

NORTH SHORE VISIONS

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FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD BY NJOKI KAMAU

As I write this newsletter article, there are less than twenty days towards the end of Fall semester. I cannot believe how fast the semester has come to an end. That is a sign that we have been very busy. Did I say busy? Think again! Laura and I have been multitasking and working late at night to have everything done.

We began the semester by celebrating a Quarter century of our existence at UMD. Many of our current and former students, friends and faculty attended the festivities. Marge Grevatt was our keynote speaker. Marge tenderly cautioned us against becoming complicit. She reminded us that gains that women have made over the years have not been permanent and there is always the threat of backlash. Marge in particular cautioned those of us in Women's Studies not to get comfortable. I agree with Marge, we cannot tire and we cannot become complicit. Yes, millions of women of have made gains and a number of Women's Studies departments have been established in the United States and even in the so called "developing world." Many gender sensitive policies and programs have been mandated and even enforced. But sexism still is alive and well. Gender equality is still an issue in the United States. Beyond gender, our society is still fractured by race, class, sexual orientation, bodily ability, age, language, country of origin, pro-life, pro-choice, and stem cell issues among others. We cannot tire or become comfortable because a majority of women in other parts of

the world still live under the yoke of local, national and international sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism and xenophobia. Many women in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East fight multiple forces such as internal constraints and intrusive Western interferences and still they dance!

On behalf of the department and myself I extend a vote of thanks to all of you who worked so hard to make the anniversary panel event a huge success. In particular, I thank our speakers, among them our key note speaker Marge Grevatt, and panelists Bilin Tsai, Susana Pelayo Woodward, Rachel Kincade, Kris Simonson, Crystal Pelkey and Ayida Abate. Special thanks to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Dr. Linda Krug, and Vice Chancellor Vince Magnuson for remarks at the program. I thank Associate Dean Dr. Gerald Pepper, Dr. Larry Knopp, Women's Advisory Board Member, and Richard Liu for attending our celebration. Your presence reminded me of Seneca Falls convention in 1848 when about three hundred women and one man met and rewrote the declaration of Independence. Thanks to those of you in corridors of power at UMD who silently respect and support the work that we unflinchingly and tirelessly do at the Women's Studies Department. You are worthy allies and we continue to count on your solidarity.

The three day celebration included a sumptuous dinner, topped with a beautifully decorated and delicious

25th anniversary cake, and cups of ginger spiced Kenyan tea. The dinner conversations between faculty, students, alumni, and friends were not only celebratory but insightful, thoughtful, and intellectually stimulating. As I reflect on the celebrations, I cannot but observe that real power is collective. A male professor accosted Dr. Maddy by the elevators, lifted her up, and kissed her profusely, and then looking into her eyes asked her, "Does that feel like sexual harassment?" Can you imagine that happening today? These women did not pack and go home; instead they organized different paths of resistance. They looked and found each other. They nurtured each other and made sure that their voices were not silenced, their presence was not rendered invisible, and that their knowledge was not invalidated. It is the resistance, persistence, courage, determination, passion, and wit that these women among others embodied that led to the establishment of the Women's Studies Department at UMD.

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ALUMNAE NEWS

Rose Carlson is moving to Virginia, MN in December. She's hoping to get back to Duluth more often, and particularly to get the Motherhood Seminar together again!

From Heather Hamilton - After 3 days of inducement and 12.5 hours of labor, Jonas Hamilton Dark has joined our family. Born in Dayton, OH @ 2:02 am on Friday, November 17th 2006, 7lbs 3 oz .

From Nicki Seibert - Sam, Alisha, and I are happy to announce the arrival of Benjamin Girard Blazevic-Seibert. Despite having a C-section scheduled for November 24, Baby Ben (as Sam refers to him) had other plans. He arrived on November 17 at 6:04 pm. He was 8 pounds, 1.8 ounces and 19.1 inches long. He has lots of hair that at first looked blond and curly, but now it looks darker and straight so who knows. Alisha is recovering very well from surgery. Ben is also doing very well. He is constantly sucking his thumb and seems very alert for only being a couple days old. Sam is thrilled to have his baby brother finally here.

From Lila Kahmann - I just wanted to let you know that I had the baby two weeks ago, Oct 3. We have another little girl her name is Kayla River and she was born at 9:54 pm. This birth was about 5,000 times easier than Aurora's.

From Maren Hansen and Alyssa Kramer - Maren and I are writing you today to share some wonderfully joyful news. We are expecting our first child! Maren is almost 7 weeks pregnant! We are both filled with an enormous variety of emotions... excitement, anticipation, wonder, awe, love, and even a dash "holy crap, it worked!" These are very exciting times and we are thrilled to be able to share this news with you. We are both tremendously excited as we begin our preparations to welcome this new little person into our family! We hope you'll wish us plenty of luck! Our baby is due in early July.

From Patty Sobczak - Patty and Eric adopted two baby girls from Ethiopia earlier this fall. Sadly, one of them, Pearl, is suffering from cardiomyopathy and may be facing a heart transplant. Please see her website at www.caringbridge.org under the name of Pearl Swanson.

Alumni Directory: We are compiling a directory of all of our grads. Thanks to those of you who sent your info. There is still time to be part of the directory. Please send your current contact information [street address, phone, email address] to: ws@d.umn.edu . Thanks!

NEW STAFF IN THE DEPARTMENT— LAURA STOLLE SCHMIDT

Hello to all. I'm the new Department Secretary for Women's Studies, well officially, I'm the Executive Office and Administrative Specialist. Some of you may remember me from the mid to late 90's in Duluth when I worked a short stint as coordinator of Aurora: A Northland Lesbian Center. Or you may have seen me at the Building for Women, DAIP, or the Whole Foods Coop Deli. I've moved back to the "area" with my partner of 8 years who teaches at UMD. We live near Port Wing, WI on 40 acres and are trying our hands at raising some laying hens, growing a garden, and keeping the dog from being mistaken for a deer. I'm thrilled to be working in Duluth at UMD's Women's Studies Department. Stop by and see me in 494 Humanities!

News in the Library

Some new titles that have been ordered for the UMD Library include:

Price of Motherhood: Why The Most Important Job In The World Is Still The Least Valued by Ann Crittenden.

Fleeing The House Of Horrors: Women Who Have Left Abusive Partners by Aysan Sev'er

Voices Of Resistance : Muslim Women On War, Faith & Sexuality edited by Sarah Husain.

Feminist Contentions : A Philosophical Exchange edited by Seyla Benhabib

Women's Roles And Statuses The World Over by Stephanie Hepburn

Globalization And Feminist Activism by Mary E. Hawkesworth.

DVD - What I Want My Words To Do To You: Voices From A Maximum Security Women's Prison

More new materials related to Women's Studies can be found at <http://www.d.umn.edu/lib/ref/ws/index.htm>.

Contact Jodi Carlson, Women's Studies Subject Librarian, at 218-726-7880 or jcarlso@d.umn.edu

25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION BY BETH BARTLETT, PROFESSOR

 Women's Studies celebrated our 25th anniversary the first weekend in October. Over 50 current and former students, faculty, staff, and friends attended the opening reception and panel presentation. Marge Grevatt, one of the original founders of the Women's Studies program at UMD, gave an insightful and inspiring keynote, that ranged from the expectations of women university students 50 years ago (to arrange their lives so as to be engaged before graduating) to the challenges facing Women's Studies in the future. She was joined by several others –Bilin Tsai (another founder),

role of Women's Studies in their lives, in academia, and in the world.



The reception was graced by a large "tree" containing the names of all the people who helped form Women's Studies (the roots); all the faculty, staff, and community members who have been on the Advisory Board or have taught courses in Women's Studies (the trunk); and all of our current and former students (the leaves). (See photo). Thanks to Kris Simonson and all others who helped to make the tree on very short notice. We also unveiled the beautiful 25h anniversary quilt (see photo). Thank you to everyone who contributed a square, and to the amazing quilt makers, Norma Riehm and Cheryl Denison. Both the tree and the quilt are still on display in the Women's Studies office.



Susana Pelayo-Woodward (current WS faculty), Rachel Kincade and Crystal Pelkey (WS grads) and Ayida Abate and Kris Simonson (current WS students) who each shared their reflections on the



The celebration continued with a dinner and then a

brunch at Chester Creek House. Several current and former students had a chance to meet each other and break bread together. It was truly a joyous event!



Tree of Founders, Supporters and Graduates created for the 25th Anniversary by students, staff and faculty (above)

Quilt squares from the Anniversary Quilt (throughout)

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We celebrated our accomplishments and the fight that we wage for our survival in Academia. We have succeeded in exposing the ugly head of patriarchy whenever it shows up. We have sustained a loud and clear discourse on sexism in our classrooms and outside our classrooms. Sexism has become part of the public discourse, in my view, at UMD.

We celebrated to remind ourselves that even though some of us have made inroads, and in fact benefit immensely from patriarchal institutions, the work of social change is far from being over. Systems of injustice reinvent themselves all the time. We need to be critically aware about the kinds of knowledge that we produce and disseminate, our daily informed actions and the futures that we envision.

Doing our work with critical awareness, did I say? Does this look or smell like intentional, purposeful critical awareness? Read on! As I write to you on my Gateway computer I'm reflecting at how the world is so interconnected and how we in Women's Studies talk about, write about or teach about the changes that are transforming our lives so fast. In between my writing this article, I paused and text messaged my brother in Kenya. Within a span of three minutes, he text messaged back that all is well and that it is raining much in Kenya. I am using a Nokia cell phone made in China. Clothes

that I'm wearing as I punch on this keyboard are all made in different parts of the world. For example, my sweater is made in Thailand, my shirt in Honduras, my headscarf in the Philippines. My jeans are from Mexico, my belt from Israel, my shoes from Korea and the list goes on. This morning I had a cup of Colombian coffee with milk from Wisconsin. The computer on which I am punching the keys is assembled in China, and who knows where all the parts are from. I am forced to think about the implications of globalization. What is globalization and what makes globalization work? On my table I see wonderful titles like *Sweatshop Warriors*, *The Global Assembly Line*, *Beyond Borders*, and Amy Chua's book, *World on Fire*. I think about the floating populations or floating people as they call them in China - people who have no fixed abode. These are migratory populations that are forced by globalization to follow the transnational corporations wherever they relocate. And, mark you, they move fast once workers demand fair wages, better working conditions or freedom from pregnancy tests on the job, among other things. Women are the preferred workforce in almost all of the transnational corporations and sweatshops. I reflect on my Witness for Peace delegation to Nicaragua in year 2003. With a few students from UMD plus local and national delegates, we traveled to Nicaragua to witness

the impact of globalization on women's lives. In all the sweatshops that we visited, about 95% of the workers were women and the few men working there were floor supervisors. We witnessed deskilling of women who spend more than fourteen hours per day sewing a shirt sleeve or a collar. We held meetings at the cover of dusk for the safety of the employees. The women workers showed us their pay slips. We visited their homes and we were shocked by their living conditions. Some will argue that globalization creates jobs for these women, while others will argue: yes, but why not work with dignity. But women globally are not victims. They have become sweatshop warriors and they are resisting.

Why is this important to us in the United States and especially in the Department of Women's Studies? Third world women make the clothes we wear, grow and pick the fruits we eat, and above all produce the flowers that we give at Valentine's Day and for special occasions. They also assemble the computers that we use at every other minute. And oh yes, they read our mammograms in India just in time for our doctors to open their clinics. Our jobs have been exported, outsourced and we have to worry about the gender implications of globalization both at home- here in United States and overseas. In the Women's Studies Department we have been offering several international courses this fall to capture how good, moral, just and hard-working people, especially women, can unwittingly become complicit with systems

that that write them off as a group as docile, compliant, nimble fingered, un-unionized workers. Globalization is gendered, classed and raced, and women - in particular, those in two thirds of the world - are the last colony. Globalization as an area of study excites many of our students.

Women's Studies renders itself a different pedagogical style. We aim at critical discourse and sometimes, we share in animated discussions that make me just love being in Women's Studies. Our students are thoughtful, creative and resourceful and are really engaged in the joint search for knowledge.

Beyond the department, I traveled to San Francisco for African Studies Association (ASA) annual meeting in mid November. This was my first visit to this beautiful city. I was surprised by the blatant wealth differentials. I was shocked by the number of men and

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women that are mentally ill and are aggressively begging in the streets. This was in contrast with our conference venue. The conference was held in a five star hotel, The Westin St. Francis. The highlight of the conference was meeting and sharing with widely known feminists/

with these intellectuals. They spoke about changes in the world and how these changes determine what we teach and study. "Meet change with change but not with resistance," Mama told us; and Steady spoke at length about the essentializing, homogenizing and universalizing imperatives in Academia.

Beyond celebrations, reflections and travels, we had our share of emergencies. In mid-semester one of us had to take medical leave. Quickly, we regrouped and volunteered to cover the classes. What next I wondered? The classes must be covered until the end of semester and our faculty came through for the long haul. We hired Maggie Kazel, a

Duluth writer, activist and teacher to cover some of the load. Welcome, Maggie, and thank you for the team spirit that you bring. I cannot ask for a better faculty than the one in Women's Studies. With all the work you so selflessly do and for making the department a vibrant space, you exemplify the best. Our students were very caring, concerned, gracious and very understanding as we scram-

bled to have all classes covered. They exhibited the best of the ethics of care. Yes, our students are our inspiring spirit, our social barometers, and make us get the job done and done right. We are grateful to you all.

Last but not least. This department would not move forward without the day to day work done by Laura and Krista. Thank you, Laura, for doing the everyday stuff that keeps the department running. You have demonstrated leadership by coordinating the many meetings we have held, and looking for and acting on information that we needed to move the department forward. A tremendous thanks to Geraldine Hughes who has gone out of her way to make the office transition seamless and continues to support the department in many ways, not the least of which includes continuing as newsletter co-editor and Women's Studies Advisory Board member. Thank you to all the members of the advisory board for your donation of beautiful plants and art for our new space. Please come and visit with us in room 494 Humanities. You will be glad that you came!

Happy Holidays!

Njoki



Maggie Kazel, Krista Allgor, Laura Stolle Schmidt in front of the new Women's Studies office and conference room in 494 Humanities Building

womanists such as professors Claire C. Robertson, Margaret Jean Hay, Ife Amadiume, Amina A. Mama, director of Gender Studies at University of Capetown, and Filomena Chioma Steady, chair of African Studies at Wellesley College, who delivered powerful key note addresses for both the main conference and the Women's Caucus Luncheon. I had a very powerful encounter

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**Brown Bag Lunch
Programs
Women's Resource and
Action Center**

January 31
February 14
February 28
March 7
March 21
March 28
April 11
April 25

**Women's History Month
March 2007
Watch for events in next issue!**

**February 9-13
Marjorie Agosin on campus**

Look for future announcements regarding lectures and workshops. Ms. Agosin is a human rights activist, writer and poet currently on the faculty at Wellesley College. She will speak, read, and conduct workshops on incorporating human rights issues in the classroom.