Spring is when students graduate from college and look forward to bright futures in the world of work or post-graduate education. Faculty and staff members of Women’s Studies celebrate the accomplishments of our students. Congratulations Class of 2009! Just remember not to stop “learning” after graduation because a future without learning is a world without ideas. Keep in mind Maya Angelou’s remarks in a graduation speech, “the horizon leans forward, offering you space to place new steps of change.”

I believe that the success and accomplishments of our graduates are very much linked to our faculty’s commitment to excellence.

As the year end approaches, I want to thank all of my colleagues for their leadership, work and contributions to our department— together you make Women’s Studies an awesome place.

Finally, in this spring issue of the newsletter, I invite you to read a “showcase” of our graduating seniors, their experiences as Women’s Studies majors, their goals and aspirations. Also featured in this issue are the scholarly accomplishments and activities of our faculty and affiliated faculty. Enjoy reading on!
Becerra, Claudia  
(Major)  

Studying women’s issues in a wide range of areas shows that the women’s experience is unique and challenging from person to person, based on geographic and cultural differences. But true learning takes place outside of the classroom, in delving on the lives of women in their own communities, and in their own experience. This year, I have taken my studies on gender outside of the ivory towers, and into the spaces of women that have been institutionalized through the Prison Industrial Complex, as well as an exploration of Anarcha-Feminist history, contemporary practice, and vision for change.

For the past two quarters, I have been involved in a film project with Cine Revolucionario, a film collective on campus who have taken on a project that aims to uncover the injustices of the Prison Industrial complex, and in response, create an alternative vision to what could happen in place of prisons; an abolitionist vision of change. In order to truly understand the experiences of women who have been part of the cycle of incarceration, and are aiming towards recovery and a new life, I interned at a women’s reentry home called A New Way of Life (ANWOL). The films vision towards abolition is reflected in the efforts of the women of ANWOL, and we aim to capture the message and spread the word of what abolition in practice is all about.

I am a UCR Women’s Studies graduate from 2007, and am about to receive another tassel in May with my Masters degree from San Diego State University. I have spent the past two years earning my degree in Postsecondary Educational Leadership with a specialization in Student Affairs, and am currently interviewing with universities across California to find my ideal career fit in Student Affairs. Keep your fingers crossed for me!

Working with a diverse college student population, I am able to use information and theories I learned in my Women’s Studies class and apply them to my students and help bring about institutional change to better my students’ experiences. I have been able to get a pilot program approved for gender-neutral housing which will hopefully help support our LGBT communities have a safe and supportive living environment.

I don’t think I would have had the confidence to apply to graduate school and reach where I am today if it weren’t for Dr. Amalia Cabezas in the Women’s Studies department. It was her intro class sophomore year that sparked my interest in women’s studies, and her frequent questioning of, “are you sure you’re not interested in graduate school?” that pushed me to excel. It is professors like Dr. Cabezis and Dr. Takeshita who both show their commitment to holistically educating our students, and this has propelled me to where I am today. They truly make the Women’s Studies department one that I am proud to have graduated from.

Janeth Pineda Navarro  
(Major)  

My last year has been one of the busiest and most active here at UCR. For example, I, along with other fellow students, have been working towards establishing two new student organizations; the Youth Advocacy Project and ASAPP (Active Students Against Policing & Prisons). The Youth Advocacy Project has allowed me to work with 12th grade ELD (English Language Development) students, where we were able to generate a curriculum that stepped away from the typical monotonous pedagogy and instead produced workshops that encouraged not only higher education but invoked critical thinking and analytical skills. We also created an after school tutoring/mentoring program open for the rest of the student body.

As a direct result of working with the Youth Advocacy Project I decided to focus my senior thesis on my experiences, conversations, and interviews with our students. I am currently ethnographic research paper that specifically focuses on the way in which one’s gender and citizenship status affects agency (our decision making processes), during and after high school.

On the other hand, working with ASAPP has presented the opportunity to work along with other radical individuals that seek to generate a new discourse against the PIC (Prison Industrial Complex), but most of all to abolish this system that maintains the social inequalities of race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship.

Overall, both YAP and ASAPP have had a profound influence in cultivating my political identity and consciousness where I hope to continue to educate and further politicize our youth and eventually subordinated communities.

Navi Kalinski  
(Major, Alumni)  

Feminism, a critique on its contemporary practice, and my vision of how Anarchist Feminism can be leaders of a revolutionary movement in the struggle against hierarchy and oppression. In this thesis, I aim to discuss my personal journey of discovery and identification with Anarcha-feminism and the rejection I have experienced for not fitting the established “mold” of the anarchist scene. I will use my personal experience as a point of departure for exploring the current constraints on Anarcha-Feminist theory and practice, and what I feel is necessary for the Anarcha-feminist movement to be a genuine force for social justice.

Copyright 2023 Our Student Showcase
Carolina Quiroz  
(Minor)

I am a fourth year psychology major, with a Women’s Studies minor. I became interested in women’s studies my second year in UC Riverside after taking a women’s literature class. From then on, I began to take more classes and then decided to minor in women’s studies. Being a woman of color, I strongly believe women’s studies has a curriculum that should be taken by all men and women. Women studies courses have deeply changed my views and perceptions on life in general.

Making women’s studies my minor has been one of the most important decisions in my life. Being raised Catholic, in Orange County, really limited my understanding of the “real” world. Women’s studies has helped me better understand the politics, and patriarchy, of the culture we live in. Overall, I believe taking all these courses, has allowed me to become more aware and interested in being engaged to make change in society.

Psychology is my major and one of my passions in life. Even though, I am aware that the field follows a medical view which still has a number of racial, gender, and class biases. However, I plan to incorporate my knowledge of psychology and women’s studies in the future.

Currently, I am working on a thesis where I plan to look at mother-child interaction data which we have collected in the UCR Adversity and Adaptation Psychology Lab that I belong to. We examine how gender and class differences vary as a factor of the mother’s upbringing during the mother-child interaction. I am deeply interested in seeing how these factors vary and overlap with one another. I want to see the degree in which gender and class as a factor of the caregiver’s upbringing affects the child and mother interaction. I am highly concerned about finding ways in which we can prevent negative outcomes.

Moving on, I plan to apply for a clinical psychology program for fall of 2010. Before that time comes, I plan to apply for a position in a group home where I can work with adolescents since, my wish for the future is to work with young adults in a hospital setting. I plan to continue working in the UCR Adversity and Adaptation Lab as well as, incorporating women’s studies in my future research.

Sonia Valencia  
(Major)

My senior thesis “Creating Mujeres y Hombres: A Look at Gender Socialization in Mexican-American Families,” explored the gender socialization of male and female Mexican-American teenagers. My project documented the ways that young Mexican-American women and men learn how to become and behave like men and women. I explored the cultural and gender values that are (in) directly transmitted vis-à-vis the division of household labor and the monitoring of appearance and sociosexual life.

One of the most exciting parts of my project was learning different research methodologies. I was trained as a humanities researcher (my majors are English and Women’s Studies) and had never worked with human subjects before, so learning about quantitative and qualitative techniques was new and exciting for me. I chose to employ qualitative research methodologies; over the course of two months, I conducted eight semi-structured interviews because I wanted to understand participants’ experiences and the ways that they interpreted them. I felt that semi-structured interviews would best allow me to uncover and record the nuances and variations of the experiences of growing up experiences among these men and women. I identified potential participants through snowballing technique and referrals.

I hypothesized that Mexican-American young women would be more monitored and restricted than their male counterparts. The data collected from these interviews showed that Mexican-American teenage girls continue to have larger shares of household chores. The data also revealed that the sociosexual life of women is more monitored than that of their male siblings. One of the exciting discoveries of this study was the fact that men’s appearance is monitored just as much as that of their female counterparts.

While this study confirmed that women have more household responsibilities, and are monitored and restricted more heavily than their male counterparts it also revealed the ways that these young women navigate and challenge these inequalities in their daily life. These young women are not passive individuals; on the contrary they openly challenge and question their parents’ ideologies. Many want to change the next generation of husbands and fathers and therefore talk to their brothers and force them to more equally partake in family household chores. The qualitative nature of this work allowed me to discover and explore the mundane ways that young women challenge patriarchal familial institutions.

The senior thesis is simultaneously the most challenging and rewarding experience I had as an undergraduate. I recommend other Women’s Studies majors to do a thesis project. I also recommend students to enroll in the WMST 193 which class really helped me narrow and define my research question. My project reflects my critical investments, interdisciplinary training and my efforts to bridge the fields of Women’s Studies, Ethnic Studies, English and Cultural Studies through my work.

I plan to continue this type of interdisciplinary research at Georgetown University this fall, where I will be working towards an M.A. in English and American Literature. I want to thank the wonderful Women’s Studies faculty and staff, particularly my mentors Dr. Amalia Cabezas and Dr. Piya Chatterjee, and Dr. Jennifer Najera (Ethnic Studies) who directly guided and oversaw my work, and Dr. Tiffany López (English) who sowed the seeds for this project in her English courses.
The Truth about Strangers: Exposing the Danger behind Acquaintance Rape

Intertwining at the Assistant Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students office was a great experience. I was able to learn about sexual assault and the many effects it has on women—more explicitly college-aged women. I was shocked at the fact that there was so much information about sexual assault, beyond the scope of its broad definition. Defining sexual assault is important because it helps us communicate change in our society or even on the UCR campus. Sexual assault can be defined differently from person to person because of culture, language, and societal norms.

Given these factors, a possible threat can or cannot be interpreted as sexual assault. According to RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network) sexual assault is a broader category that the U.S. Justice Department uses to classify rape, attempted rape, and other violent felonies that fall short of rape (RAINN). However rape is defined as “forced sexual intercourse, including vaginal, anal, or oral penetration” (RAINN). Many do not realize that rape is a form of sexual assault.

Understanding why women disbelieve their chances of being a victim of acquaintance rape and/or sexual assault can allow one to learn about the frequencies of acquaintance rape and/or sexual assault, for example on college campuses. For instance, many believe that the perpetrator of sexual assault and/or rape will be a stranger or even more - a stranger in the dark. Women may believe this notion because our culture blames the victim, and that gender biases create the illusion that women have to protect themselves at night.

Learning and being more aware of acquaintance rape allowed me to question and critique on-campus events such as the Annual Campus Safety Walk and Self-Defense for Women and Men. It has also taught me the importance of community outreach across all UC campuses. Examining UCR’s approach to sexual assault prevention and how it differs from The UC System-wide Sexual Assault Grant is crucial for the progress of sexual assault prevention. For example, the description for the Annual Campus Safety Walk says, “tour sections of campus in groups for potentially unsafe areas”. The Self Defense for Women and Men notes, “Be aware! Be prepared! Learn basic self-defense techniques. Co-sponsored by the Campus Safety Escort Service” (Women's Resource Center).

I believe that these programs on-campus are important, but the fact of the matter is, they tend to reproduce ideas about why women should be afraid of the dark, and then sadly reproduce the belief that women are more likely to fall victim to stranger rape rather than acquaintance rape. These programs contribute to the acceptance of rape myths, blaming the victim, and gender roles, racism and sexism, and why so many women have to take self-defense classes, and how is it that a safety walk through campus would decrease the chances of falling victim to sexual assault?

Rape myths contribute to the fact that women believe they will be a victim of stranger rape rather than acquaintance rape. The major problem with rape myths is that they blame the victim and not the perpetrator. Rape myths are a dangerous set of beliefs that play psychological games on the mind of many men and women. Some examples of accepted rape myths are: nice girls don’t get raped, real rape involves strangers and strangers only, rape happens at night when a girl is walking home by herself, girls who dress provocatively deserved to be raped because they “asked for it,” and women lie about rape, or cry rape to protect their reputation.

To understand the greater effects of rape myths one must understand traditional gender roles, racism and sexism, and why so many accept interpersonal violence or domestic violence. When there is tolerance in our society for any systems of oppression, it is obvious that these systems will continue to propagate many rape myths.

There is an importance for these programs on-campus, and with the UC System-wide Sexual Assault Grant there is the possibility to strengthen this community and provide better services for sexual assault awareness, and most importantly provide better aid to survivors. The UC System-wide Sexual Assault Grant is “a UC-wide approach to reducing violence against women, specifically sexual assault” (Memorandum of Understanding 1).

As of now all 10 UC-campuses are involved in this grant. When the community at UC-Riverside comes together with all the other UC-communities it would bridge a huge gap and “[focus] on enhancing criminal justice engagement with victims and witnesses by encouraging more effective practices and inter-agency coordination at local levels” (Robinson 412).

I believe that starting at local levels on universities all across the country can create a network or safe haven for women and men to express themselves without the fear of rape and/or sexual assault.

Sarah Wheeler
(Major)

My past year in the Women's Studies department has been nothing short of amazing. Through the faculty, I found endless support and encouragement; in my classmates, I found friends; and in myself, I discovered the ability to believe in my own potential and capabilities.

All of this contributed to my decision to apply to graduate school this past fall, and with the help of generous recommendations from Professors Piya Chatterjee, Jane Ward, and Catherine Allgor of the History department, I was accepted to a Women's Studies M.A. program at San Diego State University. I'm also excited to be working as a graduate assistant in the program during the 2009-2010 school year.

After I earn my M.A., I hope to move on to a Ph. D program and eventually become a professor myself. My research interests mainly revolve around issues of sexuality and queer studies; currently, I'm fascinated by the topic of polyamorous relationships, and hope to one day conduct my own studies on the subject. However, I'm interested in a wide range of other issues as well, such as women's creative expression, identity and digital culture, women and mental health, women's history, and fat studies. Whatever the subject matter, I hope to stress the importance of activism and outreach in everything I do.

Until I find time to explore all of those topics, I'm keeping myself happily occupied by working on my thesis. Under Professor Ward's advisement and mentorship, I'm writing about independent lesbian-queer pornography, and theorizing about the ways in which it incorporates feminism, creates a distinctly queer erotic aesthetic, and queers the images and narratives of heterosexual pornography.

I am quite pleased (and nervous) to also be presenting an early draft of my thesis at the 5th Annual Gender, Sexuality, and Power Student Research Conference at CSU Los Angeles on May 12th.

I have been able to accomplish so much thanks to the guidance of our faculty. As an alumnus, I hope to make the department proud while teaching and inspiring other women as much as they have taught and inspired me these past four years.
Tammy Ho

During Winter 2008, Tamara C. Ho was in residence at UCR’s Center for Ideas and Society. She collaborated with UCR Professors Farah Godrej (Political Science), Keith Harris (English and Media & Cultural Studies), and Setsu Shigematsu (Media & Cultural Studies) to examine how “minoritantarian” knowledges rearticulate canonical understandings of political theory, religious studies, feminist theory, and cultural representation. As part of this endeavor, the group is sponsoring an upcoming film screening and conversation among queer feminist filmmakers in late May as part of the “Feminisms and Intersectionalities in the 21st Century” conference at UCR.

Professor Ho is deeply honored to have been invited to participate in various events in late 2009. In May, Professor Ho will be presenting her work at “El Mundo Zurdo: the First International Conference on the Life and Work of Gloria Anzaldúa” at University of Texas San Antonio. In June, she will be attending “Women of Color: Theory, Scholarship, and Activism,” a summer institute hosted by Spelman College’s Women’s Research and Resource Center in conjunction with the National Women’s Studies Association. This three-day Institute is “designed to explore issues of power and privilege and examine intersectional analyses of race, class, nation, sexuality, gender, and globalization which have become central to the field of Women’s Studies as well as feminist activism.” Professor Ho was one of only 20 participants selected from a national pool of 70 applicants. Professor Ho was also awarded a resident fellowship at the University of California Humanities Research Institute at UC Irvine and will be joining the collaborative research group “Species Spectacles: Locating Transnational Coordinations of Animality, Race, and Sexuality,” convened by UC Berkeley Professor Mel Y. Chen during Fall 2009.

Chikako Takeshita

Professor Takeshita attended the UC Women's Council Meeting at UC San Diego, April 24, 2009 "The Bio Politics of Contraceptive Research: Population, Women’s "Choice," and the Intrauterine Device” Also conducted a “mini writing retreat” by myself between April 13-17 staying at the International Residence Hall in the UCR Extension. She is happy to report that she was able to produce a draft of the introduction to her book manuscript.

Caroline Tushabe

Dr. Tushabe was chosen to be a Future Minority Studies (FMS)-Mellon Fellow for the year 2009. The Future of Minority Studies Research Project (FMS) is a highly regarded initiative started in 2000 by a consortium of scholars and academic institutions with a primary interest in minority identity, education and social transformation. The FMS conducts a Summer Institute with two-week summer seminar and colloquium at Cornell University. There are 12-16 participants chosen from a mature wide pool of applicants. It will run from July 26th-August 8th, 2009. The seminar leaders are: M. Jacques Alexander, Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies University of Toronto and Spelman College, and Minnie Bruce Pratt, Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, LGBT Studies Writing and Rhetoric Syracuse University. It is a great honor for a UCR faculty member to be selected for a second time to this prestigious program. Professor Tracy Fisher attended last year!

Jane Ward

This year, Jane Ward is enjoying teaching full time in Women’s Studies while working on several research and editorial projects. She is delighted to be supervising three outstanding undergraduate research projects in Women’s Studies: Sarah Wheeler's research on queer pornography and sexual aesthetics, Claudia Becerra's research on anarcho-feminism, and Veronika Staffel's research on lesbian dads. As for her own research, Jane is currently writing a book on the contemporary history of straight men who have sex with men, titled Not Gay: Straight Men, Homoerotic Encounters, and the Preservation of Normalcy, and is Co-Editor (with Beth Schneider, UC Santa Barbara) of the “Special Issue on Sexualities and Heteronormativity” for the journal Gender & Society (scheduled for publication in October 2009). Additionally, Jane has been working in conjunction with the Center for Women in Coalition to develop the Queer Pedagogies Project (QPP), which provides an interdisciplinary forum for feminist scholars to discuss the impact of queer studies on their teaching and research. QPP’s current efforts include seminars and workshops aimed at reviewing recent developments in the field and sharing best practices for teaching LGBT survey courses and integrating sexuality studies into gender studies curricula. As Co-Director of QPP, Jane was invited to give the first of these seminars for the Department of Women’s Studies at the University of New Orleans in March 2009. In other news, Jane’s recently published book, Respectably Queer, was named a Favorite Book of 2008 in The Progressive.

We are proud to announce that Chrissy Crockett will receive the annual teaching assistant award. Congratulations to her and all of our TA’s for their hard work:

- Megan Andrews
- Sarah Grant
- Jennifer Keys
- Shawn Schuelsenberg
- Lauren Schwartz
- Kristy Shih
- Tina Stavropoulos

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In the last couple of decades, violence as an analytic category has loomed large in the historical, literary and anthropological scholarship of South Asia. The challenge of thinking violence in its gendered incarnations fully and in all its complexity is not only theoretical or critical but also irreducibly ethical and political, given the proliferation of civil wars, pogroms and riots, fundamentalist movements, insurgencies and counter-insurgencies, and new technologies of violence and injury. All of these simultaneously feature and help constitute gendered actors and gendered scripts of violence. States of Trauma seeks to examine this terrain by staging a set of questions. How are we to think about the moral charge that accrues to violence? What is the relationship of violence and nonviolence? In considering the moral and affective economy of violence, how may we speak of the seduction of the idioms and practices of militarism and sexualized violence for women? How are these seductions/pleasures distinct from those proffered to men, if, indeed, they are distinct? These are some of the many questions that the essays here — that range from addressing the gendered violence of 1947 to the subalternization of the ‘bandit queen’ Phoolan Devi — seek to address.

Amalia Cabezas

Based on ten years of research, Economies of Desires is the first ethnographic study to examine the erotic underpinnings of transnational tourism. It offers startling insights into the commingling of sex, intimacy, and market forces in Cuba and the Dominican republic, two nations where tourism has had widespread effects. In her multi-layered analyses, Amalia Cabezas reconceptualizes our understandings of informal economies (particularly “affective economies”), “sex workers,” and “sexual tourism,” and she helps us appreciate how money, sex and love are intertwined within the structure of globalizing capitalism.
For three years, Jane Ward did participant-observation at three nationally prominent queer organizations in Los Angeles: Christopher Street West, which produces L.A.’s queer pride festival; the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center, a 37-year-old multi-site organization; and Bienestar, an HIV services organization for gay Latinos. Ward documents the evolution of these organizations, including class and race conflicts within them, but she especially focuses on the misuses of diversity culture. *Respectably Queer* reveals how neoliberal ideas about difference are becoming embedded in the daily life of a progressive movement and producing frequent conflicts over the meaning of "diversity." The author shows how queer activists are learning from the corporate model to leverage their differences to compete with other non-profit groups, enhance their public reputation or moral standing, and establish their diversity-related expertise. Ward argues that this instrumentalization of diversity has increased the demand for predictable and easily measurable forms of difference, a trend at odds with queer resistance.

Ward traces the standoff between the respectable world of "diversity awareness" and the often vulgar, sexualized, and historically unprofessional world of queer pride festivals. She spotlights dissenting voices in a queer organization where diversity has become synonymous with tedious and superficial workplace training. And she shows how activists fight back when prevailing diversity discourses—the ones that "diverse" people are compelled to use in order to receive funding—simply don’t fit.

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Sherine Hafez book investigates Islamic women’s activism with a focus on the Islamic movement in Cairo. The author argues that Islamic women’s activism cannot be adequately understood in terms of liberal feminist views employed to interpret their empowerment in Muslim society. Instead, this study proposes an approach that relies on these women’s perspectives as a guiding factor in assessing the impact of their activism. Islamic women activists pursue their self-enhancement in order to arrive at a Muslim notion of the ideal woman. The study concludes that the applicability of the notions of “empowerment” and “agency” as understood in western liberal paradigms should be reevaluated with regards to Islamic women activists.

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Sherine Hafez

*The Terms of Empowerment: Islamic Women Activists in Egypt*

Sherine Hafez

*Respectably QUEER: Diversity Culture & Light Lesbian Organizations*

Jane Ward
Setsu Shigematsu

Setsu Shigematsu is a scholar-activist, mother of two, and works as an assistant professor in the Department of Media and Cultural Studies. She has published on anti-imperialist women’s movements, comparative feminist philosophy and gender politics in contemporary Japanese media.

This summer, she will travel to Japan to finish her book, Between Feminism and Violence: The Women’s Liberation Movement in Japan. This is the first interdisciplinary study of the history, philosophy and political formation of the radical feminism in Japan, during the late 1960s-1970s. It examines the specificity of feminist politics in Japan, with an emphasis on this movement’s feminist approach to revolutionary violence and the struggles and contradictions common among such anti-establishment movements.

Setsu has been working with Cine Revolucionario, a new UCR student film making collective, to write and produce a film about women of color centered alternatives to dehumanizing effects of the prison regime. This feature-length documentary film includes interviews with scholars such as Angela Davis and Andrea Smith who are leading figures in the prison abolition movement.

This film is based on Setsu’s work with the L.E.A.D., a political education project for women transitioning to re-enter society and re-unite with their families after prison. LEAD stands for Leadership, Education, Action, Dialogue, and educates about better alternatives to the prison system. Setsu has coordinated and taught for the lead project since 2005, which is located in the Watts, Los Angeles.

She recently completed an anthology, Militarized Currents: Towards a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific, co-edited with Chamorro historian and poet Keith Camacho (UCLA). This collection examines the intersections of gender, militarization, race and colonialism in Asia and the Pacific, foregrounding the analysis of indigenous and feminist scholars. It is forthcoming with University of Minnesota Press in 2010.

During the 2009 spring quarter, Setsu worked to establish a chapter of Teachers Against Occupation at UCR, with Feras Abu-Galala, a Palestinian scholar and engineer. Catalyzed by the most recent assault by Israel against Palestinians in Gaza, this nation-wide network of teachers seeks to educate about the ongoing violations of human rights, international law and the other atrocities taking place in zones of militarized occupation. This chapter currently has about 30 UCR members and will hold a major event on May 26 (6-9 pm) From Palestine to the Prison Regime: the Politics of Apartheid and Settler-colonialism in the 21st Century.

“Since moving to UC Riverside in January, I have been involved in a number of activities. I currently work with the Boarding School Healing Project which is organizing to build a movement for reparations for American Indian Boarding School survivors. In the 1800s, the U.S. government instituted a policy where Native children were forcibly taken from their homes to attend boarding schools, often thousands of miles away from their homes. They were routinely sexually, emotionally, and physically abused and forbidden from speaking their languages or practicing their cultures.

It is widely believed that the level of violence, suicide, and dysfunctional behaviors within Native communities today can be traced to these boarding school policies, yet nothing has been done to acknowledge this history or to redress it. Through the BSHP, my report on Boarding Schools and Indigenous Peoples was published through the United Nations this year. We are working on a book project and filing a request for a thematic hearing with the Inter American Court.

Also, as the U.S. coordinator for the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, I organized the U.S. delegation to the World Forum on Theology and Liberation in Brazil this January. At the World Social Forum which proceeds the WFTL, the indigenous peoples’ delegation made a day-long intervention. The overall framework articulated by the indigenous organizations represented was that while they had important issues that needed support, their reason for participation was not to address their specific concerns, but to build a global movement against multinational capitalism and the state-system of governance. They stressed the need to build a movement to change the way we all live that will socially and environmentally sustainable.

In particular, they critiqued the state-form of governance. “It hasn’t worked for 500 years.” they said. They linked this system to western epistemology, and argued that we need a whole different way of thinking so that we can live differently. They envisioned a society in which all could live on the land together (they specifically mentioned African descendant groups in this regard), but in a way that would be built on principles of radical participatory democracy. What we call democracy today, they said, is not real democracy. There was also discussion on addressing gender justice within indigenous communities and the world as a whole. They attributed gender violence to colonialism and traced this gender violence to the development of state forms of governance.

Otherwise, I’m very happy to be in the land of Jamba Juice, Pinkberry Yogurt and Rocky Mountain Chocolate!”

Andrea Smith

Andrea Smith (Cherokee) is a long-time anti-violence and Native American activist and scholar. She is Assistant Professor of Media and Cultural Studies. She is co-founder of IN- CITE! Women of Color Against Violence, a national grassroots organization that utilizes direct action and critical dialogue. She is author of Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide (South End Press, 2005) a widely regarded, paradigm-shifting discussion of U.S. settler colonialism. Her second book, Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances, was published by Duke University Press in 2008. She has written widely on race, state violence and antiviolence nationally and internationally.
On Thursday May 21, C.A. (Crystal) Griffith, an independent filmmaker and Associate Professor of Film and Media Production at Arizona State University, and H.L.T. Quan – co-directors of The Angela Y. Davis Project — will share their film-in-progress and participate in a public conversation with filmmaker Cheryl Dunye. Griffith and Quan’s documentary highlights women of color’s cultural activism by featuring conversations between Angela Davis and Yuri Kochiyama, an 87-year-old Japanese American community activist and former confidant of Malcolm X.

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” will reflect on how feminist epistemologies and intersectionality challenge hegemonic positions within knowledge production and cultural practice.

From May 21 to May 23, roundtable discussions with distinguished scholars and artists will explore different approaches to decentering patriarchal heteronormativity and colonizing forms of knowledge production.

The conference will open with two film screenings: Cheryl Dunye’s The Stranger Inside and The Angela Davis Project. On Thursday afternoon, Dunye and the co-directors of The Angela Y. Davis Project will discuss their films and participate in a public discussion with UCR faculty.

Friday’s discussions feature Egyptian writer and activist Nawal El Saadawi, Professor Gayatri Gopinath, and performance artist Monica Palacios. El Saadawi will be discussing creativity, dissidence, and feminism, and Gopinath will be exploring the interface of archive, affect, and the everyday in the works of queer diasporic visual artists Allan deSouza and Chitra Ganesh.

On Saturday, Nadine Naber will analyze anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism post-9/11; her discussion with UCR faculty will broach the fraught transnational issues of occupation, war, and settler colonialism. The final panel, featuring Thu-huong Nguyen-Vo, will explore time and spectral femininity by focusing on stories of rural and working-class women in global production and garment work.
Professor Dean Karen Jo Torjesen recaps the academic history and import of the study of women in religion.

The WMST conference room was packed to capacity with interested students, faculty, and local community members.

Event organizers (CIS research group members—Professor’s Sherri Johnson, Vivian-Lee Nyitray, Sherine Hafez, Karen Torjesen, Sylvia Marcos, Feryal Cherif) with distinguished invited speakers.

Dr. Sylvia Marcos (Scholar and Director of the Center for Psychology-Ethnological research in Mexico) discusses indigenous women’s spiritual worldview and consensus-building.

UCR Professor of Political Science Feryal Cherif answers student questions about human rights and women’s organizing.
The process of organizing and holding a Court can take years, every step of which is productive of new knowledges, concrete changes, and healing. Survivor/witnesses find community and support. NGOs are given the time and space to reflect more deeply than their day-to-day work allows on the complexity of the situations with which they are involved and to create lasting networks with one another. “Resource people” (academics, journalists, program coordinators) develop presentations to supply “The Words Missing from the Stories” at seminars and roundtables that take place in the days leading up to the Courts.

After carefully sequenced testimony by witness/survivors and expert witnesses (sometimes these roles are filled by the same person if she has herself begun working for an NGO or become a community organizer), sessions close with responses by jury members. The members of the juries are deliberately chosen from among high-profile transnational human rights advocates, such as former U.N. official Denis Halliday, feminist, post-colonial theorist Gayatri Spivak, and philosopher/activist Angela Davis. Having just been given the extraordinary gift of new knowledges, painstakingly gathered synthesized, and articulated, jury members are charged with the responsibility of doing something.

One such jury member, a Nepalese judge, was able significantly to change the laws of property ownership in Nepal. The outcomes of the Courts are many and not predictable in advance, but repeatedly they have opened paths of communication between the grass roots and local, national, and international policy-makers, as well as creating profound change in the lives of all who have participated.

Although the topics of the conversations over the four days in a quiet retreat on the outskirts of Bengaluru were painful, the meetings were exhilarating. A recent guest speaker at UCR, Mexican feminist activist and religious studies scholar Sylvia Marcos, who was also at the Roundtable in Bengaluru, commented that it was the most wonderful meeting she had ever attended—and she has attended many.

Professor Waller notes “Everyone felt richly welcomed and deeply heard. People were attentive to one another on levels I am only beginning to learn about, valuing each other with keen intellectual and emotional appreciation. I came away, not only having learned volumes about the geopolitics and political economy of today’s world, but also about the value of a way of relating that requires no particular wealth, status, or position.”
The Center for Women In Coalition, the research wing of the Department, is revving up! We have spent the past year working through questions of governance and leadership while continuing to support, and encourage, a wide range of initiatives. We co-sponsored talks and conferences this past year, including the highly successful The Supernatural In Southeast Asian Studies conference in Fall 2008 (co-organized by Professors Tammy Ho and Lan Duong (Media and Cultural Studies, Board members) and most recently Agent Orange (co-organized by Professor Lan Duong and her colleagues, Christina Schwenkel (Anthropology) and David Biggs (History).) We are also co-organizing a meeting of the southern California Gender and Sexuality Studies Consortium in Fall 2009. This will bring together UC, Cal State and Community College faculty who work in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies programs and departments. The one day discussion will focus on Queer Pedagogies and Institutional Survival. We would like to thank Amy Nguyen, an undergraduate student, who has worked tirelessly to update our website. She did this as a volunteer—for no academic credit or money. Wow!

Check out our website at www.womenincoalition.ucr.edu for more information about what we do. If you are interested in working with us, please feel free to contact any of us. We are also in the process of expanding membership. Current organizing Board members include: Lan Duong, Kris King, Tracy Fisher, Sheila Givens, Tammy Ho, Priya Srinivasan, Chikako Takeshita, Jane Ward and Piya Chatterjee. Contact any of us if you are interested in getting involved!

IN MEMORY

“I would like to pay special tribute to the late Professor Emory Elliott who was a friend, guide and mentor for many of us in the Department of Women’s Studies. His encouragement, his advocacy of so many of us “behind the scenes” made it possible for some of us to feel that we might actually have a place at the table. At a personal level, I will remember working with Emory and Laura closely for three years. Through all the irritations that come with co-administering a grant, and working the minefields of academic politics, I came to admire and love Emory’s ability to always keep his door open, to be open to moments of ranting, and to see the humor in a lot of what we do. On a more material level, that grant enabled many of us in the department to get time-off, and work on collaborative projects. His generosity was immense; his heart, wide open. I can’t believe he is gone—and like so many others here at UCR, feel blessed to have sojourned with him for a while. Shanti, Peace, Emory.” –Piya Chatterjee.