A Word from the Chair

I am inviting you to read Women’s Studies Fall Newsletter which features articles and news updates about the faculty’s research topics and success stories. As I read the faculty’s contributions to the Newsletter, I can’t help but feel very proud to be their colleague. Their research, narratives and experiences make our academic unit one of the best in CHASS.

I feel compelled to express my concern regarding a proposal which will increase student fees by 32% through 2010. The U.C. Regents will vote on this proposal at their November 17-19 meeting. Such increase, I believe, is a direct assault on public education. In response to the manner in which the administration is handling the budget crisis, and in defense of public education, a systemwide call was made to take action on September 24. The Department of Women’s Studies publicly endorsed this day, U.C. “Day of Action”. Below is the statement of solidarity endorsed by all faculty members. I am including it here because I believe that the proposed student fee increase is not the solution to the current financial crisis at the University of California.

Women’s Studies Statement of Solidarity:

The Department of Women’s Studies endorses the UC Day of Action, planned for September 24, 2009. We believe that this symbolic action is a necessary step in the defense of public education. The dismantling of public education must be stopped, and we endorse this Day of Action because we believe that the political budgetary decisions being made will make public education far less accessible than it has been, especially, for low income students and many students of color. In addition, we recognize that when the gates of higher education are slammed shut for working class and low income students, the promise of inclusion and upward mobility is broken. This Day of Action is an act of solidarity with students, service workers, and all the other people who make the University of California one of the greatest public University systems in the world. As teachers in a department which came to be legitimized because of social movements of justice and equity, we are proud to endorse this action.
Piya Chatterjee

Piya has been busy working on her second book, *The Politics of Witness: Violence and Feminist Transformative Work*, which is based on her grassroots organizing experience with women workers in the tea plantations of eastern India between 1999 and 2007. It explores feminist ethics, trauma and history by engaging not only mobilizing work (in all its contradictions), but also the haunting historical connections between sugar plantations during slavery and contemporary tea plantations. Since 2007, she has been involved in putting together a rural literacy program (following Paulo Freire) with village women in South Bengal: "Together, we have put together a book of poetry and short stories that they have written about their lives, tentatively titled "A Fistful of Sun." We plan to publish this in Bengali and English. We are really excited because we have put together an editorial collective and created our writing together. Many of the women are neoliterate or nonliterate so it has been an amazing adventure. Apart from this, she is thrilled to be serving on INCITE:Women of Color Against Violence’s National Organizing Collective for three years. If you are interested in joining INCITE as an individual member, or want to know more about our work nationally and internationally, please contact her at piyachatterjee@yahoo.com. And check out our website at http://www.incite-national.org/.

Tracy Fisher

Tracy Fisher, has co-edited an anthology *Gendered Citizenships: Transnational Perspectives on Knowledge Production, Political Activism, and Culture* with Kia Lilly Caldwell, Kathy Coll, Renya Ramirez and Lok Siu. *Gendered Citizenships* builds on feminist and ethnographic approaches to citizenship by placing the experiences and analyses of women of color and Third World women at the center of our understanding of citizenship. The project is unique in its collective conceptualization of an "ethnography of intersectionality" anchored in geographically situated questions of experience, subjectivity, and citizenship of marginalized communities of women. *Gendered Citizenships* (forthcoming, December 2009) is part of the Comparative Feminist Studies Series, Palgrave Macmillan Press.

Tracy was awarded a Group Residency Fellowship in Winter 2010 at UCR’s Center for Ideas and Society. She will be collaborating with UCR Professors Traise Yamamoto (English), Erica Edwards (English) and John Kim (Comparative Literature). The group project "Afro-Asian Encounters" will study Afro-Asian intersections and seeks to study the multiple connections between Africans, Asians, African Americans and Asian Americans in the U.S., Asia and Europe.
Report from the Field: Eastern German Women 20 Years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall
Katja M. Guenther
Assistant Professor of Sociology

Since 2000, I’ve been conducting research on how women in the former East Germany have responded to the massive changes accompanying the collapse of socialism in 1989 and the unification of East and West Germany in 1990. In October and November, 2009, I had the opportunity to return to Germany to conduct follow-up interviews with eastern German feminist activists and observe events commemorating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Berlin Wall was the core symbol of the Cold War, which divided the world for almost half of the 20th century. Yet its collapse and the changes that followed have had mixed outcomes for women from the former East Germany. In East Germany, women were valued both as workers and as family members. West Germany had a more traditional gender ideology that stressed women’s roles as wives and mothers and laid little value on women’s economic contributions. It was this more traditional gender ideology, and accompanying state policies, that took hold after German unification in 1990. Many eastern German women felt thrown out of the labor force, and they were heavily overrepresented among the unemployed and underemployed after 1990. State policies that supported women’s dual roles as workers and parents—like free day care for children as young as 11 weeks old and year-long maternity leaves—were dismantled by the unified German government, also making it much harder for women to combine paid employment and parenting.

Today, eastern German women continue to fight for their right to participate in society as workers and not just as mothers and wives. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, they are overwhelmingly grateful for the new opportunities and freedoms the end of socialism created for them. At the same time, there are many aspects of the life in East Germany that they still long for and hope to somehow recreate in the unified Germany. Feminists in eastern Germany mostly work at the local level with loose national networks and coalitions. Like the US, Germany is a federal state, and feminist groups push for policy changes at the state level. Their efforts have focused on increasing women’s employment and educational opportunities, community building, and securing programs for survivors of gender-based violence. Even in cities the size of Riverside or Corona, it is common to find a dozen or more feminist groups organized around these issues and drawing attention to the problems women face since German unification.

Throughout the “Festival of Freedom” to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the collapse of the wall, gender has been notably absent. Even as German Chancellor Angela Merkel—Germany’s first woman and first eastern German Chancellor—acknowledged in a speech as part of this festival that a gap between East and West remains, political leaders and the public still do not approach German unification as a gendered process with gendered consequences. Feminist groups will continue to agitate for greater recognition of the gendered dimensions of unification and for more resources to counter the deleterious effects of German unification for women.
Sherine Hafez

Center for Near Eastern Studies (CNES), UCLA
Los Angeles, California

Co-organizers:
Sherine Hafez
(sherine.hafez@ucr.edu)
Susan Slyomovics
(ssly@anthro.ucla.edu)

The link between the ideology of power and knowledge production about the Middle East/North Africa is a potent, generative and creative one. Our conference aim is to tap the most recent contributions to the field of the anthropology of the region and to highlight collaborative research that recognizes the potential of ethnographic methodologies as a powerful catalyst for theoretical debate. We will examine a wide range of theoretical paradigms and methodological approaches that emerge at the intersection of scholarship and a larger discourse of power analytics. Topics might include, but are not limited to:

- Islam and secularism; colonialism and postcoloniality; problems of modernity and the limits of theory; gender and sexuality; media and globalization; nation building; war and occupation.
- This conference poses the following questions: Has academic scholarship on the Middle East/North Africa been successful in resisting the appropriation of knowledge by hegemonic dominance? How is decolonization of knowledge possible? What are the limits of critique? And, what are the possibilities and directions that novel theoretical imperatives can take to transform the face of the anthropology of the Middle East/North Africa?

Abstracts are invited for 20-minute papers. Abstracts should be no more than 250 words in length. Deadline for abstract submission is December 1, 2009 to be sent to CNES Program Director, Amy Bruinooge at abruin@international.ucla.edu. Those whose papers are accepted will be notified no later than December 31, 2009. CNES covers participants’ travel from any location in continental USA and Canada, accommodation for three nights (March 31-April 2), and local meal expenses within university mandated limits and guidelines.

We plan to publish an edited volume with the papers from this conference and therefore request that participants present an original paper, a draft to be sent in by March 1, which we will email in advance to conference participants.

Please circulate our conference invitation to your colleagues. The conference will be open to the public.
In June, Tamara C. Ho was honored to attend “Women of Color: Theory, Scholarship, and Activism,” a three-day institute hosted by Spelman College’s Women’s Research and Resource Center in conjunction with the National Women’s Studies Association. Funded by the Ford Foundation, the Institute convened faculty from around the U.S. to explore issues of power and privilege and to examine intersectional analyses of race, class, nation, sexuality, gender, and globalization which have become central to women’s studies as well as feminist activism. Notable scholars Bonnie Thornton Dill, Andrea Smith (UCR), and Jacqui Alexander led intensive day-long discussions of intersectionality, native/indigenous feminisms, and queer diaspora, respectively. (see picture below)

Over the summer, Professor Ho completed two publications (a film review and a comparative essay) on the topic of Burmese animism and spirit mediumship. The review of *The Legend of Lady Hill* (2005), the first Burmese motion picture to be translated into English, will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Visual Anthropology*. The essay “Transgender, Transgression, and Translation: A Cartography of Nat-Kadaws (Notes on Gender and Sexuality within the Spirit-Cult of Burma)” will be part of a special issue of *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture*, edited by UCI Professor Bliss Lim (March 2010).

This Fall, Professor Ho is a resident fellow at the University of California Humanities Research Institute (at UC Irvine) as part of the research group “Species Spectacles: Locating Transnational Coordinations of Animality, Race, and Sexuality.” Convener and UC Berkeley Professor Mel Y. Chen explains, “There is a long history of knotted meanings, metaphors and material conditions interlacing conceptions of race with animality and sexuality. The group emphasizes ways in which racialities may be found in both animalities and sexualities and how all three interplay.” While at UCHRI, Ho is exploring shape-shifting and polymorphous human-alien intimacies in science fiction/speculative fiction by women of color as she prepares for her new CHASS Connect course on “The Feminine Fantastic: Gender, Science Fiction, and Futurity,” offered in Winter 2010.
Feminisms and Intersectionalities in the 21st Century
May 21 to May 23, 2009
University of California, Riverside

Feminisms and intersectionalities — both imply plurality and multiplicity, offering various ways to question universalizing frames. The UCR conference “Feminisms and Intersectionalities in the 21st Century” reflected on how feminist epistemologies and intersectionalities challenge hegemonic positions within knowledge production and cultural practice. In other words, how are feminists creating and highlighting different forms of knowledge and culture? How do factors such as race, sexuality, class, and nation affect our understanding of “feminisms,” gender, and social justice? From May 21 to May 23, roundtable discussions with distinguished scholars and artists explored different approaches to decentering patriarchal heteronormativity and colonizing forms of knowledge production.

Before the conference, there were two film screenings: Cheryl Dunye’s *The Stranger Inside* and *The Angela Davis Project*. Dunye’s 2001 award-winning film is based on four years of research and dramatizes the lives and complex relationships among incarcerated women. *The Angela Y. Davis Project*, co-directed by H.H.T. Quan and Professor Crystal Griffith (Film and Media Production, Arizona State University), is a work-in-progress: a unique documentary highlighting women of color’s cultural activism by featuring conversations between Angela Davis and Yuri Kochiyama, Japanese American community activist and former confidant of Malcolm X.

The conference began on Thursday afternoon with Dunye, Griffith and Quan discussing their respective films and participating in a public roundtable conversation with UCR faculty. Friday’s events featured Egyptian writer and activist Nawal El Saadawi, Professor Gayatri Gopinath, and performance artist Monica Palacios. El Saadawi discussed creativity, dissidence, and feminism. Professor Gopinath (Social and Cultural Analysis, American Studies, NYU) explored the interface of archive, affect, and the everyday in the works of queer diasporic visual artists Allan deSouza and Chitra Ganesh.

On Saturday, Professor Nadine Naber (American Culture and Women’s Studies, University of Michigan) analyzed anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism post-9/11; the subsequent discussion also featured Sondra Hale (Anthropology and Women’s Studies, UCLA), and explored fraught transnational issues of occupation, war, and settler colonialism. The final panel, featuring keynote speaker Professor Thu-huong Nguyen-Vo (Southeast Asian and Asian American Studies, UCLA) and Professor Laura Kang (Women’s Studies, UC Irvine), focused on stories and material practices of rural and working-class women in global production and garment work.

Scenes from a Conference
“Viral Ports, Virtual Currents: Interconnections of Media, the Arts and the Everyday in Southeast Asia and its Diasporas,” a conference organized by Mike Atienza (Women’s Studies Student Adviser and Southeast Asian Studies Master’s student) and other UCR graduate students and faculty. UCR, October 2-3, 2009.

Professors Mariam Beevi Lam, Thu-huong Nguyen-vo (UCLA), Laura Kang (UCI), and Tammy Ho at UCR conference (Feminisms and Intersectionalities)

Prof. Gayatri Gopinath, with Tei Okamoto and UCR Prof. Jayna Brown

Chicana performance artist Monica Palacios brings “Greetings From A Queer Señorita” to the conference.

Prof. Caroline Tushabe asks the Egyptian writer a question.

Prof. Gayatri Gopinath, with Tei Okamoto and UCR Prof. Jayna Brown

Profs. Caroline Tushabe, Tammy Ho at UCR conference (Feminisms and Intersectionalities)

Naval El Saadawi Panel Discussion, with UCR Professors Margie Waller, Yenna Wu, Sherine Hafez, and Jeffrey Sacks

Professor Tammy Ho and Mike Atienza Academic Advisor at UCR conference (Feminisms and Intersectionalities)

“Viral Ports, Virtual Currents: Interconnections of Media, the Arts and the Everyday in Southeast Asia and its Diasporas,” a conference organized by Mike Atienza (Women’s Studies Student Adviser and Southeast Asian Studies Master’s student) and other UCR graduate students and faculty. UCR, October 2-3, 2009.

Prof. Nadine Naber (UMichigan) discusses the War on/of Terror
Marguerite Waller

I participated in two very different gatherings over the summer. The first, a national conference on poverty, called “Building the Unsettling Force: A National Conference to End Poverty,” was held in Louisville, Kentucky at inner city Spalding University. Two groups co-organized the conference, PPEHRC (Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign) and SWAA (Social Welfare Action Alliance), and people from all over the country came. They drove, hitch-hiked, or took buses to get there. The energy was amazing, and the picture of what is happening economically was devastating. The two organizations plan to hold a “Court of Women,” on the model developed over the past 16 years by Corinne Kumar and her colleagues in the Global South. Kumar, a transnational feminist activist and theorist who works through NGOs in Bangalore and Tunis, inspired Cheri Honkala, a founder of PPEHRC. After Honkala served on the jury of the “Court on HIV, Inheritance, and Property Rights” held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in August of 2007, she envisioned a “Court on Poverty and Homelessness” to be held in New Orleans (ground zero of Hurricane Katrina) in 2011. It will be fascinating to see how poverty and corruption in the U.S. looks through lenses developed by feminists in the Global South.

In the photo, conference participants have adjourned for a street demonstration, which was well-received by the citizens of Louisville. A month later, I was one of the teachers in the European Union’s NOISE Feminist Summer School. The topic this year was “Moving Boundaries in Feminist Theory: Postcoloniality and Posthumanity.” In my lecture, I spoke about “epistemological violence,” particularly as it is playing out in EU and particularly Italian immigration policies and practices. I was also able to interview German film director Karin Jurischick, who screened her award-winning film “The Peacekeepers and the Women.” As the title suggests, the film is about the impact on women of the presence of international peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Kosova. It is somewhat cognitively dissonant to discuss what is happening along the “moving borders” of Fortress Europe from the vantage of tranquil Utrecht, where the “New Canal” running alongside the summer school building has been flowing since the 1200s, but the students, many of whom are themselves border subjects, keep it real.
When we thought about raising a child as queer parents, we looked around and quickly realized that the resources available for LGBT parents in Los Angeles presume a ‘two moms’ or ‘two dads’ arrangement and are generally very gender-normative in their conceptualization of both parents and children. We wondered: What about queer and genderqueer parenting? Dyke dads? Fag moms? And all the other possibilities?!

Though queer and feminist movements have made profound interventions into our thinking about the social construction of gender, we still have a long way to go to rethink the ways that motherhood and fatherhood are mapped onto female and male bodies. Even most feminist writing on the subject of queer parenthood presumes that queer women produce “two-mommy” families in which both women adopt the role and identity of mother, albeit with different styles and systems for negotiating the distinction between gestational and “other mothers.” Such assumptions reflect the deeply gendered and essentialist construction of parenthood, in which female parents are always mothers, and male parents are always fathers. As feminist literature on motherhood extends the concept of maternalism (or feminist parenting) to men, still very little attention has been paid to the intersections of parenting and genderqueer subjectivity, or the possibility that “mother” and “father” could be fluid and performative categories more than descriptions of our presumably fixed, sex-based relationships to children.

The fact that my partner Kat feels more like a dad than a mom is especially confounding to many of our lesbian friends, who would rather see her “expand” her understanding of motherhood in ways that allow her to fit within it. But this suggestion misses the most basic point of the transgender movement, namely that as long as we live under the weight of a repressive and socially constructed gender binary, the best we can do is to choose the gendered options that feel most comfortable, most livable, and most like home for each of us. For Kat, who is butch and genderqueer and has very positive associations with the notion of being a stay-at-home dad, being a dad is a good fit. But it is also the culture of motherhood—including the notion that motherhood is the ultimate manifestation of femininity—that is simply a bad fit for her. As for me, I feel right at home with being a mom.

So what can we do? Kat and I decided to start a genderqueer parenting group, which is now meeting monthly in Los Angeles. The group is designed to build a community in L.A. of genderqueer people who have close relationships with kids—as parents, partners of parents, aunt/uncles, friends, etc., or people who are planning to someday have kids. At our meetings, we talk about the difference between queer and lesbian/gay parenting (is there one? what is it?), how to relate to children in differently- and cross-gendered ways, how to parent or care for children without being totally integrated into private, consumer-based and homonormative domestic relations, and how to help create sustained space for children to explore gender, desire, and their own embodiment without imposing our own favorite gender systems on them (whatever they may be). So far, it’s been a great success!

If you would like to talk about queer parenting or how to build gender-expansive communities for children and parents, stop by Professor Ward’s office!
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- intern in an agency or organization that deals with women, gender and/or sexuality issues;
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- share workplace experiences with a supportive group of peers and the professor;

analyze how issues of gender, race, class, and sexuality operate in the workplace as well as in the goals of your organization.

NOTE: Alternatives to Domestic Violence and the Riverside Area Rape Crisis Center require 6-month commitments (including training). If you are interested in working with these organizations, you will have to start early (Jan 2009 or earlier), but enrolling in WMST 198g in S09 can get you academic credit while learning valuable skills & helping others!

Questions? Interested? Contact Piya Chatterjee at piyachatterjee@yahoo.com