

studies

college of liberal arts • university of south carolina

Women's
Studies
30 years

WOST Faculty Grants

WOST core faculty member Dr. DeAnne K. Hilfinger Messias has received a grant for \$250,000 from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to conduct a two-year study on improving access to health-care through a language education curriculum. Dr. Messias holds a joint appointment in the College of Nursing. A co-investigator on the study is Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina, also a WOST core faculty member who holds a joint appointment with the School of Public Health.

The researchers will develop and test a community-based educational program aimed at improving the capacity of recent Hispanic immigrants to access and navigate the formal U.S. healthcare system. This project is especially critical for Hispanic women, who typically bear the burden of ensuring the health of all family members.

The educational program, entitled "Navigating the U.S. Healthcare System," will be delivered through English-As-A-Second-Language classes offered by local adult education and community-based programs. Expected outcomes include improved knowledge of the local healthcare system and available healthcare resources.

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Constance Curry Keynotes Women's Studies Conference 2004

Constance Curry, writer, activist, and fellow at the Institute for Women's Studies, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, will present the keynote address for the 17th Annual Women's Studies Conference "Gender, Race and Liberation in the 21st Century." on Thursday, February 26, at 5:30 p.m., in the Moore School of Business' Belk Auditorium. The title of her lecture is "We Who Believe in Freedom."

Curry has a BA from Agnes Scott College and a J.D. from Woodrow Wilson College. She was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Bordeaux in France and a fellow at the University of Virginia's Carter G. Woodson Institute, Center for Civil Rights.

Curry is the author of several works, including her award-winning book, *Silver Rights* (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1995; paperback Harcourt Brace, 1996), which won the Lillian Smith Book Award for nonfiction in 1996; was a finalist for the 1996 Robert F. Kennedy Book Award; was recommended by the *New York Times* for summer reading in 1996; and was named "outstanding book" on the subject of Human Rights in North America by the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights. With an introduction by Marian Wright Edelman, *Silver Rights* tells the true story of Mrs. Mae Bertha Carter and her family's



Constance Curry

struggle for education in Sunflower County, Mississippi. The Carters were Mississippi Delta sharecroppers living on a cotton plantation in the 1960s when they dared to send seven of their 13 children to desegregate an all-white school system in 1965 after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Curry's book provides much insight into the family's determination to obtain an education for their children. Her most recent book is *Mississippi Harmony* with Winson Hudson, published fall 2002 by Palgrave/St. Martin's Press. *Mississippi Harmony* tells the life story of Mrs. Winson a civil rights leader from Leake County, Mississippi, who also challenged segregation in the 1960s.

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Director's Comments



Dr. Lynn Weber, WOST director

Feminism and Freedom in the Twenty-First Century

What is freedom? Most people think of freedom as the power to act, speak, or think without externally imposed restraints. In the United States at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the abstract notion of freedom is typically called on to mean one of two things:

- the powers that individuals have to choose freely among a variety of options for meeting our needs and satisfying our wants—e.g., the freedom to choose a school, a physician, a diet, a career—to consume
- the quality of societies or nations in which individual freedoms are guaranteed and protected by the state—a “free society.”

When the women's studies faculty decided on the theme for this year's women's studies annual conference, “Race, Class, Gender, and Liberation in the Twenty-First Century,” we wanted to encourage people to think about the everyday reality of freedom in the lives

of Americans today. We used the term “liberation” as a reminder that societies are not naturally inclined to grant and to protect the freedoms of their citizens—that freedom is not given: it is won in the ongoing act of democratic participation. And while the great social movements of the recent past—women's, labor, gay and lesbian, black, Latino, or Pan Asian—have not achieved their goals of “liberating” America from unjust constraints on these groups, the language of liberation and freedom is no longer even associated with them.

Today, we are likely to hear freedom spoken of in its individual, consumerist sense—as when George Bush advised after 9/11 that our collective response, indeed responsibility, was to shop—because we can. Or freedom is simply proclaimed to be a characteristic that is owned by the United States and that separates us from the rest of the world. Freedom is American. Freedom is the American flag. Freedom is what makes America morally superior to other nations. Freedom is what we have to give the world. And our moral superiority is what justifies whatever actions we choose to take against other nations in the name of freedom.

To me and to many feminists and others who have worked their lives in and for justice movements, this shift in language—from the association of freedom with liberation movements for justice to the rationale for war—is deeply disturbing. We need to understand how such a shift happened and what can be done both to reclaim the concept and to further the cause of justice.

Since freedom is about power, insight into the shift can be seen in the differing ways in which the dominant ideology and feminist scholarship treat power and social inequality. In the dominant

lexicon, social inequalities are simply individual differences in *distributions* of resources and options—some people have more education, income, wealth, status, and prestige than others. The fact that certain groups may have less of each of these valued resources has only to do with the characteristics of the groups themselves—they are collectively less ambitious, intelligent, and hardworking; have entered the country recently; prefer less rewarding occupations, etc. In short, the wealth, health, and prestige of those who are disadvantaged are in no way connected to the power, resources, and control of the privileged. This ideology is the reason that the concepts of race, gender, sexual orientation, and class are typically equated with people of color, women, gays and lesbians, and the working classes and with the deficits they are believed to embody.

In contrast, feminist scholarship examining social inequalities has come to see that they are *relational*—they are power relations. The resources and options available to privileged groups are possible because those same options and resources have been restricted for others. Men's dominance in the workplace, for example, is made possible by women's care for families in the home, and white's dominance in the economy and in the political sphere is made possible by limiting access for people of color to decent educations, jobs, and full participation in the democratic state. When we recognize that there is a relationship between power and privilege on the one hand and disempowerment and disadvantage on the other, we have laid the groundwork for reclaiming freedom. We can expand freedom from the individual right to consume to the collective possibility for voice and participation in the democratic state.

When citizenship is about individual consumerism, we have been reduced as a nation to a point where we collectively don't exist. We are told that we are a nation of individuals. Yet we are collectively suffering from war and loss, radical economic inequalities, and a top-notch health care system only the few can afford. And perhaps most significantly, we are a people disenfranchised in a political system that does not include our voices (e.g., neither Clinton nor Bush received the votes of over 75 percent of adults in the nation).

Individualism, its attendant social isolation, and the sense that social inequalities

are out of our hands and are individually produced, leave us collectively in a position of vulnerability to a language of fear and to simplistic explanations that blame others for our plight. We have been brought to a crisis point in our nation—divided against each other and the world around us—by a set of arguments that tells us that freedom is about individual choice, that our choices have no consequence for others, that our power cannot be connected to others' misfortunes. Feminist scholarship and that of other movements for liberation have shown us that these arguments are

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Mark Your Calendars

Spring 2004 Pedagogy Brownbag Teaching Series: Teaching for Social Justice

"The South Carolina Grimke Sisters: Past and Present"

Wednesday, January 28, 2004, Noon
Flinn Hall, Room 101

Facilitator: Becci Robbins,
Progressive Network and Grimke Sisters

"Service Learning at USC"

Thursday, February 12, 2004, 12:30 p.m.
Flinn Hall, Room 101

Facilitator: Janet Mason,
College of Education

"Birth Order: Little Choice, Big Effect"

Tuesday, March 23, 2004, 12:30 p.m.
Flinn Hall, Room 102

Facilitator: Winifred Thompson,
Arnold School of Public Health

Spring 2004 Research Series Reception following lectures

"Girls, Math, and School Tracking"

Thursday, January 22, 2004, 3:30 p.m.
Gambrell Hall, Room 429

Speakers: Lala Carr Steelman, Ph.D.,
Department of Sociology; Lynn Mulkey,
Ph.D., Department of Sociology,
USC Beaufort

"Students Creating New Knowledge"

Wednesday, March 3, 2004, 3:30 p.m.
Gambrell Hall, Room 152

Speakers: Women's Studies
graduate students

"Gender and Communication in Engineering Student Workgroups: A Study of Initiation Devices"

Wednesday, March 17, 2004, 3:30 p.m.
Gambrell Hall, Room 152

Speaker: Tracey Weldon, Ph.D., Department
of English and Linguistics Program

WOST 30th Anniversary Celebration

Mark your calendar now for Women's Studies 30th anniversary celebration to be held on Thursday, September 30, 2004!

Members of the Women's Studies Partnership Council, in collaboration with faculty and staff of the Women's Studies Program, are making plans for an exciting day to mark three decades of the program's constantly increasing growth and service.

The day-long event will include panels, symposia, and lunch with a speaker, and will culminate with an evening presentation by a nationally renowned figure of prominence in the arena of women's issues.

The planning committee, chaired by Marie-Louise Ramsdale, is comprised of the entire WOST Partnership Council. In addition to Ramsdale, council members include Ruth Abramson, Keller Barron, Sally Boyd, Claudia Smith Brinson, Judy Davis, Victoria Eslinger, Loretta Felder, Elizabeth Todd Heckel, Beebe James, Katherine Wylly Mille, Alicia de Myhrer, Samuel Tenenbaum, Mary Baskin Waters, and Carolyn West. ■

March is University-wide Women's History Month, coordinated by the Women's Studies Program and the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs. If you are sponsoring an event and/or would like to sponsor an event, please e-mail Rosa Thorn: Thorn@gwm.sc.edu.

Women's Studies Conference 2004

This year's Women's Studies Conference, "Gender, Race and Liberation in the 21st Century" builds on the success of the conference during the past 16 years. Continuing our one-and-a-half-day format, the conference will include four paper sessions, a panel on teaching and learning, and a keynote address.

The first day, Thursday, February 26, begins with a concurrent paper session at 1:15 p.m., Daniel Management Center, 8th floor, Moore School of Business, followed at 3 p.m. by a panel discussion about new forms of teaching and learning led by Dixie Goswami, senior scholar at Clemson's Strom Thurmond Institute. The keynote lecture at 5:30 p.m., Belk Auditorium, Moore School of Business, sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts, features Constance Curry, writer and activist, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

The second day of the conference, Friday, February 27, includes three paper sessions beginning at 9 a.m. During the luncheon, Dr. Juliann Sivulka, College of Mass Communications and Information Studies will present the Josephine Abney Lecture. Dr. Sivulka's talk presents results from her book project "The History and Agency of Women in the Advertising Profession" which examines gender representations in advertising messages and production.

The panel discussion led by Dixie Goswami, and the keynote lecture featuring Constance Curry, are free and open to the public. A registration fee is required for conference attendance (\$40 general registration; \$20 student registration—fee includes materials, lunch and receptions). Registration forms also are available in the Women's Studies Program Office, 201 Flinn Hall and/or the Women's Studies Web site www.cla.sc.edu/wost. For more information, please call the office at 803-777-4007. ■

WOST Graduate Certificate Program

The Graduate Certificate Program continues to emphasize interdisciplinarity. The 24 female and male students currently enrolled in the program come from nearly every college at the University. With majors in anthropology, comparative literature, English, political science, psychology, public health, history, education, nursing, and sociology, these students make the program one of the most diverse of its kind. Many are actively engaged in the profession. For example, Winifred Thompson, from public health, co-authored the article "Personal, Social, and Physical Environmental Correlates of Physical Activity in African-American Women in South Carolina," in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* and Emily Aleshire, from comparative literature, will be a presenter at the Sixth Annual Comparative Literature Conference this spring.

There were three winners of the fall 2003 Harriott Hampton Faucette Award. Jessica Forehand used the award to aide in her ongoing research on lynching. Laura Gambone received funds for her project "Getting the Big Picture: Conceptualizing the Social Experiences of Gay and Lesbian People." The Faucette Award provided funding for Jessica Lab-

be's project "Mythological Inclinations of the Modern Woman's Life and Literature." Designed to assist with research and professional development, the award is open to students enrolled in Women's Studies Graduate Certificate courses. Congratulations to these outstanding students.

The Graduate Student Research Series Panel will be held Wednesday, March 3, 2004 in Gambrell Hall, Room 152. The presentations highlight multidisciplinary research by the some of the best students in the program. There will be a reception following the presentations.

The new Graduate Committee members are professors Carol Harrison (history), Nancy Lane (languages, literatures, and cultures), Ann Ramsdell (women's studies) and Susan Schramm-Pate (education). They will assist with decisions concerning course petitions, the selection of graduate assistants and award recipients, and revising and redesigning the certificate brochure.

For more information about WOST awards or about the Graduate Certificate Program, please contact the Women's Studies Office at 803-777-4007 or Wanda A. Hendricks, graduate director of Women's Studies, at 803-777-4009. ■

Mission Statement

University of South Carolina Women's Studies Program

Women's Studies at the University of South Carolina promotes understanding of the diverse array of women's experiences through a complete program of teaching, research, and service to the University, the local community, the state, and the nation. Through its research mission, Women's Studies reconceptualizes existing knowledge and creates new knowledge through the lens of gender and the prism of diversity.

Through its teaching mission, Women Studies shares this knowledge with students so that they learn to think critically, to communicate effectively, to solve problems, and to interpret human experience. Emerging from an activist tradition, Women's Studies serves University, local, state, and national communities by acting as a resource and guide for issues related to women and gender. Our research, teaching, and service missions interweave as we create, share, and apply the knowledge, skills, and values that promote the full participation of women in society. ■

Freeman Lecture



Leith Mullings, presidential professor of anthropology graduate center, City University of New York, delivered the 2003 Adrenée Glover Freeman Memorial Lecture in African American Women's Studies on October 21, 2003.

Left, top: Mullings responds to questions from the audience.

Left, bottom: DeAnne Messias, joint appointment in the WOST Program and College of Nursing (left); Mullings; and Lynn Weber, director of the WOST Program (right).

Right, top: (left to right) Mullings; Adrenée's daughter, Karma Frierson; Adrenée's brother, Gregory Glover; and Gregory's wife, Carolyn Sawyer. Adrenée's other daughter, Savannah Frierson (not pictured), attends Harvard University.

Right, bottom: Mullings signs book for John Skvoretz, interim dean, College of Liberal Arts, during a book signing after the Freeman Lecture.

Making Ripples

Art from ripple-effect™ will be available at the Women's Studies Conference. All the products for sale in the gallery store are hand-produced by leading national craft artists. Many are exclusive and are developed at an annual design camp held in Rock Hill. These artistically created objects are sustainable and most are primarily made from recycled materials. With each purchase you are encouraging thoughtful reuse of our resources and materials usually bound for the landfill. This nonprofit entity supports professional artists' work, increases environmental awareness, and encourages economic development opportunities. The ripple-effect™ art project and the Revival-Design Camp Meeting have received funding support from the Arts Council of Rock Hill and York County, the American Craft Council, the S.C. Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts. ■

women's

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WOST Undergraduate Program

Our students in both the undergraduate BA program and minor program continue to distinguish themselves as campus community leaders and scholars. We have 35 majors and 25 minors. Our alumna pool continues to grow as we award four or five BAs in Women's Studies at each commencement. In December of 2003 we had a record of seven Women's Studies majors graduating. They were: Dawn Bozard, Caroline Byrd, Jimia McDowell, Melanie Murry, Meltrece Thomas, Anne Tromsness, and Sara Wood.

Our alumnae continue their work at the intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality in various domains. For example, Sharon Rachel completed a master's degree in women's studies at Ohio State University and is currently at Emory University in their Women's Studies Graduate Program. Helen Tecklenburg is staff person at the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Martha Wright finished an internship at *The Washington Post*.

In the fall of 2003 we had a busy and diversely placed group of Women's Studies interns. Three students (Carolyn Akers, Shalonda Johnson, and Meltrece Thomas) interned at the USC Offices of Sexual Health. They worked on World AIDs Day, the "These Hands Don't Hurt" project, and nonviolence training for campus groups. Anne Kelly Tromsness worked at the Governor's School for the Arts in Greenville, South Carolina. She focused on the full incorporation of girls into the performing arts, and integration of plays and skits by girls and women into the repertoire.

Ivy K. Ingram interned at the YMCA of the Grand Strand helping them with outreach to children, adolescent girls, and families concerning safety and health. Jimia S. McDonald applied her women's studies skills at "Stuff Inc.", a nonprofit clothing, furniture and household items collection center and distribution store for needy families in the Clover-Rock Hill

area. With recent plant closings and worker layoffs in the upstate, the demands for these services and referrals were heavy. Alanna Wendt interned with the Catawba Indians in the upstate where she worked with the Catawba Care Coalition to help them with fundraising, grant seeking, and programming to enhance and protect the health of Catawba families in all their diversities.

An internship is required for our BA degree. Students often find their placements very rewarding and inspiring. Over the years the agencies where our students have interned have unanimously praised their work, begged us for more interns, and reported that without these hardworking, intelligent, and devoted women's studies interns they do not know what they would have done. We are very proud of our interns. They represent the University and Women's Studies in the best way possible. Given the great needs in our state, our interns help make a difference in the lives of many people. We thank the interns and the agencies for these successful placements.

The Women's Students Association and numerous volunteer actresses, producers, and directors are going to perform "The Vagina Monologues" on February 12, 13, and 14. The students who worked on the "Monologues" last year and the Women's Students Association won USC's Outstanding Student Organization Award and Outstanding Student Leadership Awards. The past two performances of "The Vagina Monologues" have raised several thousand dollars for antiviolence organizations in the community and have raised awareness of the extent and seriousness of violence against girls and women throughout our area.

WOST alumnae, please contact us at mcclaryj@sc.edu and/or woliver@sc.edu and tell us your news and your accolades so we can publish them in future newsletters. ■

Curry continued from page 1

Curry also collaborated in and edited *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement* (University of Georgia Press, 2000) and the book *Aaron Henry: the Fire Ever Burning* (University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

From 1957 to 1959, she was national field representative of the Collegiate Council for United Nations. From 1960 to 1964, she was the director of the Southern Student Human Relations Project of U.S. National Student Association, where she developed programs for black and white college students to communicate and organize and served as advisor on the executive committee of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during its campus-based years. Curry has also served as the Southern field representative for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and from 1975 to 1990 was director of the Office of Human Services, for city of Atlanta.

Curry is the producer of a newly released documentary film entitled "The Intolerable Burden," (winner of the John O'Connor film award, January 2004, from the American Historical Association) which is based on her book *Silver Rights*, but also shows today's resegregation in public schools and the fast track to prison for youth of color. As activist/participant and writer/intellectual, Connie Curry has helped further the cause of justice in the South. There will be a showing of the documentary film at the Nickelodeon, 937 Main Street, on Thursday night, February 26, at 7 and 9 p.m. ■

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improved language and communication skills, increased self-efficacy related to access and utilization of healthcare services, and higher levels of satisfaction related to healthcare encounters.

The researchers also hope to assess the effect of the intervention upon actual utilization of primary healthcare services and emergency department visits and enrollment in government-sponsored health insurance programs. These outcomes will be evaluated by monitoring health utilization data of children living in study participant households. This research builds on previous research, funded by the National Cancer Institutes, and on Messias' and Para-Medina's involvement with the South Carolina Hispanic/Latino Health Coalition. ■

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false. Freedom depends on our taking collective responsibility for the state of our nation and our world, not simply for our own households. Shopping is not the way to freedom. To borrow the civil rights movement theme and the title of our conference keynote, "We who believe in freedom ..." cannot rest until we have reclaimed our sense of collective responsibility—our commitment to the notion that none of us can be free until we are all free. ■

Support USC Women's Studies and the Initiative for Women's Well-Being

The Women's Studies Program is growing. We invite you to join our efforts to promote the understanding essential to improving the lives of women and girls by becoming a Friend of Women's Studies.

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