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Women's Voice, Volume 5, Issue 7, March 2000

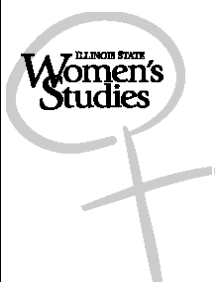
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Women's Voice

Illinois State University

Volume 5, Issue 7, March 2000

From the Director:

Paid Maternity Leave and Subsidized Child Care as Necessary Social Rights

Close to half the labor force in the United States is female, and a great majority of mothers with small children are gainfully employed. And yet the United States, unlike other rich countries and also unlike many developing countries, has no national policy on maternity leave and childcare. Policies are ad hoc and vary from state to state, and from workplace to workplace. At our recent Fifth Annual Women's Studies Symposium, Dr. Sonya Michel, Director of Women's Studies at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, discussed "Why the U.S. Has No Universal Child Care". She presented a historical analysis of the halting development of childcare in the U.S. during the late 19th century and the 20th century. She talked about how ideologies about mother-child bonding intersected with a deep-seated antipathy to state provision, resulting in the curtailment of the growth of public services. She looked at trends in the provision of childcare in both the public sector and the market sector, and the connections between them. She showed how the government chose to use tax incentives to spur the growth of market-based services. These privately-owned childcare services, however, range from expensive high-quality centers that only the rich can afford, to unregulated facilities which could be detrimental to the children in care. Dr. Michel also pointed out that the divided constituency for childcare has blocked development of a lobby for universal services.

The lack of support structures for working mothers and their children is a distinctive feature of life in the United States. It is ironic that those politicians who most harp on "family values" are precisely those who deny mothers and fathers paid leave to bond with their infants or spend time caring for children and elderly relatives. They also reject the use of tax revenues to establish a nation-wide network of subsidized, regulated, and quality childcare facilities.

Other countries, however, have found creative ways of instituting "family values" as well as the rights of mothers and of children. Sweden is one of the best countries for working parents (and the others are also Nordic countries). A Swedish law passed in 1985 guarantees a place in a day-care center for every child between the ages of 1 and 6, and a place in a "leisure time" center for every child between 7 and 12. France also provides government-sponsored childcare for children over 3. In addition to a mother's entitlement to paid maternity leave (six weeks before delivery, six weeks afterwards, at 90% of her salary), additional paid parental leave of one year is allowed. New policies now encourage fathers to take parental leave and spend time with their children. One parent, usually the father, has the absolute right to one month leave at 85% of salary. Parents have the right to a 25% reduction in their work hours until a child is 8 years of age. Indeed, in Sweden, maternity leave and childcare are legal rights (social rights). (Information from the Human Development Report 1999.)

The key difference between the United States and Sweden is that citizenship rights in Sweden are characterized by the unity of civil, political, and social rights (characteristic of social democracy), whereas in the United States, civil and political rights are guaranteed, but social rights are not (characteristic of (neo-)liberal democracy). Feminists around the world have questioned the separation of civil, political, and social rights as inimical to the equality, autonomy, and empowerment of women. In the same way that feminists challenged the separation of human rights and women's rights, insisting that women's rights *are* human rights, we are now calling for the expansion of citizenship that takes into account women's interests and needs, ending the false separation of social rights from civil and political rights.

It's very simple. The absence of paid maternity leave and childcare is a form of de facto discrimination against women, because working women cannot compete fairly with men in the labor market without it. (It is no accident that in Sweden, women make over 90% of men's wages, while in the U.S. women make 75% of men's earnings.) Moreover, since women reproduce the labor force, they should be compensated for it through appropriate social policies. ✍

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS/FEATURES

Letter from former Malaysia Prisoner

Women's Studies received the following letter from Lim Guan Eng of Melaka, Malaysia, via Amnesty International (AI) dated January 4, 2000. It is unedited and reads as follows.

Dear Amnesty Member,

Greetings from one of your "adopted" prisoners of conscience from Malaysia. I am finally free after spending one year in jail for trying to defend an underage girl who was raped and instead of being protected by the law, punished and detained for 3 years.

The girl's rapists were never jailed because of the Malaysian government's attempt to cover up the scandal as the rapists allegedly included a senior government Minister. I find a certain satisfaction that a man can go to prison for women's rights.

During these bleak days in prison, your letters bring me much cheer. Coming from foreign lands, it gives a whiff of exotic places far away that makes you forget the dismal situation one is in for a while. Even the stamps lend promise of a much better world outside, one that we can escape to if we can endure the adversities of prison life. These little things matter when you are a prisoner with nothing much to look forward to.

I can never say thank you enough to all of you who wrote, whether in English or languages I did not understand, especially little notes and crayon drawings from children. Your cards and messages of support gives hope not only to a better future but also personal comfort when I am ill that I am not alone.

It is an unfortunate fact of life that one gets abandoned by friends when in prison even for a just cause. I never lost faith for I know that I have friends from AI. That is the magic of AI, its ability to gather a community of peoples all over the world for the common cause of humanity and dignity of man and woman -- not only to lend hope to prisoners of conscience but also give human fellowship and warmth.

From the scriptures, we learn the value of serving others, of raising the soul by diminishing the self. In AI, we have seen its practical application.

I wish to share some of my experiences inside my prison where I learnt a great deal of the sorrows of fighting injustice. Such sorrow endured by my family and me, painful though it may be, is expected. What is not expected though is that sorrow can help to strengthen my resolve to endure all these adversities. Struggling on despite our sorrow serves to affirm and reaffirm the commitment to our cause and the rightness of our principles.

Even though I have lost almost everything, I am thankful for the love of my family and the moral support you all have shown. I will still continue my struggle to bring justice, freedom and human dignity to my people. Prison bars may break our backs but they can never break our spirit to demand nothing less than equality for women.

Together we can overcome, whether in Malaysia or other parts of the world. May God bless you!

LIM GUAN ENG

If you would like to respond to the above, you may do so by contacting Amnesty International, 322 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10001. Telephone: 202-807-8400. Website: <http://www.amnesty-usa.org>.

An equal opportunity/affirmative action university encouraging diversity.

Internship Opportunities

The Women's Studies Program maintains a listing of all announcements received regarding internships and independent study/professional practice positions, and they are available for to view during regular office hours.

Feminist Women's Health Center

The Feminist Women's Health Center is now offering internships at their facility in Atlanta, Georgia. The goal of the health center is to offer women of all socio-economic status, ethnicities, and sexual orientation the same concern and aid. The center is an advocate of community and policy progression and offers many health services including abortion care, fertility services, and regular gynecological care. For more information you can contact the center at (404) 875-7115 or stop in at Women's Studies and peruse the announcement.

Native American Women's Health Education

Internships for those concerned with Native American rights and health issues is now being offered by the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center and the Women's Lodge. They offer a variety of services from domestic violence advocacy at their shelter, to counseling on their Youth Crisis Hotline. Other more technical jobs in specific areas cover needs, such as: brochure writing and reporting, teaching at the Early Child Development Program, and organizing events for the Youth Advisory Council. For more information visit www.nativeshop.org/internships.html.

Women's Studies Consortium of Illinois Conference

The Women's Studies Consortium of Illinois 2nd Annual Conference will be held Saturday, **April 8** on the campus of Eastern Illinois University in Charleston. Student participants from twelve Illinois institutions will present papers at the all-day conference. Meridith Kruse, graduate teaching assistant in Women's Studies, will represent Illinois State with the presentation of her paper, "Considering the Voices of Lived Experience: Current/Former Recipients' Perspectives of Successful Welfare Reform."

Illinois State University's Women's Studies Program is one of the founding members of the Consortium, which was organized at a meeting hosted by Illinois State in the fall of 1997. The consortium serves as a resource for Illinois women's studies students and faculty, a forum for discussion, and a sponsor for state conferences. Dr. Valentine Moghadam and Dr. Sandra Harmon, director and assistant director of Women's Studies respectively, will attend the conference and faculty meeting.

Spring 2000 AWIS-HOI Lecture

The Heart of Illinois Chapter of Association for Women in Science will host a lecture on **Wednesday, April 5** at 4:30 p.m. at Illinois Wesleyan University, Natural Sciences Building, Room C 101, 201 E. Beecher Street, Bloomington, Illinois. Dr. Sevim Erhan, Research Leader for Oil Chemical Research Unit, National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research, USDA Laboratory, Peoria, Illinois, will discuss how vegetable oils are used in various industrial applications such as emulsifiers, lubricants, plasticizers, surfactants, plastics, solvents and resins. The title of her talk will be "Vegetable Oils for Environmentally Friendly Applications". For more information about this talk and other AWIS-HOI activities, contact Dr. Zahia Drici, AWIS-HOI President, Illinois Wesleyan University, Department of Mathematics and Computer Science, at 309-556-3669 (voice), 309-556-3864 (fax), zdrici@sun.iwu.edu.

Talk on Women's Movement in Morocco

Women's Studies Program will sponsor a talk on the Women's Movement in Morocco on **April 10** at Illinois State University, Schroeder Hall Room 244 at 4:00 p.m. The guest speaker will be Zakia Salim, M.A., a graduate from the University Toulouse-Le Mirail, France, and from the University Mohamed Ben Abdallah, Fes, Morocco. Ms. Salim has been a lecturer at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, the Training Institute for Teachers; research director and a member of the Editing Committee of *Ecole Normale Supérieure's Journal*. Ms. Salim's research experience has been in focus groups and surveys pertaining to women in Morocco. She has received several awards and honors and has had several publications.

For further information contact Women's Studies at 309-438-2947.

5th Annual Women's Studies Symposium

Over the course of the day, Friday, March 24, the Fifth Annual Women's Studies Symposium attracted nearly 150 people who came to hear student paper presentations and the keynote address by Professor Sonya Michel, director of the Women's Studies Program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Dr. Valentine Moghadam chaired the first of the three morning student panels, "Women and Gender in International Perspective." The panel featured Jessica Pilson, "Women's Suffrage in New Zealand"; Anne Semlak, "Eradicating FGM, Contesting Tradition"; and Susan Harsha, "Women in Japan with a Comparative Glance at the U.S."

The second panel focused on "Domesticity, Work, and Welfare," with papers by Bill Hiles, "Chicago Women's War Workers and the Media"; Michelle Clardy, "Women's Prescribed Domesticity of the 1950s"; Angela Waarala, "Bingo Biddies: A Photodocumentary about the Women of Bingo"; Pam Morbitzer, "Employer-Sponsored Childcare: A Study of Terms, Concepts, and Metaphors"; and Meredith Kruse, "Women Defining Successful Welfare Reform." Dr. Mary Trouille moderated the panel.

Dr. Sophia McClennen chaired the third panel, "Gender, Communication, and the Music Industry." Two students presented papers: Tessa Giffillan, "Mixed Signals: Gender Differences in Communication," and Melinda Crabill, "Lilith Fair in the Women's Movement."

The afternoon session, "Feminist Pioneers and Their Discontents," moderated by Dr. Sandra Harmon, featured Tina Landgraf, "Theory and Feminism in the Victorian Era"; Jennifer Angelo, "The Early Influences of a Victorian Social Reformer: A Study of John H. and Jane Addams"; VaNatta Ford, "Black Women in the Suffrage Movement in the U.S."; and Marla Ringger, "Anti-Suffrage Dogma and the Western Dilemma: How the Anti-Suffrage Movement Dealt with Woman's Suffrage in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho." ✍

Student Profiles

Women's Studies minor **Amanda White** will graduate in May with a degree in Sociology. In addition to her Women's Studies minor, Amanda also has a minor in Spanish and had the opportunity to study in Mexico last summer. She is a member of Women's Coalition and volunteers as a medical advocate at Neville House, the local shelter for battered women. She has been accepted into sociology masters programs at both Illinois State University and the University of Illinois. She plans on eventually earning a Ph.D. and would like to teach in a college or university.

Alison Thomas is student teaching at Heyworth High School where she teaches five different classes in literature and written and oral communication. She writes that she has had her students write, speak and think about a number of women's issues. She is a member and former treasurer of Sigma Tau Delta, an English honor society, and is a member of NEA, IEA, and SEA. She has tutored at the University Center for Learning Assistance (English, math, communications, and study skills) and was a peer mediator. She was involved in the Building Bridges Program, a curriculum integration program that encourages teacher education students to make connections between multiple subject areas. Her team's lesson plan took third place in the October conference held at Ewing Manor and they were invited to present their plan to a teachers' conference on technology in Peoria. Alison also presented papers at the 1999 Women's Studies and Undergraduate Research Symposia last spring. She will graduate in May with a degree in Speech Communication Education and minors in English Education and Women's Studies.

Kathryn Doyle will graduate in May with a major in sociology and minors in psychology and women's studies. She has trained as a peer mediator and serves as an undergraduate teaching assistant for Sociology 341: Sociology of Sex Roles. She has participated in Take Back the Night marches and has done volunteer work at a retirement home in Springfield, her hometown. In addition, she works at the Coffee House in downtown Normal. She is currently doing research for her senior seminar paper on the differences in feminist beliefs between African-American and Euro-American college-age women. Graduate work in sociology is one of her future goals. ✍

Reflections from Women's Studies Alumni

In recent months, Women's Studies has received correspondence from some of our alumni with reflections on how their women's studies minor has helped to prepare them in their careers and life. The following are some of the excerpts as they have been received.

Diane Onken

"In a macroscopic sense, my Women's Studies minor provided me with a lens through which I could view the world and organize for its change. . . . Women's Studies course work enabled me to analyze power structures."

"My work toward my Women's Studies minor gave me the great gift of language to speak of my experiences and articulate the forms of oppression that hamper many lives."

"My feminist background has also pushed me to take on new challenges, even those I was reluctant to take them on. For in my mind, if I supported women's leadership I must position myself as a leader."

"My Women's Studies minor impacts the way I view the work that I do and the various political issues that I work on just as it impacted the way I viewed literature and language when I was working toward my English degree."

Lainie Petersen

"I worked with Dr. Cynthia Huff during the time she was program director at ISU. I served as office manager for many years, was a founding member of Gender Issues Forum (later reinvented as the Feminist Alliance and the Women's Coalition), and also served as an undergraduate teaching assistant. I have many fond memories of those 'early days' in Women's Studies at ISU."

Elizabeth Lambert

"The Women's Studies Program at ISU was instrumental in my transformation from information consumer to information producer and critic. The curriculum encouraged me to analyze my surroundings and the information I was being 'fed' in other classes. This helped me to grow as a student and a person because I no longer just took in what people told me. I began to question."

"The Women's Studies office provided me with a community, a context in which I could see myself and grow as a woman. The multiple events sponsored by the program helped to create a space where women's issues are of greatest importance, where women can finally be surrounded by scholars and other academics who believe in the power of women." ✍

Faculty News

Dr. Val Moghadam presented a paper entitled "Enhancing Women's Economic Participation in the Middle East and North Africa" at a conference in Cairo, 58 March. The conference was organized by the Economic Research Forum for the Arab Countries, Iran, and Turkey (ERF), the Mediterranean Development Forum (MDF), and the World Bank. On 3 April, at the invitation of the Women's Studies program at Yale University, she presented a paper entitled "Patriarchy, the Taliban, and the Politics of Public Space in Afghanistan." Her most recent published article is "Transnational Feminist Networks: Collective Action in an Era of Globalization", *International Sociology*, vol. 15, no. 1 (March 2000): 57-85.

Dr. Louis Perez, History Department, has been named director of the General Education Program. He will officially begin as director on July 1, but will begin the transition during the spring semester.

Dr. Deborah Gentry, Family and Consumer Sciences, was featured in the faculty close-up in the March 2nd issue of Illinois State University Report. She teaches subjects about intimate couple relationships. ✍

Welcome New Women's Studies Minor
Amanda Karvelaitis--English

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Did you know that Women's Studies has a Resource and Documentation Center available to use for your research studies that focus on women's issues? Photo copy service available. We do not allow materials to be checked out. Call 309-438-2947 for information, hours available, or scheduling study-groups. You may also e-mail Rozel White at rwhite@ilstu.edu.

New Acquisitions to the Women's Studies Library

The Women's Studies Program would like to thank Dr. Claire Snyder for her donations to our library. The new donations are as follows: *After Second Sex, Reproductive Rights and Wrongs, Feminist Scholarship, Making Face/Making Soul, Blood at the Root, Erotism, Lesbian Ethics, Nostalgia and Sexual Difference, The Politics of Reproduction, Mother Love, Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression, Contested Lives, Why E.R.A. Failed, New French Feminisms, Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse, Disciplining Foucault, and Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy*. Aside from this generous gift, Dr. Snyder has also given journal volumes of Women in Politics and also Signs.

New Videos at Women's Studies Resource and Documentation Center

Defying the Odds: Women Around the World Create New Roles
Beyond the Veil: Are Iranian Women Rebelling?
To be a Woman in Burkina Faso
Women: The Double Shift
Algeria: Women at War
Arab Women at Work
Honorable Murder

There are other selections available at the Resource and Documentation Center.