

But How Have Women “Recessed”?

By Sherrilyn M. Billger

Economists declared the Great Recession over in summer 2009.¹ Yet two years later, unemployment remains high and debates continue about fiscal stimulus, tax cuts, mortgage rates, and government regulation. Politicians and pundits focus on the relevant economic agents, who appear to be entrepreneurs, bankers, blue-collar workers, and occasionally teachers. The prototypical victim of the weak economy is a beleaguered small-business owner or a middle-aged man whose unemployment benefits have run out. Sometimes women will make the news; one woman discusses her recent layoff, another sits on the couch beside her husband as they recount their mortgage foreclosure.... But women have not been the focus of news reports about the personal consequences of this weak economy. Perhaps we should step back from the mainstream media outlets and consider how the recession has impacted women.

Historically, men are more likely to lose their jobs during economic downturns. Yet, the most recent unemployment rate is 8.8% for both men and women.² Past recessions were most devastating for (predominately male) blue-collar workers in manufacturing and construction. This time around, we know about auto manufacturing bailouts, federal and state construction contracts, and bank bailouts. Public policy interventions (i.e., bailouts and increased government spending) benefitted these industries that

employ far more men than women. Even in these predominately male industries, women have higher unemployment rates: in financial services, 5.0% male and 6.7% female; and in construction, 13.3% male and 21.9% female.

After the government's initial industry bailouts and (arguably weak) fiscal spending increases, focus has shifted to debt reduction. How is this approach likely to impact women? In a nutshell: male-dominant industries have received economic support from the government, and female-dominant industries are currently under fire.

Much of government spending is used to pay salaries, healthcare, and retirement benefits for government workers; so proponents of vast spending cuts quickly put government jobs (including teaching) on the chopping block.³ Teachers are already underpaid, and the current climate will only exacerbate the problem. Many women (and minorities) pursue government jobs because they experience less discrimination; salaries and promotions are more equitable.⁴ “Streamlining” government services not only harms the Americans who depend upon them, but also removes jobs that are generally better for women than what they can find in the private sector.

On the other hand, a woman need not work outside the home to suffer from the recession. In my labor economics classes we discuss the phenomenon of “added workers.” The typical added worker is a woman married to a long-term unemployed man who gave up looking for work. He likely has substantial (*cont'd*)

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Women's and Gender Studies Staff

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skills and had earned a high salary, making him unwilling to take a job dropping fries at Burger King. But his wife, who had been the homemaker and caregiver, is willing to become a (minimum-wage) greeter at Wal-Mart, in order to help pay the bills.⁵ Recessions can truly devastate “traditional” families, as family roles shift and their standard of living plummets. Plus, the added worker’s home responsibilities are not likely to change. Even when a woman works outside the home, she still spends more time than her husband on housework and caregiving.⁶

Proposed policy changes are not likely to help women, and could even send us backwards. For example, the minimum wage is under attack again. Reducing the minimum wage would not stimulate the economy. There simply is no proof that the minimum wage causes unemployment, and potential cost savings are negligible.⁷ Employers hire workers if revenues exceed costs. Small changes in wage bills or taxes will not increase hiring—consumer demand needs to improve. Furthermore, the consequences to workers are serious, since the current minimum wage does not ensure a decent standard of living. This is clearly a gender issue; the majority of minimum wage earners are adult women.⁸

To emphasize: *consumer demand needs to improve*. The claim that business owners await either 1) lower taxes for the wealthiest Americans, or 2) less business regulation before they increase hiring, is a fallacy, as a variety of polls reveal.⁹ We need policies that will enhance consumer confidence. Public sector layoffs would reduce consumer spending (unless private firms were to quickly hire everyone who would be laid off). Removing environmental regulations would put some government employees out of work and would leave our environment, well, unregulated. (Fracking, anyone?) Reducing taxes for the top 1% would not increase consumer spending. The wealthiest Americans would save extra income; it is middle- and low- income earners who would spend it. Reducing the debt above all else will not help us out of this weak economy, and it is likely to have particularly devastating effects on women. So we need to stay vigilant, as this recession threatens our progression.

Sherrilyn M. Billger is interim chair and associate professor in the Department of Economics and is a core WGS faculty member.

1. http://www.bea.gov/faq/index.cfm?faq_id=1004
2. <http://bls.gov/cps/>
3. Edwards, Chris, “Employee Compensation in State and Local Governments,” *Cato Institute Tax & Budget Bulletin*, no. 59, January 2010. Note that a clear majority of state and

local government workers are women, while they are a minority in federal government jobs.

4. Meyer, Gerald, “Selected Characteristics of Private and Public Sector Workers,” *Congressional Research Service*, July 1, 2011, p.13.
5. I’m not saying he *should* drop fries. We should have more good jobs for everyone.
6. See for instance the American Time Use Survey, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/atus.pdf>.
7. Doucouliagos, H., and T. Stanley, “Publication Selection Bias in Minimum-Wage Research? A Meta-Regression Analysis,” *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 47(2), 406-28.
8. Filion, Kai, “Minimum Wage Issue Guide,” *Economic Policy Institute*, July 21, 2009.
9. See for instance: King, Ted, “Dearth of Demand Seen behind Weak Hiring,” *Wall Street Journal* online, July 18, 2011; or Hall, Kevin G., “Regulations, Taxes Aren’t Killing Small Business, Owners Say,” *McClathy Newspapers*, September 1, 2011. ☼



Left to right: Alison Bailey, Rozel White, and Becca Chase at Rozel White’s retirement party, September 30.

Rozel White Retires

By Becca Chase

Our beloved office support specialist, Rozel White, retired on September 30 after 14 years serving the Women’s and Gender Studies (formerly Women’s Studies) Program. She worked for ISU for 23 years, starting at the College of Education in Clinical Experiences, and then as secretary to the chair of the Department of Business Education in the College of Business. During her time at Women’s Studies she received three awards. In 2000 she was co-recipient with the Women’s Studies staff of the Team Excellence Award. In 2002 she received the Outstanding Civil Service Award, and in 2003 the Outstanding Civil Service Award from the Office of Intercultural Programs and Services.

Rozel was passionate about her work. She is proud especially for her major efforts toward developing and funding the “Women’s Employment: Linking Global and Local” conference in 1999. Through this work she befriended Luellen Laurenti, in whose name the Luellen Laurenti scholarship was established. She also (*cont’d*)

was close to Dorothy E. Lee, who helped establish the Women's Studies Program and has funded the Dorothy E. Lee Scholarship and Grant. Editing the *Women's Voice* newsletter was very important to her, too.

She remembers most fondly the many students she has encountered over the years, such as our scholarship and grant recipients and graduate and undergraduate assistants. These students "are near and dear to my heart," says Rozel. "I have always been happy to be behind the scenes, helping others to achieve their best."

Now that she is retired, Rozel remains devoted to helping others. She is establishing a nonprofit organization to benefit single mothers, and will stay actively involved in her church, Judah International Ministries, as an elder. We wish Rozel all the best for a fruitful and happy life beyond Women's and Gender Studies! ☀



Detail from a mural at the Little Village Lawndale High School Campus in Chicago.

Latin American and Latino Studies Program Celebrates Latino Heritage Month

By Maura I. Toro-Morn

This year the Latin American and Latino Studies Program (LALS) kicked off a month-long series of activities on September 15 with a visit by Prof. Frances Aparicio, Director of the Latino Studies Program at Northwestern University. She shared with us her knowledge of the expanding field of Latino Studies during a packed lunchtime event. In the evening, she presented "Embodying Latinidad: Intra-Latino/a Subjects in Chicago," in which she explored the complexities of pan-ethnic labels—such as Latino and Latinidad—for subjects who identify with more than one nationality. Her lecture was co-sponsored by Diversity Advocacy and the Association of Latin American Students (ALAS).

On September 27, ALAS sponsored Nuestra Comunidad: Latinos in Central Illinois, a panel discussion that showcased how much the area's Latino community has grown, and how community organizations are responding to such growth. The panel, which was moderated by Axel Jimenez from State Farm, included representatives from many community and campus organizations. The discussant was Prof. Rocio Rivadeneyra (Psychology and Women's and Gender Studies). The State Farm Hispanic Employee Resource Organization, Hispanic Families Work Group, LALS, Organization of Latin American Employees, and University Housing Services co-sponsored the event.

For our first "Conversando entre nosotros: LALS Brown Bag Series," Asst. Prof. Alejandro Enriquez (Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures) spoke about "Marianismo and Religious Syncretism in Colonial Mexico" on October 14. We also co-sponsored with the University Galleries the visit of Puerto Rican artists Josué Pellot and Héctor Arce Espasas. Their joint exhibit *Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted* was displayed in the University Galleries from September 23 to October 23. Pellot delivered an artist's talk on Monday, October 10 and that night answered questions after a screening of his film *I Am Queen* at the Normal Theater.

The highlight of the month was the Latino Gala Dinner on October 1 at the Bone Student Center, featuring two internationally known artists: Cuban pianist Chuchito Valdes and actress America Ferrera. Blending influences of Caribbean rhythms and jazz, Chuchito has won numerous prizes, awards, and recognitions for his music. America Ferrera is best known for her critically acclaimed role in the award-winning TV series *Ugly Betty*; but ask a Latina and she will immediately connect Ferrera to the hit 2002 indie film, *Real Women Have Curves*. The event was organized by Housing Services and co-sponsored by LALS.

Dr. Toro-Morn is Professor of Sociology and Anthropology and a member of the Women's and Gender Studies and LALS faculties. ☀

"It Gets Better" at ISU

By Gina Rachele and Deandre Williams

On September 14, Dan Savage, founder of the globally successful "It Gets Better" Project, presented a fiery lecture at Braden Auditorium about the plight of gay youth and how best to support them. Savage created the project, a compilation of YouTube videos with encouraging gay-friendly messages, in fall 2010, to reach struggling lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth. Since its inception, over 35,000 (*cont'd*)

people, from President Barack Obama and celebrities like Lady Gaga to ordinary people sharing their own coming-out stories, have uploaded inspirational videos.

The idea came to Savage after a gay teen who had been severely bullied completed suicide. Savage was angry and frustrated with the public school principals who wouldn't allow him in their schools, and with those parents who were hostile toward their own LGBT children. "LGBT kids are four times more likely to attempt suicide, and eight times more likely if their parents are hostile," he said. "LGBT kids who are bullied at school all too often go home to parents who also bully them. Then they are dragged to a church on Sunday where they are bullied by God."



Savage saw an urgent need for adults to reach out to those young people in crisis and figured that online social networking was the best way to approach isolated youth. The "It Gets Better" Project has the unique ability to support youth who otherwise would never have the opportunity to gain acceptance. Said Savage, "We are talking to these kids now, whether their parents want us to or not, without an invitation and without permission, because we're gonna save their lives, and if you don't like it? Fuck you." The audience responded with an eruption of cheering and applause.

Earlier in the day, Savage spoke at Milner Library. His visit was sponsored by the University Program Board, Diversity Advocacy, and Milner Library. ☀

The Women of Lockerbie

By Jeanette Odle



The Women of Lockerbie, which ran from September 30-October 8, was one of the School of Theatre's most sizzling shows of the fall season. With a full riverbank and rolling Scottish hills, a moving original score, and an extremely dedicated cast, *The Women of Lockerbie* was an unexpected and emotional delight. This story revolves around three Scottish women and an American couple who lost loved ones in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 in 1998, known as the Lockerbie bombing. Although fictional, these characters bring to life the tragedy and the impact of terrorism. On a deep level, *Lockerbie* showcases what grief looks like in its many forms, but does so in such a way that, by the end, the characters come together in a united expression of sorrowful hope.

The playwright, Deborah Brevoort, came to ISU on the fourth and fifth of October. On the morning of October
Gender Matters

4, she delivered a guest lecture entitled "The Writer's Impulse" for LinC classes and other students at Milner Library. During the early afternoon, Brevoort delivered a lecture on the writing process for THE 340: Directing Workshop, THE 348: Playwriting, and IDS 121.39: Contemporary Women Playwrights at the Center for the Performing Arts Theatre. That evening, Brevoort attended the performance of *The Women of Lockerbie* at the Center for the Performing Arts, and immediately following participated in a talkback with the playwright. At noon on October 5, Brevoort delivered a talk on "*Enduring Tragedy: The Women of Lockerbie and Responses to Terrorism*" at the International Studies Seminar in the Bone Student Center. ☀

Faculty Accomplishments

Kyle Ciani was a panelist for "Motherhood Revisited: Maternalism in the Next Generation," at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, June 11. She presented "The National Woman's Party and Political Rhetoric: Visual Propaganda in the Battle for the Vote," at the William G. McGowan Theater in Washington D.C., by invitation of the Sewall-Belmont House & Museum and the National Archives of the United States, to honor Women's Equality Day, August 25. She was a panelist at the opening reception for the "Reason, Reflect, Respect" exhibition at the McLean County Museum of History in Bloomington, September 24.

Cara Rabe-Hemp presented "Maternity Policies in American Police Departments: Organizational, Legal, and Practical Considerations" at the Midwestern Criminal Justice Association Meeting in Chicago, October 1. She wrote Chapter 10: "Police Corruption and the Code of Silence" in *Police and Law Enforcement*, ed. William Chambliss (Sage) and Chapter 34: "The Career Trajectories of Female Police Executives" in *Women and Justice: It's a Crime*, 5th Ed., ed. Rosalyn Muraskin (Pearson). She wrote the articles "Exploring Administrators' Perceptions of Light-duty Assignment" in *Police Quarterly*, Vol. 14(2) and "Beauty, Brains, and a Badge: A Content Analysis of Female Forces" in *Feminist Criminology* Vol. 6(2); and with **Dawn Beichner**, "An Analysis of Advertisements: A Lens for Viewing the Social Exclusion of Women in Police Imagery" in *Women and Criminal Justice*, Vol. 21(1).

Maura I. Toro-Morn published with Nilda Flores Gonzalez "Undocumented Immigrant Women in the Midwest: The Struggles of Elvira Arellano and (cont'd) Flor Crisóstomo" in *Wounded Border, Frontera Herida: Writings on the San Diego-Tijuana Region and (cont'd)*

Beyond, ed. Justin Akers Chacon and Enrique Davalos (San Diego City Works Press). Also with Nilda Flores Gonzalez she published "Transnational Latino Mother-Activists in the Americas: The Case of Elvira Arellano and Flor Crisóstomo" in *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*, Vol. 2(2).

Georgia Tsouvala presented "Plutarch, Alexander, and the Marriage at Susa Revisited" at the Illinois Classical Conference Meeting, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, October 8. She presented "Before Title IX: Women Athletes in Ancient Greece and Rome" at Newman University, Wichita, KS, on September 29; and "Markia Ismenodora and Heteraia Prokilla: Women in Gymnasia," at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, September 9.

Christine Varga-Harris published the article "Хрущёвка, коммуналка: социализм и повседневность во время 'Оттепели'" in *Новейшая история России*, no. 1. (June) This piece addresses housing and daily life in the Soviet Union during the postwar era through the 1960s; the English title of the periodical in which it appears is *Modern History of Russia*. ☀

Student News

LGBT Intern Works for Social Justice

By Jessica Bales

In fall 2010 and spring 2011 I interned with the LGBT/Queer Studies and Services Institute at ISU. The Institute is a fledgling entity on campus that seeks to promote equality and safety for LGBTQ people on campus and in the community and to promote greater LGBTQ inclusion in the curriculum. During my time with the institute I maintained the Web site, attended board meetings, assisted in research projects, organized the library and archives, and networked with other LGBTQ groups on campus. Working towards social justice is never an easy task, and interning for the LGBT/Queer Institute, which is a grassroots project operating with university's recognition but without an operating budget or paid staff, was frustrating at times, but it was also extremely rewarding. Interning for a group that is actively seeking equality at ISU is a powerful experience. Because the Institute was still forming, I was able to participate in the creation of an entity that will be an amazing part of ISU someday. This internship needs someone who has fire, drive and passion; the Institute still needs to cut through a lot of red tape. So if you are self-motivated, creative, can think ahead, and are willing to do *all* kinds of things to further equality at ISU, then this internship is for you. ☀

Women and Children's Horizons

Internship

By Celia Mokrzycki

This semester I was able to participate in a WGS 398: Professional Practice internship for *Women and Children's Horizons* (WCH) in Kenosha, Wisconsin. This organization's mission is to provide support, education, training, and healing for victims of sexual and domestic violence/abuse. Such institutions provide extensive training. At WCH the training program consisted of biweekly meetings ranging from three to four hours per meeting for five weeks. We learned about sexual assault and domestic violence, legal advocacy, and law enforcement responses. The perspectives of the victims, abusers, witnesses, children, law enforcement officials, and healthcare workers all were included.

My supervisor, Andi Connolly-Meyers, helped me get a broad-ranged and in-depth experience with WCH by allowing me to shadow staff members and assist several departments within the organization. My tasks included everything from recruiting volunteers to covering calls for emergency responses. The most interesting part of my experience was working with the Circle of Change batterers' treatment group. This program provides domestic abuse education for men and women who abuse. In our training we focused primarily on the victim and learning to be the victim's advocate, but participating in the Circle of Change group allowed me to become familiar with the psychology of the abuser. I was able to witness firsthand how the curriculum increased the perpetrators' understanding of their violent behavior by helping them examine their behaviors in cultural and social contexts.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in this professional program through Women's and Gender Studies. While I gained much new knowledge and experience during my internship, the education I received through my gender studies courses gave me the skills to analyze how rigid gender roles and a patriarchal system support abuse and violence. ☀

A Queer Internship

By Danny Mathews

I credit the Women's and Gender Studies program with changing the way I look at the world. With each class, my personal philosophical beliefs have been informed as I critically engage texts and situations through a queer, feminist political lens. My summer internship at ISU's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Queer Studies and Services Institute was no different. (*Cont'd.*)

The summer of 2011 was a pivotal time of change for the institute. Ironically, the LGBT/Q Institute previously was located in a closet of the Women's and Gender Studies Library. After *coming out* of the closet, the institute was a brief guest in the School of Social Work. This summer the institute moved to its new permanent space in the Professional Development Annex.

As an intern, I facilitated the organization and relocation of the institute's library and archive. I helped design and rearrange the new space into administrative offices, resource center/lounge area, and meeting room. We have created a safe place for LGBT/Q students to gather, socialize and do LGBT/Q-related academic research. This new space also has ample room for campus and community groups that serve LGBT/Q people.

During the summer I researched LGBT programs at ISU's peer institutions and organized a trip to Northern Illinois University's LGBT Resource Center as a means of assessing other programs for LGBT/Q students in Illinois. The NIU trip also provided an important networking opportunity.

This fall I have begun my graduate studies at ISU in College Student Personnel Administration. My experience and work with the LGBT/Q Studies and Services Institute is an inspiration because it is the realization of a long-time dream—working to support the success of LGBT/Q people seeking higher education.☀

Kindling Activism on Campus

By Charlotte Adams

F.L.A.M.E., Feminist Led Activist Movement to Empower, the feminist RSO that ignites activism on ISU's campus, has produced a full fall semester of events. Meetings have touched on topics ranging from "isms," to conforming to feminine norms, to a discussion about pornography. Of course, the events presented on ISU's campus have a great impact on the students and community members. On October 12, many passersby stopped to view t-shirts displayed on the Quad that were decorated by Bloomington-Normal survivors of rape, domestic violence, and sexual assault for The Clothesline Project. Survivors and their loved ones add new t-shirts every year to support the project's goal: to raise awareness about sexual violence and domestic violence in our community by "airing out the dirty laundry." That same day, F.L.A.M.E. held Take Back the Night (TBTN) in the Activity Room of the Bowling and Billiards Center. The audience listened attentively as Members of Planned Parenthood's Teen Awareness Group began the event with a thought-provoking poem about healing. YWCA staff member Erica Thurman

(WGS '07 and '10) gave an enthralling spoken word performance, kindling the fire of activism in the air. Next, speakers courageously shared their stories of domestic violence and experiences of working with sexual assault survivors. Audience members, who had already taken a first step toward creating a campus that functions as a safe space by acting as witnesses, were then encouraged to march around ISU's campus. Demonstrators marched with signs and chanted empowering slogans, urged on by a F.L.A.M.E. member with a megaphone, before ending in front of DeGarmo Hall for a candlelight vigil. Everyone who attended the vigil was invited to proceed to discussions in safe spaces led by ISU Counseling Services staff, for anyone who wanted to talk about the event.☀



Benita Ulisano (left) and Michelle Woods (right) from the Illinois Choice Action Team at Take Back the Night.

Welcome, New Minors!

Emma Belz, Community Health
Education

Tomás Bolivar, Theatre History and
Sociology

Elizabeth Brei, English

Ashley Salzman, Biochemistry

Welcome, New Certificate Students!

Susan George, English Studies

Brooke Burns, English Studies

Congratulations, Graduates!

Jessica Bales, Sociology

Danny Mathews, English

Kelsey Schreck, Sociology

Illinois State University Women's and Gender Studies Program

Faculty: Please encourage your students to submit outstanding papers or presentations that they complete for your classes to the Women's and Gender Studies Program Committee for consideration for the spring symposium.

Seventeenth Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium

Friday,
March 30, 2012
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Old Main Room,
Bone Student
Center

Illinois State
University

For more information contact Sue Tracy
at: (309) 438-2947 or wgstudies@ilstu.edu
or visit our website at:
www.womensandgenderstudies.ilstu.edu

Call for Papers

Panels on Friday morning and afternoon

Lunch at noon

Keynote Address at 1:00 pm

Dr. Tiya A. Miles

"Writing Women of Color into History"

Undergraduate and graduate students are invited to submit papers and detailed descriptions of other types of presentations (e.g. short performance pieces and artist's talks). Papers and presentations are welcome on any topic related to the study of women and/or gender. Students must have a faculty sponsor.

Send papers with a coversheet providing the following information:

Title of paper or presentation

Name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address

Sponsoring professor and, if relevant, the course for which you wrote the paper or developed the presentation.

The deadline for submissions is **Monday March 5, 2012**.

Send to:

Women's and Gender Studies Program Committee

Illinois State University

Campus Box 4260

Normal, IL 61790-4260

or

submit your proposal to the Women's and Gender Studies Program, Rachel Cooper 237, Campus Box 4260; or by e-mail to wgstudies@ilstu.edu.

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

For the complete spring 2012 course list, visit <http://womensandgenderstudies.illinoisstate.edu/>

HIS 308 Selected Topics in European History: Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women and Sexuality in Greece and Rome
T R 2-3:15 p.m. with Dr. Georgia Tsouvala

This course is meant to introduce you to the sources, methodologies, and current debates focusing on women and gender in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds.

ENG 261 Women's Literature in a Global Context: Women Writing War and Peace
T R 2-3:15 p.m., T R 3:35-4:50 pm
with Prof. Rebecca Saunders

The purpose of this course is to read textual representations of war and peace written by Korean, Armenian, Sri Lankan, Cypriot, Mexican, French and Nigerian women and consider the ways in which their writing explores the gendered nature of the experience of war and the building of peace.

ENG 495 Topics in English: Troubling Racialized Sexuality and Gender Constructs in Holocaust Literature
T 2-4:50 p.m. with Dr. Paula Ressler

This course is designed to deepen our understanding of the cultural and historical context of Nazism, its ability to cause so much widespread and unspeakable suffering, the possibilities and impossibilities of resistance, and how its aftermath impacts our lives today.

PHI 330/WGS 391 Feminist Ethics
M W 3-4:15 p.m. with Dr. Alison Bailey

This course aims to introduce philosophy and women's and gender studies students to some of the basic movements, issues, and conceptual tools in feminist ethics.

Visit our website at <http://www.womensandgenderstudies.ilstu.edu>