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Women's Voice, Volume 4, Issue 1, January 1999

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Illinois State University

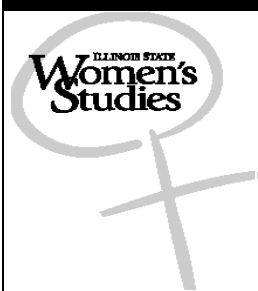
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Women's Voice

Illinois State University

Volume 4, Issue 1, January 1999

From the Director

Women and Citizenship: Reflections on the Middle East and North Africa

What is the relationship between calls for women's rights and the process of democratization? Between demands for full citizenship for women and the reconfiguration of the public and private spheres? At a conference I attended at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Israel in early January, I argued that the feminist movement and women's organizations in the Middle East and North Africa are playing a central role in advancing the democratization process that began in the 1980s, in contributing to the formation of civil society, and in reconceptualizing citizenship.

Much has been written about the problematical nature of women's citizenship rights in Middle Eastern societies. It results largely from a discrepancy between constitutions that award equal rights to men and women, on the one hand, and family laws derived from the Sharia (Islamic canon law) that undermine this equality, on the other. These family laws privilege men in such areas as inheritance, marriage, household headship, divorce, and child custody. In a few cases (e.g., Turkey and Tunisia), the discrepancy is with secular codes that continue to define women as wards of men and their families. And in a few Arab Gulf countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman,

Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates - women have yet to receive political rights.

Women's second-class citizenship has long been institutionalized, but this condition is being challenged by women's organizations throughout the region. In general, Middle Eastern feminists are challenging women's location in the private domain and men's control of the public domain. In particular, they are calling for the modernization of family laws, the criminalization of domestic violence, greater access for women to employment and participation in decision-making, and the right of women to retain their own nationality and to pass it on to their children. Feminists are also pointing out that existing family laws are at odds with the universal standards of equality and nondiscrimination embodied in international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. They are demanding that these instruments be implemented and enforced and that the governments guarantee the protection of human rights, including the human rights of women.

Clearly, these gender-based demands for civil, political, and social rights would improve the legal status and social positions of women by extending existing rights to women. But more profoundly, these demands are broadening the political agenda by problematizing individual rights. As such, feminists are redefining the concept of citizenship and the relationship between the state and civil society in the Middle East and North Africa. ✍

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fourth Annual Women's Studies Symposium—Call for Papers

Women's Studies is issuing a call for papers for the Fourth Annual Women's Studies Symposium on Saturday, March 27, 1999. We encourage undergraduate and graduate students who are working on papers this semester to propose them for the symposium. We ask faculty to encourage their students to submit proposals. Students from any major are welcome to submit proposals.

Students should send a one-page abstract/proposal to Women's Studies Program, Programming Committee, Campus Box 4260. Please include your name, major, student status, the course and instructor for whom the paper was written. The abstract should be detailed, with information on the topic to be discussed, the research question, methodology and sources of data (for social-science papers), and the main arguments.

Proposals may be submitted at any time with a deadline for submission February 22, 1999. ✍

Dr. Schuler is Symposium Keynote Speaker

Margaret Schuler is the Founder and President of Women, Law & Development International, a non governmental organization committed to the defense and promotion of women's rights globally. WLD International builds the capacity of women around the world to be advocates for their own rights through advocacy training programs, strategy development and the promotion of regional and international networks of women's rights activists. Dr. Schuler is considered a leader in bringing women's human rights to the attention of the international community.

Her extensive experience in this field includes the development of regional women's rights networks in Africa (WILDAF), Asia (APWLD) and Latin America (CLADEM), all of which continue to be important members of the international women's rights movement. She also organized many major international conferences and training programs to promote women's rights in every region of the world.

One book that Dr. Schuler edited, From Basic Needs to Basic Rights: Women's Claim to Human Rights (1995) grew out of an international conference that she organized in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Her current work involves a global project to develop human rights advocacy skills for women based on the recently published book, Women's Human Rights Step by Step: A Practical Guide to Using International Human Rights Law and Mechanisms to Defend Women's Human Rights. She will be speaking on the international women human rights movement. ✍

Working Women's Action Day

On Thursday, March 18, 1999, the Illinois AFL-CIO is sponsoring the **Working Women's Action Day** from 9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. The conference will focus on legislative, political and bargaining strategies for improving the lives of working women. Additional topics to be covered include family and medical leave, flex time, child care, domestic violence and sexual harassment. For more information or to register by February 26th, contact Illinois AFL-CIO, 534 South Second St., Springfield, IL 62701-4014 or by phone, (217) 544-4014 or via fax, (217) 544-0225. ✍

Foreign Languages Film Festival

The Department of Foreign Languages is sponsoring the 2^d annual **Foreign Languages Film Festival** to be held in late February at the Normal Theater in Downtown Normal. The films tackle the issue of justice and two of the six films deal specifically with women's issues. The question of what constitutes a criminal act or a breach of ethical behavior is extremely difficult to decipher. For a complete listing and description of each film, visit their website at: <http://iilt.ilstu.edu/smexpos/photo.htm> or call 438-7984. ✍

Presentation by Dr. Dammers

Dr. Richard Dammers, professor of English and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, will present a program on eighteenth-century English women writers, Monday, February 22 at 7:00 p.m. in Stevenson 401. The popular notion is that few women were writers in the 18th century. The facts are that women during this time wrote a variety of texts in poetry, drama, and prose with great success. The presentation and discussion will focus on this variety as Dr. Dammers shares information and selected readings of women writers in 18th-century England. The program is sponsored by the Canterbury committee of the Vladimir-Canterbury Sister City Association of Bloomington-Normal. ✍

Pearl Cleage to Visit ISU

Pearl Cleage, nationally acclaimed novelist, playwright, performance artist, and essayist who addresses social justice in her work, is scheduled to visit ISU on February 14--21.

While at ISU, Ms. Cleage will be promoting her new bestselling novel "What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day" on Wednesday, February 17 at 7:30 p.m. in the Bone Student Center Main Ballroom, with a book-signing to follow. In this novel, Ms. Cleage addresses the issues of AIDS, violence, self-love and social redemption. ISU's Theatre Department will also be putting on her play *Flyin' West*, which focuses on African American homesteaders who traveled west after emancipation. The play addresses such issues as racism, domestic violence and racial identity. Ms. Cleage will be in attendance opening night and will participate in a discussion with the audience directly after the performance.

The sponsors of Ms. Cleage's visit are Women's Studies Program, Sociology, History, Family and Consumer Sciences, Philosophy, Political Science, Undergraduate Studies, MECCPAC, Multicultural Center, University Forum Committee, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Fine Arts, Black Student Union, Office of Residential Life, Minority Scholar in Residence Program, The Provost's Office, The President's Office, University College, Women's Coalition, The Living Ethics Series, PRIDE and The Triangle Association. ✍

Minority-Scholars-in-Residence at ISU

Suzanne Douglas will be the first Minority-Scholar-in-Residence to come to ISU this semester. Ms. Douglas will discuss her acting, singing and dancing career with Illinois State University students, faculty and staff. She will be on campus from February 8-10 and will give a public performance/present a public lecture on Tuesday, February 9 at 7:30 p.m. in the Old Main Room of Bone Student Center.

Ms. Douglas studied at Illinois State University from 1975 to 1978 and was impressed that "Illinois State in the middle of the 1970's was doing nontraditional casting-giving actors the chance to play any roles regardless of their skin color." Douglas attended Illinois State at the same time as many of the actors who would join the Steppenwolf Ensemble, including John Malkovich and Laura Metcalf among others.

Adrien Wing will be the second Minority-Scholar-in-Residence at ISU. Professor Wing is a professor of law at the University of Iowa College of Law. Professor Wing specializes in both comparative and international law, and has published in such areas as constitutionalism in Namibia, South Africa and Palestine; critical race feminism; legal decision-making in the Palestinian *intifada*; rape in Bosnia; women's rights in Palestine and South Africa; and foreign sovereign immunity and the act of state doctrine. She is the editor of *Critical Race Feminism--A Reader* and is on the Board of Editors of the *American Journal of Comparative Law*.

Professor Wing will be at ISU from March 29th to March 31st. On Monday, March 29th at 12:00, the Women's Studies Program will host a luncheon with Professor Wing. On Tuesday, March 30th at 7:00 p.m., Professor Wing will be giving a public lecture on "Critical Race Feminism: The Role of Race and Gender for the 21st Century." ✍

Women's Studies Students: News and Profiles

By Sandra Harmon

In this column, we will profile women's studies students and report on their activities, accomplishments and honors. Women's studies students are involved in campus and community life, often in activities where they can apply the skills, knowledge and insights gained from their academic studies.

Illinois State University Debate Team partners **Leah Bruno** and **Michael Reno** recently competed in two debate tournaments. They reached the semi-finals of the John Carroll University Debate Tournament held December 4-5, 1998. Each was ranked among the top ten debaters. They also made the semi-finals at the Miami of Ohio Tournament, January 15-17, 1999. Both are women's studies minors. Leah has a major in English and Michael a double major in English and philosophy.

Sarah Anderson, a mass communications major, has a Women's Studies professional practice internship with Planned Parenthood of East Central Illinois this semester. Among her duties is the development of an advocacy guide for Campus for Choice student leaders. Sarah is co-president of Campus for Choice—ISU as well as a member of Women's Coalition and Amnesty International and is a reporter for the *Daily Vidette*.

Winter Wren, was elected vice president of the Midwest Pagan Council in November. The council is a non-profit organization that sponsors events and promotes understanding of Pagan religions. She will be responsible for planning and managing the day-to-day activities of the 23rd annual Pan Pagan Festival that will be held in August, 1999. Winter is an art major.

AAUW Gender Equity in Education Study Materials

Marion Jones of the Bloomington/Normal Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) presented the Women's Studies Resource Center with a set of materials commissioned and produced by the AAUW Educational Foundation: "Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America: Executive Summary, A nationwide poll that assesses self-esteem, educational experiences, interest in math and science, and career aspirations of girls and boys ages 9-15"; *How Schools Shortchange Girls: The AAUW Report*; "Hostile Hallways: The AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in American Schools"; *Girls in the Middle: Working to Succeed in School*; *Separated by Sex: A Critical Look at Single-Sex Education for Girls*; Video—"Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America," 1991; Video—"Girls in the Middle: Working to Succeed in School," 1996 with video guide.

The Educational Equity group of the branch is also distributing sets to the Illinois Wesleyan University Women's Studies program and to the Bloomington and Normal Public Libraries as their project this year.



Faculty News

Professor Phyllis Bixler of the English Department of Southwest Missouri State University will present the 1999 Lois Lenski Children's Literature lecture, co-sponsored by the English department and Milner Library, on Tuesday, March 2, 1999, in CVA 147 at 7 p.m. Professor Bixler will discuss Francis Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*. The lecture will last about one hour and is open to the public.

Christopher Horvath, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Biological Sciences, was recently appointed to the American Philosophical Association Committee on the Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered People in the Profession. His appointment begins in July 1999 and runs through June 2002. Prof. Horvath together with his colleagues from Northwestern University and Boston University have recently had the results of a long-term research project accepted for publication. The publication is titled Familial Aspects of Homosexuality: Archives of Sexual Behavior. Professor Horvath also had a paper accepted for publication, *Measuring Gender, Biology and Philosophy*.

Laughter is a tranquilizer with no side effects!

ISU Women's Coalition

This semester, Women's Coalition meetings are going to be held on Monday evenings at 7:00 p.m. in Stevenson 223. This semester's events include films, discussion panels, literature night, yoga and the talent showcase "The Voice That is Great Within Us." For more information, suggestions, questions, contact Liz at 662-2906 or Becca at 451-8744.

Women's Coalition to be Part of a National Rally

By Kelly Henry

Women's Coalition will be participating in the National Labor Committee's Holiday Season of Conscience this year. The focus this year is Wal-Mart and its unfair labor practices. Wal-Mart has refused to open its apparel factories to an independent monitoring board. In fact, Wal-Mart has flat out forbidden any outsiders to enter into its free trade zone factories, stating that the working conditions are without reproach. Nonetheless, international labor watch dogs, like the National Labor Committee, have strong evidence that Wal-Mart factories pay substandard wages and contain dangerous working conditions.

The National Labor Committee decided to hold rallies nationwide on December 7, the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Human Rights, to educate shoppers in Wal-Mart's refusal to independent monitoring and its using unfair labor practices. According to the National Labor Committee, Wal-Mart's net profits for 1997 was 3.53 billion, which is larger than the GNP of 155 countries combined (there are only 192 countries). Wal-Mart is in a position where it is able to pay a decent livable wage and provide good factory conditions for its workers.

Women's Coalition wanted to get involved with the activities, since a great deal of unfair labor practices in free trade zones are occurring to young women. Since young women are seen as easily controlled, less likely to mobilize, and willing to take below poverty wages, they are often targeted to be workers in these areas. However, because of time constraints and finals during the week of December 7, Women's Coalition will hold a rally in the spring in support of the National Labor Committee's requests.

February is Black History Month

During the month of February, remember to look for information announcing special presentations offered around campus and the community that will celebrate the importance of Black History Month.

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

Women's Studies Brown Bags Spring 1999

"Gender Across the Disciplines- Part II"

The Brown Bag series "Gender Across the Disciplines" will continue through February at the Women's Studies offices, Rachel Cooper, 2nd floor, Room 234. Speakers will discuss the integration of women and gender issues in their disciplines and the way they address women and gender issues in their own research and teaching. Please bring a sandwich. We will provide coffee, tea, and juice. For further information, call 438-2947.

Thursday, January 28—12:00-1:00 Elizabeth Mullinex, Theatre

Wednesday, February 3—12:00-1:00 Maura Doherty, History

Wednesday, February 10—12:00-1:00 Lori Heggie, Foreign Languages and Mahide Demirci, English

Wednesday, February 17—12:00-1:00 Gary Kinchin, Health, Physical Education and Recreation

TBA Maria Canabal and Deb Gentry, Family and Consumer Sciences

If you have a disability and need accommodations, please contact 438-5853.

Internship at WREI

The Women's Research and Education Institute (WREI) is now accepting applications for the 1999-2000 Congressional Fellowships on Women and Public Policy. The WREI Congressional Fellowship Program is an annual program that places graduate students in congressional offices and on strategic congressional committee staffs.

WREI is designed to encourage more effective participation by women in the formulation of policy options; promote activities that encourage the translation of research into policy; raise awareness that national and international issues concerning women are interdependent, and increase understanding that those issues often defined as "women's issues" are, in fact, "human issues" of equal importance to both women and men.

You can request an application by sending WREI a self-addressed, stamped, business-size envelope. They can be reached at 1750 New York Avenue, Suite 350, Washington D.C. 20006, (202) 628-0444, fax (202) 628-0458. You can also reach them via email at wrei@wrei.org, or you can visit their website: <http://www.wrei.org>. The application due date is February 15, 1999. ✉

The White House Project Results

The results of The White House Project ballot box initiative will be posted on their website at www.thewhitehouseproject.org on February 7th. You may also find their results in the February 7th issue of Parade magazine. The White House Project is dedicated to changing the climate of American politics, so that in the future women will launch successful campaigns for the U.S. presidency. ✉