



“What Can I Do for Women’s and Gender Studies This Year?”

By Alison Bailey

So glad you asked. Historically, women’s organizations have run largely on volunteer labor, and our program is no exception. Despite the progress we have made toward completing the Women’s and Gender Studies strategic plan, our community is still young and fragile. We are only as active as the people who keep us going. We are only as strong as the support we offer one another. We are only as visible as we make ourselves.

This year we need to continue expanding our base so that the tasks of growing the WGS program don’t continue to fall to the same eager band of volunteers. At this point, we are asking everyone in our community to make consistent regular efforts to promote the WGS minor, graduate certificate, programming, and opportunities in their classes, department meetings, and community events. You are our best representatives!

Many of you have stepped up to “do one thing for Women’s and Gender Studies” (our recruitment motto) by making short office visits with faculty in your departments to bring them up to date on the program. Others have helped promote the program through campus events and opportunities. Kristen Dykstra invited Achy Obejas to campus for a reading and lecture, both well-attended. Janet Wilson and Maria Schmeekle brought Yvonne Bezzera de Mello to campus for a series of lectures and produced the premier of Margaret Iha’s *Hopeless Spinning*.

Melissa Oresky, Melissa Johnson, and Jin Lee curate two to three student art shows in the WGS Gallery annually. Diane Zosky, Becca Chase, and Paula Ressler are leading focus groups and committees for the LGBT studies certificate. Karen Pfof and Sara Cole advise FLAME, which was awarded best small Registered Student Organization again this spring. Elizabeth Hatmaker put together a series of readings for women’s history month. Amy Wood has stepped up to lead the Women’s Research Consortium. Gina Bessa, Michelle Vought, and others volunteer at the National Women’s Music Festival. Gail Trimpe-Morrow regularly facilitates a talk-back session after Take Back the Night. Rebecca Saunders is hosting a conference on women and global violence in the spring. Women’s Project ran a successful poetry slam and Annaliisa Ahlman has been working hard to bring Holly Hughes to campus in February. These are formidable contributions, and we heartily thank everyone who has chipped in, including members of our WGS community who are not mentioned here.

We urge you to join our valiant group of WGS activists! Here are some things you can start doing now:

- Once a semester educate your students about the minor and graduate certificate.
- Regularly announce WGS events in your classes and encourage students to attend – many faculty give extra credit or require attendance at one or two events.
- Recruit students to present at the WGS symposium.
- Develop a WGS-related course for your department or program. (*Continued p. 2*)

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One Thing (Continued)

- Have students from FLAME give a five-minute presentation to your classes on how students can get involved in feminist issues on campus.
- Volunteer at the National Women's Music Festival.
- Meet regularly with WGS faculty in your department.
- Organize an event for Women's History Month – or any other time!
- Meet with your department advisors to bring them up to date on the WGS program.
- Encourage your department to hire faculty that can contribute to WGS.

Okay, does that answer your question? Here's to a good new year for you and for us. ☀

Healing from Napalm Bombing: Who Is Responsible?

By Becca Chase

Dr. Mimi Nguyen, assistant professor of Gender and Women's

Studies and Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, was guest speaker for the International Studies Seminar on November 7.

Taking a transnational feminist perspective, Nguyen discussed the impact of the famous 1972 photo of Phan Thi Kim Phúc (pronounced "fan ti kim foo"), a young girl who was burned by a napalm bomb during a U.S. air strike in the Vietnam war, and of her public testimony of healing and forgiveness as an adult. Kim Phúc sustained third-degree burns and endured 14 months of treatment in Vietnamese hospitals. Several years after the war ended the photographer, Huynh Cong Ut, tracked her down. As an adult she immigrated to Canada. There, she employed self-help techniques to heal from her psychological trauma. Later she set out on a personal therapeutic quest to confront the past, during which she visited the photographer, the hospital, and a peace studies class. She also appeared on Oprah Winfrey's show and in other venues, most notably at the Vietnam Memorial



Dr. Mimi Nguyen

in Washington DC on Veteran's Day 1996. In her speaking and writing, Kim Phúc emphasizes that she does not want to talk about the Vietnam War. Instead, she wants to use her situation to urge people to seek peace.

Nguyen analyzes Kim Phúc's perspective from a transnational feminist perspective, describing how human rights, postcolonial, and transnational media theorists challenge Kim Phúc's theme of personal healing and forgiveness. Originally, the photograph stirred people's compassion, outrage, and guilt; and some say it was a significant factor in turning public opinion against the war. Kim Phúc's testimony, however, has transformed the subjugation to subjectivity, undercutting the need for a social justice perspective, argues Nguyen.

Bitterness prevents one from moving on and healing, suggests Kim Phúc, whereas forgiveness aids in this process. The danger, Nguyen says, is that the guilt and outrage felt by the citizens in response to the photograph becomes dispersed, and government culpability becomes invisible. Whereas bitterness could become a motivation to agitate against the state, and healing could be achieved through reparation and justice, instead bitterness becomes a self-defeating obstacle to healing, which is achieved through the responsible exercise of free will. The atrocity becomes equivalent to "abuse." By turning the healing process from war trauma into a process of "self management," Kim Phúc depoliticizes her injury and equates it with personal suffering. (Nguyen compares this to the rationale for welfare-to-work programs, which are founded on the idea that women can take responsibility for moving out of poverty through self management.) Suffering is compensated, and even becomes meritorious, when healing from suffering enables the sufferer to achieve full actualization. Kim Phúc's redemptive language makes her an "angel," in the words of one of the students in the peace studies class she visited, who enables Americans who hear her speak to move "from guilt to grace." The essentialist message: U.S. violence is transformed through a women's caring, passive/pacifist nature – a message Nguyen rejects.

Mimi Thi Nguyen is co-editor, with Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu, of *Alien Encounters: Popular Culture in Asian America* (Duke 2007), and author of the forthcoming book *Representing Refugees* (Duke). ☀

Huynh Cong Ut's photo of Phan Thi Kim Phúc ©1972.



Holly Hughes to Visit ISU

By Annaliisa Ahlman

Renowned performance artist Holly Hughes will visit ISU this winter. Hughes' often hilarious identity-focused work challenges cultural norms through text that combines poetic imagery with political satire. Her one-woman show *Preaching to the Perverted* will be performed at 8:30 p.m. in Westhoff Theatre on February 28, 2008. Hughes will also speak at a colloquium on Art and Visual Culture at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 27, and will give the keynote address at the 13th Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, February 29. Both of these addresses will be given in the University Galleries.

During the early 1990s culture wars, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) rescinded public funding for Hughes and fellow performance artists Tim Miller, Karen Finley, and John Fleck. Following a growing tendency toward maintaining "family values," cultural conservatives labeled their work "indecent." These artists became known collectively as the "NEA Four" when they successfully sued the federal government to reinstate their funding. This decision favoring the artists was challenged by the NEA and eventually brought to the Supreme Court in 1998. Sandra Day O'Connor wrote the majority ruling, which stated that the NEA may invoke "standards of decency" when awarding or denying grants. These standards still apply to NEA grant applications



Performance Artist Holly Hughes

today, and the NEA no longer funds individual artists as they did before.

Concerning performance art and the NEA Four, Holly Hughes states, "We are four artists whose art aims to be provocative, to be controversial, working in a marginal field that is poorly understood. Few people have seen performance art at all and the phrase is often used as shorthand for 'bad theater'." A self-proclaimed provocative artist, Hughes used her experience with the Supreme Court as material for new performance pieces, including *Preaching to the Perverted*. Hughes' use of the personal narrative for performance has garnered her international recognition and has placed her work at the center of America's continued culture wars.

After growing up in Michigan, Holly Hughes migrated east and began a career in visual and performance art. Hughes was one of the first students to attend The New York Feminist Art Institute, and later joined the Woman's One World (WOW) Café, an arts cooperative located in New York City's East Village.

Currently on the faculty at the University of Michigan, Holly Hughes has published two books and is in the middle of co-editing her third, *Memories of the Revolution: The First Ten Years of the WOW Café*, with Alina Troyano. Hughes also has been commissioned by the UM Institute for Research on Women and Gender to create a new performance piece in celebration of the organization's tenth anniversary. ☀

Call for Papers

Thirteenth Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium

Friday February 29, 2008
9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Undergraduate and graduate students are
invited to submit proposals:

by mail

WGS Programming Committee
Illinois State University
Campus Box 4260
Normal, IL 61790-4260

in person

Rachel Cooper Room 237

by e-mail

wgstudies@ilstu.edu

Submissions due January 14, 2008

For more information contact the Women's and Gender
Studies Office at (309) 438-2947 or wgstudies@ilstu.edu

FLAME Still Going Strong

By Kati Cruger

The Feminist Led Activist Movement to Empower (FLAME) was very busy in November with guest speakers presenting at general meetings on a wide array of topics. On November 7, Dr. Alison Bailey spoke about different types of feminism and the intersections between feminism and race issues. At our women's health night on November 14, Shireen Shrock from Planned Parenthood taught participants how to perform self breast exams. The group also learned about different types of birth control and tried on an Empathy Belly (an educational tool used to educate teens and young adults about what it feels like to be pregnant).

As the semester came to a close, FLAME was still going strong. On November 26-28 we set up tables with petitions to lower birth control prices. This action is part of a national campaign sponsored by Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Also on November 28, FLAME hosted a joint meeting with PRIDE focused on lesbians and their allies, featuring a panel discussion led by Reverend Susan Ryder of New Covenant Community.



Above: Members of the FMLA/PRIDE November 28 panel on lesbians and their allies.



Left: Students listen to the discussion.



Carissa Schultz tries pregnancy on for size at FLAME's Women's Health Night, November 14.

FLAME members are also working on programming for the spring semester. Auditions were held on December 3 and 4 for this year's production of *The Vagina Monologues*. The Vagina Planning Committee will meet Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m. in the second-floor lounge of Rachel Cooper Hall beginning January 16. Folks interested in helping out are welcome to attend, and questions can be directed to Brandy Peak at bmpeak@ilstu.edu. We will perform the show the weekend of February 29 and March 1. A great team of women has come together to work on the production. It should be fantastic!

In April, FLAME will sponsor the second annual Illinois State University "It Affects Me" week to heighten awareness about sexual assault. We are partnering with the YWCA's Stepping Stones Sexual Assault Program to bring Angela Rose to ISU as keynote speaker. After being abducted and sexually assaulted at the age of 17, Angela was shocked to find out that almost nobody believed her story. She is now an educator and founder of PAVE (Promoting Awareness, Victim Empowerment). FLAME is very excited to have Ms. Rose coming to ISU.

Meetings will be held during the spring semester at 7 p.m. every second and fourth Wednesday in the Rachel Cooper second-floor lounge, beginning January 16. Everyone is welcome to attend. Stay tuned to the WGS events calendar for meeting topics. *The Vagina Monologues* and the "It Affects Me" campaign both offer many wonderful volunteer opportunities, so bring your skills and ideas to the meetings and get involved!

Kati Cruger is FLAME's Public Relations Executive. ☀

Slam Is a Success for Women's Project

By Claire Small

On November 13 the Women's Project held their first poetry slam, "Celebrating Women." The slam is just one step in the recent expansion of the Women's Project goals, formerly focused on the theatre, to encourage women's creative expression in all mediums. The poetry went down at the Coffeehouse in Uptown Normal and attracted both men and women to perform, observe, and listen to the readings. Among the performers was Kirsten Zona, an ISU professor and poet who met with Women's Project members in preparation for the slam. She performed her own work and the work of another poet she admires, May Swenson. In fact, most of the "slammers" performed a mix of their own poems and the writings of others. Popular favorites included Maya Angelou and Sylvia Plath.

(Continued p. 5)

Slam (Continued)

The laid-back setting of the Coffeehouse seemed to cater to everyone, and the audience and coffee-drinkers were very supportive. Coloring books were passed around for more entertainment, and poetry books were shared so that even those unprepared for the festivities could find something to read aloud. One attendee felt so inspired and comfortable that she composed a few poems on the spot just before sharing them out loud! Another member of the Women's Project was encouraged to read a prose piece that she wrote. Work presented during the evening expanded from poetry to song lyrics and even short essays.

All in all it was a night of inspirational fun for all expected guests, performers, and unsuspecting customers.



Katie Klemp shares her original poetry.



Above: Claire Small performs to a full Coffeehouse at the Women's Project Poetry Slam.

Faculty and Student Accomplishments

Dr. Alison Bailey presented her paper "What Should White Feminist Philosophers Do? Notes toward a Critical Race Feminist Philosophy" on October 25, 2007 at the California Roundtable on Race in Northridge, CA.

Annaliisa Ahlman (Theatre Education) directed Brian Tanen's play *The Man of Infinite Sadness* at University High School, and will receive a scholarship in the spring from U-Club. She is also serving as the Co-Chair for the Student Committee of the Illinois High School Theatre Festival, which will be held at ISU in January, 2008.

Shushan Avagyan (Graduate, English), Nancy Agabian, and Lara Aharonian published *(An)Taratsutian mej* through The Women's Resource Center of Yerevan, Armenia (2007).

Jenna Goldsmith (English) published her poem "Re-Pair" in ISU's online literary magazine *Euphemism*3, issue 1 (2007).

Right: On November 14, Dr. Cassandra Veene (former ISU WGS Faculty) presented "The Effects of Structural Adjustment Programs and Democratization on Refugees, Host Governments, and Host Communities in Kenya and Tanzania" as part of this year's International Studies Seminar Series.



Left: On November 5, WGS affiliated faculty member Dr. Tom Gerschick presented "Disability and Gender: Mapping the Sociological Landscape" as part of the Sociology/Anthropology Faculty Research Seminar Series.

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

Welcome, new minors!

Erin Carey, psychology
Jodi Gray, politics and government
Kendra Karman, journalism
Ashley Parker, communication
Heidi VanDeVoort, music education/performance

Congratulations, Graduates!

Jonathan Crowley, Communication Studies
Shauna Jackson, Mass Communications
Lauren Kim, English Education
Lauren Kruzil, Political Science
Deandra Williams, Communication Studies
Deandrena Williams, Communication Studies

Spring 2008 Calendar

- Jan. 14** WGS Symposium Proposal Submission Deadline
- Jan 18** Meet and Greet at Fat Jack's. 511 N. Main Street, Bloomington, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
- Feb. 9** Fourth Annual Women's Mentoring Network Conference. Location TBA, 8 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
- Feb. 27** Holly Hughes, "Performance as Visual Culture," lecture. University Galleries, 4 p.m.
- Feb. 28** *Preaching to the Perverted*, Holly Hughes's one-woman performance. Westhoff, 8:30 p.m.
- Feb. 29** WGS Symposium. Keynote: Holly Hughes, performance artist. University Galleries, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Mar 19** Gender-Based Violence Panel Discussion. International Studies Seminar Series. 3d Floor East Lounge, BSC, 12 p.m.-1 p.m.