

NORTH SHORE VISIONS

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FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

This is my last letter to you signed as Department Head. It's my honor to pass on the so-called chair to Njoki Kamau, Associate Professor of Women's Studies.

You have heard me say it often, but I will say it again: there would be no Department of Women's Studies at UMD if it weren't for its deep roots in the feminist communities on the UMD campus and in Duluth that keep us alive and vibrant. They are the women who do the work in the trenches. They are the ones who teach our interns, inspire us, keep us informed about the everyday struggles women face--we know it isn't getting easier-- they are the ones who keep us accountable.

At UMD my heartfelt thanks go to: our students, who do us proud; Geraldine Hughes and Anna Hoffman in the WS Office (we would not be nor go anywhere without you), my terrific colleagues on the faculty: Beth Bartlett, Njoki Kamau, Susana Pelayo Woodward, Joan Varney and Cindy Christian; Susana Pelayo Woodward, Chris Simonson, Katy Brandes, Sarah Fries, Annie Ragsdale



Tineke, Tina and Beth

of the Women's Resource and Action Center for amazing programming; Gesa Zinn and the Women's Studies Advisory Board; Angie Nichols and GLBT services; the UMD Commission on Women; KUMD's 103.3 FM for the women's music program. In Duluth thank you: Tina Welsh, founder and Director of the Women's Health Center and the Building for Women, and who was our never-to-forget keynote speaker for Women's History Month on the topic of our vanishing reproductive rights; Beth Olson and Candace Harshner at the Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault and organizers of the powerful Take Back the Night March; the Northland Country Women's Coffee House; Aurora. A Northland Lesbian Center; Women's Community Development Organization; Women in Construction;

The Life House; Safe Haven; The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project; Praxis International; the YWCA; Planned Parenthood; Adeline's. Many of these organizations as well



WS students with Tina

as the WS department are celebrating our 25th anniversary about which you are sure to learn more in the next newsletter.

Last but certainly not least, we want to recognize our graduating students and wish them all the best. You are fabulous! Do please keep in touch.

In sisterhood,

Tineke

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COMMON GROUND BY KATY BRANDES, WS MAJOR

On March 10, I took the Greyhound bus to New Orleans to work with an amazing organization called Common Ground Collective. Common Ground was formed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina to provide immediate aid and long-term support to residents in rebuilding their communities in just and sustainable ways. It is a grassroots, all-volunteer organization which has helped over 60,000 residents in New Orleans and the surrounding Gulf region. The collective includes a free health clinic, women's center, technology center, childcare facility, bioremediation gardens, volunteer lawyers and volunteer laborers.

I worked with Common Ground for five days in mid-March. I was given a place to sleep in a former Catholic School, St. Mary's, where residents had sought refuge during the hurricanes, and I was fed three delicious, mostly vegan meals each day in exchange for any service I could offer. The week I worked with Common Ground, there were about 700 people working with them—about 500 of whom were staying at St. Mary's. It was quite the experience of communal living.

After an orientation session, I was put into a work team with whom I later worked with gutting houses. We completed a small house belonging to a high school teacher named Miss Pat. She is an incredibly gracious and



Debris collected

hospitable woman who has lived in that house for 29 years. This was definitely the hardest and some of the most rewarding work I have ever done. Due to



Katy in safety gear

black mold and other carcinogens from the flood water, not only all the furniture and possessions had to be thrown away, but the walls, ceilings and floors had to be removed as well.

Towards the end of the week, I worked on another house, and I participated in civil disobedience with 200 volunteers when we began to gut a public school in the lower 9th ward. However, the police did not end up arresting anyone and instead let us go about our business trying to clean out the severely damaged MLK elementary school. I

also attended an Undoing Racism workshop put on by The People's Institute, a press conference concerning the closing of St. Augustine par-

ish, and spent time exploring New Orleans with many new friends.

I must share with you what I saw in New Orleans, because it was quite shocking. It has been eight months since the hurricane hit, but it seems that hardly any reconstruction has taken place. However, it is widely known that more rebuilding has taken place in the more affluent white neighborhoods, while the hardest hit areas—which were predominantly poor African-Americans—have hardly been touched since Katrina. Despite the fact that New Orleans has a history of racism, I was shocked by the apparently blatant discrimination by the government in the relief efforts, and I feel that all of America needs to know what is happening.

I am not an expert and I do not have a solution to these problems, but I want to make you aware of what is going on in Louisiana. Please stay aware of what is happening in this region and help if you can. There are many organizations participating in the relief effort and there has been recent legislation in our federal government concerning funds going to Gulf



Homeowner, Miss Pat with Abena and Norris, student volunteers from George Washington University

Region.

Please visit Common Ground's website at www.commongroundrelief.org. If you would like an invitation to my online photo album, please email me and I would be happy to share it with you.

My favorite thing about Common Ground Relief is their motto: Solidarity not Charity. When residents thanked me for coming all the way to Louisiana I told them that I was supposed to be there and more Americans should be because we should all be in this together.

I may not know all the facts on what has happened and what is currently happening in the relief efforts on the Gulf coast, but I do know that was I saw in New Orleans is not acceptable, and it is the responsibility of all Americans to do what they can to help.

In Solidarity,

Katy Rose Brandes

katybrandes@hotmail.com

Women's Studies and Slamming Poetry by Cheryl Reitan, WSAB member



Bushra Rehman

In February, 2006 Bushra Rehman, New York, Pakistani, performance poet and writer, came to UMD as an artist-in-residence. Bushra is the co-editor of *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism*. In her writing, she tells stories of her immigrant upbringing in Queens, the aunties, bodegas, stray dogs, street life, and children, with both humor and sincerity. These events were made possible by a UMD Chancellor's Diversity Grant.

At UMD, Bushra gave a solo performance, she taught poetry and performance workshops, and she spoke in several classes. In each setting, Bushra brought warmth and a lively spirit. For example, Bushra spoke at Njoki Kamau's "Women, Race, and Class" evening session. At the end of the period, one of the students rigged Bushra's laptop to the classroom speakers and the whole class learned how to dance Pakistani dances set to Bollywood music. The week culminated in a poetry slam at the Duluth restaurant Pizza Luce. Over 100 people came to see the poetry slam and 20 stu-

dents performed, most of them from the women's studies program. Poetry slams are "edgy" poetry performance events where the audience judges rounds of poetry until a winner is declared. Whew! It was a whirlwind week. Here's what some of the faculty had to say about the experience.

"Bushra was amazing in so many ways, and inspiring to all. Our students are still raving about her, their new friend. My favorite Bushra event was the poetry slam at Pizza Luce. I could not have fathomed that the place would be absolutely packed, by young people who had come out to share their poetry or just listen. Poetry! That was awesome. Of course, the Women's Studies Department takes pride in the fact that the winner was Molly Duepner, a WS major, whose poems left the audience spellbound. Bushra also succeeded in bringing to the stage poets Cheryl Reitan and Angie Nichols, both of whom revealed tremendous personal courage through their respective poems." Tineke Ritmeester

"Bushra's presentation was refreshing. It was a chance to experiment with dra-

matic verbal expression and to connect with others (students, staff and faculty) across campus in a personal way." Lynn Bye

"Bushra was delightful. She brought wonderful energy to this campus, and to my classroom. The Intro to Women's Studies students were so excited that she was visiting our class because we've been reading *Colonize This!* She led them in a poetry writing exercise to elicit their responses to images of women in the media. Their poems were wonderfully creative, humorous, serious, and profound. Some of the students later read their poems at the poetry slam. I loved working with Bushra in the workshop on incorporating poetry into the classroom, and was immediately inspired to go try it. I did this in Ecofeminism and was impressed with the way my students were willing and eager to use poetry to access and express their feelings about the topic of the day -- Hurricane Katrina. I learned so much from Bushra, but mostly she touched my heart and delighted my soul with her spirit." Beth Bartlett

2006 GRADUATES

(No Photo)

Katie Rasset: I will be leaving Duluth to go student teach in St. Paul next fall, finishing up my degree in Secondary Education- Social Studies with a concentration in Psychology. After that I plan on heading out of the state to get a teaching job, I am focusing my search on going to Alaska. Throughout all of my classes and professors, Women's Studies has allowed me to feel as an individual where my opinion is beloved. Differing perspectives and life lessons learned through those who were presented before me in these courses by some astonishing women are things that I will be taking into my own classroom.



Susan Meyers: The Women's Studies program has been an amazing journey full of transition and growth for me. I honestly didn't have a clue what 'Women's Studies' involved; I only knew that this was where I was supposed to be. I began the WS program at a point in my life that was full of new opportunities, fear, explora-

tion and self-discovery. I had already completed my BFA in Graphic Design in spring 2003, so this is my second Bachelor's. Art has always been a big part of who I am and Art has always held the ability to empower me, and I felt the need to share that feeling of empowerment and confidence with other women, and being led in this direction, into the Women's Studies program seemed to be a perfect fit. The WS classes have taught me about more than the various "feminist theories," which were amazing to learn, even though I may not have them all memorized, the core concepts will be with me forever. I have learned how to be more honest with myself and with others, to be genuine and authentic, to look at all issues from different perspectives and so much more. Everyone I have met in the WS program has helped me understand that there is much work to be done for women, children and men, women of color, and various classes in this world. They have helped me realize my role, my contribution, no matter how large or small, and that I can make a difference. I realize my work is valuable. The WS department and peers have shown me how women's issues are important not only to me, but to everyone I know, especially my daughter, my son and my precious three year old niece. I have met and worked with such wonderful, warm, strong, active and intelligent women as peers and instruc-

tors. We, as women, have so much to give and share with each other and the world.

I am now able to see my future clearer, freer and in a role of empowering others, as well learning more about myself and the world each and every day. I have started an 'Art Enrichment' program at a local battered women's shelter that I plan on continuing and support it in its continued growth. I hope to become more active in other causes related to women, the earth, art and spirit.

Many thanks to everyone here at the UMD WS Department. I feel this experience has made a powerful impression on my life in a very beautiful way. I am a changed woman.



Sarah Fries: Women's Studies has honestly changed my life. While I don't have a solid plan after graduation, I can definitely attest to the numerous ways this field of study has impacted my academic and personal life, as well as helped to direct my career goals. This can be attributed not only to the course matter, but more importantly, to the staff and

Continued on Page 6

“EVERYONE I HAVE MET IN THE WS PROGRAM HAS HELPED ME UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS MUCH WORK TO BE DONE FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN AND MEN, WOMEN OF COLOR, AND VARIOUS CLASSES IN THIS WORLD.”
SUSAN MEYERS



Caroline Ouelette

Women's Studies Alumna Wins Olympic Gold! By Beth Bartlett, WS Department

Congratulations to Women's Studies alumna Caroline Ouelette (2005) for achieving, for a second time, her dream of winning an Olympic gold medal in women's ice hockey. Caroline was part of the winning Canadian women's hockey team, scoring a hat trick in the first few minutes of their first game,

and finishing out the last game with the goal that put the Canadians safely in the lead over second-place Sweden.

Caroline, who played for and was the captain of the UMD women's ice hockey team, has dreamed of and worked for this Olympic achievement all of her life. But she said that it was not the medal or even the last game that she will remem-

ber, but rather the journey. The friendships and the solidarity, the struggles and the joys she and her teammates shared, are the highlights for her.

Caroline plans to continue to train for the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, Canada, and hopes to coach women's hockey in the future.

LIBRARY NEWS BY JODI CARLSON, WOMEN'S STUDIES LIBRARIAN

The UMD Library has IM Chat and Chat/Co-Browse services available for online assistance to UMD students, faculty and staff. Chat/Co-Browse is available Monday through Friday from 1 to 4 pm and IM Chat is available when the Reference Desk is open. Users seeking help at other times may use the e-mail form on the "Ask Us!" page. To find out more check out--[http://](http://www.duluth.umn.edu/lib/askus/index.htm)

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Women, Peace and War: MADRE Project by Kristin Thompson, WS Major

Because of the class, Women, Peace and War, Amanda DeVoogdt, Nancy Carriveau, Erika Kern, and myself were able to join with MADRE and create a lasting class project; a class project that not only educated the class, but the students, the community, and helped women and their families abroad. MADRE is an international organization which promotes social justice and development around the world by

developing partnerships with community-based women's groups. We collected household hygiene items and medical supplies, little things such as toothpaste, soap and aspirin, which we take for granted everyday, but not for women and children and families in war stricken countries, who have lost everything. We were able to get the word out by flyers, word of mouth, email and tabling in front of the bookstore. For our project, we

collected many bags full of items. The outpouring of help was tremendous and the response by the students and faculty was astonishing. The shipment will be on its way to MADRE headquarters in New York to be distributed as needed to Latin American and African countries. Thank you to Beth Bartlett for creating the class and to all who donated for your support. We couldn't have done it without you!

2006 GRADUATES CONTINUED, AND CONGRATULATIONS ...

the students I have had the pleasure of interacting with over the last couple of years. They have inspired me and encouraged me to take what I have learned in the classroom and apply it to my daily life, something that I feel makes Women's Studies a unique department. I cannot imagine what my life would be like without the amazing experiences I have had while being a part of the Women's Studies program and I am eternally grateful for the impression everyone has left on me. Thank you!



Sara Scalise: As of May 13, 2006, I will be a graduate of the University of Minnesota Duluth majoring in Criminology with a double minor in Women's Studies and Sociology. I am currently employed at Bethel Work Release Center as the information specialist and have committed to continuing my employment until February of next year. Sometime shortly after that I plan to move back down to the cities and search for a new job. I would really like to apply to law school at William Mitchell, the U of M or St. Thomas. I hope to be-

come a criminal prosecuting lawyer with hopes of someday becoming a judge. I think that getting involved in the Women's Studies program at UMD has really opened my eyes to things that I would like to accomplish. I really feel that getting involved in law, and maybe someday becoming a judge with a Women's Studies passion and background could really influence me in trying my hardest to make some changes in our legal system.



Katie Witzig: As I look back on the years I've spent here at UMD, I feel as though I have made the most of my college education by double majoring in Women Studies and Studio Art. Both have enriched my life more than words could ever express. I discover daily the interconnectedness of my majors and the impact my Women Studies courses have had on my life and my art. I plan on taking a year or two off to decompress before I go on to grad school. I will miss the professors who so willingly shared their wisdom, compassion, and enthusiasm with their students as well as my classmates who continually

brought a multitude of perspectives to every women studies course.



Terri Fitzgibbons: As a women's studies minor, not only have I developed a greater understanding of how to see the world through a feminist lens, I have also had the opportunity to meet some wonderful students and professors at the University of Minnesota Duluth. I would like to thank my professors, Beth Bartlett, Susana Pelayo-Woodward, and Tineke Ritmeester, for sharing their passion and knowledge. As for the future, I am currently working as an administrative assistant for the Duluth Police Department and hope to volunteer at PAVSA. The knowledge I have gained from the Women's Studies Department at UMD will certainly stay with me throughout my lifetime.

Not featured in the graduate listing is Kristin Zilkoski.

Congratulations to all of you and good luck on your endeavors!



Congratulations to Susana Pelayo-Woodward!

Susana was selected for the UMD Outstanding Academic Advisor Award this year. Susana is so dedicated and gives so much of herself to her students. We are so lucky to have you with us.

Pictures from the Grad Party:



From the left to right: Geraldine, Susana, Terri, Elisa and Joan.



From the left to right: Katy, Molly and Njoki

SLIMMING AND WHITENING CREAM BY GERALDINE HUGHES, WS DEPT. STAFF

After almost a three year "absence" from my hometown, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, I decided enough was enough and that I needed to get home to see my parents, friends and relatives. Booking the flight was not a problem, but my timing was rather bad for my department. The plan worked out that I'd be gone right in the middle of Women's History Month, one of our busiest times of the year.

I arrived in Singapore March 9th in the wee hours of the morning, to be greeted by my darling mother, and cousin Jeremy. We spent the night in my uncle's home. Later that morning, Mom, cousin Adrienna and I took a ride to the Singapore Botanical Gardens. Our mission was to find my aunt Angie a copy of the orchid booklet the Botanical Gardens' publishes. I told Adrienna that it is probably some little leaflet or pamphlet style publication as a joke when she mentioned the price (Singapore Dollar \$7.80). Funny, it was a pamphlet! After that, we went to Singapore's famous Orchard

Road for window shopping and I got my exercise in for the day walking through miles of shopping centers.

While in the shopping centers, I noticed beauty products to whiten a woman's skin. From Clinique to Clarins, you name the brand, there is a whitening product or two available. Not thinking anything of it, I kept on observing.

Outside on the streets and in the newspapers, there were advertisements for slimming packages for the "overweight." The main feature of the ads were women carrying a young child or baby as the before shot, and the same women sans baby in a slinky outfit looking all trim and slim. I never did take a magnifying glass to those ads to see if the women are one and the same!

So then I thought well you're in Singapore, the women here pride themselves in dressing well and looking great all the time, and it might be different in Malaysia. Well it wasn't any different! I asked my best friends,

Faridah and Josephine why there are so many slimming "spas" and Faridah's answer, "It's a huge money maker." If I have learned anything working in this department, it's not to take such a statement lightly because it's abusive to put your body through the process of losing weight in a short time. And why does a woman need to have fairer skin, an outsider might ask.

Growing up in Southeast Asia, girls were always protected from the sun because if your daughter has dark or darkened skin, she has less of a chance of marrying well. Whatever that means! My mother allowed my sister and me to tan on the beach as children (with sun-block on) and she was often chastised for allowing us to tan. If a woman is unmarried in my homeland, it would be said that she is too dark therefore, no man wants her as she's not beautiful enough.

When I kept receiving "compliments" on the fairness of my skin, it brought back some of the memories of being able to play on the beach instead of sitting under the trees away from the sun. Do these

women want to end up like Michael Jackson?

To be continued in next newsletter.

Editors: Tineke Ritmeester and Geraldine Hughes

Contact Information:

Dept. of Women's Studies
1201 Ordean Court
475 H
Duluth MN 55812
Tel: 218-726-7953
Fax: 218-726-7651
Office hours: 7:45 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Mon-Thurs.



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University of Minnesota Duluth
475 Humanities
1201 Ordean Court
Duluth MN 55812

Phone: 218-726-7953/6224
Fax: 218-726-7651
Email: ws@d.umn.edu
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BON VOYAGE—OFF TO UNIVERSITY FOR PEACE, COSTA RICA by Annie Kiel, WS alumna



I have always known that Duluth has some of the most amazing women. Ironically, many of them can be found in or are products of the Women's Studies Department at UMD. I credit much of who I am as well as my achievements to those women. As a 2004 UMD graduate, I value my WS minor as the foundation of my entire undergraduate education. My experiences academically inspired me to become a feminist activist in the Duluth community as a volunteer, organizer, and an em-

ployee through many organizations. Due to this astonishing community and my experiences within it, I have recently been awarded a full scholarship to attend the United Nations mandated University for Peace in San Jose, Costa Rica. I plan to move to Costa Rica in August 2006 where I will be working towards a master's in Gender and Peace Building. This is a one-year program that offers a thoroughly global education about peace and human rights issues. Upon completion of the program, I hope to work for an international women's human rights organization. I would just like to express a sincere thank you to the WS department for preparing me for such an endeavor and especially for inspiring young women everyday to create change.

***Mark Your Calendar!!!**

**Women's Studies Department's
25th Anniversary Celebrations**

Homecoming Weekend

Oct. 6-7, 2006

**LOOK for details in the next
issue of North Shore Visions.**

**** Submission deadline:**

Aug. 22, 2006

