From the Chair

CONGRATULATIONS to all of our graduating seniors! Please stay in touch and let us know what you are doing.

GENDER STUDIES IS HUGE NATIONWIDE, according to former Women’s Studies Lecturer Amy Ziering. Amy has been criss-crossing the country, including a stop hosted by UCR’s Women’s Resource Center in May, to screen and discuss her Academy Award-nominated documentary The Invisible War, which addresses sexual assault in the U.S. military. Her new film, due out this fall, addresses campus sexual assault, recently identified by President Obama as a top national priority. She and her co-director, Kirby Dick, have been impressed by the powerful response to their film by both male and female students. She was particularly impressed by the passion and articulateness of the UCR audience.

It has certainly been a pivotal year for our own Women’s Studies Department. Our request to change the department’s name to Gender and Sexuality Studies (GSST) has been approved, and the new name will become effective for the 2014-15 academic year. It will take time for all the university’s on-line systems and the Catalogue of Courses to catch up. New and returning students should look under both GSST and WMST when registering for courses and looking for their grades.

We are also looking forward to welcoming a new faculty member, Dr. Jade Sasser who brings extensive expertise in feminist political ecology, sustainability, and health studies to our department (see interview on pages 2-3). Dr. Sasser will contribute centrally to the development of our new Bachelor of Science degree in the areas of Sustainability and Health Studies.

We congratulate both winners of this year’s Tomás Rivera Award, senior majors Jo Montoya and Judith Osorio (profiled and interviewed on pages 4-5). This award recognizes the academic excellence of two graduating seniors in the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences for outstanding academic and/or creative achievement and demonstrated commitment to community service. Women’s Studies students are clearly making a great difference in communities on and off campus.

Recognizing the power and effectiveness of including gender in the university curriculum, the students in Professor Jane Ward’s Women’s Studies 128 Critical Approaches to Heterosexuality course have proposed a campus wide course requirement in gender studies. Their resolution cites statistics on date rape, forced sex, gang rape, abduction, and other forms of harassment, violence, and discrimination on college campuses nationwide, and stresses that the complex topic of gender is faced by everyone. It will be introduced first to the ASUCR and then to the Academic Senate.

Dr. Banu Subramaniam, this year’s presenter of the biennial Jane Block Distinguished Lecture, spoke about race, gender, and the practice of science in a brilliant talk on the discourses surrounding the migration of plant species. Dr. Subramaniam is Associate Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Di-
Interview with
Dr. Jade Sasser
by Melissa Rodriguez

MR: How did you come to connect Women’s Studies with political ecology and sustainability studies?

JS: My PhD is in Environmental Science and Policy Management, and I study how environmental activism and environmental change impact the policies and programs that are developed around women’s health. Environmental problems are social problems because they impact all aspects of social life, and because social behaviors can either exacerbate or alleviate environmental problems. So we can’t separate society and environment, and we can’t really understand social relations without analyzing gender relations. Research has shown that women and men have different environmental knowledge, different social roles when it comes to environment-related work, and we tend to be impacted very differently when environmental problems or disasters strike. These connections are increasingly important as we think about climate change, our constant exposure to toxic chemicals, and issues like food deserts.

MR: Some of your research focuses on gender, poverty, and climate change in Africa, could you tell me a little more about that?

JS: I spent a number of years in East Africa before returning to graduate school for my PhD, and one of the things that was most striking to me was how innovative and resilient women farmers are, particularly in rural areas. But the development programs that come into their communities often don’t take that into account. For my next project, I’ll be looking at the ways women in Madagascar find and use household energy sources differently in the context of climate change, and how this relates to questions around empowerment, development, and poverty.

MR: What is it like to be a researcher? Do you set your emotions and feelings to the side?

JS: I love doing research! My emotions and feelings are never set aside— I need to be passionate about a project in order to want to invest the time and energy required to spend weeks, months, or years working on it. At the same time, the passion is for the questions, not any specific result or outcome. Researchers have to be prepared for things not to go as planned, for there to be mistakes and setbacks along the way. You also have to be prepared for your ideas to be challenged. That’s part of the fun of doing research.

MR: How did you decide to study gender, population politics, and the environment?

JS: In a former life, I worked in international development, in the field of international public health. My job was to develop and manage reproductive health programs in East and Southern Africa, and over time I noticed that in international development agencies, environmental priorities often played a role in determining how women’s reproductive health services were organized. I found it fascinating. When I returned to grad school, I knew that I wanted to pursue these questions further.

MR: Why did you decide to enter your field? Why the Women Studies

Melissa Rodriguez is a graduating senior, class of 2014. She is the first in her immediate family to attend a UC. She writes:

It has been challenging but also very rewarding. Women’s Studies has taught me many things, including the importance of literacy as key to women’s empowerment and that receiving an education helps us fight the challenges, oppression, and subordinations we face as women every day. It has also taught me to be an independent woman and most importantly to love myself. Women’s Studies has instilled in me the importance of justice and equality for all. In the future I want to become a family lawyer as well as an advocate for women’s higher education.

Professor Jade Sasser will be joining the Gender and Sexuality Department in Fall 2014 as an assistant professor. She has a Ph.D. in Environmental Science, Policy & Management from UC Berkeley (2012) as well as an M.A. in Cultural Anthropology from UC Berkeley (2007) and an M.P.H. in International Health from Boston University (2000). She was an assistant professor of women’s studies at Loyola Marymount University from 2012 to 2014. She was interviewed by Melissa Rodriguez.
department?
JS: The first time I took a Women’s Studies class was in high school, and women’s issues have always been central to the work that I’ve done, whether it was applied public health work or academic work in anthropology and environmental studies. My research is highly interdisciplinary, and teaching within an interdisciplinary department like Women’s Studies allows me the flexibility to analyze gendered inequality by drawing on a range of disciplines.
MR: Have you ever found yourself in a position where you have to defend your position as a women’s studies professor? Or perhaps more specifically, women’s studies in general?
JS: I’ve never had to defend my position as a Women’s Studies professor, but I have met a lot of people who weren’t aware that Women’s Studies is a major. So I get a lot of questions about what I teach, and why we focus on women, etc., and I welcome those questions because they’re always teachable moments. My usual response is to say that

Women’s Studies helps to give us a fuller and more complete understanding of the world we live in, by exposing and critiquing patriarchy and challenging gendered inequality at micro, macro, and global scales.
MR: Why UCR? What was your first impression of the students here at UCR?
JS: UCR has one of the most diverse student bodies you could find. I find that diversity makes a big difference in how students analyze information, apply it to the context of their lives and communities, and participate in dialogue and debate with their peers. My impression is that UCR students are dynamic, engaged, and committed to maximizing the opportunities a university education has to offer.
MR: Could you tell me about the classes you are going to teach here at UCR?
JS: I will be teaching classes focused on women in global context, including courses on development and environment. I’ll also be teaching a course on feminist research methods.
MR: What is the best way to study for the classes you will teach?
JS: The best way to study for my classes is to do the reading! And not just to read it passively, but to really engage with it and be prepared to have something to say about it. Develop questions as you read. Think critically about the text. What is the author’s central argument? How do they support it? Do you agree or disagree with what they’ve written? Why? What would you say differently if you had written this piece?
MR: To conclude, what would you say is the most rewarding aspect of your job?
JS: Developing relationships with students is by far the most rewarding aspect of being a professor. Mentoring students, helping them develop academically over the years and then watching them go out into the world to make their mark is so inspiring. I can’t wait to meet my students at UCR!

Our Department Name has Changed from Women's Studies to Gender and Sexuality Studies

Continued from page 1 Chair

reector of the Five-College Women’s Studies Program. We are grateful once again for the intellectual openness and generosity of Jane and Richard Block who made this path-breaking event possible. We are al-
M.W. What are some of the activities and projects you have been involved in during your years at UCR?

J.M. In my first year I participated in programs at the LGBT Center. I was active in CORE (Community Outreach Educators), a peer education program whose student volunteers are trained to educate others regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. We visited classrooms where students could ask questions about queerness and sexuality. That was a great experience because a lot of us, including me, had just come out, and we had a chance to tell our stories, which was really empowering. I was also active in another student program, La Familia, which connects queer communities with Middle Eastern, and solar communities, which before had no connection on campus. A lot of Middle Eastern people on campus feel unwelcome, and we wanted to push for a space where they would feel welcome.

Through that organization we decided to organize events that would make us and our name heard. We wanted to push ourselves into the spaces in which people were talking about Middle Eastern issues. This was the idea behind the “Queering the Middle East Symposium.” Working with Students for Justice in Palestine, we sent out a call to students to submit essays and workshop ideas. Megan also took the lead in reserving a room, securing funding, and doing publicity. We thought the symposium was necessary because it was about a topic not talked about. In many classes nothing queer is mentioned unless we ask about it. It is usually not part of the curriculum. That’s why we brought this group together and created the symposium.

This year for the Tabla conference we reached out to other campuses. The main purpose of the Tabla conference was to create a space, modeled on NAMES and Neighbors, for queer people with ties to the Middle
East, North Africa, South Asia, and neighboring countries like Armenia, Turkey, and Iran. Conference workshops ranged from spirituality to political activism, Palestine, disability justice, art, poetry, and current projects within NAMES communities.

M.W. You are about to graduate. Are you going to be able to continue this kind of work?

J.M. I hope so. Next year I want to teach English in Korea. I studied Korean for two years, and I really want to learn the language well. After I get experience in Korea, I would like to teach English in the Middle East and improve my Arabic. I would also like to go to Latin America. My goal is to go to graduate school eventually.

CT: Tell me a little bit about yourself. How did you get to UCR?

JO: I grew up in the San Fernando Valley in an apartment building next to a motel overlooking the railroad tracks with my mom and baby sister -- it wasn't the best environment (laugh). I always did well academically and graduated from a STEM magnet high school. But I got pregnant when I was nineteen and it was not until I had my son that I really buckled down to put my life on track. I worked a medical assistant job while I attended three different community colleges so that I could transfer to a four-year college. I came to UCR in 2012.

CT: What was it like to start at UCR with your baby son?

JO: It was a rough start, both for myself and for my son who was just turning two and only spoke Spanish. Economically it was really tough because I did not yet live in family housing and rents were high. My peer campus mentor, who also had a child, helped me with the transition. But I still felt like an outcast because UCR was not really set up to meet the needs of student parents. For instance, I had to figure out how to apply to family housing and how to get my child into the on-campus daycare center all on my own. I was taking care of my son alone, so I could not attend student functions in the evenings. Small things like that made me feel like the only person with a child who did not fit in.

CT: Is this why you founded R’Kids?

JO: Yes. I founded R’Kids in 2012 to help student parents navigate college. We also formed the Student Parent Action Committee and held a town hall meeting with UCR administrators to convey our needs. Some improvements have already been made including increased safety patrol and a call box in the Canyon Crest family housing complex and diaper changing tables in the restrooms in the HUB. There will soon be EBT registers on campus, a grant for commuting single parent students, and parent student brochures and orientations. The university is hosting a student parent graduation and we have been able to hold kid-friendly events on campus. In that sense it has been very fulfilling.

CT: That’s great. What are your plans after graduation?

JO: I am taking a brain vacation first (laugh). Then I will get ready for my GRE and graduate school application. My goal is to get a Ph.D. in Higher Education Policy.
Working in Global Public Health

Fatima Ahmed is graduating senior, class of 2014. Prof. Chikako Takeshita interviewed her about her participation in the UCR Global Public Health Brigades in Honduras.

CT: First, could you tell me a little bit about yourself? How did you come to UCR and to women's studies?

FA: It has been a long journey for me. After attending college in Seattle and Chicago, I returned to California where I was born. I came to UCR as a neuroscience major, and I still love the discipline and continue to study it. Before last year I didn’t even really know what Women’s Studies was. Then I took my first Women’s Studies class with Professor Sherine Hafez, and it opened my eyes to a whole new way of looking at the world through the lenses of human rights, social justice, gender equality, cultural sensitivity and different sexual identities. So I switched to women’s studies, and I am very happy with my decision. I learned from so many of the department’s faculty. They are impressive in their fields of research and compassionate as professors, challenging me to go further than I thought was possible in such a short time.

My long term goal has been to enter the health field and support underserved communities both local and global. I have completed all the prerequisite courses I need to apply to physician assistant programs. Switching from hard sciences to women's studies I have learned a new language and vocabulary with which to speak more effectively about matters concerning gender inequality and women's needs, which will be valuable in my future.

FA: I was lucky enough to be a part of a very special club on campus; Global Public Health Brigades. I was very impressed when I learned about Global Brigades, which is the largest student-led global health and sustainable development organization in the world. We have a holistic approach to development. In other words, we carry out projects with the full consent and involvement of the local community. There are several chapters here at UCR that have different focuses like medical, public health, dental, business, architecture, human rights, water and more. If I had more time, I would want to spread awareness of this club within Women’s Studies. I will have to leave that as a challenge to future and continuing students in our major.

As for my own experience, we travelled to a village called Jute in the mountainous region of Honduras. Medical brigade had gone in first to identify the community’s health issues and found the main health issues to be parasites, health and safety issues with obtaining water from a river down the mountain, and respiratory issues from breathing the smoke from their stoves. The water brigade went in next and laid down pipes and built a water system in the village. Then we, the public health brigade, covered the floors of the houses with concrete. We did this because children were getting parasites from crawling on the dirt floors of their homes. We also built latrines, showers, septic tanks, and water pilas where they can do their dishes and get drinking water. We broke into groups and were each assigned to a home, and the families worked along side us. Before, many women had to walk down a steep hill to the river, fetch water, and lug it up to do the dishes, shower, etc. They had no privacy when they wanted to bathe, but now they have a safe and private place to do so. So, this was quite life changing for them. It was rewarding to be able to help them in such a direct way and get to know them personally and learn a bit about their culture. They were extremely hospitable and gracious and very excited for the improvements. But we all felt we were the lucky ones for the opportunity, and it was rewarding for us to be able to make such a difference in a practical and personal way.

CT: How long were you there?

FA: We did everything in one week, but it took us an entire year to prepare for the trip, raising funds for travel and procuring material that we needed for the building and school supplies and shoes to donate to the orphanage we visited during the week. We worked closely with UC Irvine’s Public Health chapter as well. All of the funds donated to the organization go straight to the

Outstanding Student Scholar-Activist
Campus Organizing

Megan Awwad has been recognized by the Women’s Studies Department for her organizing work on the Tabla conference and various campus activities she has been involved in. Prof. Jane Ward spoke with Megan.

JW: What kinds of organizing projects have you been involved with on campus?

MA: I have been involved in organizing around the queer Arab and South Asian community on campus through NAMES and Neighbors, which Jo Montoya and I co-founded together. Also, I helped create Tabla: Drumming our way into Queerness, which was a queer conference focusing on issues that Queer and Trans Middle Easterners, South Asians, and North Africans face. In addition, I have been involved in helping out with the Middle Eastern Student Center. Recently, I have been getting more involved in Students for Justice in Palestine and in trying to create spaces for unity and solidarity amongst people of color.

JW: How has your education in women’s studies shaped your organizing and political work?

MA: My education through women studies has given me the discursive tools with which to understand the ways systemic oppression works. Women’s Studies has taught me the importance of organizing and standing in solidarity with other folks. Readings assigned in class, group activities, and especially interactions with professors helped further my understanding.

JW: What do you think are some of the most urgent social justice issues facing your generation?

MA: The most urgent social justice issue that I personally believe our generation faces is the occupation of Palestine. However, that is an extremely biased answer, since I am Palestinian. But to further expand on the question, Palestine is entangled...
with many of the most important social issues that the United States faces, such as the Prison Industrial Complex, the U.S./Mexico border, immigration, racism, and the fact that both the United States and Israel are settler colonialist countries.

JW: What is one thing that your professors don’t know about you?
MA: One thing that my professors don’t know about me is that during my spare time and in order to de-stress from all of my class I love to go swimming.

Latina Empowerment
by Chikako Takeshita

Eva Torres and Crystal Martinez are part of the Latina/Hispanic Women’s Empowerment Research Group led by Cal State San Bernardino psychology professor Manijeh Badiee. The research project involves interviewing Latinas/Hispanic women in order to learn more about their community’s needs. So far Eva and Crystal have facilitated focus groups with participants they recruited through the Mexican consulate. They are also transcribing the group interviews and learning how to code. Eva and Crystal’s proposal for a roundtable entitled “Ni de aqui, Ni de alla” was accepted for the National Latino Psychological Association conference, which will take place in New Mexico in October. The panel will address Latina women’s struggle to define their self-identity given that they feel that belonging to the same community helped the women relate to her. She is preparing to apply to masters programs in public health so that she can continue her research on the empowerment of Latinas. Her ultimate goal is to become a professor. This is what Eva had to say to incoming women’s studies students: “Don’t let people question your choice of major. Know that everything is worth it. And keep going!”

This was the first time for many of the women in Crystal’s focus group to have talked with anyone about their struggles, and she was inspired by the emotional connections she made with them. Crystal plans to pursue a masters degree in public health and work in Orange County in the community where she grew up. She has already been involved in Latina Health Access, a community support group that promotes mental and physical health among women living in a mobile home park. She witnessed her own mother flourish in the group. Crystal’s father, a very traditional Mexican man, did not allow his wife to drive. Crystal’s mother saved up, took driving lessons, and one day secretly took her husband’s truck and drove to the grocery store for the first time. Crystal has been personally touched by women’s empowerment through such experiences. She found her own voice through women’s studies, which gave her the language to explain some of the hardships she endured and helped her to define her identity and find her place in the world. While at UCR, Crystal also studied abroad in England and volunteered with Rainbow Pride Youth Alliance for three years. This is what Crystal had to say to incoming women’s studies students: “Take advantage of everything. Women’s Studies is more than just classes and theory. Live it!”
Women in Engineering  
by Mitzi Salgado

Mitzi Salgado made a presentation on her study of female students in the Bourns College of Engineering at the UCR Undergraduate Research Symposium. She reports on her experience as follows:

I did research in women in engineering because they are significantly underrepresented. I suggest developing a "Learning Community" composed of female first-year students who will attend engineering classes together, have the same classes, and participate in an additional "Learning Community class" where they will meet in a classroom setting few times per week, do homework together, and meet with their mentors and their advisers. They will continue to be in the "Learning Community" setting in their second year as mentors for the next class of first year students in engineering.

Only one out of every five students applying to engineering are female. Worse yet, the drop out rate for female engineering students is 67%. Their retention is critical. This is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed.

I want to propose a solution at the University level because educational institutions are designed to empower individuals, among them women. Women face discrimination in the engineering classroom because they are minorities in these fields, and university institutions have the power to change this. It all starts with education.

My research is not just an investigation. It doesn't end there. My goal is to improve the environment for women in engineering classrooms through the creation of a safe space. This safe space will raise greater awareness of women's issues in the classroom and potentially create a new environment over the course of time. This is my duty as a women's studies major. It is a calling, a vocation. I want to improve the lifestyles and opportunities for women across the board. To plant a seed of opportunity and possibility in the hearts of all women who want to enter male-dominated careers and professions such as engineering. To tell them that engineering is a choice, and such a wonderful rewarding career. I compare engineering to motherhood. If women can create life, they can create a bridge. That choice exists; there is room for them in engineering fields. It is possible. We can increase the number of women in engineering, and we must work towards a safe space for them in those professions. Women engineering students should not live in the shadows in engineering classrooms, nor should they face isolation.

Youth Organizing  
by Chikako Takeshita

Joshua Chavez and Christina Contreras interned for the Child Leader Project, an international non-profit organization that provides leadership programming to children and youth. As Social Justice Interns, they focused on nutrition and the food desert as well as community organizing for youths. They also organized the first Re-Discover Riverside Day for youths living in a generally low-income area of town. The teens spent the day in downtown Riverside, exploring the various resources the city has to offer including the historic downtown and museums, art and poetry night at a local café, and the farmers market.

Joshua is a first-generation college student, who transferred to UCR in 2012 from Riverside City College after supporting himself for several years working at a major grocery store while attending junior colleges. He came in as an anthropology major and declared women's studies as a second major.

In summer 2013, Joshua joined a non-profit organization called One Heart Source in Cape Town, South Africa, which works with some of the most disadvantaged children in the world offering them opportunities to excel academically and personally. Joshua worked in the Imizamo Yethu community, also known as Mandela Park, as a relationship builder between One Heart and community members, youth leaders, and other officials, reaching out to them so that the organization could strengthen its partnership with the local community. "It was emotionally draining to witness the hardship that people in Mandela Park endured," Joshua recalled, "It is a black township, a ghetto, that is built
right on top of a dump. Up to nine families share a restroom, people have to walk a block or two just to get any kind of running water, and electricity can go out any time day or night. Just seeing that was a lot to take in. How can we help bring positive social change to a community that has so much to overcome?"

"It was motivating to work with the youths," Joshua continued. They shared stories of struggles and bonded over them. Joshua learned that they were fearful of growing older, because of the crime, the pressure to make ends meet by selling drugs, and having to move away from their families into the city to find jobs. "They realize that education is important to change the situations that they are currently in," said Joshua, "and yet, they lack the resources. I felt very humbled at hearing this. What the organization does is try to create a sustainable social movement by providing assistance based on stories like these that its volunteers collect from local communities." Joshua also learned from a parliament member, who invited him to her home for lunch, that all the necessary courses to transfer to UCR, where she started as a psychology major with the goal of working with boys and youths in juvenile halls. After taking a women’s studies course, she decided to focus on girls instead and switched her major to women’s studies. Interning with the Child Leader Project has given Christina the opportunity to work directly with youths in juvenile detention draws on her experience of growing up in East LA. She along with some of her friends had to deal with having gang members in their families and some of her friends even went to jail themselves for various reasons. She realized that many of the teens who got in trouble had immigrant parents who did not speak English or who couldn’t relate to their child’s experience of growing up in an urban crime-ridden area. Christina recounts, "I was running around the streets with friends since I was about thirteen. But when and if I found myself in bad situations, I always had my mother and father (even if separated) and older sister to talk to. My friends on the other hand were on the streets because they were looking for somewhere to go and someone to identify with." Christina’s friends and peers who got in trouble with the law would often come to talk to her mother because she would listen to them rather than simply get upset as their own parents would have. "Even to this date, my friends remember my mom and visit her" says Christina "I want to be that person," she says, "whom young people can come talk to when they are having problems and cannot find anyone to identify with."

Christina’s interest in working with youths in juvenile detention draws on her experience of growing up in East LA. She along with some of her friends had to deal with having gang members in their families and some of her friends even went to jail themselves for various reasons. She realized that many of the teens who got in trouble had immigrant parents who did not speak English or who couldn’t relate to their child’s experience of growing up in an urban crime-ridden area. Christina recounts, "I was running around the streets with friends since I was about thirteen. But when and if I found myself in bad situations, I always had my mother and father (even if separated) and older sister to talk to. My friends on the other hand were on the streets because they were looking for somewhere to go and someone to identify with." Christina’s friends and peers who got in trouble with the law would often come to talk to her mother because she would listen to them rather than simply get upset as their own parents would have. "Even to this date, my friends remember my mom and visit her" says Christina "I want to be that person," she says, "whom young people can come talk to when they are having problems and cannot find anyone to identify with."
Scholars in women's studies have been tracing the dense traffic between our conceptions of women, gender, and science. Dr. Subramaniam spoke about the historical, political, and cultural specificity of our anxiety surrounding the immigration of plants, animals and humans.


"Dr. Subramaniam's research was so innovative, especially her curation of news articles and commercials that classified "invasive" plants as "adaptive, aggressive... with a high reproductive capacity," leading to an increased call for protection of local areas. She drew a clear parallel between the rhetoric of invasive biology and the xenophobic and nationalistic narratives against 'illegal' immigrants and 'potential terrorists' following 9/11."

-- Paris Brown, Graduate Student
Spring Party for Graduating Seniors  
June 2, 2014
We celebrated the end of the school year with graduating seniors and their families and friends, women’s studies alum, current students, faculty, and guests. Women’s studies alumnae Eli Tizcareno and Virginia Escobar spoke eloquently about the activist work they are doing and how it was inspired by their major.

Feminist Political Ecology & Sustainability Studies Lecture Series

Jade Sasser  
February 10, 2014
Making Sexual Stewards: Youth and Population-Environment Activism in the Age of Social Justice

Anne-Marie Hanson  
February 12, 2014
Shoes in the Seaweed and Bottles on the Beach: Global Garbage and Women’s Activism in Coastal Yucatán

Mez Baker-Médard  
February 14, 2014
Lost at Sea: Regendering of Marine Resources Use in Madagascar

Carmelita Tropicana  
April 22, 2014
Carmelita Can be a Beast: Sex, Gender, and the Animal Species
Alina Troyano, a Cuban-born artist who performs under the name “Carmelita Tropicana,” visited UCR in April 2014 and shared excerpts from her book I, Carmelita Tropicana: Performing Between Cultures (2000). In addition to showing film clips and re-enacting some of Tropicana’s multi-media performances, Troyano talked about her creative process and the generative intersections among sex, gender, racialization, and those we mark as animal.
Pictured (l to r): Prof. Alicia Arrizón with Troyano, Tyler Stallings (Artistic Director, Culver Center of the Arts and the Sweeney Art Gallery), Prof. Jennifer Doyle (English, LGBITS/Queer Lab), and Tammy Ho (Women’s Studies).
An Interview with Jane Block

by Chikako Takeshita

Jane and Richard Block’s generous endowment to the Women’s Studies Department has enabled us to invite prominent speakers to UCR for the biannual Jane Block Distinguished Lecture in Women’s Studies. I asked Jane, who has been a resident of Riverside for 45 years, to tell me about her community organizing work. During our conversation Jane emphasized that all the work she has done has been collaborative and made sure that I noted down the people she worked with in each of her projects.

CT: What kinds of activist work did you become involved in during the 1970s after you came to Riverside?

JB: I joined the National Organization of Women (NOW) and gave talks on women’s rights and issues to various women’s clubs in Riverside. In these meetings I learned from the reaction of the women when I would discuss abusive relationships, and women who were unable to leave their husbands because they had no other resources, that it was a significant local problem. We formed a group and requested that the Riverside County Board of Supervisors form a Commission on the Status of Women. The first thing the commission did was to hold a hearing on the need for a shelter for battered women and to work with them to help the victims. Other shelters that went the opposite way and alienated law enforcement did not do so well. Much has changed since women have entered the workforce in law enforcement.

CT: Could you tell me about your involvement in the Women’s Resource Center at UCR.

JB: I was a member of the committee that led to the founding of the Women’s Resource Center. WRCs were starting to happen on college campuses, but it was still a new concept. I helped the students organize and establish one at UCR. After it was up and running, the students decided that they didn’t want an older community member on the Board anymore and asked me to step down, which I thought showed good leadership on the part of the student board members.

CT: What were some of the other things you worked on around women’s issues?

JB: After we founded Alternative to Domestic Violence, we started working on electing women to political positions in Riverside County. We first got Kay Ceniceros from Hemet elected to the Board of Supervisors. Corky Larson from Palm Springs followed. And then Melba Dunlap, a Riverside nurse, was elected to the Board. Riverside thus became the second county in California to have a female majority on the board of supervisors. This was very important because having women in office dramatically changed the attitude of the county government where earlier only one department was headed by a woman. The Board still listens to women carefully. These three women did some wonderful work. I have not been active in pushing for women officials since, and the current Board is all male.

CT: I see. Hopefully we will elect more women in the future.

JB: After we got the three female board members elected, I thought about what I should put my energy into next. Feminism was moving along nicely and young women were having careers and they needed reliable and high quality childcare. So,
we decided to found the Riverside County Childcare Consortium, which still exists and is organized County-wide. After getting the consortium established we went to Riverside County Superintendent of Schools Dale Holmes and asked him to provide us with office space and supervision of our employees. We needed experts in early childhood education. He assigned Diane Mapes and Carolyn Wylie to work with the consortium. They had both been part of our original group. When First 5 California was instituted in 1998 as a state funded program that focuses on educating parents and caretakers about the importance of the first five years of a child’s development, Riverside County was ready to institute the program because we had already organized childcare countywide. Carolyn Wylie, since deceased, was the first executive director of the First 5 Program in our county; she had previously spent many years working for the Riverside County Office of Education and made important contributions to early childhood education locally and statewide. However Diane Mapes continues to be active in the Consortium.

CT: Could you tell me about your environmental activism work?

JB: While I was working on women’s issues, I also got involved in environmental conservation. What inspired me was a story I heard from Ruth Bratten Anderson Wilson who helped save the Santa Ana River, a Riverside landmark, from a plan to turn it into a channelized concrete waterway with utility pipes and a highway running alongside it, much like the rivers in LA. Pete Dangermond was the county park director. With his help they were able to have the river proclaimed a natural open space. Anyway, one day my husband and I were hiking on Box Springs Mountain and we ran into a man on a motorcycle, who told us that he was planning to develop the area, claiming that “people would rather look up at nice houses rather than ugly boulders.” My husband Richard Block, a UCR Math professor, and I organized a group with many members from UCR to try to save the mountain, with its extensive wildlife, from excessive development.

CT: I live by Box Springs as do you, and have seen coyotes, foxes, raccoons, possums, and bobcats in my backyard. I even found a baby kangaroo rat once. During the winter, after we get the little rain that we do, Box Springs Mountain turns green and it is quite beautiful. It does look a bit like the highlands in Scotland, from where UCR gets the Highlanders name.

JB: This was in 1973. Our group provided the citizen impetus and with a lot of help from then-County Supervisor Norton Younglove, the county obtained over 2,200 acres on the mountain and established the Box Springs Mountain Park. The Park is adjacent to the UCR land reserve that contains the symbolic letter “C” at the top of a much-celebrated hiking trail for students.

CT: I am so glad you were able to save the mountain; it is a great open space along with the nearby Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park.

JB: Yes. So, next we had to save Sycamore Canyon, which was also slated for development in the mid 1980s. Many people were involved in this effort. This time we were able to make arrangements to develop one area and save the rest for a park. Did you know that, after Griffith Park in Los Angeles, Sycamore Canyon is the second largest park that has been established and operated by a city in southern California?

CT: No, I did not. But, I have seen many people hike, mountain bike, and walk their dogs there. You can walk up and see the entire city from the top of the hill. I never really thought about how nice it is to have a place like this in the neighborhood. Thank you so much for talking to me. I learned a lot today and it was very enlightening.

JB: You are welcome.
Alicia Arrizón


Sherine Hafez

Sherine Hafez is Associate Professor of Women’s Studies and the author of a number of books and publications on women in Arab, Middle Eastern and Muslim majority countries. Her first book, The Terms of Empowerment: Islamic Women Activists in Egypt (American University Press, 2003), questioned the applicability of western liberal notions of empowerment to Islamic women's activism. More recently her second book, An Islam of Her Own: Reconsidering Religion And Secularism In Women’s Islamic Movements (New York University Press, 2011), challenged binary representations of women's subjectivities in Islamic movements. Hafez is also co-editor of a volume entitled, Anthropolgy of the Middle East and North Africa: Into the New Millennium, (Indiana University Press, 2013). Her articles have appeared in American Ethnologist; Feminist Review; Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies, Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society and Journal of North African Studies. Hafez has been giving lectures on topics related to gender, Islamic movements, women’s Islamic activism and the uprisings in the Arab World. She recently returned from Egypt where she conducted research for a project that explores the role of women in the Egyptian revolution.

Tamara C. Ho

Tamara C. Ho was tenured and promoted to Associate Professor in 2013. Her work focuses on transnationalism, migration, human rights, and intersections of race, ethnicity, and sexuality. Her areas of specialization include 20th century American literature, LGBT studies, Anglophone postcoloniality, and Southeast Asian diasporas. Her recent research has explored trans-gendered shamanism and speculative/science fiction by women. She authored the entry on "Burmese American Literature" for The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature, edited by Rachel C. Lee (2014). Ho’s first book Romancing Human Rights: Gender, Intimacy, and Power Between Burma and the West is forthcoming from University of Hawai’i Press.

In January, Professor Ho shared a preview of her book with the Riverside branch of the American Association of University Women. Her talk "Gender, Leadership, and Change in South East Asia" focused on Burmese Nobel Laureate and former political prisoner-turned-parliamentarian Aung San Suu Kyi. Bakersfield College invited Ho to speak at their March celebration of Women’s History and More. Her talk “From El Movimiento to Real Women Have Curves: Chicana Activism and Edu-
Chikako Takeshita

Chikako Takeshita is Associate Professor of Women's Studies. She is the author of The Global Biopolitics of the IUD: How Science Constructs Contraceptive Users and Women's Bodies (MIT Press, 2012). She has also published articles on bioprospecting and indigenous people's knowledge of medicinal plants. Her most recent article "Eco-diapers: The American Discourse of Sustainable Motherhood" has appeared in Mothering in the Age of Neoliberalism edited by Melinda Giles (Demeter Press, 2014). She has just completed a piece called "Babies are Born Everywhere: Representations of Childbirth in Call the Midwife." During the 2013-2014 academic year, Takeshita was involved in several collaborative projects including Culture of Technoscience working group, NEH-funded Narratives in Tandem workshops, and the UC wide Sci-ence and Technology Studies Re-

treat. Takeshita's current main project Surgical Birth examines ca-
sarean section as a cultural practice that has become extremely common and yet remains controversial. This summer and fall, she will be inter-
viewing women who have had C-
sections in order to better under-
stand their embodied experiences of giving birth surgically. Takeshita is also the primary editor of the current newsletter.

Marguerite Waller, Chair

Marguerite Waller is Professor of Women's Studies and Comparative Literature. She has served on the faculty of UCR since 1990 and was a founding member of the department. Her research focuses on gender, sexuality, and knowledge production, transnational dialogues among contemporary women's movements, feminist and queer film and media, and postcolonial cinema. She is co-editor of Postcolonial Cinema Studies (Routledge 2012), The Wages of Empire (Paradigm Publishers 2007), Dialogue and Difference (Palgrave 2005), Federico Fellini: Contemporary Perspectives (University of Toronto 2002), and Frontline Feminisms (Routledge 2001).


Jane Ward

Jane Ward is Associate Professor of Women's Studies. Her research is centered in queer, feminist, and critical race studies, with focus on the conver-
gences of heterosexuality and white-
ness. She is the author of Between Bros: The Sexual Encounters of Straight White Men (forthcoming with NYU Press in 2015), in which she argues that heterosexuality is not the opposite or absence of ho-
mosexuality, but its own unique mode of engaging homosexual sex, a mode characterized by pretense, disidentification and heteronorma-
tive investments. While recent ac-
counts of “men who have sex with men” have focused on men of color and the ethnoracial factors that pre-
sumably keep them in the closet, Be-
tween Bros highlights the dominant culture’s investments in preserving sexual and racial normalcy for its most idealized figures: straight white men. Ward is also the author of Respectably Queer (Vanderbilt University Press, 2008), as well as several articles on queer Los Angeles and the queerness of children. She is currently conducting research on sed-
duction trainings and pickup-artist bootcamps for straight men. Some of her writing can be found at the blogs feministpigs.com and social-
quiry.com. Ward has performed in the L.A.-based queer burlesque troupe The Miracle Whips and is a baker of pies.
News from Our Alums

Vianey Ramirez-Roseborough, class of ‘03, is a lawyer and financial adviser. She served as a public defender for seven years and felt that her Women’s Studies training was an important asset to her work, which involved representing “hundreds of women and children in the ‘criminal’ and ‘delinquency’ context.

Arlene Jane Tinga, class of ’05, has gone on to earn an M.A. in Education from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with a specialization in Guidance and Counseling and a PPS credential. After working for several years as a program supervisor and therapist in the area of autism, she earned a second M.A. in Sexuality Studies from San Francisco State University. She reports that her Women’s Studies major initially helped her in her school counseling internship program, allowing her to bring an open mind to the lives and decisions of students. Students trusted her, and she was able to help them in a wide array of situations. When she began working with individuals with autism and their families, she found that she was adept at thinking outside the box in determining effective therapies.

But “sex and sexuality,” she reports, “were still very taboo when it came to individuals with disabilities, especially autism.” Her Women’s Studies major inspired her recent decision to return to school with the specific goal of creating a sex education program that primary caregivers could use with individuals with autism and their families.

Jasmine Wilson, class of ‘11, has gone on to work in the field of Social Services/Human Services as a Behavior Interventionist in the field of Autism Spectrum Therapies. She now works for the County of Orange-Social Services Agency and is entering her second year of graduate work at Argosy University where she is pursuing an M.A. in Counseling Psychology. Her goal is to go into clinical work with families and children. She is delighted to discover that the foundation laid at UCR is enabling her to do extremely well in graduate school, where she particularly enjoys learning about research in her areas of interest.

Connie Guzman, class of ’12, has been working as a Youth Leader for 1st and 2nd graders, offering homework help and art lessons. Working in the public school setting, she has come to realize how intensely young children are exposed to heteronormativity, and her Women’s Studies major has built her confidence in her abilities to help change that. This fall she will be entering San Francisco State University to pursue an MA in Women and Gender Studies. She is happy that so many people in her own life have become feminists. Please send us news about what you are doing and how your Women’s Studies degree is contributing to your work and/or further studies to: mwaller@ucr.edu
As you have read in this newsletter, Women's Studies (now Gender and Sexuality Studies) is accomplishing great work in research and teaching. Gifts from alumni and friends like you help us support student scholarship, sponsor conferences, bring guest scholar-activists to our classrooms, and conduct research on important gender issues. Please make your gift to Women's Studies today!

In Memoriam

Elia Leticia Borrero
1991-2013

UCR senior, Elia Leticia Borrero from Altoona, Wisconsin, passed away in September 2013 after a 13-month battle with pancreatic cancer.

Elia was a shining star in the Women's Studies Department, showing great promise as a scholar and a teacher. She was a woman of remarkable courage, intelligence, and dedication to social justice. We relied on her to make stimulating comments in class that took student discussion to new levels. She excelled in the courses she took, earning high grades and developing ideas for an honor’s thesis she hoped to complete. Especially impressive was Elia’s passion for gender studies and her motivation to continue her studies independently even as her health was diminishing. She was, and is, a remarkable inspiration to us.

All of us who knew Elia personally—her friends, professors, and comrades in the student organizations in which she was centrally involved—miss her very much. Her absence is deeply felt, and her memory very much alive here in Riverside.

-- Jane Ward

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