

Merged and Moving Forward!

UNLV Women's Studies Department

Spring 2011

published annually

Volume 8, Number 1



A Message from the Chair

by Lois Rita Helmbold, Ph.D.

What a tumultuous year this has been! Women's Studies has swung from incredible highs to difficult lows. I learned in undergrad philosophy classes that only change is changeless.

Women's Studies has reached its peak in my ninth year here. Ten students completed our senior capstone, Praxis, with excellent research presentations, and three PhD candidates completed the Graduate Certificate

(Angela Moor, Gina Sully, and Jennifer Whitmer). This spring, we filled five electives, the most we've offered in one semester: Radical Feminist and Queer Love; Gender, Development, and Globalization; Feminism and Activism; Critical Race Feminism; and Bodies, Sex, and Health. Working with the Jean Nidetch Women's Center whirlwind Christina Hernandez, and other faculty, we put together an incredible Women's History Spring (not month), including a talk by Colin Johnson, a scholar of prostitution in mid-century Chicago; a book celebration for former faculty Michelle Tracy Berger and Cheryl Radeloff; a University Forum talk by Eithne Luibheid, a scholar of border politics and sexual and reproductive issues, debunking the concept of "anchor babies;" long visits with Amber Hollibaugh, activist and executive director of Queers for Economic Justice; and Blanche Weisen Cook, biographer of Eleanor Roosevelt; performance art by the Tragic Bitches (see pg. 3); and our annual production of *Vagina Monologues*. Gay Sessums unearthed incisive and compelling sentiments for reflection in our Women's History Month quotes of the day, sent to the entire campus. We have hosted an array of conferences and speakers all year long. Our students have been accepted into prestigious graduate programs and they have practiced numerous versions of activism. Feminist analysis and activism continue to grow elsewhere on campus. Dr. Anita Revilla was tenured and promoted to associate professor.

So what's not to like?

The attack on public education in this country is chilling. How can there be democracy without free, high quality, K-12 public education and affordable public education at the college level? Black and poor white men fought for universal free public education in Reconstruction legislatures, a success succeeding generations have taken for granted. In Nevada, economic crisis continues to deepen, and Las Vegas holds the dubious distinction of highest unemployment and foreclosure rates in the country. The legislature has not yet finalized a budget for higher education. Our new Republican governor chants the mantra, "no new taxes," and vows to veto any revenue plan the legislature passes. Gold

(Continued on page 7)



Women's Studies Majors and Minors: (from left) Kirsten Hoerner, Travis Wisdom, Danielle Decuir, Amber Corral, Sydney Bean, Mallory Cyr, Irina Barrera, and Jorina Hortizuela.



SAVE UNLV WOMEN'S STUDIES & CAMPUS DIVERSITY INITIATIVES— 1,000 Letters of Support Campaign

The campaign to save the Women's Studies Department and campus diversity initiatives received over 2,000 letters of support. The letters were compiled by student volunteers and hung from the second story balcony rail in the FDH building.

In This Issue...

A Message from the Chair	1
News & Views	2
We Are Out There!	3
Praxis Projects	4
Contribute to Women's Studies	8



We Are Social!



Like us on Facebook

[facebook.com/UNLVWomensStudies](https://www.facebook.com/UNLVWomensStudies)

Follow us on



#UNLVWMST

Rebelling

News & Views



Fight Back USA! National Teach-in

by Danielle Roth-Johnson, Ph.D.

In response to a call issued by Frances Fox Piven and Cornel West in *The Nation* (<http://www.thenation.com/article/159309/debt-austerity-and-how-fight-back>), members of the Department of Women's Studies and MEChA hosted a national teach-in on debt and austerity policies on Tuesday, April 5 in the Student Union at UNLV. In the first part of the teach-in, participants at more than 250 universities across the nation simultaneously viewed a streaming webcast from Judson Memorial Church in New York City that featured renowned national speakers such as Frances Fox Piven, Cornel West, activist Heather McGhee and economist Geoffrey Sachs. Given the record number of states currently facing massive budget shortfalls and the deleterious impact of those deficits on social programs and education, the teach-in was designed to educate the public about the factors contributing to these shortages at all levels of government in the United States.

Immediately after the national teach-in, members of the Department of Women's Studies and MEChA participated in a local brainstorming session with members of the audience about the current fiscal situation facing the state of Nevada and possible strategies for closing its budget shortfalls. Readers interested in learning more about the teach-in, the academic institutions that participated in the webcast or in viewing recorded versions of the speakers from the national webcast should visit the Fight Back USA! website at <http://www.fightbackteachin.org/nationalcall.html>.

Walking UNLV to the Guillotine: Why Women's Studies Matters

by Travis Wisdom

The current climate for the Nevada educational system is in dire straits and the Governor's budget cuts have literally dozens of programs on their way to the guillotine. I have been a student at UNLV since 2006, and my program is facing decapitation: Women's Studies is one of many that are proposed to be expendable.

Many of the misconceptions of Women's Studies are down right humorous. Women's Studies is not about angry lesbian women plotting violent attacks against men or complaining that they are oppressed because a man held open the door for a woman. Women's Studies is not just for women. I am a man and Women's Studies has provided me with the skills I need to specialize in civil rights law after graduate school.

Women's Studies bridges academic disciplines and expands on current research. It studies subjects that are often left with unquestioned answers or trivialized perceptions, allowing students to be at the cutting-edge of social reform. Women's Studies teaches students to ask questions about social problems: scrutinizing the questions asked and asking what no one cares to ask. Women's Studies teaches students how to analyze the assumptions that are left unquestioned.

(Continued on page 7)



Backlash Culture and the Attack on Women's Studies

by Lynn Comella, Ph.D.

It's been two decades since the publication of *Backlash: The Undeclared War on Women* and yet Susan Faludi's analysis of the counter-attacks on women's rights is more relevant than ever. According to Faludi, this backlash, which gained traction in the 1980s, "convinced the public that 'women's liberation' was the true contemporary scourge – the source of an endless laundry list of personal, social and economic problems."

We are currently in the midst of a renewed backlash against women. The GOP's recent assault on Planned Parenthood is just one example of a larger trend. Closer to home, this backlash has taken the form of a coordinated attack on UNLV's Women's Studies Department by a small but vocal group of disgruntled former students and naysayers who are advocating for the department's elimination.

In both cases, budgetary concerns have become convenient excuses for political conservatives and antifeminists to launch ideologically motivated attacks against women, feminism and women's studies in an effort to undermine the small gains that have been made by the women's movement over the past forty years, from women's health to education.

Fear mongering and the perpetuation of falsehoods are powerful weapons in times of pronounced backlash. Republican Senator Jon Kyl's claim that abortion was "well over 90 percent of what Planned Parenthood does," a blatant lie, is a case in point. And let's not forget Pat Robertson's creative take on feminism: "*The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians.*"

For some people women's studies is synonymous with the caricatured versions of feminism advanced by people like Pat Robertson and Rush Limbaugh. Women's studies departments, they argue, indoctrinate students, undermine Western culture and values, lack intellectual depth and rigor and are nothing more than "pseudo" academic enterprises.

(Continued on page 3)

2011 Awards!

Anita Revilla, Ph.D.
CSUN Faculty Award for Teaching

Janis Duncan, MSW/LCSW
Faculty Award for Excellence
in the UNLV Division of Educational Outreach

Audre Lorde Award Winners
Mallory Cyr
Jorina Hortizuela

We Are Out There!

Tragic Bitches in Las Vegas

by Anita Revilla, Ph.D.



On March 24, 2011, the UNLV Women's Studies Department had the pleasure of hosting a trio performance art group from California and Texas as the main event of Women's History Month 2011. Adelina Anthony, Dino Fox and Lorenzo Herrera y Lozano read from their recently published book, *Tragic Bitches: An Experiment in Queer Xicana and Xicano Poetry*. After reading their work in Dr.

Revilla's class, Radical Feminist and Queer Love, students were thrilled to have the opportunity to see them in person. The book "documents the process and poetry of three queer Xicana/o artists seeking to revel and heal in the darkest and most vulnerable spaces of love, desire and loss."



Tragic Bitches Event: (from left) Dr. Lois Helmbold, Adelina Anthony, Dino Fox, Lorenzo Herrera y Lozano, and Dr. Anita Revilla.

The event was fabulous! It was co-sponsored by Women's Studies, UCIR (the United Coalition for Im/migrant Rights), UNLV SODA (Students Organizing Diverse Activities), the History Department and the UNLV Office for Diversity and Inclusion. We brought together faculty, students, staff and community on and off campus for back-to-back performances. Off campus, Paria B and Duwop Rose the Vinylist hosted a poetry night and open mic where many students and community members also shared their poetry. For more info: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Tragic-Bitches/174216975954953>.



2011 Women's Herstory Month Guest Speakers

Amber Hollibaugh

Queer and Invisible Desires: Class, Race & Sex in the Wrong Places

Eithne Luibheid

Babies & Borders: Gender, Immigrant Illegality, and Exclusionary Nation-Building

Blanche Weissen Cook

Eleanor Roosevelt & the Future of Human Rights



Women's Studies Students and the Cast from Tragic Bitches

(Comella—Continued from page 2)

Such accusations are neither accurate nor original. In fact, they are so old and tired they've become little more than clichés.

The assault on women's studies obscures far more than it reveals. Women's and gender studies departments are thriving at colleges and universities across the country, producing some of the most cutting-edge scholarship that exists today. UNLV women's studies students have been accepted into highly competitive graduate programs at USC, UCLA and George Washington University, among other places, proving beyond a doubt that our students are intellectually prepared to compete with the best and the brightest in the nation. Our graduates work in a variety of fields, from the casino industry to education, law and medicine.

If ever a city needed women's studies, it's Las Vegas. All anyone has to do is look out his or her window to see the extent to which

the economic foundation and social organization of Las Vegas relies not only on the marketing of women's bodies and sexuality, but a highly racialized and stratified workforce. Women's studies give students the tools they need to think critically about these and other issues that directly impact their lives and the world in which they live. As a UNLV graduate student recently noted, "What happens in Vegas gets studied by feminists."

Backlash is often invisible, Faludi writes, churning "beneath the surface." But on occasion, it bursts through, its presence undeniable. This is such a moment, both nationally and locally. And while it is deeply unpleasant to be the target of such ugly and misguided campaigns, it also has the benefit of shoring up, for many people in Las Vegas and elsewhere, why the field of women's studies is more important than ever.

This op-ed originally appeared in the April 28 – May 4, 2011 issue of *Las Vegas CityLife*.

Feminist Praxis Projects

Feminist Praxis Research Projects

by Lynn Comella, Ph.D.

For students in Feminist Praxis, the women's studies capstone course, the public presentations of their research on May 6th was the culmination of a semester of hard work, tireless research and countless revisions. Their projects involved multiple methods of data collection, long hours spent in the archives, numerous visits to field sites and, in some instances, stretching beyond one's comfort zone. They learned to refine research questions, develop interview questions and analyze original data. Their projects are as sophisticated as they are compelling and, I am proud to say, reflect undergraduate research at the very highest level.

Hidden From History

Mallory Cyr, "Gay Sense and Sensibility: The Role of Organizers in the Early Gay Movement at University of Nevada, Las Vegas"

At a time when diversity initiatives at University of Nevada, Las Vegas are being looked at as places to cut in order to balance the institution's budget, this praxis project looks to inspire current students, faculty, and staff through reflecting on student organizing in the early 1980s. At a time when there was much fear and ignorance surrounding the perception and inclusion of the gay community, 10 students came together and sought to transform the school. In 1982, the Gay Academic Union (GAU) became a recognized organization with nine gay-identified men and one straight-identified woman. The goal of this research is to examine the roles of various members of the early gay movement at UNLV and to understand how involvement within the GAU shaped their identity as students and activists. The analysis of primary resources collected by founder Dennis McBride and housed within the Lesbian Gay Archives in the Special Collections at UNLV, interviews with founders, and oral histories make it clear that the organization challenged the heterosexual norm and looked to change the apathetic environment on campus through raising the consciousness of the gay community. Reflecting on their movement through a feminist lens 30 years later, this project looks to examine the lack of

women and people of color at the start of the GAU. It also seeks to connect the lived experiences of the organization's members to literature and theory related to activism and social justice.

Kirsten Hoerner, "Pioneer Womyn in Early Las Vegas: 'The Girls' of Block 16 1905 - 1942"

The construction of Senator William Clark's railroad and the construction of Boulder Dam would not have been as successful if Block 16 had not existed. Block 16, the site of quasi-legal prostitution in Las Vegas, was established in 1905 and torn down in 1942. Building upon archival research, including census data, newspaper accounts and oral histories, I suggest that the women on Block 16 should be recognized as pioneers for their contributions in the building of early Las Vegas. However, female prostitutes are rarely seen as pioneers because they are not perceived as building or creating anything of significance. Block 16 thrived in the 1920s and 1930s, yet in 1942, the Block was closed due to pressure from the Air Force regarding the spread of venereal diseases. In part, this research asks the following question:

What can we learn from herstory if we link the missing pieces together? I argue that the women of Block 16 had a role in shaping Las Vegas and it is important for it to be acknowledged and respected.

Irina Barrera, "Fighting Isolation: Women Political Prisoners Mobilizing through Zines"

This research project examines how zines provide a space for women political prisoners to vocalize injustices that pris-

ons and other institutions of oppression have created. I suggest that without these kinds of alternative media outlets, prisoners aren't able to voice the injustices they face in prison or to be active in their communities. I look at the history of zines and how women during the 1930s were denied access to mainstream forms of media had to use zines to mobilize into action. Similarly, women political prisoners today use zines because society hasn't provided a space for them to voice their various concerns. I analyze interviews, articles, and poems from former and current women political prisoners that appear in a number of different zines. I hope this research shows that political prisoners need more access to reaching the non-prison populations. Even though these women are incarcerated, they should be given avenues to express their opinions, whether it is about the governments, laws, or how prisons are operated.



Women's Studies Praxis Class: (top row, from left) Dr. Lois Helmbold, Travis Wisdom, Amber Corral, Syndney Bean, Mallory Cyr, Dr. Anita Revilla, (front row, from left) Grace Olaluwoye, Jorina Hortizuela, Irina Barrera, Danielle Decuir, Jennifer Rodriguez, Dr. Lynn Comella, and Kirsten Hoerner.

Systems, Structures, Gender and Inequality

Jennifer Rodriguez, *“Real Life Mean Girls: The Cultivation of Bullies Among High School Girls”*

Recent Hollywood films such as *Mean Girls* and *Thirteen* depict teenage girls as living lives of manipulation, betrayal, crime, violence, sexual exploitation, and “meanness.” There have also been news reports of teen bullying leading to suicides. This research examines the interpersonal dynamics among high school girls, with a focus on bullying. Studies have shown that girls use relational aggression as form of bullying, which is a subtle form of aggression that uses relationships to damage or manipulate others. Because of the development of new modes of communication such as text messaging, Facebook, Myspace, and YouTube, cyber bullying has become a more accessible and popular mechanism for peer interaction. Understanding why girls bully each other, and the modes in which it is done, is crucial in understanding how girls navigate through the social world. Bullying is an important issue to study because it can result in depression, eating disorders, drugs, and sometimes even suicide. For this project, I interview high school girls who have been victims of bullying or have been bullies themselves, and high school teachers, in order to better understand this phenomenon and its effects on teenage girls’ lives.

Danielle Decuir, *“The Privilege of Staying Healthy: Social Injustice within the Healthcare System of Las Vegas”*

The healthcare system in Las Vegas is lack-luster at best. It is yet another institution where men, non-minorities and the economically well-off are privileged and receive better care, both in terms of quality and quantity. This research examines the racial, gender and class-based inequalities present in the American healthcare system, specifically in Las Vegas, Nevada. Who, among Las Vegas, has access to healthcare? How does their economic status impact that access and the role that insurance companies play in the fight for equal access to health care? I interviewed several Las Vegas natives, asking them about their healthcare coverage and their experiences with the healthcare system of Las Vegas. I am researching these issues because they are extremely relevant in both local and national debates. By studying them I hope to come up with local solutions for how healthcare in Las Vegas might be improved to better serve more people.

Amber Corral, *“Is it still a Man's World? Experiences of Men and Women within Wells Fargo Bank and the Effects of the Glass Ceiling”*

Wells Fargo Bank is a leading financial service provider in the US. Here in Southern Nevada women are the majority of employees at Wells Fargo. Out of 81 retail store branches across the valley, 54 of them have women as store managers. However, the CEO and corporate board rooms are still filled with Caucasian men. As someone who has worked at Wells Fargo for the

past six years, I decided to conduct research that examined the gendered experiences of Wells Fargo employees. Two key questions guide this research: Why are there so many women in middle management compared to upper management? Is there a glass ceiling effect that keeps women from reaching the top of the management levels? I conducted interviews with women and men who currently hold middle and upper management positions at Wells Fargo in Las Vegas in order to address these questions.

Gendered Bodies and Cultural Interventions

Travis Wisdom, *“Advocating Genital Autonomy: Methods of Intactivism in the United States”*

The genital autonomy movement advocates for the legal protection of children from genital surgeries without consent of the patient. Genital autonomy is an international social movement whose foundational principle is the right to genital autonomy; that all human beings – females, males, and intersexed individuals – have an inalienable right to intact genitalia, free from any genital modifications, such as clitoridectomy, infibulation, circumcision, and sex reassignment. This movement aims to bring consciousness and awareness of genital mutilation and to educate communities about both the benefits of the intact sex organs and the damage the removal of healthy tissue does to children. I interviewed sixteen self-identified genital autonomy activists, or intactivists, in order to investigate the methods and strategies employed by activists to promote the goals of the genital autonomy movement in the United States. Participants advocate the principle of autonomy by disseminating information about: (1) the intact body and the functions of the genitalia; (2) the damages of child genital surgeries that continue throughout adulthood and worsen with age; and (3) the ethical dilemmas associated with all medically unnecessary genital modifications. Activists employ a variety of methods and pedagogical approaches to addressing these components. These strategies create a network of activists to reach a diverse population, and offer resources that advocate the benefits of intact genitalia, and an awareness of bodily integrity and personal autonomy.

Grace Olaluwoye, *“The Problem is Missing: Sex Trafficking and Prostitution Through the Lens of Las Vegas Vice”*

Given the nature of trafficking and its often hidden face, it is extremely difficult to develop accurate statistics on the extent of the problem. Despite this, the media claims that Las Vegas has become a hot spot for sex trafficking. Through interviews with members of Las Vegas' Pandering Investigation Team (PIT) in the Vice section, I examine the problem of human trafficking through the lens of those charged with combating it. I hope to show how members of the Vice Squad contribute to and help shape what we understand as the “problem” of sex trafficking in Las Vegas. I also hope to gain an understanding of the lives of the women and girls who are being either arrested or “saved” by PIT.

Praxis Projects, Continued

Sydney Bean, “Vegas Girls: Complexities in Self-Esteem for the Young Las Vegas Woman”

Women of all ages face issues with self-esteem and body image. These issues manifest themselves in various ways and often have long lasting effects. Studying body image as it relates to one’s physical space is important because it creates a wider social context for understanding the various cultural messages that impact women’s self-esteem. This research analyzes the ways that women in Las Vegas talk about their bodies and issues of self-esteem. How do women talk about their experiences as “Vegas Girls”? How do young women interpret the messages they receive from billboards, night clubs and their work environments on the Las Vegas Strip? Studying the barriers and complexities of female identity in Las Vegas can help define alternatives for future generations of “Vegas Girls” to come.

Jorina Hortizuela, “Skin as Paper, Needle as the Pen: Women of Color Re-defining their Bodies through Tattooing”

“Tattoos,” American tattoo artist Ed Hardy states, “are like a little picture of what people are and what they would like to be. It’s kind of their reality and their dreams.” This research examines the connotations we can infer from the tattoo “reality” and “dreams” of women of color. Little is known about women of color and the specific motivations and intentions surrounding tattooing and body modification. The essentialized notion that all women feel, react, and express the same things when it comes to tattooing fails to account for one’s interrelated and convergent complexities across gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status and sexual orientation. This research utilizes in-depth interviews and fieldwork in order to better understand the lived experiences of tattooed women of color and their choices and attitudes about tattooing. What meanings and purposes does tattooing represent to these women? Through my research I hope to address the pressing issue concerning the lack of visibility for tattooed women of color, the re-claiming of one’s identity through body modification practices and the polysemic nature of tattoos.

My Bulletin Board

by Gay Sessums, Administrative Assistant

My bulletin board has been on my mind. The board itself is not so much; it’s typical of the standard institutional issue 2x2 gray fabric-covered bulletin boards found in the office of many an Administrative Assistant at UNLV. What’s special about my board is that I think of it as a microcosm of an inclusive world. It bears a bookmark, “Mark your place in the world!,” a remnant of a flyer, “motherhood by choice, not chance,” a sticker, “keep abortion legal,” a rainbow-colored button, “proud ally,” a wrist band, “stop rape,” a postcard, “do justice,” a department brochure, “changing the world one mind at a time,” a commendation of my 15 years at UNLV, a pin, “I [heart] UNLV,” and a shiny gold star, a memento from a college holiday party when there were better economic times. These times call for an end to the Women’s Studies Department. Although I’m assured that I’ll have a job, what other place will welcome my bulletin board?

Thank You and Farewell to my Feminist Family

by Destiny Farr Rodriguez,
Graduate Certificate Student and Part Time Instructor

Alone, my mother raised my sister and me as future feminists with social justice at the core of our beliefs. While her defiant rejection of patriarchy is admirable, decisions like my mom’s had consequences, particularly in the conservative deep South. Those consequences included living in poverty and away from family and any support system, and constantly fighting battles that, while ideological to some, were the mainstay of our family of three women. We were an affront to a well-defined hegemonic culture that justified its oppression largely on the back of “Southern Christian values.”

Because we did not abide by the culturally imposed values of the heteronormative, white, patriarchal society and the segregation of people by race, class, and ethnicity, my childhood friendships often could not extend outside of the school setting: the fear of diversity, inherent in the beliefs of my friends’ parents, translated our lifestyle as “evil,” “unnatural,” and “ungodly.” I distinctly remember my junior high and early high school years when, feeling ostracized and abnormal, I asked my mom why we couldn’t be “just a normal family, like everyone else.” I was caught between two worlds that I didn’t really understand.

I finished high school and went off to college, a step I considered a necessary evil. With the vague goal of becoming a lawyer, I maintained average grades the first year of my criminal justice program. I was a far cry from passionate about this field; in fact, I was apathetic. By my second year at the university, even the dominant influences in my life were not motivation enough to inspire further ambitions on this path. My life was a mess.

And then came Hurricane Katrina, releasing her wrath on the residents of southern Louisiana. I was overwhelmed by the devastation and had absolutely no idea how to deal with any of it. I was furious with the government for its part in the destruction; filled with tremendous sorrow at the images of dead, floating bodies; and repulsed by the heightened, publicly-sanctioned “right” claimed by so many to create an even more hateful racial divide among our people. Katrina brought with her realities that made my miserable existence in college seem foolish and wasteful. Angry and full of self-doubt, I quit school and got a full-time job. This was, of course, another bad decision in a long line of them. For a couple of years I drifted, but with soul searching in mind (and a fierce push from my mom), I eventually found myself living with my grandparents in Las Vegas where I half-heartedly applied to UNLV.

And then I walked into the UNLV Women’s Studies Department. My life changed.

I began to feel as if I *belonged*. For the first time, I felt as if I had some investment in an education. Suddenly I couldn’t get enough of school, class, and my professors. In my Women’s Studies courses I began to realize that social justice issues not only could

(Continued on page 7)



Articles, Continued

(Wisdom—Continued from page 2)

Throughout my college career, I have worked full time in the hospitality industry, Southern Nevada's most prized job market. Many of the employees have degrees in Hospitality, Business Management, and Marketing. I am the minority with a Women's Studies degree, but after explaining what Women's Studies is, people understand why it is useful. Graduates with Women's Studies degrees ask questions that Business Administration graduates often do not ask or thought were not important: *why are fewer women in management positions? What causes fewer women to apply and to hold these jobs? Does the corporation support and offer diversity-training programs?*

Women's Studies connects research from sociology and psychology to biology and philosophy, to name a few. It doesn't just *add women* to current disciplines, but attempts to undercover the areas in which women were excluded. The degree opens the doors to just about any career sector: health and human services, medicine, law, social policy, education, public administration, hospitality, and management.

This education has helped me to master the skills of writing and research. I have published three articles and have been accepted to present at five separate conferences, in and out of the United States — which is rare for an undergraduate student. One thing that I know about Women's Studies at UNLV is that it will push its students to excel in writing and research so that by the time we are seniors, we will likely be operating at a graduate level.

This degree is crucial and it must persevere at UNLV. Women's Studies prepares students with abstract thinking, analytical skills, public speaking, and exceptional writing and research expertise. These are all necessary for any professional career. Women's Studies has nothing to do with man-bashing or holding hands in a circle with unshaved women singing kumbaya; it has everything to do with ensuring a better life for the next generation of girls and boys, women and men through positive social change.

(Helmbold—Continued from page 1)

fetches high prices, but the state constitution protects the mining industry from all but token taxes. The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) and UNLV leadership have gone through numerous plans, and lack of plans, to cope with the assured assault. On International Women's Day, the administration announced that Women's Studies was on the elimination list (the second year in a row). We stayed on that list through plans 2 and 3, and on 3A we were downsized and merged. Our department will become a sub-program of another program, Interdisciplinary Programs, and we began transition meetings this week with the director of IDP. The possibility of working with small or nascent ethnic studies and area studies programs, as well as students who want to learn to think interdisciplinarily, promises an exciting future.

At UNLV, departments and programs headed by women and serving primarily students of color (of all genders) and women (of all races) have been major targets of cost-cutting. Women's Studies will lose the highest proportion of faculty in Liberal Arts: 50% of our tenured/tenure-track faculty. No other unit has taken such a huge hit or lost departmental status. Two departing faculty members will not be replaced. Dr. S. Charusheela resigned in December, 2010, to take a position, mid-year, at University of Washington, Bothell, where her husband teaches. I have been selected as a Fulbright Senior Lecturer in Turkey and will be teaching at Ege Universitesi in Izmir during 2011 - 2012.

(Rodriguez—Continued from page 6)

be, but *must* be investigated through an academic lens. Although the issues I was learning had always been a part of my life, I never saw them valued in this setting. I found this feminist education and theory applicable to not only my life, but also to what drives my passions and goals, and realized my desire to fight for justice did not have to separate me from my education. In fact, in the right setting, as proven by this department, they complement each other perfectly. My Women's Studies professors taught me, through the context of *my* life, terms like patriarchy, politics of location, and colorism. They showed me the herstory of peoples' struggles, the formation of knowledge, the distribution of power and resources, how to do feminist research, and perhaps most importantly, how to contribute to a more socially just world *through* my education rather than in spite of it. The professors in Women's Studies equipped me with the tools to link my activism with theory, and my education to praxis.

My work and activism in and with the Women's Studies Department found me constantly surrounded by progressive, critically thinking people, who, though encouraging and supportive, insisted on self-awareness. Although the process of dismantling my previous self, full of internal -isms, was challenging, it was no longer a confusing, chaotic journey. I was re-creating my authentic self.

For the critically conscious, feminist lens I gained through the department and the personal relationships and friendships I have made with people here, in the last four years, I am eternally grateful. The professors, staff, students, and allies of the Women's Studies Department have not only educated, challenged, and supported me in a way that no one else ever could, but they have also connected me to communities that do the same- communities that I now call my own.

Although I am leaving Las Vegas and UNLV, I will never forget that this is where I found Destiny. I will never forget that this is where I started my life. For this, from the bottom of my feminist heart, Thank You.

I cannot even begin to make sense of my academic life, other than the obvious ironies. I began teaching Black studies in a small, rural Black college in Mississippi in 1969; created my first women's studies class in 1970, part of the founding generation; began teaching what we now call intersectionality with my first course in Women, Race, and Class in 1973; and headed two women's studies units. Although I continue to have energy for students and teaching, two years of elimination threats and this year's assured amputation have exacted a high price. This week, the university offered a buyout to encourage senior faculty to retire, and I jumped on it. I will, at least, have time for deferred writing, so you will hear from me in the future!

I end with optimism that Anita Revilla, Lynn Comella, Danielle Roth-Johnson, our administrative assistant, Gay Sessums, and our great group of part-timers, are well-prepared to create the next version of women's studies at UNLV. Our students' intellectual and activist efforts inspire the best in all of us. Multi-focused feminisms will thrive in Las Vegas; bet on it!



Editorial Team:

Dr. Lois Rita Helmbold, Carel Lyn Miske, and Gay Sessums

Contribute to Women's Studies!

Awards for Students: Women's Studies has set up a new fund: The Department of Women's Studies Award Fund -- all the monies donated to this fund are tax deductible charitable contributions, and the donations to this fund are reserved for funding student awards.

Contributions toward Speakers and Events: You can also make tax deductible charitable contributions to other aspects of Women's Studies. Donations to our general fund help us bring in speakers and host events -- in the past, the money from this fund has helped us bring scholars like Cherrie Moraga to campus!

Name: _____

Please check which fund you would like to donate to:

Address: _____

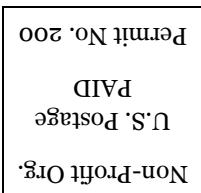
_____ I would like to contribute to the Award Fund

_____ I would like to contribute to the General Fund

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Amount of contribution: _____



Women's Studies Department
Box 455055
4505 S Maryland Parkway
Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-5055

