

Spring 2014 Newsletter

Colgate

Center for Women's Studies

Volume 20, Issue 2

A Note from the Director

The sun is finally out, more Hollywood films have passed the Bechdel test this year, and our graduates are walking out the door. It is a bittersweet time for sure. It is also a time for gratitude. Here are a few highlights for Spring 2014:

- Congratulations to Evan Chartier and April Bailey, our Elizabeth Cady Stanton Award winners this year. These two earned this award because they have contributed tremendously to improving women's lives on our campus over the last four years.

- Nine senior concentrators created and sustained smart and thoughtful feminist praxis projects throughout the Spring semester.

- This year WMST had a record number of senior honors students; Catherine Yeh, April Bailey, Michelle VanVeen, and Evan Chartier are all graduating with honors in WMST. Thank you Mary Simonson and Susan Thomson for your assistance with these important projects.

- Seventeen fantastic courses were offered for credit in Women's Studies this semester, as well as our first Biology of Women FSEM. Thank you, faculty!

- I was trained in Bystander Intervention (a model created by UNH and Duke University) at the National Women's Studies meetings in November. Thanks to Thad Mantaro and Lyn Rugg for their support in launching this program and to the students for taking it forward!

- Yes Means Yes, Colgate's innovative non-credit highly popular positive sexuality program, is in its 6th year, and now carries a PE credit. Thanks to Dawn LaFrance, Evan Chartier, Mel Grover-Schwartz, and to all of the WMST faculty and staff who help to facilitate this program.

Readers, thanks to you all for your ongoing commitment to feminist education.

Please come by to toast our newly renovated Center in August, and celebrate 20 years creating community in this space in November!

Graduating concentrators and interns, we will miss you. Keep doing feminism in your lives, and stay in touch!

Best,
Meika

Open Hours at the Center for Women's Studies

Monday - Thursday
8 AM - 9:30 PM

Friday
8 AM - 5 PM

Sunday
4:30 PM - 9:30 PM



13 Oak Drive
Hamilton, NY 13346
(315) 228-7156

Buck Angel's Story: An Inspiration for All by Angelina Baker '16

On Tuesday, April 1, as part of this year's QueerFest, Buck Angel came to speak for the weekly Women's Studies Brown Bag series. Because of the high number of people in attendance, the talk took place in Love Auditorium where most of the seats were filled. Buck Angel is a trans male, an adult film performer and producer, and now also a motivational speaker. Buck started out by showing us some pictures and clips from his childhood, his early adult life, his transformation, and his current life as a trans male.

He explained how he was raised as a tomboy, but when he hit puberty that is when he started to feel very disconnected from his body. He became depressed throughout high school and had a lot of substance abuse issues and attempted suicide. He ended up living on the streets after high school and hated himself for a long time because his womanly body did not feel right. Eventually, with help from the right people and a lot of determination, Buck realized he wanted to become a man, and after consulting with his doctors, he started his transformation. Once he found his new identity as a trans man, he founded Buck Angel Entertainment and started making adult films with transsexuals. Buck then decided he had a message that he could be spreading, so he started to make a name for himself as a motivational speaker.

I am so glad Buck came to Colgate to speak. Although most of his talk was about his life story, and I cannot relate because I have never been in the same situation, I found it very inspirational. His message resonates with the LGBTQ community as well as the straight community. That message is to deprogram yourself, don't be something that you are not just because society wants you to be, and don't worry about what other people think. I believe that Buck Angel and his story can be a model for anyone who feels like they may not fit in or anyone who has ever felt alone and confused. I think he can give a lot of people the motivation to be themselves, no matter what gender, sex, or identity that might be. Overall, we learned that we cannot be afraid to Buck the System!



Feminist Responses to Gendered Violence in Sri Lanka by Jennifer Ho '16

On Tuesday, April 29th, the weekly Women's Studies Brown Bag was "Feminist Responses to Gendered Violence in Sri Lanka, Tactics of the Everyday: Working Class Women's Theater in a Time of War."

Professor Nimanthi Rajasingham presented her research findings on theater as a form of protest. She explained the underpublicized, underlying problem within export processing zones in Sri Lanka: the severe mistreatment of their workers. Every day these predominantly female employees show up for work, they are faced with adversity in variety of different forms. They are subjected to horrible working conditions for extremely long hours at a time, and all for minimal pay.

Additional oppression comes from military restrictions in the form of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which results in the prohibition of worker education within these labor zones. These instances of the unfair treatment imposed on many Sri Lankan workers promotes the widespread misconception of Third World women as objects made to be exploited. They are stereotyped as unresisting victims, passive, and easily manipulated.

However, currently, this very workforce is slowly and steadily attempting to escape workplace violence and breaking the mold of weak Sri Lankan women that society has built for them. They are accomplishing these small instances of refusal and resistance through individual embodied actions. The working class' incremental, yet far from insignificant, actions are beginning to show the world that the bodies of workers play a crucial role and can't be so easily controlled. The working class women of Sri Lanka are proving how small acts of defiance result in small steps towards change.



Michigan Womyn's Music Festival by Sarah Kistner '14

The Women's Studies Brown Bag about MichFest, a women's music festival held each summer in Michigan was riveting, enlightening, and completely different than anything I have ever experienced. We heard from three speakers: a sophomore at Colgate, physics professor Catherine Herne, and Heather Dockstader who is the Interim Director of LGBTQ Initiatives. Each "womyn" was so enthusiastic about her experience there. From what I understood about this festival is that it is liberating, comfortable, spiritual, and full of feminists.

Each summer, women travel to Michigan to live on the land, build massive campgrounds, participate in a variety of events and activities, and bond together throughout their experience together. The camp is 650 acres of remote woodlands where women can camp together or alone. A crew is composed of women who volunteer to set up the camp at the beginning of the summer – they work hard to transform a rural forest into a space perfect for a women's festival. The word that seems to best articulate MichFest is "home" - each speaker described Michigan as a safe haven for women in which they felt completely comfortable and themselves. Nudity is encouraged, even during the long work shifts that each camper is required to do as part of their stay on the land. The goal of this feminist experience is for women to find comfort in their bodies - to feel liberated, safe, and welcomed in the new community. There are intensive, educational workshops that campers can participate in, as well as concerts and community service opportunities.

One of the most poignant parts of the talk was when Heather said the experience is about "sitting in conflict with sisters trying to figure it out." She explained that people come to MichFest with their own personal baggage, and it can be a difficult experience for some. However, she explained beautifully that in this supportive environment, women learn to face their problems together. It is a cooperative, amazing atmosphere in which women can succeed together and understand some of their deepest personal issues.

This August, Professors Meika Loe and Mary Simonson will be leading a trip of Colgate students to head out to Michigan for the 2014 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival! They are sure to have a great time and bring back many exciting stories and memories to share.



WMST Brown Bag Series - Spring 2014

Last Chance for Justice	1/21
Featuring TK Thorne, author	
Co-sponsored with the Jewish Book Council	
Community Building at Colgate	1/28
Aidan Davis '16, Valerie Garcia '15, Renyelle Jimenez '14, Gloria Kebirungi '15, Stephanie Nabine '16, Lindsey Skerker '14, and Michelle Van Veen '14	
Birthing Stories	2/04
Debbie Alt, Brenda Ice, Jenna Reinbold and Priscilla Van Wynsberghe	
MichFest: A Movement Through Music	2/11
Heather Dockstader, Catherine Herne, and Susan Miller '16	
Women and Postconflict Politics in Africa: Possibilities and Paradoxes	2/13
Featuring Catharine Newbury	
Co-sponsored with ALST and PCON	
Black Identity at Colgate	2/18
Joe Aiken '16, Aidan Davis '16, Jamari Hysaw '14, Aja Isler '15, and Whitney Robbins '15	
Perspectives on Intersectionality, Introspection, and Leadership	2/25
Hoa Bui '14, Evan Chartier '14, Melissa Melendez '14, and Che Hatter '13	
Reproductive Health Activism	3/04
Featuring Beth LeGere of Planned Parenthood Mohawk Hudson Valley	
Generation Roe: Inside the Future of the Pro-Choice Movement	3/11
Featuring Sarah Erdeich	
Co-sponsored with the Jewish Book Council	
Inverting the Narrative: Complicating Gender, Development, and Education	3/25
Students of Educational Studies 308	
Latina Feminism	3/27
Valerie Garcia '15, Jessica Aquino '14, Martha Montufar '17, Natasha Torres '15, and Anna Rios	
Bucking the System	4/01
Featuring Buck Angel	
Gender Transition and Intergenerational Relationships Across the Life Course	4/08
Featuring Carrie Elliot, Andrew London, Natalee Simpson, Rebecca Wang and Tre Wentling of Syracuse University	
Inverting Dominant Discourses: Queering Education Poster Projects	4/15
Students of Educational Studies 241	
Big Questions Feminists Ask: Senior WMST Concentrators Speak Out	4/22 & 4/24
WMST concentrators in the Senior Seminar Course	
Working Class Women's Theater in a Time of War	
Nimanthi Rajasingham	
Legendary	5/01
Featuring Gerard H. Gaskin	

Q&A with Guest Speakers Hill L. Waters by Aidan Davis '16

Hill L. Waters (HLW) is a partnership birthed by two artist scholars, Durell M. Callier and Dominique C. Hill (class of 2005), committed to social justice, education, and critical performance pedagogy. HLW deploys performing arts (i.e. dance, theatre, music) to facilitate healing, highlighting their commitment to arts as transformation. Manifested within their pseudonym is investment in erasing boundaries while staying accountable to their communities of affinity, families and friends. Paying homage to each artists' family lineage, HLW incorporates their familial surnames signifying fluidity, emphasizing process and the journey to surmount struggle. The "L" stands for whatever you need it to be - perhaps that is love, or maybe it is life.

Through the collaborative efforts of both ALANA and WMST, Hill L. Waters brought together a collective of students for three workshops (Revolution Begins in the Self, Anger as Activism, and Building Sustaining Coalitions), and a Who Mad? open mic. All of these workshops, I believe, truly spoke to a need for people to be honest and most important, vulnerable. Vulnerability and its purpose are often taken for granted and perceived as weakness. Hill L. Waters challenged those who attended to understand that vulnerability in fact allows people to grow and hopefully heal in order to better facilitate social justice change.

To get a better sense of the creative process and background that goes into the revolutionary workshops, I have included a brief interview with Hill L. Waters that really speaks to their commitment and brilliance.

1. How did you develop the topics of the workshops demonstrated on your last visit to Colgate?

The topics developed for the workshop happened through a series of conversations with both the Program Assistant at the Center for Women's Studies, Che Hatter, and the Program Assistant for the Office of Undergraduate Studies, Drea Finely. Both of these staff members expressed present concerns and issues students at Colgate were experiencing. With a general understanding of current issues facing the student body, and which students in particular were likely to participate in our workshops, we began to craft interactive workshops to address the issues. We felt personally and politically called to engaged in the particular content we addressed during our time at Colgate. Too often, as iterated by Che and Andrea, are students asked to just deal and kind of muscle their way through pains and struggles. In our own lives, each of us have been grappling and continue to consider, what to do with that emotion called anger. And oh yeah, how do I love myself in the midst of the madness? Could I start a revolution? And what will it look like?

Spring 2014 WMST Courses

ECON 234: Gender in the Economy	FREN 455: Francophone Voices - North Africa
EDUC 303: Gender, Education, and International Development	HIST 348: European Women in Modern Times
ENGL 204: American Lit: Native American Writers	HIST 325: Sexuality/Reproduction in Latin America
ENGL 208: Sex and the Global City	LGBT 303: Queer Identities and Global Discourses
ENGL 306: Antebellum American Literature	PCON 260: Gender in Conflict and Peace
ENGL 433: Caribbean Literature	RELG 234: Women and Religious Tradition: Islam
ENGL 412: Jane Austen and Women Novelists	WMST 202: Intro to Women's Studies
ENGL 442: Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster	WMST 490: Women's Studies Senior Seminar
	WRIT 242: Stand and Speak: Feminist Rhetoric

2. How did you engage with these concepts during your time in undergraduate university, or did you at all?

Both Dominique and I were involved as student leaders at our respective undergraduate institutions, University of Maryland Baltimore County (Durell/Waters) and Colgate University (Dominique/Hill). Perhaps unable to articulate anger as a form of activism, or knowing that the revolution begins in the self, we were involved in student organizations, as well as campus and community



service organizations that allowed us to express our anger in political and strategic ways. Durell aka Waters was involved with The Baltimore Algebra Project that sought to address the inadequate education students in Baltimore city experienced. While Dominique aka Hill's expression of anger was unleashed through her attempts as a member and chairwoman of Sisters of The Round Table (SORT) to bring to the table issues (i.e. sexuality) that were being swept under the rug by many members of the group. It was also during our undergraduate experiences that we really began to explore who we were as individuals, to challenge beliefs we had grown up with, and come into our own sense of self. For both of us, this meant exploring our sexuality, finding no easy answers to being Black and queer, as well as juggling familial responsibilities was no easy task. However, college provided a prime opportunity to try out a few new ideas.

3. How do you measure your success in your work?

Success. An abstract and large ideal. In Hill L. Waters (HLW) how we measure success is in part through our ability to set, and reach goals, and to reassess, and then prioritize goals when necessary. At a deeper level, success is about simply coming together and creating space. To be in community, to carve out time, and opportunity to practice freedom and new ways of thinking, to create a sacred space, in which vulnerability, and honesty were achieved, and if someone had a revelation, took something away to make life a little brighter for themselves, shared in their own way, if we were allowed to show up in all of our beautiful, complex, bold-ass brilliance, and bring into the space all of the things, people, places, we love, and move us. If that happens, when that happens, it's a pretty good day and we're onto something like success.

4. What advice would you give to students interested in this work pertaining to vulnerability?

- Know that someone needs to hear your truth
- Get comfortable with being uncomfortable, and willing to swim in uncertainty.
- Be intentional and aware
- Know that your story, and experience have value
- Be ready to share pieces of yourself with strangers
- Know that someone's life will be changed in your sharing

Lesbian Film Done Right by Anna Heil '16

As part of a two-day event for the Queer Performance Series here at Colgate, Barbara Hammer—an experimental filmmaker primarily known for dealing with women’s issues and the lesbian experience—came to talk about her work. Hammer was a very engaging speaker who talked about her own personal history as a queer woman and how it has informed her film. For a long time Hammer was unhappily married and felt constrained by the expectations of married life before finally coming out as gay. She was shocked and dismayed by the state of the lesbian film scene, and she took it upon herself to explore this way of life with her avant-garde film experience.

Hammer is very interested in identity politics and its relationship with history. She spoke a little bit about the lesbian experience in film, and how historically men created and directed it. This is obviously problematic, as the lesbian experience is often misconstrued by the male gaze in vehicles like pornography or popular culture as something unauthentic and at its core, done for men’s pleasure. Hammer believes that a culture needs a history, and so started making her own videos about lesbian relationships and the queer identity. Her videos about lesbianism and feminism have a distinctly humorous streak, brought about by her inclusion of Choplin-esque music and moments of light heartedness. One such example in her work is when one of the women goes into a telephone booth labeled “The Closet” or when one woman is so overjoyed she loses her crutches and dances around.

It was surprising to me that pre-dating Hammer’s work, there was a severe lack of lesbian produced and directed lesbian film. How can one truly create authentic work about an experience and an identity that one does not share? Barbara Hammer went on to explore other concepts and create other films unrelated to lesbianism, but she certainly made an impact on the film world and gave voice to gay women everywhere with her ground-breaking work.

Breaking the Silence on Sexual Assault by Lindsey Skerker '14

On April 21, a group of students organized a silent protest in front of Colgate’s Memorial Chapel. This group wanted to bring light to the problem of sexual assault on campus, and they definitely made their voices heard loud and clear, even without uttering a word. Group leaders Cameron Costa '15, Tess Cumpstone '15, and Laura Wojcik '15 began rallying those interested by starting a group called Breaking the Silence. Those part of the demonstration wore duct tape across their mouths to symbolize the silencing of sexual assault that occurs on campus. There were also fact sheets placed in front of the Chapel so that people could gather more information. Overall, the demonstration received largely positive reactions from professors, administrators, and students alike, but the group realizes this is their first step in joining the conversation around sexual violence and breaking the silence.

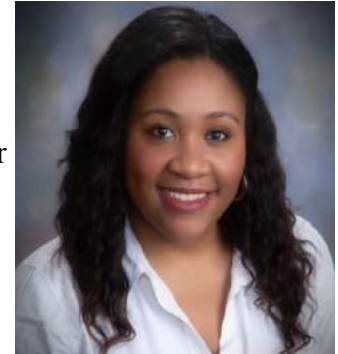


Senior Spotlight!

The three senior interns here at the Center for Women's Studies were asked the following question: "How has feminism and your time at the Center changed you, and how will you take what you've learned here with you?"

Renyelle Jimenez, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Awareness:

Working at the Center has exposed me to so many different facets of feminism and has given me the tools to do the same for others. I am unsure of where exactly life will be taking me next, but I am confident that whatever I do will cause irrevocable damage to the patriarchy. Despite all of the headaches and frustrations that often came with identifying as feminist on this campus, I know that I am a much better person today than I was when I moved into Stillman four Augusts ago, and for that I am eternally grateful.



Lindsey Skerker, Publications:

I never knew Women's Studies and never had much of a connection to "the F word" until my sophomore year when I took Intro to Women's Studies. Learning about feminism and coming to embrace the word as part of my identity has really helped me to grow as both a student at Colgate and just as a better person. Through my Women's Studies education, I think one of the most important things I've learned is to be curious and to not be afraid to question things. That's one of the most valuable lessons someone can learn, so thank you to everyone in the WMST community for a great few years!

Michelle Van Veen, Community Action and Alumni Affairs:

I've always grown up with feminism, but it wasn't until I took Intro to Women's Studies with Professor Loe that I finally had the tools and language to talk about the things that I've always believed in. I have learned more than I ever could have imagined these past four years by taking feminist courses. Some of the biggest life lessons I learned were to acknowledge my own privilege, always remain curious, and recognize and appreciate the beauty that is within all of us.



A Note from the Program Assistant

Finishing up my first year as the Program Assistant, I have been witnessing and participating in the development of the department, which is an amazing experience. Not only because our Brown Bags and events continue to pull in large audiences and because our faculty members are engaging in important academic and community building work. But also, I am constantly impressed by the creativity of our students who take the initiative to build the conversations they want to see and shape the environment of the campus.

Our students have engaged with Sexual Assault Awareness conversations by inviting Wagatwe Wanjuki to campus and participating in the Take Back the Night March as well as Project Unbreakable. They also continued these conversations about sexual violence on campus by staging a Breaking the Silence protest. They examined hip hop feminism and the complexities of Black feminist identity by engaging with Joan Morgan during the highly successful Africana Women's Week. They challenged the gender binary by hearing the experiences of prominent trans activists such as Buck Angel, Kye Alums, and Ignacio Rivera during QueerFest. They workshopped transforming anger into activism by taking part of events facilitated by Hill L. Waters. And they also challenged our community knowledge by hosting the first ever International Women's Day Trivia event.

This semester has truly been a busy one. And I would like to extend my thanks to the ALANA Cultural Center, Printing Services, Film and Media Studies, Educational Studies, Africana and Latin American Studies, LGBTQ Initiatives, the Jewish Book Network, the Office of the Chaplains, Shaw Wellness, the COVE, and Peace and Conflict Studies for their contributions to the success of this year's programming. The impact of the Center's events is tied directly to our supportive community partners.

There are also campus-wide initiatives that have seen significant progress this semester. Bystander Intervention trainings have been jump-started on campus with already more than 140 students trained in methods of addressing and interrupting instances of sexual assault and 14 student leaders who have been trained as facilitators to head into the incoming year. This has been a collaborative effort among administrators, faculty, and staff and shows promise in engaging the Colgate community in ways to effectively shift the sexual climate.

I am very excited for what our program has in store for year. With the 20th anniversary of the space approaching on November 8th and our renovations underway this summer, there will be many opportunities to learn about, recognize, and celebrate the growth and history of our Women's Studies program. See you next semester!

- Che J. Hatter

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, November 8th, 2014

**The Center for
Women's Studies
Celebrates 20 years
at Colgate!**

The Center for Women's Studies Staff

Director:

Meika Loe

Associate Professor of
Sociology and Women's
Studies; Interim Director of
LGBTQ

Program Assistant:

Che Hatter

Administrative Assistant:

Letta Palmer

Student Interns:

Aidan Davis '16
Valerie Garcia '15
Gloria Kebirungi '15
Renyelle Jimenez '14
Stephanie Nabine '16
Lindsey Skerker '14
Michelle Van Veen '14