



# Women's Voice

Illinois State University

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## From the Director

This summer, in the midst of much-needed rest and relaxation in London, I traveled to southern Italy to participate in the 7<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region. The AWMR is a progressive transnational feminist network that brings together women from all parts of the region, including conflict areas such as Cyprus, Turkey and Greece, Serbia, Albania and Croatia, Israel and the Palestine Authority, and other countries such as Malta, Italy, France, Spain, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Syria. The conference theme was women and work, and I presented a paper on the problems and prospects of women's employment in Arab countries of the Mediterranean region. I felt an almost instant political and cultural affinity with this group, its objectives, and its members. I was most impressed by the ability of the women from conflict regions to engage in civil and principled discussion of their differences, and then to agree on common resolutions.

Would international relations and foreign policy be better conducted if women were in charge? One thinks of questionable figures such as Golda Meier, Margaret Thatcher, Benazir Bhutto, Tansu Ciller, and Madeleine Albright. On the other hand, we have wonderful role

models in former Irish president Mary Robinson (now head of the UN's Human Rights Commission), former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (now head of the UN's World Health Organization), and Sri Lanka's president Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. And I have always felt that if Hanan Ashrawi were the Palestinian leader and Shulamit Aloni the head of the Israeli government, the conflict would have been resolved with dignity and justice long ago. It is significant that the positive figures I mentioned have some relationship to feminism or the women's movement, in addition to their party affiliations – which are usually social-democratic or socialist.

At ISU, we take up the issue of the links between gender and politics in the Introduction to Women's Studies class (WS 120). It is also a topic in the course Women and Politics, to be taught this year by new political science faculty member Claire Snyder, who will also teach a graduate seminar in feminist political thought in Spring 1999.

Let me end by extending a warm welcome to new faculty and students, and a welcome back to our returning students. ✍

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Visit our website at: <http://www.cas.ilstu.edu/WomenStudies/womenstudies.html>

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## WOMEN'S STUDIES BROWN BAG PLANNED FOR FALL: GENDER AND THE DISCIPLINES

The Women's Studies Program at ISU will sponsor a regular brown bag series during Fall 1998 to explore the integration of gender in the disciplines and in research and pedagogy at ISU. Interested faculty from any department, program, or college, are invited to discuss (a) how feminist analysis and a gender perspective are utilized in their disciplines, (b) how faculty use gender in their research and teaching, and (c) how students respond.

As background reading, we have Discipline Analysis publications from the nation-wide Curriculum Transformation Project. These cover Sociology, Anthropology, Philosophy, History, Education, Geography, Political Science, Biology, and Economics. We would also like to involve faculty from "non-traditional disciplines", including Family and Consumer Sciences, Business, and Agriculture. For more information, contact Dr. Moghadam at [ymmogha@ilstu.edu](mailto:ymmogha@ilstu.edu) or call 438-2947.

## WOMEN'S STUDIES AS A RESOURCE AND DOCUMENTATION CENTER

The Women's Studies Program collects information on graduate programs in Women's Studies and on internships and fellowships appropriate to Women's Studies minors and to other students interested in women and gender issues. Feel free to come to our offices to browse, or make an appointment with Dr. Moghadam or Dr. Harmon.

## MATERIALS AVAILABLE AT WOMEN'S STUDIES

### AFRICA

Dr. Moghadam has received a number of publications on women and gender issues in Africa from the UN's Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), based in Addis Ababa. These include the African Platform for Action, which was adopted in November 1994; a study on women and socio-economic development, published in 1996; and the African Women's Report 1995. Students or faculty undertaking research on Africa or African women may call Dr. Moghadam concerning these publications.

### SOUTH AMERICA

For faculty and students researching women in Latin America, Dr. Moghadam has publications from the women and development unit of ECLAC – the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. These publications cover such issues as women and politics, gender-based violence, women and the new technologies, female human resources development, health, women and the urban informal sector. An interesting publication is entitled "Changing Power and Autonomy of Caribbean Women". Also available for research purposes are national reports on Mexico, Venezuela, and other countries, prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, Sept. 1995).

## INTERNSHIP

Women's EDGE-the Coalition for Women's Economic Development and Global Equality is seeking interns for its Washington, DC office. Interns are unpaid and must be interested in working in political organizing for international and domestic women's issues. To apply, send a resume and cover letter to Ritu R. Sharma, Director, Women's EDGE. 1424 K Street, NW., Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005. Telephone: (202)637-6215. Fax: (202)628-3306, E-mail: [womensedge@igc.org](mailto:womensedge@igc.org).

## WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAMMING FALL 1998

**Lecture and films by Judith Helfand  
16-19 September 1998**

**Film series on and by women  
Wednesday evenings, September 1998**

Open House at University Galleries, followed by screening of "Speaking of Nairobi".

Additional information available on flyers around campus, or call Dr. Alison Bailey for the Judith Helfand (438-7795) and Shari Zeck (438-8293) or Sophia Exposito (438-7984) regarding the films.

## JOIN WOMEN'S COALITION

*"I have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat."—Rebecca West*

Everyone's definition of feminism differs slightly. But if you look in the recent media (take *Time* magazine or our own *Daily Vidette*, for example), feminists and women activists seem to be badly misrepresented. So what does that matter to you, the average student (or faculty or staff member)?

A lot. This is my chance to invite you to join Women's Coalition, where we provide a safe space to discuss and learn about issues affecting all of us (body image, feminism, campus safety, women and creativity, etc.). Women's Coalition also sponsors or works on activities like Take Back the Night (a march protesting violence against women), Women's History Month, women's talent forums,...and we're always looking for new ideas.

Women's Coalition is especially looking this year to foster a feminist identity, a sense of collectivity, at ISU. So even if you can't fit the occasional meeting into your schedule, consider how those media misrepresentations of feminism hurt us all, keep us from paying attention to each other and working together.

Actively support what you believe in. Women's Coalition meets Thursday nights (beginning August 27) at 7 p.m. in Stevenson Hall, Room 401B. For more information contact Liz Sawyer at 662-2906 or [ewsawye@mail.ilstu.edu](mailto:ewsawye@mail.ilstu.edu).



Have you noticed the front cover of the 1998-1999 Undergraduate Catalog? The Women's Coalition sponsored "Clothesline Project" is featured. Check it out!

# NOTES ON WOMEN'S STUDIES STUDENTS AND FACULTY

## WOMEN'S STUDIES MINOR REPORTS ON SUMMER INTERNSHIP

*Molly DiRago, president of Women's Coalition and a Women's Studies minor, was accepted into the highly competitive summer internship program of the Feminist Majority, based in Washington DC. Letters of recommendation for Molly were written by Dr. Alison Bailey, Philosophy and Women's Studies, and Dr. Valentine Moghadam, Director of Women's Studies. Congratulations to Molly. Excerpts of her report follow.*

The Feminist Majority and the Feminist Majority Foundation, two similar non-profit organizations, with different legal boundaries and privileges, are led by the president, Eleanor Smeal, a recognized women's rights leader in the United States and beyond. Major projects are ending gender apartheid in Afghanistan, the National Clinic Access Project, the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, writing the Women's Equity act, the Feminist News, legalizing and supporting RU486, and the Feminist Chronicles.

I worked on the gender apartheid project. A militant group called the Taliban entered the cities of Afghanistan a couple of years ago, and women and girls have lost their basic human rights. Girls are not allowed to go to school and women are not allowed to work or attend universities. Women can not go out unless completely covered with a *burqa*. The consequences for not obeying these and other strict rules are beatings, public humiliations, and even death. The Feminist Majority began a nation-wide petition drive, collecting signatures to be sent to Bill Clinton, Madeleine Albright, and members of the United Nations. Demonstrations were held at embassies, the White House, and the headquarters of companies who are contributing to the Taliban monetarily.

UNOCAL, a U.S. oil and gas company, wants to build a pipeline that would go through Afghanistan and enrich the Taliban. The Feminist Majority has targeted UNOCAL through research, attending board meetings, and demonstrating against them. The Feminist Majority is currently planning a packet to give to college students to help them stage their own demonstrations and rallies.

Studying Women Studies at ISU allowed me to converse easily and intelligently with the permanent staff at Feminist Majority, all of whom are working in different areas of feminism. I also felt comfortable performing whatever task was required of me.

This feeling was emphasized at the National Organization for Women (NOW) annual conference in Rochester, New York. The majority of women at the conference were older women, most aging from forty to sixty years old. It was clear that the younger feminists felt comfortable discussing feminism, and knew the words they need to convey feminist thoughts. This, I assume, is all due to Women Studies courses, where feminism is discussed and explored in depth, and also where young women find that their ideas are worth having and expressing. Women Studies gives students ample opportunity to express and fine-tune their ideas. In Women Studies classes, feminism is spoken, written, and read. We must write about what we hear, forcing us to think over these discussions and then come to our own conclusion in a well thought-out manner.

Students of Women Studies get the advantage of having feminist professors. Having Women Studies professors gives young women mentors and role models who are successful, feminist women. It is amazing to see all that your professors have accomplished, which suggests that we students can have similar accomplishments.

Women's Coalition gave me similar gifts of role models and confidence, especially as the president. I felt far more prepared than any of the interns, and far more experienced in activism.

## WOMEN'S STUDIES MINOR ATTENDS NATIONAL WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

*Liz Sawyer, Women's Coalition, attended the 19<sup>th</sup> annual NWSA conference held June 10-14 at Oswego State University in New York, where 700 faculty, students, staff, and activists converged on the bank of Lake Ontario.*

The sheer volume of activity was amazing: In addition to 177 different small-group sessions, there were plenaries on the politics of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities, activism v. academia, feminism in education, and sexuality and power; a feminist film series; a writer's series; and a book fair, to name a few. A trip to nearby Seneca Falls to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first women's rights convention was a highlight.

I found the conference empowering, educational, overwhelming, and profoundly moving on many levels. It was the first time that I had experienced such a powerful (large) space where women's issues were the central and most important focus. Attending sessions like "Combining Scholarship, Activism, and Community," "Voices Addressing Violence," "Feminist Activism and Organizational Structure," and "The Body as a Site for Learning" were beneficial to me and helped me shape and refocus my feminist studies. I also made several friends and found professional contacts.

A persistent issue concerned the tension between activism and the academic world, and the balance that must be reached, but is difficult to maintain, between two sometime disparate areas. I realized too that the connection between theorizing (the abstract) and activism (the everyday) and the importance of both are what make women's studies so different from other academic pursuits (and so important to my own education). I feel my understanding of feminism and the need for social change has increased exponentially. ☺

## NEWS ABOUT WOMEN'S STUDIES FACULTY

During the Spring and Summer of 1998 **Dr. Valentine M. Moghadam**, Director of the Women's Studies Program, made the following conference presentations or guest lectures:

April 10-11, Brown University, Conference on women, economic restructuring, and activism in the Middle East: "Women and Globalization in the Middle East and North Africa: Problems and Prospects".

April 24-25, Portland State University, a panel discussion on her new book, "Women, Work, and Economic Reform in the Middle East and North Africa".

April 28, University of Oregon, Eugene, lecture on "The Algerian Women's Movement in Regional and Global Perspective."

May 19, Ohio State University, lecture on "The Feminization of Poverty in International Perspective";

July 26-August 1, the XIV World Congress of Sociology, Montreal, Canada, three presentations: (1) "Gender and Globalization: Female Labor and Women's Mobilizations"; (2) "Revolution, Religion, and Gender Politics: Iran and Afghanistan Compared"; (3) "Globalization and Transnational Feminist Movements: Implications for Social Movement Theory".

August 21-25, annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco: participation in a panel organized by the Political Economy of the World-System section, on national comparative development versus world-systems analysis. ☺

**Maura I. Toro-Morn**, Visiting Professor, Department of Philosophy and Sociology, Lanzhou University, presented a paper entitled, "Family, Gender, and Work: Racial and Ethnic Families in the United States" at the Second Annual American Studies Conference "Perspectives on Modern America" held in Beijing, April 6-8, 1998. ☺

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### WOMEN'S STUDIES CONFERENCE TO BE HELD AT SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Faculty and Students are invited to submit proposals for the first symposium of the Illinois Women's Studies Consortium, to take place at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, on Saturday, October 24, 1998. The theme is open, so papers are invited on any topic related to women and gender issues. As a participating program of the Consortium, we are calling for and soliciting papers. This is the second call for papers, after which we will rank and choose papers in time for SIU's September 10 deadline.

Please send a detailed paper proposal, or a completed paper, along with your name, address, phone, fax, and e-mail, to: The Women's Studies Programming Committee, Illinois State University, Campus Box 4260, Normal, IL 61790-4260. The ISU Women's Studies Program will cover the costs of participation for those from ISU whose proposals are accepted. ✉

### Women's Voice

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## PAST WOMEN'S STUDIES EVENTS



*Women's Studies Open House – November 13, 1997*



*Illinois State University Third Annual Women's Studies Symposium  
March 22, 1998*