainable agricultural intensification.

Finally, many of the faculty members who are interested in Gender Studies are activists as well and contribute their expertise to the development of gender sensitive policies at the national level. In fact, a representative from the Centre has sat on the steering committee of the nationwide Network for Women's Rights since its inception. Serving on the steering committee of this organisation institutionalizes the relationship between women academics and activists in Ghana and is yet another achievement of which CEGENSA is very proud. In its fourteenth year of establishment, CEGENSA is the go-to space for students and academics interested in Gender Studies at the University of Ghana. Our work has already been the subject of inquiry by a graduate student in the Department of History at the University of Ghana

(Owusua Amoako, 2020). In the years ahead, the Centre will continue to work to maintain its relevance both at the institutional and national level.

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16.

Parar para Avanzar:  
Feminist Activism  
in 2019 Latin  
American  
Mobilizations

## By Erika Márquez-Montaño, Universidad Icesi

In 2019, global protests challenged the belief that the world had moved irreversibly towards political authoritarianism.

In Latin America, the wave of mobilizations was most visible in Colombia, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, where immediate grievances like low salaries or public transportation hikes

triggered demonstrations

alongside more structural issues such as assaults on democracy or austerity measures. Prominent among the protestors' ranks were women, youth, and middle-class people who, adding to the traditional workers' protest repertoires, advanced claims for equality, dignity, and the end of all forms of violence—chiefly, patriarchal violence.

Among this plurality of actors, feminist collectives added in significant ways to the emerging mobilization. Even though women's organizing in Latin America is far from new, this time feminist protests intersected with concurrent actors in a way that both amplified their own claims and enriched others' agendas. As they joined the new wave of protests, feminists built upon a legacy of activism that galvanized agendas focusing on multiple issues from political participation to gender violence (Maier and Lebon, 2010). Throughout the 20th century,



Erika Márquez-Montaño by Nicole  
Carter

feminists accessed policymaking, academia, and other mainstream venues to which they brought intellectual influences including Gender and Women's Studies, intersectional approaches, and decolonial perspectives (León, 2007; Curiel, 2007). At the same time, Latin American feminists relied on both local and transnational feminisms (Thayer, 2010), a mixture that allowed them to enrich their critique of patriarchal forces in the region as well as to project their proposals towards the larger mobilization arena.

Over the last decades of the 20th century, too, Latin American feminists moved to collaborate in strategic alliances with a variety of sectors to advance a cross-section of causes, from the defense of human rights, antiracism platforms, or workers' rights, to the development of Gender and Women Studies programs, among others. Participating in these causes, they engaged in what Sonia Alvarez (2010) has theorized as feminist sidestreaming, or the militance that "spreads horizontally into a wide array of class and racial-ethnic communities and social and cultural spaces, including parallel social movements publics" (p. xii). As opposed to mainstreaming feminism, whose focus is on the state, parties, and institutions, sidestreaming feminism allows for co-construction opportunities where movement agendas can influence other struggles and build collectively, as it happened in the 1980s in Central American national liberation movements or the Southern Cone transition to democracy. In these cases, women activists started as revolutionaries or pro-democracy activists but eventually branched out to have their activism include feminism (Shayne, 2004). In 2019, sidestreaming was particularly visible in cases such as

those of Colombia and Chile, where feminists both articulated their own demands and were amplified by ongoing plural mobilizations.

Examining 2019 protests, it is possible to see that Latin American feminist mobilizations built upon the larger anti-neoliberal agenda (Seoane and Taddei, 2002) in order to make claims regarding the precarity of women's lives. Grievances included the deepening of economic inequality which is reflected in situations such as continuing gaps in salaries, the overrepresentation of women in the informal sector, and the invisibility of care work which is done predominantly by women. At the same time, feminist protests like the ones that happened in Colombia concurrently with a national strike on November 21st, formulated proposals complementing a set of demands that the movement's coordinating committee presented. The first point concerned the government's recent tax reform. They demanded it be repealed in part due to its regressive structure, as the strikers claimed, but also because its lack of gender perspective further contributed to the feminization of poverty ("Así fue," 2019).

Feminist demands also enriched mobilizations with a critique of the state that stressed how it advanced towards a markedly securitized agenda. In Chile, for instance—where October 2019 demonstrations were fueled by increases in transportation fares—protesters were met by state repression and 24 cases of sexual violence perpetrated by members of the police and army were reported (UN OHCHR, 2019). In this case, as feminist collectives came into the streets and the institutional reaction against them intensified, their claims grew more visible, drawing a larger female presence

into the protests. Similarly, in Colombia, the special police force ESMAD (anti-riots mobile squad) was heavily criticized as it engaged in an inordinate amount of force. In Bogotá, movements showed how repression disproportionately targeted youth and women. Feminist organizations decried state censorship as *La Morada* collective's meeting space was visited by police units in connection with the November 21st mobilization, with officers claiming that the women needed to be "protected" (Tapia Jáuregui, 2019).

The feminists' critique against the state resonated with the situation in countries like Honduras and Brazil, where prominent women social movement leaders Berta Cáceres and Marielle Franco were assassinated because of their activism for territory and people's rights (Mackey, 2016; Neuenschwander and Giraldes, 2018). In Colombia, only three weeks before the November 21st strike, indigenous governor Cristina Bautista was killed near the Tacueyó Nasa reservation—a painful event that renewed demands for social movement leaders to receive special protection as 844 of them, including leaders and human rights defenders, had now been attacked in Colombia in 2019 (*Somos Defensores*, 2019). In the case of female leaders, activists emphasized women's importance in the defense of human rights, especially in this period when the country moved forward to a complicated post-peace agreement reality. Feminist organizations reiterated that during an armed conflict, women's bodies become war spoils, and that a gender perspective needs to be applied so that human rights violations against women are actually investigated, and those who perpetrate them are punished (*Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres*, 2014).

Amidst this complex scenario, expressive activism also

had a place. Chants, writings, visual art, and songs about state repression resonated throughout the region. *LasTesis* collective's performance "*Un violador en tu camino*" ("a rapist in your path") about gender violence and impunity became an anthem among feminists throughout the world, offering a possibility to articulate claims on sexual violence that are often ignored and underreported (Serafini, 2020). The performative power of *LasTesis* permitted a connection between body and mass action—a link with transnational repercussions and the possibility to strengthen feminist agendas locally and beyond. At the same time, 2019 protests also built upon creativity and "activism" as a response to widespread fear and curfews. Urban art, graffiti and silkscreen printing were used in marches and the emphasis was on public access rather than individual authorship. Strikers appealed to memory as a way of reclaiming truth, and platforms such as "*Puro Veneno*" invited to remember and reflect through different visual art formats in Bogotá and elsewhere in Colombia (Motilla Chávez, 2019).

If historically, feminists staked claims for equity in institutional settings, including universities, then street protests opened up existing repertoires to pursue feminist agendas in the public arena. Marches, on the one hand, became a possibility of meeting face to face while broadening activist networks. *Cacerolazos*—banging empty pots and pans, often from home—meant that protests could erupt at any moment or place without a possibility of restriction. *Cacerolazos* aimed to extend the realm of the domestic to call those sympathetic and nearby into action or reflection. Through direct action, Colombian feminist collectives engaged in *juntanzas*, or the convergence of feminist sectors that might have been



fragmented because of their dissenting positions on different issues.

Latin American feminists provided the larger 2019 protest movement with an enriched explanation of the conditions for greater injustice adding a gender perspective while collectively challenging structural violence. Through a unique repertoire, they turned the protests into a platform for women to articulate demands previously silenced amidst the rampant impunity. At the rhythm of “*El Violador Eres Tú*” (“the rapist is you”) and other lines from *LasTesis*’ performance, countless previously silenced voices came forward after recognizing that they were not the only ones who had been sexually abused; that there were endless others who were willing to support them.

Traditional feminist demands gained momentum through the national protests. Drawing on historical legal gains on matters like gender violence and public participation, mobilizations resurfaced issues that had never been resolved: feminicide, sexual harassment at the university, and continuing obstacles to sexual and reproductive rights. Incomplete agendas in these areas certainly kept feminists going. Their mass participation presented a threat to religious and right-wing groups, who seek to impede the right to free and accessible abortion as well as other gendered rights at risk. The religious right’s attempt to control women’s bodily autonomy of course fuels feminist activism rather than silences them as the right would hope. At the same time, the growing levels of consciousness gained by younger activists who are now enjoying the fruits from previous generations’ struggles, as well as the influences of movements such as #MeToo and *Ni Una Más* or *Ni Una*

*Menos* cannot be underestimated as an explanation for this wave of mobilizations.

Intersectional demands were important for this process, too, as feminist collectives furthered anti-racist agendas. In Bolivia, for example, during the November 2019 coup against Evo Morales (Farthing and Arigho-Stiles, 2020), voices were raised to protest the opposition's violence against women's marches that directly attacked indigenous symbols such as the indigenous flag or *Wiphala*, as well as women's braids and traditional skirts. As Aymara feminist Adriana Guzmán (2019) put it, the coup was racist, patriarchal, and colonial as it looked for expelling indigenous peoples from universities and the congress and to turn them back into servants and subordinates. In Colombia, anti-racist and decolonial feminists protested against all forms of oppression affecting women, from gender to unequal race relations, which was reflected, among others, in the overrepresentation of Black and rural women in service and domestic work.

In all their diversity, mobilizations in Latin America during the end of 2019 marked an inflection point for both feminists and social movements protesting on the streets. For feminists, this was an opportunity to amplify their demands in public scenarios and through direct action while they challenged the state. For the larger movement, feminist contributions represented an opportunity for a renewed repertoire where demands could respond to gender-specific realities. In the case of Colombia, just after the peak of the protests passed and mobilization concerns started giving way to the end of the year's inertia, feminist assemblies continued, expecting to include some of their claims at the negotiation table with

the government (“*Feministas piden*”, 2019). Beyond official recognition, though, feminist demands in these mobilizations represented an important victory. Claiming public space, reframing political issues, and supporting a new generation of feminist activists were only some of the achievements resulting from marching and performing in the streets and their homes.

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# Marginalized Cage (student art)



I learned marginalized communities are being restricted in society due to their physical identity. My image, a marginalized figure, trapped within their own hair, they strive to break the societal norms, symbolized by the cage.

Their ultimate goal is to use their empowering key to unlock the glass case, cut off the strands that have trapped them for generations, and finally be unrestricted.

JULIE SHAYNE

Estephania Guzman (she/her/hers)  
University of Washington Bothell, class of 2020  
Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies major



17.

Disrupting Systems  
of Oppression by  
Re-centering  
Indigenous  
Feminisms

## By Luhui Whitebear, Oregon State University

In the context of the Americas and Pacific Islands, settler colonialism has continued to have devastating impacts on Indigenous women and LGBTQ2S people's lives.<sup>1</sup> By settler colonialism, I am referring to the systems, mindsets, and violences that are embedded in our everyday lives in ways that continue to center and prioritize Euro-centric ideals as superior to Indigenous based ways of knowing and living. Haunani-Kay Trask directly reminds us of the layered ways these systems are built:



Luhui Whitebear by Nicole Carter

Genocide: European conquest of the Americas.

Colonialism: The historical process of conquest and exploitation.

The United State of America: a country created out of genocide and colonialism.

Today, the United States is the most powerful country in the world, a violent country created out of the bloody

1. Special thanks to the OSU Indigenous Graduate Student Writing Group members (Andrés Lopez, LK Mae, Valerie Goodness) who helped review this essay as well as Adam Haley from the OSU Graduate Writing Center.

extermination of Native peoples, the enslavement of forcibly transported peoples, and the continuing oppression of dark-skinned peoples.

The color of violence, then, is the color of white over black, white over brown, white over red, white over yellow. It is the violence of the north over south, of continents over archipelagos, of settlers over natives and slaves (2004, 9).

Indigenous feminisms asks us to recognize the afore described systems to think about how they impact us both historically and in the present while also imagining futures in which we are liberated from these violences.

While this essay does not focus on sovereignty specifically, I ask the reader to keep in mind that it is Indigenous people's rights to govern our lands, our bodies, and our communities. In the context of the United States and Canada, there are treaty obligations that come with this conversation that both allow and limit Tribal Nations to fully operate in ways that are truly sovereign from the settler state. Indigenous feminisms understand this complexity and asserts that Indigenous people have the inherent right to sovereignty in a complete sense; one free from the constraints settler states impose via legal restrictions.

Settler colonialism has impacted our ability, as Indigenous people, to assert our voices, knowledges, and scholarship in the academy. For example, Indigenous feminisms are often framed as an accessory to GWSS rather than central to the field. This is not enough. I am in agreement with Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill in their assertion that, "unmasking the forces that have hidden Indigenous women and Native feminist theories within gender and women's studies therefore

requires critical reflection and a commitment towards structural change” (2013, 14). In this essay I will discuss what it means to re-center Indigenous feminisms in GWSS as well as in feminist work and activism more broadly. It is important to note that when I discuss Indigenous women in this essay, it always includes Indigenous trans women.

As Luana Ross reminds us, “in academia, terminology can be used to exclude and disempower groups. Obviously, this is damaging to indigenous people who struggle to maintain their sovereign powers” (2009, 47). Therefore, to begin this conversation, we need to understand what is meant by Indigenous feminisms. I use the term “Indigenous feminisms” as a plural in order to recognize that there is no single definition of either feminism or Indigeneity. Additionally, this recognition of multiple definitions offers that it is possible for many paradigms to exist at the same time (Wilson 2008, 7). It is also important to understand that we are operating and existing on Indigenous lands no matter where we are moving. With that comes a responsibility to honor and center the people’s knowledges from those lands. Otherwise, we are participating in settler colonial modes of existence and domination. We must understand what Indigenous connections to lands means: It is not about ownership but rather a relationship. This relationality to land and each other is based on respect, which is counter to settler colonialism’s ownership approach. The ownership over lands and bodies is interconnected in violent ways, particularly towards Indigenous women’s bodies (Smith 2005, 55). It is a form of gendered violence that is enacted by the settler state and carried forward as part of the settler colonial process. For Indigenous

women, this started with European contact and is still felt today.

The violences towards Indigenous bodies and lands are intertwined and part of the settler colonial paradigm. At its root, Indigenous feminism is about these connections as well as the ways in which settler colonialism has inflicted gendered violence on our bodies and spirits because of who we are as Indigenous people. For example, Andrea Smith explains that Indigenous women birthing children is a threat to the colonial project's ultimate goal of genocide: "Native women, whose ability to reproduce continues to stand in the way of the continuing conquest of Native lands, endangering the continued success of colonization" (2005, 79). The focus here is cis-women's bodies but this is not to suggest that colonial violence towards Indigenous women spared Indigenous trans women and Two-Spirit people. Qwo-Li Driskill discusses the ways in which Two-Spirit people have been stolen from their bodies as well as their lands and that, "as Native people, our erotic lives and identities have been colonized along with our homelands" (2004, 52). Cis-heteropatriarchy is a basis from which these settler systems are built. Colonizers thus view(ed) Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people as threats to their settler colonial systems. Indigenous feminisms teaches us that understanding these interconnections and addressing misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia as simultaneous and inseparable are critical for interrupting settler colonial systems.

Indigenous feminisms allows us to focus on gendered violences from both within and outside our communities. Hilary Weaver offers that:

to eradicate violence against indigenous women, we must (a) recognize the societal context as a factor that perpetuates violence, (b) decolonize American society, (c) eradicate stereotypes, (d) recognize and address the global context of violence, (e) move toward activism and advocacy, and (f) cultivate the will to change (2009, 1558).

In recognizing the structures that exist that make these violences possible, we can work towards dismantling these structures and creating changes that impact all people. Further, Ross asserts that feminist circles allowed space for Indigenous women who “yearned to speak of violence and sexism in their respective communities” (2009, 45). Eradicating gendered violence in Indigenous communities has often been framed as secondary to efforts against settler colonial control, rather than integral to these efforts. Likewise, gendered violence towards Indigenous people is often lost in GWSS and in conversations about transnational feminism. Indigenous feminisms offers a lens that helps us understand the role settler colonialism plays in cis-heteropatriarchal systems of oppression, including violence, that draws on Indigenous knowledge and experiences.

As Paula Gunn Allen reminds us, “we as feminists must be aware of our history on this continent” (1986, 214). We must recognize the “deep roots” Indigenous feminisms have in these lands. Since contact with European colonizers, Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people have been defending our bodies and connections to lands as well as reclaiming our identities and knowledges. Our identities are tied to these lands. The violences towards both have been fueled by settler colonialism. As such, the healing both require is based in

our Indigenous knowledge systems and practices. It is through the efforts of our ancestors that we are here today to continue this work, and to help work towards the liberation of all people from the exploitation of settler colonialism. Driskill writes:

We were stolen from our bodies, but now we are taking ourselves back. First Nations Two-Spirits are blooming like dandelions in the landscape of a racist, homophobic, and transphobic culture's ordered garden. Through over 500 years of colonization's efforts to kill our startling beauty, our roots have proven too deep and complicated to pull out of the soil of our origin, the soil where we are nurtured by the sacrifices that were made by our ancestors' commitment to love us (2004, 61).

Indigenous feminisms have been a means to do this work within and outside our communities. It is built off that ancestral love Driskill writes about and is centered on the generations to come.

As Indigenous activists, we bring these same types of teachings grounded by our ancestors' love. We strive for liberation for our bodies, lands, and spirits. We push back on the notion that settler colonialism is superior or good. We understand that settler constructs were not made for us or other communities of color, and that they are built upon the ideology and practice of white supremacy.

It is the gendered violence towards Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people upon which these same systems are built. In order to push back against systems of oppression, both inside and outside of academia, GWSS must center Indigenous feminisms. As a field, GWSS has a responsibility to honor these truths by centering

Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people's voices in the curriculum offered. It is when we begin to unpack and unravel the complex histories that we begin to fully understand the issues we face today. We are able to seek alliances and build solidarities across communities. It is then that we can address the issues perpetuated by the systems of oppression in which we all live; collectively we can find ways to challenge them. This can happen in so many ways. I urge my Indigenous colleagues and non-Indigenous allies to include more courses that focus on Indigenous Feminisms, Indigenous Queer and Two-Spirit people, and settler colonialism's impact, and where possible, taught by Indigenous people. I also urge folks to bring in as many Indigenous feminist guest speakers, documentaries, and readings as possible to both courses and community spaces. This essay seeks to open a door to understanding the necessity of Indigenous feminisms and is not intended to leave the reader satisfied. It is a doorway and invitation to continue to learn more.

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18.

No One is  
Disposable:  
Ecofeminism and  
Climate Crisis

By Nicole Morse and Daniella Orias,  
Florida Atlantic University



Nicole Morse (L) with Jamie  
O'Duibhir (R) by Nicole Carter



Daniella Orias by Nicole Carter

Amid climate crisis,  
Gender, Women, and  
Sexualities Studies

(GWSS) scholars can access crucial tools through cultivating the theory and practice of ecofeminism.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, these resources are neglected when ecofeminism is narrowly imagined as essentialist and reductively stigmatized as lacking intellectual rigor (Gaard 2011). Through dialogue with Indigenous feminisms, Earth-based knowledge traditions, spiritualities from Europe, and many other philosophies, ecofeminism critiques the structures producing climate crisis, including *disposability*—the idea that beings, spaces, resources, and the Earth can literally be discarded.

At Florida Atlantic University (FAU), built on the lands of the Tequesta and Seminole nations in South Florida, our location demands that we attend continuously to the signs of climate change and to the effects of accelerating climate crisis—as well as to our role in the history of settler-colonialism. Both of us discovered ecofeminism through FAU's Center for Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies and its commitment to feminist environmental justice. We are two white, queer Jewish scholars, one an Assistant Professor (Nicole Morse, they/them), and the other a graduate student (Daniella Orias, she/her). We believe that white scholars on stolen land must challenge disposability, thereby fulfilling our responsibility to act as accomplices to Indigenous movements.

Unlike allies, accomplices are complicit in struggles against systemic power because accomplices understand that—as Audre Lorde, Lilla Watson, and many other organizers have taught us—our own liberation is inextricable from the liberation of all. Accomplices take

1. We would like to thank Luhui Whitebear for making the time to read this essay and offer her feedback.

risks; for example, as Jewish scholars, we risk exclusion from family and community when we critique the Israeli government's apartheid system. Yet disposability does not just maintain border walls, carceral (in)justice, and capitalist production models; it organizes our work within academia (from precarious labor to student debt) and undergirds many of our social justice practices (from cancel culture to punitive solutions).

Ecofeminists seek to liberate women, gender/sexual minorities, and the Earth from capitalist and kyriarchal subordination through recognizing that patriarchy is only one form of "domination" (*archein*) by those who believe themselves to be "lord" or "master" (*kyrios*). Some ecofeminist scholars are justifiably critiqued for furthering the settler-colonial project of appropriating Indigenous cultures. At the same time, critical reactions to ecofeminism, such as Feminist Political Ecology, have all too often neglected those Indigenous scholars who have made major contributions to ecofeminism (Rocheleau and Nirmal 2015, 797). Ecofeminism is distinct from Indigenous feminisms because of its roots in Western European cultures. Its internal critique of the values of minority-world cultures, including disposability, is an urgent call toward decolonization. Ecofeminism is not merely additive, introducing "and nature" to the long list of those harmed by kyriarchy; instead, it is constitutive. Ecofeminism argues that harm done to the Earth is inseparable from sex- and gender-based oppression (Adams 2007, 1).

### **Ecofeminism(s): Past and Present**

My (Daniella) connection to ecofeminism can be traced to two memories. The first is my desire to connect with nature as a child, and the second is discovering the term

in academia. As a child, I often questioned my relationship to the world around me. I believed that in order to fully connect with the world, you had to be a part of it—this often meant coming home covered in the very Earth with which I longed to converge. This constant need to connect with nature and my desire to question humans’ relationships with the natural world fascinated me. It was not until I entered college at FAU and took Jane Caputi’s “Green Consciousness” course, a class that reflected on these philosophies, that I was able to put a name to the feelings of connectedness I often sought in nature: ecofeminism.

Drawing from diverse forms of Earth-based knowledge practices, ecofeminism interrogates how cultural shifts—from the emergence of agriculture to the enclosure of the commons to chattel slavery and colonialism—produce kyriarchical oppression of living beings and the Earth (Ladha and Kirk 2016). Outside academia, the idea that challenging and questioning patriarchy is deeply connected to the environment has long been present in activist movements; in the academy, ecofeminism is compatible with environmental studies, but its intersectional analysis of power and oppression can most powerfully be nurtured within GWSS.

“Ecofeminism” first appeared in *Le féminisme ou la mort* (1974), though its theoretical insights extend beyond the history of the term itself. Conferences on ecofeminism began appearing throughout the world in the early 1970s (Gruen and Gaard 1993); as dialogue about ecofeminism proliferated in scholarship, popular culture, and movement work, the field emerged as one that has been and remains diverse and ever-evolving. Between the 1970s and 1980s, a wide range of ecofeminist texts influenced

the initial development of the field, including Rosemary Radford Ruether's *New Woman New Earth* (1975), Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (1978), and Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1980).

Amid vibrant debate and discussion, a prevalent theme appears in these early works: the split between humans and nature that is simultaneously propelled by and sustains kyriarchy. As Carolyn Merchant (1980) writes, the scientific revolution established a "mechanistic worldview" that replaced the "organic worldview" that pre-dated the 17th century (1). Founded upon domination, the mechanistic worldview treats resources—from humans to non-human animals to the Earth—as instrumental and disposable. Rosemary Ruether's *New Woman New Earth* (1975) explains that such instrumentalization both relies upon and produces intersecting forms of oppression and domination, from sexism to racism to environmental destruction. Challenging the mechanistic worldview, ecofeminism theorizes how harm to the Earth is inextricably connected to oppression of women and gender/sexual minorities.

We can comprehend what has seemed to separate humans from nature, and by understanding this separation, we can begin to heal this divide. As Greta Gaard (1993) points out in *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, and Nature*:

Ecofeminism's basic premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature. Ecofeminism calls for an end to all oppressions, arguing that no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed

group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature. (1)

As an intersectional approach, ecofeminism comprehensively analyzes how oppression and environmental harm are intertwined. Contemporary ecofeminism is responsive to critiques of essentialism (O'Loughlin 1993, 148). For example, ecofeminist Greta Gaard (1997) challenges the early feminist focus on the dualism between male/female and instead proposes the idea of decentering gender and moving "Toward(s) A Queer Ecofeminism." *Sistah Vegan* by Breeze Harper (2012) articulates a theory of "ecowomanism" that explores how veganism, race, and the environment intersect. At FAU, our ecofeminist scholars include Jane Caputi (2020), whose forthcoming book draws on many different Earth-based philosophies to produce "a deliberately dirty-minded manifesto," and vegan ecofeminist S. Marek Muller (2020), whose work interrogates how rhetoric constructs the categories of "human" and "animal" such that some beings become disposable.

### **Ecofeminism(s): Against Disposability**

"No one is disposable" is a value that I (Nicole) learned through prison abolition organizing. Disposability supports our practice of caging people, and it sustains systems that make certain beings more disposable—more killable—than others (Agamben 1998). Although people of all races and all socioeconomic classes cause great harm to each other, prisons are full of those whose race, gender nonconformity, dis/ability, and poverty are used by kyriarchy to mark them as disposable (Stanley et. al. 2012). Of course, disposability is not only about turning people into waste. Climate crisis is the result of policies and



practices that treat the Earth herself as disposable. Disposability generates profits and makes an ecologically unsustainable drive toward continuous growth manageable—at least for now (Bales 2012; Patel and Moore 2017).

Disposability is a social construct. As Carol Adams (2004) writes, disposability requires objectification, for when systems turn “someone” into “something,” these beings can then be “seen as consumable, as usable” (14). Within academia, disposability demands contingent labor, graduate student precarity, and unending growth and productivity. Disposability frames those who identify problems in the academy—from campus sexual assault, to racist microaggressions, to inaccessible buildings, to gentrification—as the problem (Ahmed 2017). Opposing disposability demands that we deconstruct social, economic, and political systems that benefit some at the expense of others—including the structures that shape academia as we currently experience it.

### **Ecofeminism(s) and GWSS: Reasons for Hope**

This article is dialogic, and in our conclusion, we want to expand its multi-vocality through unpacking longer quotations from ecofeminist authors who guide our work.

*The opportunity still exists for relationships founded in respect for all those with the vision, will and courage to pursue decolonization. In this regard, there is the possibility of a dialogue between Indigenous peoples and ecofeminism provided ecofeminists can shift to a way of being that embodies respect for Indigenous women's sovereignty. And out of such dialogues, just futures are born. ~ Ambelin Kwaymullina (2018, 13)*

As GWSS scholars, one of our central tasks is to dismantle disposability, not to further its logic by appropriating Indigenous teachings. We must resist the assumption that our culture(s) are barren and that we can only find resources to support us in this task by taking from others. For myself (Nicole), my ecofeminist commitments emerge from the *mitzvah* of *tikkun olam*—healing the world. To adapt a lesson from Rabbi Tarfon, it is not our duty to complete the work, but neither are we free to desist from it.

*There's a lot of hope. On a daily basis, I cultivate hope, not in an illusionary way but in a dedicated way of saving seed, spreading the infection among others for loving life on earth in all its diversity and pluralism.... There is society and we have to cultivate it on a daily basis. And there's hope for me in the fact that faster than the trends of destruction are the trends of a rediscovery of our humanity. ~Vandana Shiva*

Often, when facing news of climate calamities and ongoing violence against women, it is easy to lose hope in humanity. Shiva reminds us that there is, in fact, hope. As society continues to face catastrophic shifts, hope inspires us to envision a sustainable future. I (Daniella) read “rediscovering our humanity” as an invitation to heal the human/nature divide and challenge the “trends of destruction,” rewriting the human-domination narrative as a narrative of respect and reciprocity.

Ecofeminism provides GWSS with a lens to analyze and challenge the human/nature divide. It allows us to envision moving forward into a space of inclusion, connection, and respect for all beings. Shiva urges us to cultivate hope “on a daily basis.” Cultivation, which

evokes care for growing beings, implies an ongoing process that we must return to in order to effectively nurture the seeds of change.



Momordica Charantia or Bitter Melon, a subtropical vine growing on a fence that marks the border of FAU's Boca Raton Campus. Photo by Nicole Morse.

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# Students answer: Why Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies?

“Choosing to be a GWS major happened the moment I looked behind the curtain, to find that the projected image I was meant to accept as truth, power, and intimidation, was created and controlled only by a man flipping switches and cranking gears. That’s when I realized, I always had the power to be in Reality all along.”

Cait Selitrennikoff, she/her/hers

University of California Berkeley, junior  
Gender & Women’s Studies major

“Gender studies is a harmonic mixture of humanities and social sciences, encouraging study from every school of thought simultaneously using a feminist lens. Through theory, creativity, and research, I find myself constantly learning modes that denaturalize the systems that perpetuate stratification. Gender studies suggests critical frameworks that are empowering for and insightful towards whichever field I will choose to enter.”

PERSISTENCE IS RESISTANCE

Talia Spencer Heyman, they/them/she/her  
Smith College, junior  
Study of Women and Gender major

19.

Women's & Gender  
Studies at  
Community  
Colleges:  
Breakthroughs and  
Challenges



## By Shereen Siddiqui, Santiago Canyon College

Feminist pedagogy arose with the emergence of Women's Studies programs and the realization by feminist teachers that American education—both in course content and pedagogy—did not address the needs, concerns, experiences, and perspectives of women and other marginalized groups (Siddiqui 2015, 16).<sup>1</sup>

Feminist teachers



Shereen Siddiqui by Nicole Carter

“recognized that drawing connections between lived experiences and course materials, while actively engaging students in the learning process, not only aids students in learning the material, but is also crucial for the creation of an environment in which students view themselves as capable of applying their knowledge to social problems” (Siddiqui 2015; Maher and Tetreault 1994) and of transforming their own lives and the world. Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) programs continue to make central the experiences of the oppressed, and our faculty routinely bear witness to the “lightbulb moment” when

1. I am indebted to Heather Rellihan of Anne Arundel Community College for the conversation that sparked this essay and for her willingness to read a draft of it.

our students connect the personal and political. This connection is strikingly evident in our nation's community colleges.<sup>2</sup>

Community colleges in the US enroll over 40 percent of all undergraduates, catering to historically underserved, first-generation, low-income, and minority students (Carminati and Rellihan 2019, xx-xxi). Emphasizing the development of a sociological imagination, giving voice to marginalized groups, and encouraging the connection between theory and action, WGS programs at community colleges are "critical sites of learning" for underprivileged students, and these spaces at community college are natural incubators for the field of Women's and Gender Studies (Carminati and Rellihan 2019). Despite their importance, WGS programs at community colleges are underfunded and rarely researched. This essay focuses on the ways in which WGS faculty at community colleges create "critical sites of resistance and spaces of belonging for marginalized students" (Carminati and Rellihan 2019), and the challenges and threats we face in the process.

I write as a "representative" for Women's and Gender Studies at community colleges, but most of my twenty-five year career in higher education has been at large, public, four-year universities—my first career was in student affairs, my second as a Women's Studies instructor at a four-year university. It was not until the semester before I defended my dissertation when a friend

2. This is a slightly modified version of an invited talk I gave at the Sociologists for Women in Society winter meeting, January 2020. I was part of the plenary session titled: "50 Years of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies: Looking Backwards, Looking Forward." San Diego, CA.

from my PhD program had to back out of an adjunct teaching gig at a nearby community college, because she landed a coveted full-time position at a four-year, and asked if she could give them my name to replace her. I had never taught at a community college. I said yes. I figured I was about to enter the job market myself and could use another line on my CV. I didn't realize that this decision would change my life and the trajectory of my career.

Until I taught at a community college, I held some negative stereotypes about the students and teachers at these institutions. I thought most of the students were there because they couldn't get into a four-year school, or they had no direction. It was an extension of high school. Ugly concrete buildings and parking lots, far from the old, ivy-covered brick buildings of my college alma mater. And I thought the faculty were there because it was the only job they could land, a last resort. In both cases, less than, not as good as. I thought I was better than. I am embarrassed to admit all of this, but it is important to do so, because I have learned that these are common stereotypes that people have about community colleges. Needless to say, these stereotypes are damaging and problematic for many reasons. As Sara Hosey bluntly asks, "What does it say about our democracy if 'democracy's colleges' are widely imagined to be shitholes" (2019, 76)?

It did not take me long to realize how wrong I had been. I work with teaching rock stars. I often marvel that they hired me to work with them. And my students are some of the smartest and most driven I have ever encountered. They do not take their education for granted. Their families have made sacrifices for them to be here and have pinned all their hopes on them. I see myself in them. Not

only was I the first woman in my family to attend college, but I was the first to know how to read and write. For most of my students, too, education is their ticket to freedom. But hierarchies of race and class, which are “reflected and perpetuated by the bifurcation of higher education,” (Carminati and Rellihan 2019, xxi) make it difficult for them to overcome the barriers in front of them.

However, a lifetime of marginality has made them natural theorists. I do not need to spend an entire semester helping them develop a sociological imagination. I do not have to hand them an intersectional lens when they walk into my classroom. They already have it. We are just giving them the language and the affirmation that they are not alone. The WGS classroom then becomes a safe and liberatory space where they may, as bell hooks says, “connect the will to know with the will to become” (1994, 18-19).

Much of what I share in this essay is an echo of Genevieve Carminati and Heather Rellihan’s groundbreaking work in *Theory and Praxis: Women’s and Gender Studies at Community Colleges* (2019). It is the first book about WGS at community colleges, which suggests just how under-researched we are. So, who are we? In short, community college students are underserved, first-generation, low-income, and minoritized:

- 41% of all US undergraduates (Carminati and Rellihan 2019)
- 55% of dependent students with family incomes below \$30,000 (Community College Research Center)
- 57% of all Native American undergraduates

(American Association of Community Colleges 2020)

- 52% of all Latinx undergraduates (American Association of Community Colleges 2020)
- 42% of all Black/African American undergraduates (American Association of Community Colleges 2020)
- 36% have parents with no college experience (compared to 29% average for all undergrad institutions) (Carminati and Rellihan 2019; Ma and Baum 2016)
- 20% have a disability (compared to 17% at 4-year) (Carminati and Rellihan 2019; American Association of Community Colleges 2018)
- Community colleges are also predominantly female spaces: 57% community college students are female, as is 57% management, 75% business and financial operations, 81% office and administration support, 53% instructional staff, and 65% student affairs and other education services positions (Carminati and Rellihan 2019; American Association of Community Colleges 2020)

Faculty make-up suggests slightly less precarity than PhD- and MA-awarding universities: community colleges are 51% of full-time female professors (compared to 31% at doctorate award-granting universities and 42% at bachelor's and master's degree-granting colleges and

universities)<sup>3</sup> (Carminati and Rellihan 2019; West and Curtis 2006).

### **WGS at Community Colleges**

There are about 100 WGS community college programs throughout the US, meaning about 10 percent of all community colleges have some sort of WGS presence. This includes everything from colleges like mine that offer a degree in WGS, with full-time WGS faculty, to those that just offer a course or two (Rellihan and Stoehr 2019). Despite the fertile ground community colleges provide WGS, we face many challenges as well. I now turn to those.

**Tension/hypocrisy in the field:** As we know, there is a lot of talk in Women's Studies about equity and trying to help people who are oppressed, yet the field has provided little support to or respect for WGS at community colleges. As an example, a community college instructor colleague of mine was invited to speak to Women's Studies grad students on a panel about *non-academic job* opportunities for WGS graduates (Rellihan 2019, xvi). Even at the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Conference in November 2019, faculty members in attendance at the Community College Caucus meeting expressed frustration at how we are marginalized within NWSA and made to feel that we are not teaching at "real" colleges. In my estimation, the institutionalization of the discipline has taken us further from our activist roots and has further marginalized community colleges, women's centers, and activists.

**Emotional labor:** Because we disproportionately serve

3. I don't have numbers for women of color faculty, but based on my own experiences and those of my colleagues at other institutions, I suspect there are more of us at community colleges.

disadvantaged groups, community college faculty, especially women, are doing an incredible amount of emotional labor, on top of our teaching loads<sup>4</sup> and our other obligations to the college. On my campus, for example, our total enrollment is about 16,000, and we have ONE psychologist. Most of our students do not have access to mental health services. WGS faculty everywhere share the experience of students coming to us with their traumas, but because community college students often come from the most marginalized groups, our WGS faculty offices become revolving doors of tragedy. I have had students who are homeless, students who are food insecure, a student who could not come to class because his meth-addicted mother disappeared for a week and when she came back, she had burns all over her body, and he had to rub medicine on her at certain times and also take his little brother to school. There is something every day, and I have to stop what I am doing and figure out resources, where to send them, make phone calls, find someone who can help. And I continue to worry about them after they leave my office. We know that WGS faculty are expected to do emotional labor at all types of institutions (see Bauer 2002; Shayne 2017). At community colleges, however, there are fewer faculty to take on the labor, the students have far fewer resources at home, and our campuses are unable to prioritize, or in some cases even offer, mental health services, due to lack of funding (Anderson 2019).

**Guided Pathways:** Guided Pathways are credential-based programs that community colleges are implementing to increase graduation rates. These

4. As of this writing, I taught 14 classes in AY 2019-20, including summer. I am contractually obligated to teach 10.

programs assume that the current “cafeteria model” where students pick and choose classes is flawed. Instead, students select a major related to a career and are put on a pathway to complete their degree (Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins 2015). I do not think we have enough data from other schools yet to say if it actually “works” but from a WGS perspective, I do have some concerns. If our WGS classes are not deemed relevant to a particular career, we are not going to be on that student’s pathway, and they will not be able to take our classes. The larger issue is the message we are sending to economically disadvantaged students. Systems are being constructed that infantilize marginalized students, eliminate choice, and preclude poor students from having access to the same educational opportunities as students at four-year universities.

#### Academic Freedom:

This is a flyer that student Sophia Moore, from one of my Intro classes, created for an event we held on campus. A male student at the College saw the flyer, went to administration to find our Title IX Officer, found our VP instead, and told her the flyers made him feel “harassed and violated.” I was ordered to take them all down. No dialogue; no discussion. The fear of litigation is impacting our ability to do our jobs.



Artwork by Sophia Moore 2017



**Precariousness of WGS programs and courses:** All WGS programs are vulnerable to budget cuts—this is no secret, and it is likely to get much worse with the COVID-19 budget crises in which campuses everywhere are finding themselves. (See WGSC, 2020). Although we have seen some positive steps at community colleges, such as the addition of two full-time WGS positions at my college, as well as the creation of degrees and certificates at other community colleges, there is the ever-present looming threat that our programs will be cut or lose funding. We have seen this most recently at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, New York, which last year defunded WGS and took away their office space (Washburn 2019).

### **Call to Action**

Fellow GWSS faculty, there are many things you can do to upset this pattern of community college subordination. First, please check your own biases. Invite community college faculty to research and write with you. If you participate in a journal, invite folks at community colleges into the conversation. Accept transfer credits from community colleges. NWSA and other feminist organizations need to reach out to community colleges and invite us to participate in conferences and events, especially by offering scholarships. Encourage your graduate students to teach at community colleges. Offer internship credit for teaching assistantships at community colleges. As Sarah Hosey argues,

It must be part of the larger feminist agenda to more fully support the work that goes on in community colleges. Ignoring community college students, faculty, and work

reflects a larger surrender to a neoliberal postfeminist severing of the personal and the political. That is, if you don't see and struggle with and for students in community colleges, you become one of the voices telling these individuals, you are not real students, you are on your own, your voices, stories, and needs are not important (2019, 87).

Teaching WGS at a community college is the most challenging and rewarding job I have ever had. Despite all the challenges, I truly love what I do and feel that it matters. I have never felt more that I am doing the work of Women's Studies than I have at the community college. My classrooms are the most radical places I have ever worked. It is my hope that this essay will cultivate solidarity between community college and non-community college faculty and students.

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# Hometown (student poetry)

By Talia Heyman (they/them/she/her)

Study of Women and Gender major

Smith College, Junior

Driving into the city on i-75,  
I am 16 again  
mistaking the accelerator for the brake pedal,  
speeding through the stop sign or stopping at the green  
light.

I look out the window, and  
yes, I can remember a time when I missed where I come  
from.

I don't miss where I come from anymore  
because I've found someplace safer,  
where my heart sings without a muffler,  
where people say my name singsong sappy  
and no one wishes me dead,  
where I don't have to worry whether or not  
my friends are on my side.

I am 16 again, he violates my body, and  
my friends don't take my side.

This was a time when I thought I recognized my face in  
the mirror, thought  
a dress deemed me worthy of public presentation.  
Dysphoria wasn't even part of my vernacular  
and that was the time when I needed it most.

When I needed it most,  
I wandered lonesome into the bushes,  
sat on a slab of dirty concrete and imagined getting  
older,  
imagined a time when my darkness would no longer  
overshadow my light.

I am older now, I haven't worn a dress in months.  
My light emanates outwardly but  
sometimes when I'm here again my pupils  
forget to dilate  
and it's hard to see the light.

20.

The Power of Words:  
A Discussion of  
Chanel Miller's  
Know My Name



## By Melinda Chen, University of Kansas

\*Trigger Warning: This text discusses sexual violence and racism.

\*This text contains spoilers.

*Know My Name* (2019) chronicles Chanel Miller's journey after experiencing sexual assault.<sup>1</sup> Miller was assaulted on Stanford University's campus in 2015 and became publicly known as "Emily Doe"

during her assailant's trial.<sup>2</sup> Although her assailant ultimately received a paltry sentence of three months, Miller's published victim impact statement<sup>3</sup> sparked a tidal wave of feminist activism against rape culture on college campuses and in the criminal justice system (CJS).



Melinda Chen by Nicole Carter

1. Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Marcy Quiason, Julie Shayne, & Elise Higgins.
2. For this essay, I choose not to talk about her assailant because his words and those of his supporters, including the judge, have already been spoken elsewhere.
3. A victim impact statement is an optional statement made to the court after a rape trial during sentencing to determine the severity of punishment. Victim Support Services (VSS) define a victim impact statement as "a written or oral statement presented to the court at the sentencing of the defendant" (2020) and the U.S. Department of Justice explains that the statement "describe[s] the emotional, physical, and financial impact [a victim] and others have suffered as a direct result of the crime" (2020).

The statement was viewed 15 million times within five days of its publication (248).<sup>4</sup> In her memoir, Miller reclaims the narrative of her assault, transforming her identity from Emily Doe to a survivor-victim<sup>5</sup> whose words challenge the very rape culture that obfuscated her personhood.

Sexual violence affects millions of people every day, yet most survivors of sexual assault do not engage with the CJS. One in three women and one in four men report that they have experienced sexual assault at least once during their lifetimes (CDC, 2020), and an estimated one in two transgender or non-binary persons experience rape during their lifetimes (Munson and Cook-Daniels, 2015); however, only approximately one-third of assaults are reported to law enforcement (Morgan and Truman, 2018).<sup>6</sup> These rates suggest that Miller's story is unique because she directly engages with the legal system and explores how a presumably "just" institution is in fact biased against victims. The CJS demands an undue amount of evidence to begin prosecuting a rapist, thus deterring many victims from sharing stories of their assault. "Most victims are turned away at the base of the

4. Miller's victim impact statement was initially published on BuzzFeed by Katie J.M. Baker on June 3, 2016, shortly after Miller's statement was read to the court.
5. The terms "survivor" and "victim" are used interchangeably in this essay. *Know My Name* makes clear that a person should not be read monolithically and that one's identity is not premised on empowerment or victimization alone post-rape. Rather, one's identity after rape is *both* survivor and victim, and we should be mindful of how one self-presents and use the terminology of the person speaking about their experiences.
6. The actual rate of sexual violence is unknown, given the social stigma associated with reporting rape. See Yung (2014) for more information about reporting rape.

mountain [of justice], told they don't have enough evidence to make the journey," she explains (240-241).<sup>7</sup> Miller further refuses to shy away from describing the harrowing treatment towards rape victims within courtroom spaces. Victims of rape face more scrutiny and judgment than the defendant because there is often insufficient physical evidence to determine whether consent occurred.<sup>8</sup> The trial turned Miller into an "unworthy," unconscious woman who drank and partied instead of the humorous and loving sister, daughter, and writer-comedian-artist that we meet in her memoir. "[T]he victim remained stagnant, living forever in that twenty-minute time frame," she mourns (241). Even when she tried to speak in the courtroom to correct or add to her narrative, her words were eradicated immediately by the judge. "I watched my words fall like birds shot out of the air... [The judge] was teaching me to be afraid of speaking freely" (III-II2).

Miller reclaims her identity by filling in the gaps missing from court transcripts. She shows the reader that the narratives of Emily Doe constructed by media outlets

7. In addition to a high burden of proof expected of criminal cases, anti-carceral, restorative justice, and transformative justice feminists all point out that the CJS is inherently biased against minorities, consequently deterring many of them from engaging willingly with the system. For example, people of color (POC), LGBTQ people, and other marginalized people are often incarcerated for sentences longer than white heterosexual offenders, indicating that engagement with the CJS inscribes racism and heteronormativity onto the outcome of the case. See Lerman and Weaver (2014) and Morgan and Truman (2018) for more discussion around marginalization in the carceral state.
8. For more information related to revictimization by authorities (also known as "secondary victimization" or the "second rape"), see Tasltiz, 1999; Campbell and Raja, 1999; Yung, 2006; Ahrens, 2006.

and courtroom officials were nothing like the experiences of Chanel Miller, whose career, social life, and family dynamics were drastically transformed as a result of her rape. Miller claims that her

“worth...privacy...energy...time...safety...intimacy... confidence...[her] own voice” (349) disappeared and that it was not just “twenty minutes of action” that were stripped from her (232). “I didn’t know what I was doing,” she admits, as she travels hundreds of miles away from home in attempt to deny her victimhood (77). Then, months pass, and Miller begins to rediscover comfort in creative work. At the Helium Comedy Club, she finds comedy as the solution to public engagement and slowly regains a sense of Chanel, the writer. But this memoir is not a story of victimhood, nor is it a story of empowerment. Rather, Miller cautions for a more holistic reading of her story. She says: “As a survivor, I feel a duty to provide a realistic view of the complexity of recovery” (310). She remakes herself into a multifaceted survivor-victim, neither victim nor survivor alone. Chanel Miller melds with Emily Doe, and by the end of her memoir, the reader sees both personas, together.

One of the most powerful aspects to the memoir is the asynchronous manner in which Miller presents her story. The book is divided into fourteen chapters that move between past and present. This anachronistic storytelling reminds readers that survivors do not run on a chronological clock but are forced by trauma to slip in and out of linear time. In one example, she describes her desire to protect her sister: at first, she is twenty-three, outside the courtroom waiting for her sister to exit; in the next moment, she is eight years old, her sister trapped behind a pool door. Miller thinks to herself: “My eyes

burned as I watched her, stuck on the other side of the door" (185). The thought blurs Miller's two worlds of pre- and post-assault through a shared objective to protect her sister from the dangers of a locked room. The distorted timeline lapses into recognition that trauma does not accommodate for organization and scheduling demanded by court proceedings.<sup>9</sup> "Trauma was refusing to adhere to any schedule, didn't seem to align itself with time. Some days it was distant as a star and other days it could wholly engulf me" (126).

The memoir also reveals that there is more to survivor stories than igniting fires against rape culture. Identifying oneself and speaking as a victim of sexual violence widens the doors for other survivors to come forward, but empowerment is tricky when a survivor poses as though they speak on behalf of all survivors. Linda Alcoff suggests that "the effect of the practice of speaking for others is often, though not always, erasure and a reinscription of sexual, national, and other kinds of hierarchies" (1991, 29). A probation officer that misidentifies Miller as white instead of half-white, half-Chinese, errs because she does not make space for Miller's identity as a biracial victim.<sup>10</sup> The silence of Miller's minority half rewrites the narrative into one in

9. Most rape cases are criminal; thus, it is the State versus the defendant, not the victim versus the rapist. A civil suit may be brought against an offender; however, they are costly, prohibiting many victims from taking this route, and they demand much time from victims.

10. Chanel Miller discusses her Chinese heritage in *Know My Name*, enraged at a probation officer's categorization of her as white. "I'm CHINESE," she exclaims (220), and points out how her mother, a Chinese immigrant and acclaimed writer and filmmaker, had taught Miller about Chinese culture, such as dumpling making. Miller's Chinese name is Zhang Xiao Xia, which means "Little Summer" and sounds like *Xia, Cha-, Chanel* (viii).

which the rapist and victim are on equal footing, both white, rather than a victim of color experiencing racial microaggressions from a white-dominated courtroom. Still, Miller presents her side of the story as a biracial victim without encroaching on others' narratives, even avoiding a conversation about her assailant. "In not naming them, I finally name myself," she declares (viii).

Donna Haraway writes: "Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge...It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (1988, 583). Miller's memoir situates her experience but does not speak for others. Wear a plain outfit, yet you are blamed for your assault. A seemingly benign outing like frozen yogurt with family is now impossible to enjoy because of flashbacks to your assault. This mix of the mundane and the horrifying feels commonplace and is a shared experience among victims. An impact statement that "goes viral," or receiving letter after letter thanking you for your story, these are not shared experiences; they are a part of Miller's individual narrative. Therein sits the striking beauty of the book: it provides a backdrop, a foundation, for readers to fill in the gaps presented by the story. Miller's experience in the CJS illuminates that we are the same, encountering victimization by the authorities who are supposed to protect us—yet we are also different, experiencing assault in diverse ways.

Words are power against rape culture when they are spoken by the victim, but they become weapons turned against survivors when spoken and appropriated by others. Each survivor's story must be read in their unique context to become empowering. On suicide, Miller explains that every story about a death is "one and one and one..." not seven deaths, collectively (88). Miller does

not want her voice to dominate over other victims' voices, but rather stand alongside hers, individuals meeting individuals. "I want to stay and fight, while you go," she says (313), overturning the myth that "[v]ictims exist in a society...to be an inspiring story" (312). She is not there for the reader as a hero; she does not want others to experience the hardships that she has experienced. Instead, she stands as a presence to accompany and support survivors like her. Like Miller, we must be cautious about naming narratives not our own; nevertheless, we speak up and share our stories to build momentum against an unjust world.

### Parting Note

It is not an easy task to make space for others. Indeed, by quoting Miller in fragments, I decontextualize her words from the story she wishes to tell, reminiscent of a defense's tactics to isolate and conquer. Yet a review is a special case of recycling quotations out-of-place, taking another's words to point potential readers in the direction of the full story. Sometimes the review does a stellar job of highlighting the book, stepping aside to allow the main event to shine. *The New York Times* opinion piece (Ko, 2019) on Chanel Miller's Asian-American identity is an excellent read for its assessment of the racial politics involved in criminal cases, avoiding interrupting the story and instead creating something new. The reader of this discussion may not read *Know My Name* in its entirety—it is your prerogative—but I hope to point you in the direction of her story.

This collection, *Persistence is Resistance*, takes snippets of feminist histories and praxis to show new recruits and veteran GWSS scholars our successes (and sometimes, failures) so we can collectively build a more robust

feminist future. Like other authors here, I write this piece, a case study, as a way of showing the reader what might come of reading survivor stories: acknowledging others' voices. *Know My Name* allows me to share what I think is most important about feminist ways of thinking because Miller demonstrates the very feminist epistemological practice that I hope my fellow feminist peers embody. The memoir is a snapshot of our collective mission to end violence and it is how we build a movement, particularly us feminists of color. We ensure that everyone has the right to speak, and then we make space for others to speak their truths. Power comes from words, and especially words of our own making.

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# Sins of the Skinny Body (student art)



Having the skinny body as the centerpiece of a feminist collage might seem a bit odd considering the level of privilege that thinness often grants. However, feminism recognizes the worth of all people, and as such, this piece acknowledges the experiences of a type of woman that is often left out of body positivity movements. The skinny body creates controversy by the mere fact that it exists, subject to constant glorification and demonization by ever-shifting beauty ideals. By fetishizing one type of

body, you inadvertently create hostility towards a different type of body. True body confidence can only take place in a world in which people accept and respect the intrinsic worth of all people, of the bodies we inhabit, and of the natural world that sustains us—body and spirit

**Meranthly Meza, she/her/hers**

Santiago Canyon College, third year

Future Gender, Sexuality & Women's Studies major

PART V

SECTION FOUR:  
WRAPPING THINGS  
UP



# Conclusion: Damn Straight We Persisted

By Julie Shayne and Nicole Carter,  
University of Washington Bothell



Julie Shayne by Nicole Carter

“The revolution begins  
at home” Cherríe Moraga  
and Gloria Anzaldúa  
(1983, xxvi)

As you have read,  
*Persistence is Resistance* tells  
part of the story of

Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies’ (GWSS) first  
half century with a window into the next.<sup>1</sup> As the title of  
this project implies, the mere existence of our programs,  
particularly as they evolve and have deeper institutional  
roots, is a manifestation of triumph. No Women’s Studies  
program was welcomed with universal open arms,  
particularly the ones started by women of color. Feminists  
have always been a thorn in someone’s side and we always  
will be; if we weren’t, as they say, our work here would be  
done. As of this writing, we can say with 200%  
confidence, our work is nowhere close to being done. We  
are writing this as at least 140 US cities are rising up  
against police brutality, state sponsored violence, and  
structural anti-Black racism, protests that have now  
spread to at least twenty-two countries. The authors in



Nicole Carter by Nicole Carter

1. Julie would like to thank Lourdes Torres for taking the time to read a draft of this Conclusion and sharing her insights.



this collection have made it clear that feminism and GWSS are about challenging intersecting vectors of power and privilege, be it through the development of Africana Women's Studies at Clark Atlanta University (Sears), the leadership capacity of Indigenous feminisms (Whitebear), or the power of a survivor telling her own story (Chen). We hope to leave you with this sentiment of feminist resistance, especially in these very bleak times. Nicole has parting words to her fellow students, alumni, and future or GWSS curious students, and Julie to her fellow and future professors, and university staff who work with students. For those of you who do not fall in any of those categories, we hope our words resonate with all of you.

#### **Parting words from Nicole**

I just graduated from the University of Washington Bothell (UWB) with a bachelor's degree in Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies and Community Psychology. Throughout my time at UWB I had the opportunity to experience and try many new things, including peer facilitation, attending and presenting research at the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA), and working closely with professors and librarians to design a class. Even with all of that, perhaps the most significant part of my GWSS experience was witnessing first-hand the importance of an education rooted in feminist theory as the world was plunged into a pandemic *and* simultaneously rose up to demand racial justice for Black people in the United States. I began my undergraduate degree primarily focused on studying the impacts of trauma and adversity. I was very intent on trying to learn and understand the different experiences that folks have but I did not realize how narrow my

education had been until I took my first GWSS class and was exposed to the histories, stories, and lives of Black, Indigenous, and minoritized women and queer folks. I remember where I was when I first read Chandra Talpade Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes" (1991), where she aptly explains how Western feminist scholars perpetuate the idea of a "universal third world woman" by reducing folks to a single story or set of experiences. I wondered how, as a white woman, I might have contributed to this type of erasure in the past and have since used her words to guide my work. Lourdes Torres points out in this book that women of color in academia face many more obstacles in trying to secure tenure and receive the recognition they deserve for their work. In reading *This Bridge Called My Back*, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, I saw the power in queer histories of resistance and finally felt empowered and safe enough to come out myself. Being a student in GWSS was much more than acquiring an education and attaining a bachelor's degree. It was a tool for my own liberation and continued to demonstrate that resistance to heteropatriarchy, hegemonic power structures, and hopelessness is rooted in art, love, and persistence. Persistence to demand better from our country, world, families, and friends. Persistence to continue uplifting and centering the voices and cries from everyone who has been historically silenced or told their life does not matter. In my experiences, GWSS was the first place to center those voices.

I will admit I am angry. I am angry that the authors, histories, movements, and theories I have had the opportunity to learn about are not taught in other majors or throughout primary and secondary education.<sup>2</sup> If

2. K-12 GWSS materials absolutely exist! Check out Women's Studies

GWSS were required, folks would understand the only time this country points towards justice is when folks rise up to demand change. And those uprisings are almost always led by women, including trans women, even if history does not document the story that way.<sup>3</sup>

Being exposed to GWSS and deciding to add it as a double major has significantly changed and improved my life. Whether I decide to be a mental health counselor or a professor, what I have learned in those classes makes me a better friend, ally, and comrade in the fight for justice and a better world. I encourage students considering GWSS to dive in and declare it as a major! I met my mentor Professor Julie Shayne in my first GWSS class and over the course of two years have had the chance to facilitate a class, be published in a zine, travel to San Francisco to attend the NWSA and moderate a panel, and finally, work on this book. The relationships you develop along the way will truly help you continue the important work long after graduation. And your professors really do want to support you and help you be successful.

Once you declare the major, I encourage you to pursue many types of opportunities—I suspect your programs will likely have their own versions. For example, if there is a class you absolutely fall in love with or found especially compelling, you might reach out to the professor and see if they would be interested in taking on a peer facilitator or student teacher the next time they offer the course. Or,

alumna Kate Schatz and Miriam Klein Stahl's series of *Rad Women* and *Rad Girl* books, and their newest, *Rad American History A-Z*.

3. Some recent examples include Black Lives Matter (<https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/> [Accessed: 6/19/2020]); Pride (Jacobs, 2019); Undocumented immigrants' rights (Wong et al. 2012; Unzueta Carrasco and Seif 2014).

if you want to research a topic that is not offered at your school, reach out to your professors or advisors as there are often opportunities for independent research that can earn you class credit and sometimes even monetary compensation. There are also often scholarships and grants available to help students attend conferences or symposiums around the country.<sup>4</sup> A degree in GWSS is truly as expansive and meaningful as you want it to be and there are a million ways to personalize it to you, your values, and the direction you intend to go post graduation.

### Parting words from Julie

So, what next? We know that COVID-19 is already setting women faculty back (Kitchener, 2020). (See also Howard essay.) And according to the American Psychological Association, we are living in a “racism pandemic,” with dire health consequences, including “depression, anxiety and other serious, sometimes debilitating conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder and substance use disorders. Moreover, the stress caused by racism can contribute to the development of cardiovascular and other physical diseases” (APA 2020). We know our beloved students are struggling, especially the ones from marginalized backgrounds. We know we miss our students since most of us have not seen them in the flesh for a while and honestly, we are not

4. I went to a public school with not a lot of funding but even there I was able to find small grants to support my conference attendance. Contact your mentors and see if your campus has an Office of Research because they will likely help you locate funds. Also, here are some national resources: <https://thescholarshipssystem.com/blog-for-students-families/the-ultimate-list-of-scholarships-for-women-and-girls/> and this Facebook group is dedicated specifically to undocumented students: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/undocuscholarships/>

entirely sure when we will again. This work is hard. I have never met a GWSS professor who does not love their work, but we all agree, for a whole host of reasons, this work is at once incredibly rewarding and incredibly taxing, and that is under the best of circumstances. Needless to say, nothing about today's world resembles "the best of circumstances" for women and/or marginalized communities who are the center of GWSS inquiry and communities. So, let us be kind to ourselves and each other.

To begin, I would like to encourage all of the professors, professors-to-be, and staffers to read Berger and Radeloff's book *Transforming Scholarship: Why Women's and Gender Studies Students are Changing Themselves and the World, Second Edition* (2015). And after you read it, get a copy for your campus Career Services, encourage them to read it, and then discuss it with them. It may make you cringe to think of our degree as vocational but the reality is, our students need jobs, and the world needs feminists in every single sector if we are truly to see change. GWSS makes our students better at everything and Berger and Radeloff help us help them tell people why.

White faculty, please re-read Lourdes Torres's essay and think long and hard about her recommendations. In short, she asks us to start by educating ourselves. She even gives us a reading list! Then when you finish that, read Marius Kothor's blog post "5 Anti-Racist Practices White Scholars Can Adopt Today." Yes, we teach GWSS, so presumably we all intellectually understand racism at a macro level. That is not enough. I am confident that most students of color who have taken a GWSS class with a white professor have been subjected

to microaggressions perpetrated by us, just as they are from white professors in their non GWSS classes. I know my students of color who trust me have confronted me about things I have said or situations I could have handled better. Needless to say, it was not their job to educate me—it could not have been easy, and how many students are not able to talk to us? Clearly “understanding racism” does not mean we always practice anti-racism. We need to understand and interrupt our own complicity in white supremacist practices on our campuses, be they in hiring and promotion decisions; in research opportunities for our students; in antidemocratic decision making in our departments, or in our classrooms.

Despite its progressive exterior, the academy is not exempt from white supremacy, and GWSS is part of the academy. We cannot hide behind our degrees and our titles and act as if we are immune from racist practices. Our Black colleagues are telling us they are exhausted and terrorized (Anonymous, 2020; McCoy, 2020); we cannot be OK with that. If we are at white majority institutions and the number of women/femme of color faculty and staff at all levels, including leadership, are not going up, we are doing something wrong. We need to pressure our administrators to require anti-bias trainings for search committees. Not token gestures that make the organizers feel better, but effective ones, led by Diversity and Equity Deans that make the white attendees really reflect on our implicit bias and work to change our practices that continually result in all white candidates and thus white hires<sup>5</sup> (See Harvey Wingfield, 2020). We need to actively

5. Shout out to Dr. Mira C. Shimabukuro, former Associate Dean for Diversity and Equity in the School of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences

work toward changing the committee assignments that presently allow for the constant tokenizing of WOC and minoritized faculty and subsequent exploitation of their labor. We need our students of color to feel seen in our classes, and that includes in the material we assign, regardless of the topic.<sup>6</sup> Our assigned texts should never be predominantly written by white scholars. If *at least* half of the authors on your syllabi are not people of color, it is clearly time to update the syllabus. There was never an excuse for white majority content and certainly not now when there is so much readily available work by POC from which to choose. (See for example, Evans, 2019). I could go on and on because there is so much to do, but these are just a few suggestions. I firmly believe claiming to be an “intersectional feminist” without implementing the ideology as conceived by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and the women of color feminists who articulated their own version before her, is its own version of white supremacy. In my estimation, that is more antithetical to GWSS than is misogyny. White faculty, we absolutely must do better.

Returning to all GWSS faculty and staff, consider taking on administrative leadership, including budget related work. As Judith Howard eloquently lays out, there

where I work, for beginning these trainings, and moving diversity and equity work many years ahead during her tenure in that inaugural position.

6. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa’s powerful words in the Introduction of *This Bridge* are relevant here: “We see the book [*This Bridge*] as a revolutionary tool falling into the hands of people of all colors. ... We envision the book being used as a *required* text in most women’s studies courses. And we don’t mean just ‘special’ courses on Third World Women or Racism, but also courses dealing with sexual politics, feminist thought, women’s spirituality, etc.” (1983, xxvi).

is much to be done from the inside to secure the longevity of our programs and wellbeing of our faculty. Many have and will likely always argue that the more institutionalized we get the farther we get from our activist roots. I personally do not see it that way. Rather, I believe the more institutionalized we are the harder it will be to get rid of us—after all, Persistence is Resistance. There are plenty of people on all college campuses who would be none too happy to see their GWSS programs simply go away; it is up to us to keep the activist spirit central to GWSS and that is arguably easier to do if we are not also fighting to keep our programs from disappearing. As Doreen Mattingly, Chair of SDSU's Women's Studies department says, borrowing from Shirley Weber, former chair of SDSU's Africana Studies, "if you aren't at the table, then you're on the menu" (2020). That metaphor is particularly meaningful now given the debt crises campuses are finding themselves in due to COVID-19. As the University of Wisconsin Women's and Gender Studies Consortium warns, GWSS programs are likely targets for budget cuts (WGSC, 2020). We need to be in the room, making decisions, because no one is going to advocate for GWSS programs except for ourselves. Related to this, on campuses where GWSS departments and our faculty do have institutional clout and thus power, it is our responsibility to support and advocate for what are often smaller programs—Ethnic Studies, Latinx Studies, African American Studies, Indigenous Studies, Asian American Studies and the like—as these programs will no doubt be economically vulnerable as well.

Something else that came up in different ways in a lot of the essays is the emotional labor that is so common



among women and/or minoritized faculty. Mind you, many of these essays were started pre COVID-19 and pre George Floyd's murder. We know GWSS professors and staff are called upon regularly to support our students, especially survivors of sexual violence. We do it but most of us are not trained therapists. Some of us are even survivors or parents or spouses of survivors ourselves dealing with our own trauma or secondary trauma. I have written about emotional labor elsewhere and what institutions can do to recognize and count it. GWSS professors know we will not leave our students hurting, even when we ourselves are barely keeping it together. But if we are going to put ourselves on the frontlines of student support, our institutions need to acknowledge the labor we are doing. Senior GWSS professors and staff: we need to pressure our administrations to value and count this work.

Collaborate with your students, including undergraduate students, especially your first generation and minoritized students. Think of all of those lightbulb moments you have witnessed. Recall all of that amazing art and creativity that you have furiously graded at the end of each term. Remember how many times you were wowed by those research papers. Our students are amazing. They keep us going. Find ways to collaborate. Co-present at the NWSA; co-author academic papers; co-author popular press pieces. Invite your students to illustrate your book! (Thank you Nicole Carter!) But white professors working with students of color: don't tokenize your students, and don't pursue these relationships to make yourself look and feel good. (See Martinez-Cola, 2020.)

Finally, if you have not already, experiment with public

scholarship and open access publishing. As Carmen Rios explained in her essay, feminist publishing has many, many outlets and homes online right now and they are not all sequestered behind paywalls. Pursue them. Our voices matter. And please share this link on all of your social media platforms. Remember, *Persistence is Resistance*, and even in the face of global medical and white supremacy pandemics, GWSS has and will continue to persist.

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# Artist statement: Interior Intimacies Series

**By Kandace Creel Falcón**

My work engages the themes of home and belonging through mixed-media paintings rooted in processes typically assigned feminine. I purposefully include fabric arts in my work to challenge the hierarchies of the various forms of artistic making. These mixed-media paintings enable both a glimpse into the inner sanctity of my home and an opportunity for the viewer to imagine what is happening in the space devoid of figures. Through a focus on interior spaces (of self, space, and identity) shaped by exterior forces, I explore the gendered expectations of private and public spheres.

This series works to blur how Western “women’s” spaces have been historically and contemporarily coded as private and how the spaces of paid labor have been coded male/public. Through painting interior scenes of my domestic life with my wife, I contend with how space is shaped for/by those who occupy them. I am deeply invested in understanding my relationship to place. Here

it manifests in the context of the home in which I live in rural Minnesota. While the subjects of these square canvases are painted on site, they are also curated and edited versions of the actual (real) interior scene. Cleared of the messy reality of a space lived-in, the series also encourages a reflection on our relationship to things and the images we craft based on our material possessions. In this way, this series encourages investigation of how our home space reflects the relationships we maintain with ourselves and each other.

In the landscape of 21st century relationships we each are consumed with or by our various levels of participation with social media. By creating square canvases framed as though they might be on an Instagram feed, I call attention to the tension between our authentic relationships to our home spaces and the glossy, curated images that might make up our social timelines. As Instagram further facilitates what feminist media scholars have pointed to as the expertise of women being confined to “The Four F’s: Food, Fashion, Family, and Furnishings” I paint narrative interior scenes to encourage us to think about if it is possible to embrace these categories connected to femininity with pride. Can we subvert how furnished interior spaces, materiality and the spaces of the home have historically been understood as inferior because of their feminine associations? Can feminine domesticity be complicated beyond the typical associations made by the broader culture? Is the sharing of queer home spaces a political act in the context of a Western art history that has marginalized genre paintings as less important?

I carry the historical weight of painting to map new trajectories for the interior genre blending past with



present to shape new understandings between humans  
and spaces.

BA, Women's Studies University of Kansas, 2000

PhD, Feminist Studies, University of Minnesota, 2010

Instagram/Twitter @kjcfacon |

<https://www.facebook.com/ArtofKCF/>

# A Lesbian Marriage (student art)

PERSISTENCE IS RESISTANCE

By Kandace Creel Falcón (she/her/  
they)



# Kitchen Top (student art)

PERSISTENCE IS RESISTANCE

By Kandace Creel Falcón (she/her/  
they)



## About the authors

**Sonja Andrews** (she/her/they): I am originally from Miami, Florida. I earned a BA in History with a minor in Women and Gender Studies from Georgia Regents University (now Augusta University) in 2015. In 2018 I earned a Master of Divinity Degree from Duke Divinity School with a concentration certificate in Gender, Sexuality, Theology and Ministry and African American Studies. Currently I am pursuing a PhD in Humanities with a concentration in Africana Women's Studies at Clark Atlanta University. I have presented at several conferences, including: Just Space (Duke University), Planet Deep South (Clark Atlanta University), National Association of African American Studies (Atlanta, Georgia), and the National Council of Black Studies (Dallas, Texas).

**Carrie N. Baker** (she/her/they): Originally from Connecticut, I am a Professor in the Program for the Study of Women and Gender at Smith College. I have a BA ('87) in philosophy from Yale University, a JD ('94) from Emory University School of Law, and an MA ('94) and a PhD ('01) from Emory University's Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. I have published *The Women's Movement Against Sexual*

*Harassment* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), *Fighting the US Youth Sex Trade: Gender, Race and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), and co-authored *Sexual Harassment Law: History, Cases, and Practice* (Carolina Academic Press, 2020). I write regularly for Ms. magazine and am co-chair of the Ms. Committee of Scholars. I am also part of the Women's Media Center SheSource and the Scholars Strategy Network.

**Michele Tracy Berger** (she/her/hers): I am from New York City. I earned my BA ('91) at Bard College, Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies ('95), and PhD from the University of Michigan in Political Science ('98). I am an Associate Professor in Women's & Gender Studies at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am author and co/editor of several books, including *Workable Sisterhood: The Political Journey of Stigmatized Women with HIV/AIDS*; *The Intersectional Approach: Transforming the Academy Through Race, Class and Gender*; and *Transforming Scholarship: Why Women's and Gender Studies Students Are Changing Themselves and the World*. *Inheriting Health: African American Mothers and Adolescent Daughters on Wellness, Sexuality, and HIV* will be published in 2021 by NYU Press. I served as Vice-President of the National Women's Studies Association from 2010-2014.

**Amy Bhatt** (she/her/hers): I am from Philadelphia, PA. I earned my BA ('02) in Women's Studies and Political Science from Emory University. After graduating, I worked for Planned Parenthood Federation of America and the Institute for Women's Policy Research in Washington, D.C. In 2004, I began my PhD in the Gender, Women, & Sexuality Studies Department at the University of Washington Seattle. I graduated in 2011 and joined the University of Maryland, Baltimore County's

Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies Department, where I earned tenure in 2017. I am the co-author/author of two books, the co-chair of the South Asian American Digital Archive's Academic Council, and was recently the curator for *Beyond Bollywood: Indian Americans Shape the Nation* at Seattle's Museum of History and Industry.

**Nicole Carter** (she/her/hers): I was born in Dallas, Texas but grew up in Kirkland, WA. I earned my BA in Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies and Community Psychology in 2020 at the University of Washington in Bothell. I was a peer facilitator for Dr. Julie Shayne in a course where students designed a zine titled *Badass Womxn in the Pacific Northwest*. I co-presented with Professor Shayne about this project at the National Women's Studies Association conference in San Francisco (2019). I plan on attending graduate school to become a mental health counselor. I am also known as GWSS's unofficial artist and baker.

**Melinda Chen** (she/her/hers): I am a Taiwanese-American who grew up in NY/NJ and Taipei. I earned my BA in Global Liberal Studies from NYU ('18) and an MA in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies from the University of Kansas ('20). I am presently a Dean's Doctoral Fellow and Graduate Teaching Assistant in the PhD program at the University of Kansas. My research intersects sexual violence, queer theory, and East Asian feminisms, and I aim to queer anti-rape responses in transnational contexts to support survivors with marginalized identities. Along with my dissertation, I assist Professor Sarah Deer, J.D. on the Native Justice Project, a study that seeks to develop tangible changes to the tribal legal system for American Indian/Alaska Native women and Two Spirit (LGBTQ+) survivors.



**Elena Tajima Creef** (she/her/hers): I was born in Massachusetts, and grew up in Southern California where I navigated my way through the University of California system and graduated from UC Riverside (BA, English), UC Santa Barbara (MA, English), and UC Santa Cruz (PhD, History of Consciousness). I have been teaching in Women's and Gender Studies at Wellesley College since 1993 where I offer courses in everything from Asian Women in Film, The Multicultural American West, Techno-Orientalism, to Elvis Presley and 1950s America. I have written a couple of books (in Asian American Cultural Studies), and am now working on a new project about The Return of the Lakota Horse Culture and am co-creating a Public Humanities podcast on how The Battle of Little Bighorn is remembered.

**Kandace Creel Falcón** (she/her/they): I was born in Kansas but grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I earned a BA in Women's Studies from the University of Kansas (2004) and following graduation immediately pursued a PhD in Feminist Studies at the University of Minnesota (2010). After graduating I taught Ethnic Studies and Women's and Gender Studies at Minnesota State University Moorhead, as the then first and only tenure-track, later tenured professor with a line in WGS. In 2019 I made the difficult decision to leave that position. My writing most pertinent to the themes of this book is: "Courageous Xicanas: Living Legacies of Comadrazgo in the Academy." When I'm not tweeting or writing, I am painting. I most recently expanded my interdisciplinary feminist scholarly goals by attaining an AFA in Visual Arts.

**Akosua K. Darkwah** (she/her/hers): I am from Ghana. I earned a BA in Psychology and Sociology from Vassar

College in 1996 and a PhD in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2002. Since then, I have been teaching in the Department of Sociology at the University of Ghana. I am an active member of the feminist collective at the University of Ghana. I joined the Development and Women's Studies programme in my early years and co-wrote the initial funding grant for setting up the Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy. Between 2012 and 2016, I served as the Director and now participate in the activities of the Centre as an affiliate. I also served as an editorial board member for *Gender & Society* between 2014 and 2016. My research focuses primarily on Ghanaian women's work.

**Adrianna L. Ernstberger** (she/her/hers): I was born in Monterey, CA. I earned a BA in History with a minor in Women's Studies from the University of Alaska, Anchorage (2006), followed by an MA (2008) and PhD (2017) in History with a graduate certificate in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Purdue University. I have taught Women's and Gender studies courses at multiple universities, including Butler University, and the University of South Carolina, Upstate. In 2018 I joined the faculty at Marian University as an Assistant Professor of History and the Director of Gender Studies. My work bridges feminist activism, women's tertiary education, and feminist study abroad development. I recently published an article in the *Journal of International Women's Studies* on the history of women's and gender studies in Uganda.

**Beverly Guy-Sheftall** (she/her/hers): I am from Memphis, Tennessee and at sixteen, I entered Spelman College, majored in English and minored in secondary education. After graduating with honors (1966), I

attended Wellesley for a fifth year of study in English and in 1968 entered Atlanta University to pursue an MA in English. In 1971, I returned to Spelman to teach in the English department. I completed a PhD at Emory University in the Institute of Liberal Arts (1984.) I am the founding director of the Women's Research and Resource Center (1981), Anna Julia Cooper Professor of Women's Studies, and Chair of Comparative Women's Studies, all at Spelman College. I am author of many books, including the first anthology on Black women's literature, *Sturdy Black Bridges*, co-edited with Roseann P. Bell and Bettye Parker Smith; *Words of Fire; Gender Talk*, coauthored with Johnnetta B Cole; and *Still Brave*, co-edited with Stanlie James and Frances Smith Foster. I am also the founding co-editor of *Sage: A Scholarly Journal of Black Women* which is devoted exclusively to the experiences of women of African descent.

**Esthaphanie Guzman** (she/her/hers): I was born in Wenatchee, Washington and lived there for two years, eventually moving north. I earned my BA in 2020 in Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies at the University of Washington Bothell. My future goals include going to graduate school and becoming a GWSS professor. While a student at UWB, I was an Interdisciplinary Arts & Science (IAS) Interdisciplinary Scholar and Peer Navigator at the Diversity Center. I am one of the contributors to and co-creators of *Badass Womxn in the Pacific Northwest*, a zine made by students in Professor Shayne's class "Rad Womxn in the Global South." As part of that project, two other students and I co-created a video documenting the process, from idea to end-product.

**Rosanna Hertz** (she/her/hers): I am from Connecticut

and went to Brandeis (BA, Philosophy & Sociology) and Northwestern (PhD, Sociology.) I have taught at Wellesley College since 1983, arriving after I received my PhD. At Northwestern I was a teaching assistant to one of the earliest Women's Studies courses offered. Wellesley hired me to teach courses on families, work and gender, including "The Social Construction of Gender," one of the few courses in those years centered on gender. After earning tenure in the sociology department, I was asked to chair Women's Studies, moved to WGST in 1996, and am the current Chair. My books include: *More Equal than Others: Women and Men in Dual-Career Marriages*; *Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice: How Women are Choosing Parenthood without Marriage and Creating the New American Family* and a co-authored book, *Random Families: Genetic Strangers, Sperm Donor Siblings, and the Creation of New Kin*.

**Judy Howard** (she/her/hers): I was born in Waterville, Maine. I earned my BA ('69) at Cornell University, my MA ('77) from the University of Oregon, and my PhD ('82) in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I have spent my whole career at the University of Washington. I am now an Emeritus Professor in the Departments of Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies and Sociology. I served as Chair of GWSS (then Women Studies) from 2001 to 2005. I then served as Divisional Dean of Social Sciences in the College of Arts & Sciences from 2005 until my retirement in 2017. I am the co-author of *Gendered Situations, Gendered Selves: A Gender Lens on Social Psychology* (Rowman & Littlefield, Rev., 2011), and have co-edited five volumes. I served as the Co-Editor of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* from 1995-2000.

**Lori Loftin** (she/her/they): I am originally from Tampa,

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**Erika Márquez-Montaño** (she/her/hers): I was born in Colombia and naturalized in the United States. I earned a BA in Law from *Universidad Externado de Colombia*, and an MA and PhD in Sociology from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. I am an Assistant Professor and Undergraduate Program Director in the Sociology program at *Universidad Icesi* – located in Cali, Colombia. At *Icesi*, I have served as the director of the Gender Studies Program, and simultaneously I was the co-chair of the Latin American Studies Association's Gender and Feminist Studies section. My current research focuses on gender equality in the context of higher education. Previous work includes my piece, "Colombia's Gallery of Memory: Reexamining Democracy Through Human Rights Lenses," published in *Latin American Perspectives*. I can be reached at [emarquez@icesi.edu.co](mailto:emarquez@icesi.edu.co)

**Nicole Morse** (they/them/theirs): Originally from Colorado and Vermont, I came to Florida Atlantic University's School of Cinema and Media Studies after earning my PhD in Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Chicago. At FAU, I am an Assistant Professor and Director of the Center for Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. My research and teaching focus on LGBTQ media studies and I have published in

*Feminist Media Studies*, *Porn Studies*, and *Jump Cut*. My book *Selfie Aesthetics: Seeing Trans Feminist Futures in Self-Representational Art* is currently under review. Previously a filmmaker, my video essay on *Transparent* was included in the British Film Institute's list of the best video essays of 2018.

**Daniella Orias** (she/her/hers): I hail from sunny Coral Springs, Florida. I am in the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies MA program at Florida Atlantic University, where I am also a Teaching Assistant. I published an article in the *FAU Undergraduate Research Journal* with Dr. Jane Caputi entitled "Monoculture & Mono-woman: An Ecofeminist Critique" (2013). My main areas of interest are ecofeminism, literature/art/media, and queer theory.

**Donielle "PacePoetry" Pace** (she/her/hers): I am a performance poet from Houston, TX, and a mother of two teenage boys. I have a BA in English and an MA in Mass Communication from the University of Houston. Currently, I am pursuing my PhD in Humanities with a concentration in Africana Women's Studies at Clark Atlanta University. For six years, I taught middle school English and served as an English adjunct professor at Houston Community College. As a performance poet, I have performed and spoken at several significant conferences and events such as the National Council of Black Studies Annual Conference (2020) and Removing the Mask 2020 Women's Retreat. I am currently researching ancestral African technologies in the poetry of Black women performance poets.

**Cheryl Radeloff** (she/her/hers): I was born in Dayton, Ohio. My BA in Popular Culture and Women's Studies (1996) is from the University of Toledo and I earned my

PhD in Sociology from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 2004. My dissertation explored the development of mandatory testing laws for legal and non-legal sex workers in the state of Nevada. I am currently a Senior Health Educator with the Southern Nevada Health District Office of Epidemiology and Disease Surveillance. In addition, I am also an adjunct professor of Sociology at UNLV as well in Women's Studies at the College of Southern Nevada. I am the co-author of both the first and second editions of *Transforming Scholarship: Why Women's and Gender Studies Students Are Changing Themselves and the World*.

**Carmen Rios** (she/her/hers): I am a New Jersey born, Los Angeles-based freelance feminist writer, editor, and broadcaster who has spent the last decade creating and curating content that translates feminist theory and strengthens the feminist movement, and whose digital work has been taught in GWSS courses nationwide. I graduated with honors from American University in 2012 with a BA in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Public Communication. After graduation I went on to work as an editor at *Ms.Magazine* and *Autostraddle*; contribute writing to platforms like *Bitch*, *DAME*, *Everyday Feminism*, *ElixHER*, *Feministing*, *GirlBoss*, *GrokNation* and *SIGNS* on issues of gender, race, class and sexuality; launch the Webby-nominated intersectional magazine *Argot*; and produce and host feminist programs like *Bitch Media's Popaganda* podcast, *The Bossy Show* podcast and the webseries *Trigger Happy*.

**NaTasha Robinson** (she/her/hers): I am a first-generation graduate student from Richmond, VA. I earned my BA in Sociology from Norfolk State University and an MA in Applied Sociology with a

Women's Studies graduate certificate from Old Dominion University. I am currently pursuing my PhD in Humanities with a concentration in Africana Women's Studies at Clark Atlanta University. I have presented at several conferences and events, including, the National Council for Black Studies Annual Conference and Virginia Social Science Association Annual Conference. In addition, I've implemented community projects regarding sexual and domestic violence in Richmond, VA. As a "sophistiratchet" scholar-activist, I am dedicated to using my platform to cultivate activism, Black consciousness, bridging the gap between communities and academy, and uplifting the African diaspora.

**Temperance Russell** (she/her/hers): I was born in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and earned my BA in Communications and Women and Gender Studies from the College of Charleston. I earned my MA in Women's Studies from San Diego State University (SDSU). For my thesis project, I focused on celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Women's Studies Program at SDSU. I conducted oral history interviews of key figures who helped start and continue this fundamental program for the past 50 years.

**Stephanie Sears** (she/her/hers): I was born in Waterbury, Connecticut. I earned my BA in Religion at Spelman College ('93). I earned both my Master of Theological Studies ('99), and PhD in Religion from Emory University ('08). My dissertation is titled "Spiritual Quest and Crisis in African American Liberative Writing: Seeking Complementarity, Generative Power and Constructive Agency through a Womanist Psychology and Religion Framework." My current



research investigates black women's psychological and emotional health, focusing on musical healing paradigms, culture and religion. I teach classes in Africana Women's Studies, Psychology and Religion. I am presently the Graduate Advisor of the Africana Women's Studies Program and Assistant Professor of African Women's Studies and Religion at Clark Atlanta University.

**Julie Shayne** (she/her/hers): I was born in Los Angeles. I earned my BA ('93) & MA ('95) in Women's Studies from SF State University and my PhD in Sociology (2000) from UC Santa Barbara. My first job was at Emory University but my heart stayed on the west coast so I resigned and left the tenure track. I am a Principal Lecturer (Teaching Professor, starting 9/16/20) in Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences at the University of Washington Bothell, and co-founder, and Coordinator of our GWSS program. I am a passionate teacher and in 2019 was UWB's recipient of the UW Distinguished Teaching Award. I am author/editor of three other books, most recently, *Taking Risks: Feminist Activism and Research in the Americas*, and committed to public scholarship, especially about GWSS.

**Shereen Siddiqui** (she/her/hers): I was born in New York but grew up in Southern California. I earned BAs in Sociology and Women's Studies from the University of Missouri-Columbia and an MA in Sociology with a Graduate Certificate in Gender Studies from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. My first career was in College Student Affairs, and I have training and volunteer experience in violence prevention. Those experiences shaped me as an educator and led to my doctoral research on praxis in Women's Studies. I earned my PhD in Comparative Studies from Florida Atlantic

University in 2015, and in 2016, returned to California to pursue my passion as an Associate Professor of GWSS at Santiago Canyon College. RateMyProfessors.com claims that I am ranked third in the country among Women's Studies professors.

**Brea Stevenson** (she/her/hers): I am currently pursuing my PhD in Humanities with a concentration in Africana Women's Studies at Clark Atlanta University. I am originally from Bakersfield, CA. I am a first generation college student and the beneficiary of a transformative HBCU experience at Howard University where I earned an MSW and BA in English and Criminal Justice. I was a McNair scholar as an undergraduate student and published research focused on African American Vernacular English. Most recently, I was the discussant for a book talk at the *Planet Deep South Conference* and co-presented "BREATHE, Stretch, Shake, and Let It Go: An Examination of Africana Women's Mental Health and Wellness within the Africana Women's Studies Program at Clark Atlanta University." As a scholar-Activist, I am committed to the healing and wholeness of African diaspora.

**Lourdes Torres** (she/her/hers): I am from the Bronx, New York. I earned my BA at Stony Brook University (1981), MA (1983), and PhD from University of Illinois Champaign Urbana in (1987). I am the Vincent de Paul Professor of Latin American and Latino Studies and Affiliate Faculty in Women's and Gender Studies at DePaul University. My research and teaching interests include sociolinguistics, Spanish in the US, and Queer Latinx Literature. I have written and co-edited several books, including *Puerto Rican Discourse: A Sociolinguistic Study of a New York Suburb*; *Third World Women and the*

*Politics of Feminism*; and *Tortilleras: Hispanic and the Latina Lesbian Expression*, and am editor of the journal *Latino Studies*.

**Sarah Valdez** (she/her/hers): I am originally from New Milford, New Jersey. I am a senior working on my BA in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and English at the State University of New York at Albany, scheduled to graduate in December 2020. My interests include racial justice, Black feminism, and social equity. During my undergraduate career, I had the pleasure of being a part of the WGSS Teaching Collective, a cohort of undergraduate students who serve as facilitators for all WGSS 101 classes. I also had the opportunity to do community-oriented research through the Albany Birth Justice Storytelling Project, a collaborative research project that seeks to understand the pregnancy, birth, and early parenting experiences of people living in local areas impacted by racial disparities in birth outcomes. In my free time, I also write for my blog on Medium.

**Luhui Whitebear** (she/her/hers): I am an enrolled member of the Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation and the Assistant Director of the Oregon State University Native American Longhouse Eena Haws. I completed my PhD in Spring 2020 through the Women, Gender, & Sexuality program at OSU. I also received my BS in Ethnic Studies, a second BS in Anthropology, and MA in Interdisciplinary Studies (WGSS, Ethnic Studies, and Queer Studies focus), all from OSU. I am a mother, poet, and Indigenous activist. My research focuses on Indigenous rhetorics, Indigeneity & reclaiming Indigenous identity/gender roles, missing & murdered Indigenous women, Indigenous resistance movements, and national laws & policies that impact Indigenous

JULIE SHAYNE

people. I am passionate about disrupting systems of oppression and creating positive change in society.

# The authors, in pictures

## All illustrations by Nicole Carter

**Artist statement by Nicole:** At the beginning of this incredible undertaking, Julie asked contributors to send us pictures of them doing something related to GWSS. They were welcome to interpret that however they pleased and we got tons of great photos that I used for inspiration. I had never really done portraits before, and certainly not to this scale, so I was excited and nervous to dive into this project. I approached these pieces with the idea that we are all a work in progress and left in some of my guidelines to demonstrate my process. This book and the folks that contributed to it is a testament to the diversity of our programs and I tried very hard to respectfully and adequately portray that in my work. Like the rest of my experiences in GWSS, I learned a lot completing these illustrations and I look forward to harnessing these new skills!

(in the order in which our essays appear)

# About our programs

*This list includes the thirty-three schools that represent our  
GWSS training and institutional homes<sup>1</sup>*

**American University ~ Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies:** WGSS is an interdisciplinary program encompassing feminist, masculinity, and sexuality studies. The program is committed to a multicultural curriculum that sustains and integrates diverse perspectives. WGSS courses emphasize participatory education in which student involvement, critical thinking, and personal insight are encouraged and made relevant in the learning process. WGSS students gain experience off-campus in the nation's capital through an internship placement in an organization or agency whose mission embraces some aspect of women's/gender/sexuality studies. AU has a major and two minors: WGS and Sexuality & Queer Studies, and Graduate Certificate.

- I. Campus descriptions were written by faculty, students (present or former), from each institution, or, alumni from their alma mater based on information from the program's webpage, sometimes cut and paste verbatim. Descriptions were not vetted by schools represented. Responsibility for errors ultimately lies with Julie Shayne. The online document can be edited so if you find mistakes about your campus please contact Julie at [jshayne@uw.edu](mailto:jshayne@uw.edu).

**Augusta University ~ Women's and Gender Studies:**

"The Augusta University Women's and Gender Studies program was established in 1998. In addition to a thriving interdisciplinary minor, the program participates in a variety of co-curricular programming efforts on campus and in the community. .... Women's and gender studies is defined by what is taught, how questions are asked and explored, and often, how the subject is taught."

**Clark Atlanta University ~ Africana Women's Studies:**

Founded in 1982, the AWS Program is the only degree-granting Africana Women's Studies program located in an historically black college in the US, the only women's studies program in the US which offers the doctoral degree in Africana Women's Studies, and the only Africana Women's Studies program in the world. AWS provides opportunities for the systematic analysis of the convergence of gender, class, racial, and sexual bias. It primarily focuses on the comparative examination of the contributions, problems, strategies and concerns of women throughout the African diaspora.

**College of Charleston ~ Women's & Gender Studies:**

"Our program explores the intersections of gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, religion, ability, and sexuality. Through the College of Charleston's Women's and Gender Studies minor or major, you will be able to devote yourself to the study of women and gender in different cultures, contexts, and time periods. We discuss complex cultural issues—from historical to contemporary controversies—and teach students to think on their feet and develop a range of analytical approaches."

**College of Southern Nevada ~ Women's Studies:**

CSN is the largest college in Nevada, serving 40,000 students across three campuses and is considered a Hispanic

serving institution. CSN has offered an Associates of Arts degree in Women's Studies since 2004. Classes are taught by faculty from different departments as Women's Studies does not have full-time faculty members. The interdisciplinary nature of Women's Studies makes it a discipline in which faculty are enthusiastic about the application of the program and courses to other disciplines, and employment opportunities.

**DePaul University ~ Women's and Gender Studies:** WGS emphasizes feminist and social justice theory with focuses on agency, social responsibility, advocacy and activism. We help you understand the interconnectedness of systems and structures of gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ability, culture, religion and nation within broader historical, social, global, and transnational contexts. We provide opportunities for research and advocacy, community and campus engagement, leadership development, service learning and internships. We offer a major and minor, a BA/MA, an MA, a joint MSW/MA, and a four-course Graduate Certificate Program.

**Emory University ~ Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies:** The Department of WGSS at Emory University has helped to define the discipline of women's studies in the United States. Home to the first women's studies PhD program in the United States, which began in the fall of 1990, Emory's WGSS program has close connections with organizations and people outside the academy, such as Rosalynn Carter at the Carter Center, and has service learning opportunities for undergraduate majors. It also has sustained relationships with other local women's studies programs, especially Georgia State University and Spelman College.



**Florida Atlantic University ~ Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies:** The Center for Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies at Florida Atlantic University is the longest-running such program in the State of Florida with internationally known faculty across a wide range of disciplines. Our program prepares students to think critically about how gender and sexuality interact with politics, culture, ideologies, social structures, and economics, historically and globally. Our students see themselves as change agents making a difference in their own lives, in their organizations, in their communities, and around the world.

**Georgia State University ~ Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies:** The Institute for Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies has been chartered since 1994, although its history reaches back to the 1970s. Today, WGSS offers a cutting-edge academic program focusing on three areas: globalization, sexuality studies and social change. GSU offers a major or minor; an MA program with an interdisciplinary approach to the study of gender, sexuality, race and class, and a Graduate Certificate which has three interrelated areas of concentration: globalization, sexuality studies and social change.

**Icesi University ~ Gender Studies Program:** The Gender Studies Program at Universidad Icesi was created as a seminar associated to the Law and Social Sciences School in 2007 with the purpose of leading activist research and pedagogical work on gender and women's studies. Although it does not offer a major, the program's associated faculty teach a variety of elective courses on gender and intersectional perspectives to students throughout the University. It is also the incubator to an Observatory for Women's Equality .

**Marian University ~ Gender Studies:** Marian is a private, Catholic, liberal arts college in Indianapolis, Indiana committed to Franciscan (feminist) Values: Dignity of the Individual, Peace and Justice, Responsible Stewardship, and Reconciliation. The Sisters of St. Francis Oldenburg founded the university in 1937 to forward women's education, and in 1954 Marian became the first co-ed Catholic college in Indiana. The minor in Gender Studies remains committed to social justice, gender equity, and rigorous academic inquiry through dynamic coursework, local internships, and multi-country study abroad programming.

**Minnesota State University Moorhead ~ Women's & Gender Studies:** The Women's & Gender Studies Program at MSUM provides multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary feminist approaches to understanding the impact of gender in all aspects of society. It was founded in 1971 and presently offers an undergraduate minor and major as well as an interdisciplinary Women and Science Certificate. The program builds on the goals of a liberal arts education with intention on making a feminist impact within the institution and the broader community.

**Old Dominion University~ Women's Studies:** "We are committed to a social justice-based approach, and seek to bridge academic and community work. Our purpose is to provide undergraduate and graduate education that focuses on the intersection of knowledge and action. We reach out to local and global communities through a dedicated emphasis on service-learning, feminist dialogue across the university, and a range of public scholarship projects for students, faculty, and community members."

**Oregon State University ~ Women, Gender, and**

**Sexuality Studies:** Our program was founded in 1972, originally as “Women Studies.” In 2012-2013, we renamed the program “Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies” to reflect our deepening commitment to queer studies and work on sexuality more broadly, as well as scholarship regarding gender constructions and processes, and critical men and masculinity studies. We offer a PhD, an MA, and a BA as well as minors in WGSS and Queer Studies at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

**Purdue University ~ Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies:** Originally Women’s Studies, WGSS at Purdue “seeks to produce, promote, and advance knowledge, scholarship, theory, research, pedagogy, education, and action” in the pursuit of feminist ideals of equity, justice, and sustainability. WGSS at Purdue offers students four options to explore the discipline: a major or minor in WGSS, a minor in LGBTQ Studies, or a graduate concentration.

**San Diego State University ~ Women’s Studies:** SDSU’s Women’s Studies program was the first in the nation. The Women’s Studies Department is now celebrating the 50th anniversary and continues to put a strong emphasis on feminist, queer, and intersectional theories and frameworks, as well as, creating spaces for activism to be a part of the curriculum. SDSU has a BA (major & minor), MA, and Certificate options.

**San Francisco State University- Women and Gender Studies:** Women and Gender Studies (originally Women’s Studies) at SFSU formally became a department in 1976.”Forged out of transformative activism and scholarship, the department uses interdisciplinary approaches and foregrounds transnational and intersectional relationships among gender, race, sexuality,

nation, labor, technologies, and globalization. Our students engage in challenging academics, work closely with professors, and lead community initiatives.” SFSU has a major, minor, and blended BA/MA program.

**Santiago Canyon College ~ Gender, Sexuality, & Women’s Studies:** The Santiago Canyon College Gender, Sexuality & Women’s Studies program offers an historically influenced, intersectional-focused curriculum to students desiring to learn of the systematic and institutionalized oppression of gender within major Western societies. With its interdisciplinary perspectives, the program takes on the great task of exposing students to the intersections of gender with race, class, sexual orientation and ethnicity, unearthing the complexities of ‘gender’ in the modern world.

**Smith College ~ Program for the Study of Women and Gender:** Founded in the early 1980s, Smith College’s undergraduate major in the Study of Women and Gender graduates 20-30 majors each year. Smith is home to the Sophia Smith Collection of Women’s History, an internationally recognized repository of manuscripts, archives, photographs, periodicals and other primary sources in women’s history. Our graduates are in a wide range of fields, including community and labor organizing, politics, law, healthcare, the creative arts, journalism, publishing, and education.

**Spelman College ~ Comparative Women’s Studies:** Spelman College is an historically Black college that serves women of African descent. Comparative Women’s Studies (CWS) is an integral part of the groundbreaking programs of the Women’s Research and Resource Center, which was created in 1981. A first among historically Black colleges, this unique interdisciplinary program places an

emphasis on Black feminist theory, women's health, Black queer studies, and activism.

**State University at Albany~ Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies:** The Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at UAlbany has been offering courses since 1971. The WGSS department at UAlbany teaches various classes that intersect with other fields while remaining committed to education about social justice and liberation. Through The Teaching Collective, WGSS offers both undergraduate and graduate students the opportunity to practice feminist pedagogy in organizing and teaching Introduction to Feminisms to their peers. SUNY Albany offers a BA (major & minor), and various graduate options.

**University of Alaska, Anchorage ~ Women's Studies:** The WS Program at UAA started in 1986 due to the passionate "grassroots effort supported by faculty from all over the University of Alaska Anchorage." Women's Studies at UAA offers courses grounded in feminist theory and intersectional analysis while working closely with the university's Alaskan Native Studies program to cultivate a curriculum ground in the region and its history. Graduates of the WSP regularly go on to pursue graduate studies in GWSS.

**University of Ghana ~ Gender Studies:** The Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy at the University of Ghana was founded in 2006 and is the oldest center of gender studies in the country. Although it does not currently offer a major for students, it offers a core class in gender studies that all students at the university take in their second year of studies.

**University of Kansas ~ Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies:** Founded in 1972, KU's Department of Women,

Gender, and Sexuality Studies critically analyzes gender and sexuality from local and global perspectives. The department has five undergraduate programs including majors and minors in WGSS and Human Sexuality, along with a Certificate in Gender, Law & Policy. In 2011, WGSS launched the graduate program with opportunities to pursue a PhD, MA, and Graduate Certificate. The graduate program is known for its rigorous methods training and innovative scholarship in public policy, law, and history.

**University of Maine ~Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies:** Founded as Women's Studies in 1988 after over a decade of planning, the University of Maine Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program offers an undergraduate minor and major and an interdisciplinary graduate specialization. The program is grounded in exposing students to feminist, queer, and gender theory, and encourages students to get involved in experiences that allow them to apply theoretical concepts to social action through internships, community involvement, and courses focused on activism.

**University of Maryland, Baltimore County~ Gender, Women's, + Sexuality Studies:** Gender, Women's, + Sexuality Studies at UMBC is an interdisciplinary field that investigates how gender and sexuality operate as organizing axes of social, cultural, economic, and political institutions, as well as in the everyday lives and cultural products of people who must live within them. Emphasizing the importance of historical and cross-cultural perspectives, GWST critically examines the intersections of gender and sexuality with other differences, including class, race, ethnicity, nationality,

age, and ability to make visible structures of power that otherwise remain hidden.

**University of Minnesota ~ Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies:** Formed in 1973, UMN GWSS is an interdisciplinary training ground focused on diverse feminist theories and methods, decolonizing pedagogies and exploring the relationship between knowledge production and power. The doctoral program in Feminist Studies prepares scholars for advancing interdisciplinary feminist research. In addition to the PhD and the graduate minor in Feminist and Critical Sexuality Studies also offers a BA in Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies, and undergraduate minors in Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Studies.

**University of Missouri-Columbia ~ Women's and Gender Studies:** WGS is an interdisciplinary field that established gender, sexuality, race, class, and dis/ability as fundamental categories for understanding social structures, cultural norms, and power dynamics. ... The WGST major strengthens critical thinking, writing and research skills; highlights multiple forms of knowledge and encourages students to think of themselves and others as citizens of a diverse world. Undergraduate major and minor and graduate minor.

**University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ~ Women's & Gender Studies:** WGS began as a series of classes taught in 1976 during a time of social unrest. We are the oldest WGS program in the Southeast. WGS grew from a small program with no permanent faculty to a vibrant department (established in 2012) with a broadly interdisciplinary faculty of nine. We offer a major and minor, a graduate certificate, and are home to the

Sexuality Studies and Women in Science programs. WGS has 100 affiliated faculty across campus and teach over 120 cross-listed courses in twenty-seven departments.

**University of Toledo ~ Women's and Gender Studies:** Women's and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study focused on the contributions, experiences, history, and issues of women, both nationally and internationally. The discipline also examines the significance and consequences of gender as a cultural category that shapes the experiences and knowledge of individuals and communities. Women's and Gender Studies is grounded in feminist and gender theories that re-conceptualize and re-contextualize ideas and experiences as well as knowledge and knowledge production. Major and minor available.

**University of Washington Bothell ~ Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies:** UWB *feels* like a liberal arts college, especially the School of Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences which houses Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies. Faculty collaborate closely with our undergraduate students on everything from co-publishing, to co-teaching, to co-leading study abroad. Our program is relatively new: we launched in fall 2016 and are transnational and intersectional in focus, and dedicated to innovative, engaged, and community-based pedagogy. GWSS faculty won the Chancellor's Undergraduate Mentoring Award the first three years it came into existence. We have a major and minor.

**University of Washington Seattle ~ Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies:** The Department of Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies was formed in 1970 as the Women Studies Program. Launched in 1998, our doctoral program



in Feminist Studies also offers certificate programs in Feminist Studies and Sexuality and Queer Studies. All of our degree programs are organized around four foci: global identity formations; decolonizing empire; feminist knowledge production; building socio-political movements for change. Intersectional and transnational analyses are the hallmark of our curriculum and of our scholarship.

**Wellesley College ~ Women's and Gender Studies:** The Women's and Gender Studies Department has been committed to teaching at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and difference since 1982. Women's and Gender Studies examines how the lives of individual women and men are shaped by broader structural forces in both historical and contemporary contexts, for e.g., nation-building, globalization, economic developments, and the legal system. Women's Studies continues to reflect in its curriculum and faculty research the constantly changing directions that multiple first and third world feminisms are taking today.

# Praise

“This collection is the comprehensive and creative reflection that the academic discipline of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) deserves on our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. This book reflects the founding tenants of creativity, activism, collaboration, and innovative praxis in a way that both affirms and restructures formal scholarly study. There has never been one approach to women’s studies. The contributors chosen for this volume reflect philosophical, methodological, racial, gender, linguistic, generational, and geographic diversity. The project known as women’s studies has necessarily evolved. With *Persistence is Resistance*, Julie Shayne has gifted us a comprehensive piece, but the work of WGSS is not complete. The work is not yet done, as evidenced by this moment in time when we face Covid, important Black Lives Matter activism, and voting/political repression during an election year that will determine the fate of this nation. Shayne offers a moment of important contemplation as we continue the work to define, practice, reshape, and institutionalize WGSS.”

**Dr. Stephanie Y. Evans, Professor and Director**  
Institute for Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies  
Georgia State University

“This remarkable collection is essential reading for all of us who work, study and find meaning and community in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies programs and departments. The essays are brief, engaging, and cover a wide range of topics, identities, debates and geographic locations. Artwork, photography, poetry and brief testimonials from current and former WGSS students add vibrancy and richness to the volume. I recommend it for WGSS courses at all levels.”

**Dr. Doreen Mattingly, Professor and Chair**  
Department of Women’s Studies  
San Diego State University