

Confronting Gendered Violence

By Rebecca Saunders

In Rwanda, Josephina is deliberately infected with HIV by a rapist on a genocidal rampage. In Argentina, María is held in a secret detention camp and tortured with electric shocks to her genitalia. In Thailand, Siri is sold by her parents to a "job broker" who traffics her across the border and into sexual slavery. In central Illinois, Melissa is beaten by the boyfriend she is too afraid, confused, and broke to leave.

These scenes are part of a widespread pattern of gender-based violence that is at once global and local and that often remains unacknowledged. This may be because reporting mechanisms don't exist or women don't know about them, because legal and medical systems dismiss women's symptoms and testimonies, or because it is painful for women to talk about sexual violence—they feel ashamed, or are afraid of bringing dishonor on their family. But the most significant reason why gender-based violence remains hidden is that many forms of it are simply accepted as "normal"—as something that "just happens"—even if it is officially condemned.

When gender-based violence remains unexposed, perpetrators are allowed to continue their abuse, new generations of perpetrators are schooled in violence, and women's ability to protect themselves is diminished. This is why those of us who have access to education, resources, communication tools, and a functioning political system have a moral responsibility to make this violence visible and to find ways to do something about it.

Gender-based violence comes in many forms and is carried out by individuals, governments, ethnic groups, businesses, and a host of other entities. But it is often made worse by structural violence: the poverty, lack of education, racism, sexual discrimination, and war that limit women's access to basic resources such as housing, food, and clean water, as well as to medical care and legal services. Indeed, across the globe, the regions and communities most affected by gender-based violence are those with the fewest resources. In South Africa, where rape rates are among the highest in the world, it is poor, illiterate girls and women living in substandard township housing who overwhelmingly bear the brunt of that nation's rape epidemic.¹ In Brazil, young, Afro-descendant girls are most at risk for abduction into the sex trade. In the U.S., African-American women living in impoverished communities have higher rates of HIV infection and less access to treatment than any other group.

The primary (though by no means only) forms of violence against women in the U.S. are intimate partner violence and acquaintance rape. The U.S. Department of Justice reports that over 30% of homicides against women are committed by intimate partners.² Surveys of U.S. colleges indicate that one in four college women will be the victim of a sexual assault during her college years.³ While many U.S. communities and campuses have resources for reporting and responding to these forms of gender-based violence, women's ability to protect themselves from violence is hindered here as elsewhere by poverty, homelessness, lack of services, and inadequate education. In the state of Illinois, approximately 700,000 people live in "extreme poverty," that is, 50% below the *(Continued)*

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Women's and Gender Studies Staff

Dr. Alison Bailey, Director 438-5617

Dr. Becca Chase, Assistant Director/Advisor 438-7361

Rozel White, Office Support Specialist 438-2947

Rebecca Rossi, Graduate Assistant 438-2948

Annaliisa Ahlman, Undergraduate Assistant 438-2948

federal poverty line and unable to provide for even basic human needs. Of those people, 7,500 live in McLean County.⁴

What, then, can we do? Locally, we have a number of resources, including ISU's Sexual Assault Prevention Services; Neville House, which provides a 24-hour hotline (309-827-7070), an emergency shelter, and other services to women and children targeted for domestic abuse; and the YWCA's Stepping Stones program, which offers services to sexual assault survivors, educational programs and workshops, and volunteer training. Our student organization, FLAME, combines activism and education at many events during the academic year.

Yet while we have greater resources, we have much to learn from women in other parts of the world. Many have started NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) with just three or four members and no resources, and have creatively and collaboratively begun to imagine responses to unimaginably violent conditions. They have informed themselves, sold homemade goods to generate funds, educated communities, demonstrated in the streets, put pressure on local police and governments, and networked with other women's groups. We should not only learn from these women's extraordinary intelligence, solidarity, and resilience, but lend them some of our resources—a bit of time or money, our literacy, skills, or information, or our connections to people and institutions. Even a small contribution to resisting gender-based violence can yield incalculably enriching returns.

¹ Nicole Itano, "South Africa Begins Getting Tough on Rape," *WENews2* February 2003.

² U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics. Available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs

³ Illinois State University Counseling Services. www.counseling.ilstu.edu/SexualAssaultPrevention/programs.

⁴ 2006 Income and Poverty Data for McLean County. Available at www.heartlandalliance.org/maip . ☼

Where's the Outrage . . .

By Becca Chase

. . . about gender-based violence? This question was answered, in part, at the "Where's the Outrage?" conference held on March 19 at Illinois State University. The presenters challenged their audience intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally to bear witness to the toll that such violence takes on individuals and communities. They provided knowledge about and inspiration from the positive work that groups are doing around the world to help survivors heal and to overturn the social and political forces

that perpetuate this violence.

Irene Martinez, M.D. was one of up to 30,000 people who were "disappeared" in the "Dirty War" in Argentina in the 1970s and early 1980s. Martinez described in harsh detail how she was incarcerated and tortured. First she was held in isolation, then transferred to a federal women's jail. There Martinez was able to form relationships with other prisoners. While her account was brutally graphic and emotionally fraught, Irene tempered this by sharing the humor she and her sister inmates cultivated, heaping ridicule on the puerile behavior of the male guards.

Mary Fabri, Psy.D., Senior Director of the Marjorie Kovler Center for Treatment of Torture Survivors, gave the keynote lecture on rape as a weapon of war and tool of torture. She narrated the recent conflicts in which rape has been used systematically, including in 1991-1994, when Serbian troops set up rape camps to force Bosnian Muslims to flee Serbia. Sexual torture, threats of such torture, and sexual humiliation also are and have been used to discipline and interrogate prisoners, as in uprisings against right-wing dictatorships in Central and Latin America, and recently by U.S. troops at Abu Ghraib prison.

Mardge Cohen, M.D. reported on the efforts of Women's Equity in Access to Care and Treatment (WE-ACTx) to help women and children living with HIV in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. During that conflict, women were systematically raped and intentionally infected. WE-ACTx promotes a human-rights agenda designed not just to treat HIV, but also to address the larger systemic problems facing the women who were raped and the women and children affected by the AIDS epidemic.

Lynette Jackson described the experience of refugee girls across Africa—both the violence of being displaced and the kinds of violence, like rape, to which they are made more vulnerable in exile. Many girls and women have been the pawns in a strategy she calls "divide, displace, and destroy." She pointed out that although technically wars such as the one in Sudan may be over, (*Continued*)



Presenters and organizers of the "Where's the Outrage" Conference.

in many ways they are not over for the women and girls who remain refugees

Mary Black, an occupational therapist who works with survivors of torture who are refugees in the U.S., explained how trauma affects women's mothering abilities. She narrated two stories of women who had been victims of violence and asked, how can we assist mothers to cope with their own trauma in such a way that they can be effective and loving mothers? She described strategies that promote resiliency and minimize risk among traumatized mothers.

Prof. Rebecca Saunders spoke about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa. Agents of the apartheid regime routinely used many forms of gender-based torture and violence to humiliate and terrorize revolutionaries, including beating pregnant women to kill their fetuses, denying the women care at childbirth, rape and threat of rape, and forcing parents to listen to recordings of their children screaming. While the TRC was useful to document the atrocities perpetrated by the apartheid regime, it was also highly problematic. For example, survivors who were still suffering from trauma found it excruciating to testify. Women feared the stigma associated with rape. Eventually, such problems led to changes in how the TRC conducted hearings, including holding special sessions for women.

Catherine Christeller, M.S., founder and director of the Chicago Women's AIDS Project (CWAP), analyzed the structural inequalities that have led to the alarming increase in incidence of HIV/AIDS in African-American women. While they make up 12% of the female population in the U.S., black women comprise 68% of new HIV diagnoses. Their mortality rate is 13 times higher than that of white women with HIV/AIDS. She attributed this phenomenon to a host of problems reflecting systemic racism—from lack of economic and educational opportunities, to inadequate preventive health care and substandard treatment options. Christeller discussed how CWAP addresses the needs of these women. She also discussed the Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP), which is part of a national preventive justice movement that addresses structural inequalities and presses for effective interventions.

Carole Warshaw, M.D., Director of the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma and Mental Health, focused on contemporary research on trauma due to violence. Mental health professionals now understand that conditions previously considered purely biological and genetic, such as schizophrenia, sometimes are caused by violence. While men are somewhat more likely to experience certain kinds of trauma, women are much more likely to suffer from PTSD and to experience

multiple kinds and causes of trauma. People who experience abuse and violence during their childhoods are far more likely to develop symptoms of PTSD as adults. Their ability to have healthy relationships, to be resilient, and to develop a secure sense of self can be seriously impaired.

The audience left the conference informed and inspired by these activists who expressed their outrage and demonstrated what can be done to promote gender justice.

"Where's the Outrage" was co-hosted by the Women's and Gender Studies Program, the Department of English, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Latin American and Latino/a Studies Program, and the Multi-Ethnic Cultural and Co-Curricular Programming Advisory Committee (MECCPAC).☀

Faculty Accomplishments

Pat Badani served this year as Acting Director of the Interdisciplinary Arts & Media Program at Columbia College, Chicago. Badani had a solo exhibition titled "[in time time]," an interactive new-media installation at the Tarble Arts Center eGallery at Eastern Illinois University (18 January-24 February).

Dawn Beichner and Alexis Miller of Middle Tennessee State University, presented "Thinking, Teaching, and Talking about Race Revisited," at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences meetings in Cincinnati (11-15 March).

Sara Cole received the Outstanding Faculty Award at ISU's Commitment to Diversity Awards ceremony (13 April). *(Continued)*



Stacy Cordery with Kyle Ciani and Vanette Schwartz. Cordery, author of Alice: Alice Roosevelt Longworth from White House Princess to Washington Power Broker, spoke at Milner Library on March 27 during Women's History Month.



Dr. Thomas Reifer of the University of San Diego lectures on "Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century: The U.S. in the Global System" at the International Studies Seminar Series on March 5.

Faculty Accomplishments (Continued)

Kristin Dykstra won the Dean's Award for Scholarly Achievement in the pretenured category. She published a bilingual edition of poetry by Cuban poet Omar Pérez, *Algo del lo sagrado / Something of the Sacred* (Factory School, NY 2007), with an essay and English translations by Dykstra and other poems translated by Roberto Tejada. Dykstra also co-edits *Mandorla: Nueva Escritura de Las Americas/New Writing from the Americas*, a crosscultural and multilingual journal of creative writing, visual art, and cultural commentary.

Cynthia Edmonds-Cady delivered a talk on January 21 at Eastern Michigan University, "Boundaries Maintained, Boundaries Crossed: Lessons from the Welfare Rights Movement." Her article "Children in Crisis: Special Education and Other Stressors in the Lives of Children Removed from School by Expulsion," co-authored with Robert Hock, was published in *School Social Work Journal*, 32, no. 2 (2008). She also received a New Faculty Initiative Grant for her research project entitled "Race, Class, and the Rights to Motherhood."

Tom Gerschick, with Holly Aldrich of Illinois Wesleyan University, presented "The Intersection of Gender and Disability: Knowledge Available, Knowledge Needed" at the Midwest Sociological Society Meetings in St. Louis (27-29 March). Gerschick was also named ISU's RSO Faculty Advisor of the Year.

Ann Haugo's article "Storytime on the Stage: Native Playwrights and Troupes" appeared in *Native Peoples: Arts & Lifeways*, (March/April 2008). She served as a respondent to the keynote address by Ojibway playwright and humorist Drew Hayden Taylor at the Comparative Drama Conference in Los Angeles (27-29 March).

Richard Sullivan and Kimi Lee published "Organizing Immigrant Women in America's Sweatshops: Lessons from the Los Angeles Garment Worker Center" in *SIGNS: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 33, no. 3 (Spring 2008).

Mary Trouille presented "Abiding (by) the Laws of Conjugal Duty in the Wake of the 1792 and 1803 French Divorce Laws: The Web of Fact and Fiction in the Mandonnet Separation Case," at the Annual Meeting of the American Society for 18th-Century Studies in Portland, OR (27-30 March). She chaired a session entitled "Pregnancy and Childbirth in 18th-Century Literature and Society" and began a three-year term on the executive board.

Georgia Tsouvala delivered a lecture, "Biographer to the Stars: Plutarch and his World," at Illinois Wesleyan University's Ides Lecture and Performance Series (12 February 2008).

Christine Varga-Harris published "Homemaking and the Aesthetic and Moral Perimeters of the Soviet Home during the Khrushchev Era" in the *Journal of Social History* 41, no. 3 (Spring 2008). ☀

Student News

FLAME Hosts "It Affects Me" Events

By Brandy Peak

The Feminist Led Activist Movement to Empower (FLAME) presented its second annual It Affects Me campaign as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. It Affects Me is a week-long campaign that focuses on a range of issues such as sexual assault, domestic violence, representations of women in the media and advertising, and international violence.

FLAME and co-sponsors YWCA, ISU's Parent Advisory Board, and the Association of Residence Halls brought Angela Rose to campus as keynote speaker. Rose became an activist after she was kidnapped and sexually assaulted. As a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she founded PAVE (Promoting Awareness, Victim Empowerment). PAVE has developed into a global organization with branches across the United States, in Canada, and in India. Its mission is to shatter the silence surrounding sexual violence. ☀

Got Choice?

By Brandy Peak

On April 16, members of ISU's Catholic Student Association and St. Robert Bellarmine Center demonstrated against choice on the quad. While FLAME did not find out about the demo until that morning, by 11:00 a.m. at least ten women had strategically located themselves, bearing pro-choice posters and petitions supporting the Freedom of Choice Act. They collected over 100 signatures. The women also distributed "Got Choice?" t-shirts (donated by NARAL Pro-Choice America), and passed out stickers with pro-choice messages. Passersby enthusiastically supported the counterdemonstration. ☀



ISU students signed petitions for the Freedom of Choice Act.



Annaliisa Ahlman and Erin Brophy received the Women's and Gender Studies Achievement Award at the annual College of Arts and Sciences recognition ceremony.



Alumna Rachel Spangler, with son Jackson, visited ISU to promote her new book, *Learning Curve*.

Student Accomplishments

Annaliisa Ahlman organized two trips to teach social studies through creative drama to elementary English language learners in Bloomington IL (4 April and 2 May). Ahlman was named the 2007-2008 Future Alumni Leader by the Women's and Gender Studies Program and the School of Theatre.

Shushan Avagyan participated in a panel discussion entitled "Finding Language: Armenian Women Writing across Translation" with Nancy Agabian and Lara Aharonian at the City University of New York Graduate Center's Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center (19 February). Avagyan also spoke at an English Department Colloquium, "Translation as Creative Writing" (26 March).

Ricia Chansky presented her paper entitled "A Mind to Shop: Trade Card Advertising and the Creation of a Public Space for Women, 1880-1900" at the Nineteenth Century Studies Association in Miami FL (3-5 April). She received an award in research in life narrative from the International Auto/Biography Association for her paper entitled "Women with Needles: The Fiber Arts of Second Wave Feminist Community Life Narratives." Chansky was also named an Ora Bretall Fellow.

Bridget McKenna presented posters at ISU's Undergraduate Research Symposium (18 April): "Mental Illness Stigma Effects on Perceptions of Fear and Danger," "Perceived Goals of Men and Women when Initiating Relationships," and "Perception of Coerced Aggressive Acts." ☀

Gender Matters
Illinois State University
Women's and Gender Studies Program
Rachel Cooper 2nd Floor
Campus Box 4260
Normal, IL 61790-4260

Congratulations Graduates!

Graduating Minors:

Erin Brophy, Public Relations
Lisa Burns, Criminal Justice
Erin Carey, Psychology
Jenna Goldsmith, English
Lindsay Glover, Health Education
Bridget McKenna, Psychology
Elizabeth Otten, History
Christina Westendorf, Psychology

Graduating Certificate Students:

Lindsay Rosenquist, Political Science

Welcome, Newcomers!

New minors:

Magan Belcher, Political
Rebecca Harlow, Information Systems
Kate Scully, Sociology
Caitlin Tyrrell, History
Valerie Vasilou, Political Science
Ashley Weekes, Family and Consumer Sciences

Many thanks and best wishes to our wonderful student assistants, Rebecca Rossi and Annaliisa Ahlman. Both are moving onward and upward. Becca and Liisa, we'll miss you!



2008 Graduates, from left Lisa Burns, Jenna Goldsmith, Wilda, Erin Carey, Bridget McKenna, Christina Westendorf, and Elissa Otten.