

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE



STUDIES NEWS

Volume 5, Fall 2009

Anzaldúa Conference Brings Scholars from around the Globe to UTSA

Christina Gutierrez, Doctoral Candidate

On May 15-17, 2009, The Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa and The WSI hosted "El Mundo Zurdo: The International Conference on the Life and Works of Gloria Anzaldúa" at UTSA's downtown campus. The event began with a trip to Hargill, Texas, Anzaldúa's hometown and resting place, to commemorate Anzaldúa's life and works. Conference participants then visited Anzaldúa's undergraduate alma mater, the University of Texas-Pan American, in Edinburg, Texas where we enjoyed the honor of listening to Dr. Norma Alarcón's powerful talk, "Becoming MeXicana With Gloria Anzaldúa," followed by a presentation by the Members of the Gloria Anzaldúa Legacy Project and a poetry reading by UTPA students whose works are inspired by Anzaldúa's legacy.

Upon returning to San Antonio, conference participants engaged in a stimulating two days of panel sessions, plenaries, and featured

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featured speakers in which original and provocative scholarship was presented, all grounded in Gloria Anzaldúa's spirit and vision. Among some of the conference's featured guests were Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Professor and Chair of the César Chávez Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies at UCLA; Antonia Castañeda, retired Professor of History from St. Mary's University and founding member of *Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambios Social*; Randy P. Connor, Ph.D., and author; Alma Gómez, visual artist and adjunct faculty for the department of art at Boise State University; AnaLouise Keating, Professor of women's studies at Texas Woman's University; and Emma Pérez, Associate Professor in the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

We proudly welcomed back UTSA alumni Lori Rodríguez, currently Assistant Professor in the Department of Chicano Studies at the University of Minnesota, and Sara Ramírez, a doctoral student at the University of California, Berkeley in the Ethnic Studies Department. Lori and Sara along with Berkeley doctoral student Marcelle Maese-Cohen formed an inspiring panel titled, "Anzaldemia—Not a Disease but an Epistemology: How Three Chicana Feminists Use Anzaldúa's Theories in Academia." The three panel participants presented testimonios about their experiences as Chicanas in academia and how Anzaldúa's work has served to empower them as they continue to pursue their academic endeavors.

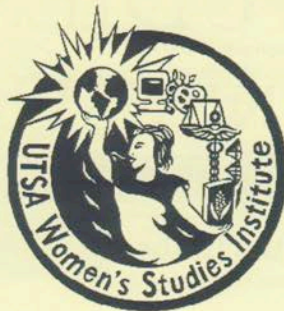
Overall, the conference was a huge success and furthered scholarly and artistic contributions following in Gloria Anzaldúa's efforts to "offer a radical (re)construction of space in the Americas where political struggles and alliances are forged..." (Saldívar-Hull 13). We are excited to announce that next year's conference will be held on November 4-7, 2010 in San Antonio.

Director's Note

Sonia Saldívar-Hull, WSI Executive Director

Welcome to the Fall 2009 newsletter, edited by our first Women's Studies major, Sarah Montoya. Sarah worked at the WSI in Spring 2009 as our first intern and this Fall 2009 as an undergraduate research assistant. Her leadership and editorial skills reflect the quality of undergraduates at UTSA. While I was away this past spring on faculty development leave, we were fortunate to have Dr. Patricia Trujillo serve as the Interim Director of the WSI. Much of the creative energy and political commitment that you witness in this newsletter reflects Patricia's contributions. We miss her presence now that she is an assistant professor at the University of Colorado, Pueblo. *Continued on page 11*

UTSA



**WSI Newsletter
Volume 5, Fall 2009**

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The Women's Studies Internship Program: "The Possibilities are Numerous Once We Decide to Act and Not React"

Lapetra Bowman, Doctoral Candidate

Starting in the Spring of 2009 and as UTSA sets its goals on becoming a tier-one institution, Women's Studies established the Women's Studies Internship Program, offering students the opportunity to gain hands-on experience relevant to women and gender issues in non-profit and for-profit organizational work, desktop publications, public relations, grant writing, and community outreach within selected organizations in and around the San Antonio area. For those students who are interested, it is never too early to begin taking the steps necessary to building their path to their future and to doing work that matters.

As the Women's Studies Internship Coordinator, my goal is to provide students the opportunity to translate their academic skills and interests into a real-world, professional setting as they prepare for graduation and their careers. It is my firm belief that our students' needs are as varied as the history and personal experiences they bring with them. Not all Women's Studies Majors and Minors are created in a singular, unified way; with this in mind, Interns are encouraged to seek Internship opportunities within their various fields of interest (e.g. Law, Union-Organization and other Non-Profit Organizational work, Rape-Crisis Center and other Community outreach programs). This is a great way for students to give back to the community and build their resume as they gain the professional experiences needed to secure a full-time position after graduation. Ultimately, the Women's Studies Internship Program becomes a way for students to fine tune their professional compass and aim it in the direction which is right for them.

My objective for our upcoming Summer and Fall 2009 Internship is to continue to develop a Women's Studies Internship Program which is student-centered. I will continue to branch out in the community in an effort to find more internship placement opportunities for our students, in addition to adding a "Professional Development" component to the WS 4933 course where students will be required to complete 5 online Powerpoint workshops I've developed: "Cultural Diversity in the Workplace," "Time Management," "Strategies for Effective Communication," "Sexual Harassment," "Leadership, Teamwork, and Strategic Planning," and "Job Stress Management". Ultimately, at the end of each semester, students should be better prepared to enter into the professional realm.

Students who are accepted into the Women's Studies Internship Program are required to register for WS 4933 Internship Course. A 3 credit course designed for Women's Studies Majors and Minors, it fulfills major and minor degree requirements for students pursuing the B.A. or the Minor in Women's Studies. WS 4933 may be repeated once for credit, however, only three hours of internship credit may be applied towards students' Major/Minor requirements. (N.B. students can meet with their major Academic Advisor first to assess how WS 4933 fits into their specific degree plan). Students must meet the following eligibility requirements in order to be considered for participation and prior to submitting their internship application form: a) Officially declared as WS Major or Minor, b) Junior or Senior Classification, c) Completion of WS 2013, d) Minimum 3.0 UTSA G.P.A. (certain exceptions may apply; contact the Internship Coordinator). Students who meet the requirements must complete and submit the Women's Studies Internship Application Form and submit a Letter of Intent to the Internship Coordinator before the deadline (Fall: Aug. 1st; Spring: Nov. 1st; Summer: May 1st). Students suitable for the internship, as assessed by the Internship Coordinator, will be contacted. The internship application form is available online at www.utsa.edu/wsi. For additional information, email the Women's Studies Internship Coordinator at lapetra.bowman@utsa.edu.

Student Perspectives on Spring 2009 Women's Studies Courses

Edible Activism: Thoughts on Feminist Food Studies

Maritza Garza, Undergraduate Student

Like many people my age, I grew up with an aversion to the kitchen. I'm inexperienced when it comes to preparing food and, most of the time, things end up burnt and smoking. So, when this course began I thought I was going to be hard pressed to relate to the subject material. I could not understand what food had to do with feminism because, after all, weren't we supposed to be liberating ourselves *from* the kitchen?

However, as the course moved on the discourse progressed from topics like re-empowering the kitchen space to more complex global issues. Women are an integral part of food production and consumption, and their experiences and responsibilities extend outside the arena of the kitchen. As feminists we have to be aware of the food we eat, how it's grown, the impact it has on the environment, and how it affects our well being. In her book, *All Our Relations*, Winona LaDuke and other indigenous activists discuss the ways their communities have been affected by the careless agricultural practices and environmental racism perpetuated by the military-industrial complex. While they analyze the effects that the current political system has on the degradation of their culture and communities, they also envision ways of environmental and cultural sustainability. Even though these testimonies explore the connections between specific cultures and their relationships with the government and environment, they offer insight from which anyone can learn.

Our class covered a wide range of women's issues including the connections between gender dynamics and consumption, gendered food, food and sexuality, body image, and colonization and decolonization. The relationship between food and gender is often unexamined, but anyone who works towards equality and opposes destructive hierarchies must also realize that what we eat and how it arrives on our table matters. Food has the ability to symbolize power, oppression, marginalization, and resistance. It is unique in every culture, yet universal in that we all have to eat. With all of these concepts in mind, how is food *not* a feminist issue?

You Betta' Ask Somebody: Black Women in Horror, Fantasy, and Science Fiction

Michael Ruiz, Undergraduate Student

Are you a fan of Buffy? What about Star Trek? Octavia Butler? Or are you afraid that if you admit to any of this, someone may look at you funny or call you names? I am here to tell you that there is a class that is warm, inviting, and completely understanding just for you. Well, its at least inviting... in the Dracula, "Look into my eyes," kind of way. The course is English 4713: Black Women in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror, and is taught by Dr. Kinitra Brooks.

As a student that has participated in the inaugural class, I have to say it has been extremely interesting. The course covered a myriad of genres and forms including novels, graphic novels, films, and television. The authors covered were Octavia Butler, Tananarive Due, Nalo Hopkinson, Robert Kirkman, and Chris Yost. Some of the works included the British film *28 Days Later*, *The Living Blood*, *Brown Girl in the Ring*, and *Dawn*.

So, what kind of students are in this course, you ask? We had quite the collection of individuals. There were students from many different majors in attendance. Within the class, there was definitely another kind of division: sci-fi fanatics and people that watched a few episodes of "Star Trek" or *Star Wars* and thought it might be a cool class to take. I fall into the latter category. This made many of the in-class discussions very interesting, especially when we got to the rape of Michonne – the only black female character in Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* series, an American comic book depicting a group of survivors in a post-apocalyptic zombie-filled landscape.

The course work is like any other senior level course. My favorite assignment was our midterm. We had to create an African American female character and develop her story. Then, we had to theoretically explain her existence. All in all, the class was great. I highly recommend this course.

Teaching Perspectives: Notes from an (Un)Fearless Feminist

Larissa Mercado, Doctoral Candidate

I want to talk about the “F” word. No, not “that” F word or even that “other” F word, but the one no one talks about in Women’s Studies: fear. My inaugural semesters teaching WS 2013: Introduction to Women can be boiled down to three words: fear, fun, and feminism. The fear set in the moment I was asked to teach the class. As a doctoral candidate in English with an emphasis in maternal studies and U.S. woman of color feminisms, I was teaching core writing and literature courses through feminist literary approaches; though my ethnic studies and social science backgrounds prepared me for the transition, the idea of teaching a course I had only wished I had taken as an undergraduate was nonetheless daunting.

The fear officially set in when I sat down to write my syllabus. Was it even possible to fit everything they needed to know into one semester? No, I quickly realized. The fear escalated the morning of my first class. With Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* tucked snugly into my bag, I lit my imaginary Tonantzin candle and marched into a room of students just as anxious as I was. But the fear quickly turned into adrenaline, and that turned into energy, and before I knew it the fun had begun.

Diverse in ethnicity and research interests, my classes these past two semesters eagerly delved into and deconstructed issues such as female body hair, adolescent sexuality, gay parenting, and the ever-popular “mantyhose.” Because I had students from all disciplines, I allowed them to choose between two final projects: a formal research paper or a Wikipage. Those who chose the latter “introduced” the Wiki world to a topic in Women’s Studies. Following specific guidelines, each student gave an overview of a topic of their choice, and those topics ranged from women in the military to teen breast implants. Their work can be viewed here: <http://utsawomengenderstudies.wikispaces.com/>.

This is my third semester teaching WS 2013, and I still experience fear. But it’s a good kind of fear -- the kind that I felt the day my first daughter was born and the first time I dropped her off at Kindergarten; and, I imagine, it is the kind I will feel the day I send her off to college. It’s the fear of not knowing if what you did was enough. It’s the fear that fuels the hope that they will never forget.

Remembering Women’s History Month 2008: “Trailblazers in Politics”

Sharron Navarro, Associate Professor in Political Science and Geography

During Women’s History Month in March 2008, Women’s Studies Institute sponsored an event titled “Trailblazers in Politics: An author’s panel with Sonia Garcia, Irasema Coronado, Sharon Navarro, and Patricia Jaramillo” in honor of the publication of *Politicas: Latina Public Officials in Texas* (2008, University of Texas Press). It was one of the most successful events the Women’s Studies Institute has ever hosted. It was a packed house. In this single sponsored event, we had some of the most powerful political Latinas in the state of Texas join us that evening. They came from everywhere: State Senators Leticia Van de Putte, Judith Zaffirini, ex-mayors Elizabeth Flores (Laredo), Blanca Vela (Brownsville), and city council members like our very own Maria A. Berriozabal, to name a few. What made this event particularly poignant was that this book was written by the only five Latina political scientists in the state of Texas. Since the writing and publication of this book, there are now two additional Latina political scientists in the state. There are less than thirty Latina political scientists in the country and to have seven in one state speaks to the strides that Latinas have made not only in our discipline but also in politics.

The purpose of the book was to provide a profile of the first Latina elected public officials in Texas. Specifically, there are chapters dedicated to Latinas in the Texas State House, Latinas in the Texas State Senate, Latinas as State judges, Latinas as city Mayors of relatively large Texas cities, and Latinas as city council members of medium to large Texas cities. We essentially examine four areas of importance: 1) political biography - how they first got into public office, why they went into politics, how long they have been in office, 2) their personal successes as a public officer holder, 3) their leadership style and how they view leadership, and 4) their attitudes regarding specific policy issues that relate to Latinas and Latinos, i.e. civil rights, women’s rights, education (elementary & secondary, as well as higher education), healthcare, and immigration among others.

It was truly a pleasure to share a spectacular evening with Latina women who have helped shape the political environment of Texas.

Angela De Hoyos: Nuestra Poeta de la Gente

The opening reception of Women's History Month 2008 honored the life and work of San Antonio poet, artist, and activist, Angela de Hoyos. The program included various recognitions of her work, including an analysis of her socio-historical contributions and various poetry readings dedicated to De Hoyos. The program ended with Dr. Sonia Saldivar-Hull and Dr. Norma Cantú's presentation of a Lifetime Achievement Award to De Hoyos.

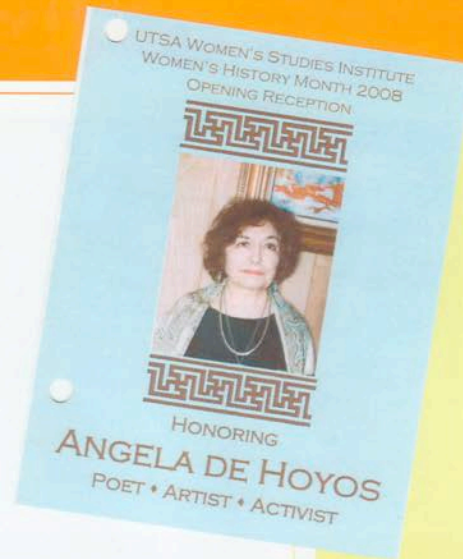
Lori Beth Rodriguez, Assistant Professor of Chicano/a Studies – University of Minnesota

As a working class Chicana born and raised in San Antonio, Angela De Hoyos's work inspires me on a personal level – validating my most intimate feelings of political marginalization and cultural identity within the specific geographical context of South Texas. Through careful introspection, a keen political awareness, and the courage to speak truth, De Hoyos's work transcends mere aesthetics of the poetic genre through her testifying to the experience of bicultural and bilingual identity shared by many within the Chicana/o community.

Her writing has received awards from the United States, Argentina, India, Italy and Germany. In addition to writing, De Hoyos founded her own publishing house, M&A Editions, with her husband, acted as general editor for M&A/Manda Publications, and served as director and general editor for *Huehuetlan* Magazine. She has also remained active in the cultural arts communities in San Antonio and Austin. Her published works of poetry include: *Arise Chicano! And Other Poems* (1975), *Chicano Poems: For the Barrio* (1975), *Selecciones/Selected Poems* (1979), and *Woman, Woman* (1985).

Although De Hoyos was a strong proponent of the Chicano Movement, she was also acutely aware of the marginalization experienced by Chicanas within that movement. We hear the experiences of a doubly marginalized subject throughout her collections, but it is in her collection *Woman, Woman* in which she specifically pays tribute to the experiences of *la mujer*. Poems such as "These Wry Negotiations" and "A Man Can Grow Old" (y tambien nosotras las mujeres cansamos) give voice to the hardships experienced by working class Chicanas in the face of Chicano patriarchy.

With her use of personal experiences to voice themes of cultural negotiations, political resistance, and philosophical questioning, Angela De Hoyos remains an organic intellectual in documenting our historical roots as Chicanas/os while also maintaining a keen foresight of the sociopolitical future of Chicanas/os in the U.S. Furthermore, De Hoyos performs a "theory in the flesh" in utilizing poetry to theorize the multiple identities embodied by women of color. Before the feminist theoretical terms such as "borderlands," *mestizaje*, and third space were even coined, Ms. De Hoyos was performing them. And she was performing them with the foresight of future Chicanas/os continuing along this path of self-validation, discovery, and re-discovery. In an interview with Marcella Aguilar-Henson, De Hoyos describes her motivation to write: "We had to stand up and shout: 'here I am! Not as you have stereotyped me, but as I really am!' and from that premise proceed to record our reality; these books are part of that reality; they represent my commitment primarily to myself and to my people who inspired them."



The family of Angela de Hoyos accepted the award on her behalf. This included, from left to right, Michael Murphy, Kenneth Murphy, Genevieve Sandoval-Murphy, and Mary Peters. Dr. Patricia Trujillo, Dr. Sonia Saldivar-Hull, and Dr. Norma Cantu presented the award.



An attendee looks at an altar created to honor Angela de Hoyos.

A Night in Pictures: The 2008 Gala Dinner and Auction benefiting UTSA's Women's Studies Institute



WSI recognized the educational philanthropic efforts of Ruth McLean Bowman Bowers with the 2008 Women's Advocate of the Year Award. Bonnie Korbell accepted on behalf of her mother.



Dr. Gina Mendez, Director of Community Relations, stands with exhibit Curator, Arturo Almeida, to announce the start of the auction.



Maria Sanchez, artist and keynote speaker at the event, addresses the audience.



Left to right: Curator Arturo Almeida, his mother, Mrs. Delia Infante, and Dr. Sonia Salvidar-Hull stand after Mrs. Infante was honored with the Mujeres de Fuerza/ Woman of Strength award.



Photo credit: Justin Pury and Arturo Almeida

Far More Than Extra Credit: Women's History Month Opening Reception



Interim Women's Studies Director, Dr. Patricia Trujillo, poses with WSI's 2009 Women's Advocate of the Year recipient, Graciela Sánchez.

Dr. Gabriela González, Assistant Professor of History

The Women's History Month opening reception on March 2 featured a terrific keynote address by League of United Latin American Citizens president, Rosa Rosales, and the presentation of the Woman Advocate of the Year Award to Esperanza Peace and Justice Center founder, Graciela Sánchez, who delivered a rousing acceptance speech. Students and faculty listened intently as Sánchez spoke of her incredible journey as an activist and the many challenges the Esperanza has faced over its twenty year history. Rosales followed with her own compelling story of success within LULAC despite tremendous struggles -- chief among them being sexism within the organization. Both women inspired the audience with their strong commitment to social justice issues and their advocacy of the activist life as an honorable and much needed vocation today as in the past.



Keynote speaker Rosa Rosales delivers her speech at the opening reception.

The UC Denman room where these events took place sits about 300 people, but that day it accommodated far more. Attendees claimed every available chair, and students sat on the floor and stood against walls. Many of the students present showed up for the extra credit their professors offered them to attend Women's History Month events. Strongly motivated to get the highest grades possible or to offset a bad grade on a previous assignment, UTSA students respond positively to extra credit opportunities. Therefore, there is a sense that perhaps students are not truly engaged in the programming being offered but attend events for purely self-interested reasons. I believe that this is a wrong-headed way of thinking about the matter, and it is in that spirit that I offer the following reflections about the relationship between students and "outside the classroom" learning opportunities.



Left to right: Rosa Rosales, Anne Hardgrove, Patricia Trujillo, Graciela Sánchez, and Gabriela González pose after the ceremony.

Days after the event, my students tested well on material pertaining to the Sánchez and Rosales presentations. Several of them wrote short essays on Rosales and seemed truly inspired by her work. Many admitted to me that they showed up for the extra credit but left the room feeling empowered by the experience, and they appreciated the opportunity to learn about these extraordinary women. Ultimately, the most important gift that our wonderful presenters gave our students that day was the gift of hope and agency. Through the biographies of Sánchez and Rosales, UTSA students got to see the human spirit in all its greatness and perhaps through their example they came to realize their own possibilities as young men and women preparing to step into history and make their own mark in a world in dire need of their brilliant minds and compassionate hearts.

If you were to have queried many of the students, they would have told you that before this extra credit assignment, they had not heard of either Graciela Sánchez or Rosa Rosales. And that is precisely the reason why it is so important for professors to offer extra credit opportunities -- so students will be motivated to attend enriching events such as the Women's History Month opening reception.



Local community organizers, including 2005 Women's Advocate of the year, Patricia Castillo (at far right), await the festivities.

And so, here is my call to all professors on campus that next year you invite your students to attend Women's History Month events, keeping in mind that while they will show up because of whatever reward you offer, they will leave with far more than extra credit.

United with you in the mission to combat ignorance and apathy,
Gabriela González

Photo credit : Gabriela González

Women's History Month 2009: A Co-Chair's reflections

Anne Hardgrove, Associate Professor of History

This year, I had the privilege of serving as co-chair of Women's History Month, along with my colleague in the UTSA history department and friend Professor Gabriela González. After several exciting months of making plans and inviting speakers to campus, March was upon us! The month went by in a flash, and I would like to take a minute to reflect on all of the great things that this month brings to UTSA. I'll focus on a few of the many events I attended, to share some of the range I experienced in Women's History Month.

Event: Women and Baby Contests in India & Brown Bag Discussion

Professor Barbara Ramusack from the History Department of the University of Cincinnati is a specialist on the history of India and participated in two events during her visit. The first was an evening lecture on the history of maternal and child health in India. The second event was a brown-bag discussion in the history department, where Rumsack explained how she became a historian when it was not a popular choice for women. Professor Ramusack was the first person in her family to go to college. To earn money for college, she worked at a local telephone company, and therefore was a little older than some of the other students when she started college. Her family did not understand her passion for education and wondered why she toiled year after year for a Ph.D. in history. The men of her generation who served in WWII used their G.I. Bill to pay for higher education, but female students had fewer options. She explained the competition she faced for scholarships, and the sexism she encountered in her fascinating career path. It was an inspiring talk, giving everyone hope in their own career goals, a reminder of how far we've come, and how far we still need to go.

Event: The Anthropology of Aging

Professor Sheryllyn H. Briller of Wayne State University in Detroit gave a lecture on the Anthropology of Aging, focusing on Women and Aging. One of the many interesting things she spoke about was about older women's sexual health. I did not know that older women are among the highest at risk of contracting HIV and other STD's. Statistically, women are expected to live longer than men, leaving many women single in their senior years, but this does not mean that a woman's sexuality is finished. Many women establish relationships in their senior years -- relationships which, for the most part, go unacknowledged by their families and even the medical profession. Since post-menopausal women cannot conceive, senior couples do not use contraception methods, thus widening the possibility of the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases. Medical professionals tend to forget to ask senior citizens, especially women, about their sexual health practices, assuming perhaps that older people are not sexually active. This neglect leaves older women on their own in terms of gathering knowledge about how their sexual practices. As a result, women in the older age groups are far less likely to talk to their partners and insist on protection against sexually transmitted diseases, leaving them much higher at risk for the transmission and spread of illness. Should an elderly woman contract HIV, Professor Briller observed, they are far less likely to share this stigmatized information with their children or other family members. In cases where family members help their elders manage their daily medication needs, an elderly HIV positive woman may feel embarrassed and skip her anti-retroviral medications, further complicating the treatment of her fragile immune system. The message of Professor Briller's lecture was straightforward: As an aging society, we all need to be far more acknowledging of the special needs of senior sexual health.

Looking Ahead to 2010: I hope that these short summaries of a few of the WHM events inspire readers to think ahead to Women's History Month 2010. Students, staff, and faculty at UTSA are encouraged to invite speakers to campus to be part of the month-long celebration and educational programs. Watch for notices about a Fall 2009 meeting when we will talk about invitations for next March. Who would you like to see come to campus?



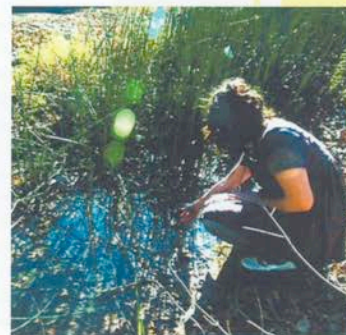
Maria Antonietta Berriozabal lectures at "UTSA Founding and Development: A Grassroots View" on March 5. Photocredit: Gabriela González



Grisel Y. Acosta, editor of the Sagebrush Review, reads poetry at the Women's Fair.



Students from Gay UTSA table at the Fair on March 16 at the Paseo.



Women's History Month 2009 brochure photo, exemplifying our "Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet" theme. Photo by Steven Gilmore. Used with permission.

International Women's Day 2009

Sarah Montoya, WSI Staff

Each year, on a designated Saturday in March, the global community holds public demonstrations to acknowledge the accomplishments of women and to discuss the issues facing women today. This year's 19th International Women's Day March took place on the morning of Saturday, March 7th, beginning with a politically charged march from Travis Park and ending in a rally at the Plaza De Zacate (Milam Park). At the rally, speakers discussed everything from women's healthcare to queer rights. The rally also included performances by local artists, Las Krudas, in addition to the readings of several poets. The event's organization and execution was the result of tireless planning by local community organizations, including San Antonio's Esperanza Peace and Justice Center and the San Antonio Free Speech Coalition, as well as the efforts of local volunteers.



UTSA faculty, staff, friends, and family gather behind the WSI banner at Travis Park before the march. Photocredit: Gabriela Gonzalez

For years, the UTSA Women's Studies Institute maintained an effort to attend this local and international event, and 2009 marked the first year that UTSA instructors, students, friends, and families gathered to represent the strong feminist values present on campus. The Women's Studies Institute's participation in this event represented an important Women's Studies philosophical tenant: building bridges. Creating a bridge of dialogue between the university and community continues to be a priority because building coalitions with local organizations is central to the creation of an ever-growing, much needed, feminist presence. Marching behind a WSI Banner, we proudly represented various interests – women's access to reproductive healthcare and birth control, and signs aimed against corporate spending and capitalism, war, poverty and hunger, and violence against women. Together, in a crowd of a thousand marching down the streets of San Antonio, we reminded bystanders and the government that *this* is what democracy looks like!



Dr. Kinitra Brooks answers students' questions after her March 26 Women's History Month Event. Photocredit: Gabriela González



Left to right: Dr. Gabriela González, Dr. Kinitra Brooks, and Dr. Joycelyn Moodyn pose after the event. Photocredit: Gabriela González

"The Final Girl": Black Women in Contemporary Sci-Fi

Sarah Montoya, WSI Staff

As part of Women's History Month, English Professor Kinitra Brooks presented the lecture, "The Black Superwoman in the Land of the Zombies," and discussed the construction of black women in the British film *28 Days Later*, directed by Danny Boyle, and *The Walking Dead*, an American comic book series by Robert Kirkman. Brooks, who specializes in black feminist theory, interrogated the characters of Selene in *28 Days Later* and Michonne in *The Walking Dead*.

Brooks contends that Kirkman's depiction of Michonne serves as a contemporary utilization of antebellum, essentialist constructs of black women's bodies. Brooks explains that Michonne is characterized by her endless capacity for pain as a modern version of "the black super woman." Michonne's wanton sexual lust is a result of the fetishization of black women's sexuality, and she possesses an ungendered body as a result of the androgyny or masculinity associated with blackness and her phallic Katana. Contrasted with this stereotypical depiction, Brooks posits that Boyle's depiction of Selene in *28 Days Later* contests antebellum scripts by allowing Selene to be a complex and motional being instead of a flat character. Also, Selene's sexuality is expressed mutually and through a "chaste kiss" with Jim, the film's protagonist, and gender appears when Selene "mothers" Ana.

Brook's lecture reminds us, despite a century's passing, that racist, essentialist narratives remain present in much of contemporary media and hides in often unexpected places, like *The Walking Dead Series*. Her lecture also reminds us that deconstructions and alternative narratives are possible and are also being constructed in very modern terms. Brooks' engaging lecture provided an innovative perspective in woman of color, feminist critique.

“He’s Just Not that In To You”: A Women’s Resource Center Event

Jessica Muniz, LCSW, Women’s Resource Center Co-Coordinator

UTSA Women’s Resource Center hosted an open dialogue surrounding the book and recent movie, “He’s Just Not that In To You” as part of Women’s History Month. The idea was to encourage dialogue among male and female students regarding dating and relationships. The reason that this topic is of interest is based on the number of students that seek support while in unhealthy relationships and during a break-up.

This event was planned with the intent to guide a healthy discussion in a non-threatening setting to begin a dialogue which addresses the power difference within relationships. We prepared several questions that students discussed within their small group and then we opened up discussion to the entire audience. Students were open and honest about their attitudes and beliefs surrounding dating relationships. They felt comfortable sharing stories about being dumped, dumping, and signs that may lead to a break up. Both male and female students shared their thoughts on what they look for in a healthy relationship. There was also discussion on role models of relationships and how they may have learned about fitting in to traditional gender roles within relationships.



Jessica Muniz, Women’s Resource Center staff, with the UTSA Women’s Resource Center Logo



WRC Staff show off their “C.U.R.E” (Campus United for Respect and Education) shirts.

Finally, students were able to deconstruct old attitudes and beliefs about roles within relationships, and begin their journey of reconstructing who they wish to be in their healthy dating relationship.

Our mission is to provide the campus with the resources, services, and knowledge of women’s issues so that all members of the campus community will represent the University of Texas at San Antonio as individuals of character, competence, integrity, compassion, and vision; committed to a life of service, leadership and social justice; capable of making culturally competent decisions; and prepared to function successfully within our ever changing world.

If interested in finding out how to volunteer and/or plan events that provide education and awareness on different aspects of relationships please contact the Women’s Resource Center at 458-6829. We are always looking for volunteers to assist with the numerous events we plan throughout the school year and to participate in the planning of activities for the UTSA community. Please visit our website at www.utsa.edu/wrc/wrc/.

Director’s Note, Continued from page 1...

Acquiring external funding for programmatic activities in Women Studies is very challenging. In the spirit of the long history of women’s triumphs in the face of struggle, we hosted our Inaugural Women’s Studies fundraiser, *Arte Latina: Roar* in May 2008. I want to thank Arturo Almeida, the curator of the exhibit, as well as Dr. Gina Mendoza, and the WSI staff who worked tirelessly to organize this successful event. The photo collage features some of the masterful Latina visual arts exhibited and offers a glimpse of some the generous guests whose contributions help fund our programs.

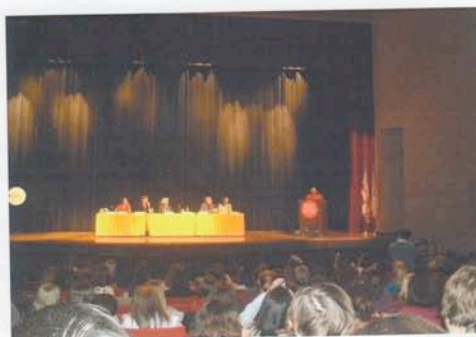
The contents of this newsletter reflect much of the WSI mission statement. In addition to the traditional functions of academic institutes, such as faculty research on and by women, we also extend our vision to include the student community as well as the greater San Antonio community of women. We sponsored student participation at the National Young Women’s Leadership Conference and funded some women’s studies undergraduate students’ participation in the 2009 Summer Institute of the major Latina academic organization, MALCS, which was held in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

In addition to our commitment to student collaboration and participation, my goal as Director is to help promote women’s research and develop an intellectual and cultural space that also welcomes the participation of the greater San Antonio community women. As reflected in previous summer leadership symposiums, like the *Juntas* leadership conferences organized by Dr. Patricia Quijada, the WSI is committed to bridging the town/gown divide and hope to once again bring 8-12 year old girls from San Antonio to our campus and show them all the possibilities open to them at our university. The page dedicated to the young women of the Martinez Street Women’s center reflects just that. It is our contention that in UTSA’s Women’s Studies, at least, there is no town/gown divide since so many of our students are from the San Antonio community and continue to mentor young women in their communities.

We now officially have a fledgling major in Women’s Studies and the minor in WS continues to flourish. I look to the future and see our continued expansion of the undergraduate curriculum in Women’s Studies. With the support of the Provost and the President’s offices, we look forward to adding faculty who specialize in Women’s Studies. As we continue to offer a site for San Antonio women’s involvement, UTSA affirms its role as a leader in the multiple communities we serve in South Texas.

The Women's Studies Institute at The National Young Women's Leadership Conference

The UTSA Women's Studies Institute proudly sponsored three research assistants' attendance at the National Young Women's Leadership Conference and Congressional Day of Action on March 21st- 23rd, 2009. The participants were Sarah Montoya, an undergraduate seeking a degree in both Women's Studies and English, Jenean Cervantes, an undergraduate seeking a degree in Sociology with a minor in Women's Studies, and Muthaheera Belgur Shamiullah, a graduate student with a degree in engineering. The Feminist Majority Foundation's mission is to empower women and girls through social awareness and activism by "researching public policy development, public education programs and providing grassroots organizing projects, leadership training and development programs" (from the FMF website). The conference provided opportunities for these women to network, gain conference experience, and engage in both intellectual and practical applications of feminism on campus and in legislation.



Left to right: WSI sponsored students Jenean Cervantes, Mutha Belgur Shamiulleh, and Sarah Montoya outside the Van Ness Campus

At left: Keynote speakers address a feminist-filled audience at the FMF Conference

Getting into Feminist Gear: My Experience at the FMF Conference

Jenean Cervantes, Undergraduate Student

I knew it was going to be an exciting trip from the minute I woke up. I furiously packed the morning of -- stuffing shoes, pants, sweaters, toothpaste, deodorant and anything else I could think of into a large blue bag, not really sure what kind of weather to expect in D.C. Driving to the airport, I kept feeling like I was forgetting something... like there was some kind of feminist armor that could help me better prepare for my first feminist-friendly conference. But who was I kidding? Nothing could prepare me for what I was about to experience. I think that all of us, myself, Sarah, and Mutha, were secretly worried that something would go wrong. Would our luggage get lost? Would the key to our room work? Would we get to the Feminist Majority Foundation Conference and realize we had shown up on the WRONG day? When something really good happens, like getting a trip to an amazing FMF Conference in Washington D.C., it's hard to not think that the karma police are going to come get me. The truth is that this was a journey, and journeys don't have karma police.

We woke up bright and early on the first day of the conference. Sarah flung open the curtains of our cozy hotel room and screamed, "Wake up, ladies!" at 7 a.m. on the dot. Irritated yet eager, I rubbed my sleepy eyes and got dressed to walk along the chilly, busy streets of D.C. We all clutched our thin jackets for dear life as we made the two block expedition to the FMF Conference. When a jogger passed us wearing spandex shorts and a sports bra, I thought, "We're clearly from Texas." We walked up the stairs of our destination, and I opened the doors of the large grey building, past the big purple sign that read "National Young Women's Leadership Conference" and took a deep breath. I looked around the room and saw women with dreads, glasses, buttons, bandanas, some in suits and heels, some in plaid and sandals, some with short pink hair, some with long brown hair, women of all different colors, shapes and sizes, and it was right then that I realized that I was going to be meeting my sisters from all over the world.

"Hey hey! Ho ho! Yes means yes, and no means no!"

Chants began to fill the room as volunteers warmed up the crowd. It was awkward for me at first and I couldn't understand why. Wasn't I a feminist? Didn't I agree with these chants? What was the problem then..?! Finally I understood--- this was a safe space. But it wasn't the kind of safe space where circles are formed and our inner-most thoughts were revealed. It was a kind of safe space where women were free to scream, yell, stand and be proud of who we are. It was the kind of space where I could shout "Roe vs. Wade is here to stay" at the top of my lungs and the woman next to me was doing the same. This was the feeling, the armor I could not pack, but could take back with me.

Reflections on the Feminist Majority Foundation Conference

Sarah Montoya, WSI Staff

I imagine my concerns upon my departure to the Feminist Majority Foundation conference were the same concerns of many first-time flyers granted a wonderful opportunity— something like, “Where is the Dramamine?” and “This is really happening!” The feeling of flying was an incredible experience, but I knew the conference held the real adventure.

Fast forward to registration morning. After haranguing my travel mates out of bed, we walked into the D.C. morning expecting amazing things. Entering the Van Ness College campus, we were jolted into a bustling room of vendors with items ranging from cheeky shirts and tote bags emblazoned with, “This is what a feminist looks like!” meant to remind passer-bys that, yes, we are all around you!

Entering the auditorium for the opening remarks shook off any lingering sleepiness as we broke into chants. If you’ve never heard 500 women shout “Woman Power!” in unison, I highly recommend it. As our keynote speakers filed in, I realized my expectations were about to be exceeded. Taking the stage was Eleanor Smeal, President of the Feminist Majority Foundation, Dolores Huerta, President and Founder of the Dolores Huerta foundation and the cofounder of the historic United Farm Workers, Hilda Solis, the US Secretary of Labor, Tina Tchen, Executive Director of the White House Council on Women & Girls, Lilly Ledbetter, Pay Equity Advocate, and Katherine Spillar, Executive Editor of *Ms. Magazine*. The honor of having so many inspiring women around was as overwhelming as the list looks. Each speaker took the stage and shared her story, encouraging us to continue the quest for women’s rights, ensuring us that it *can* and *will* be done.

Being perpetually pragmatic, my favorite workshop was “Claiming Our Spot at the Top: Women’s Political and Financial Security.” It covered information on the wage gap and provided practical tips for salary negotiation. The fact that Dolores Huerta would be speaking and I would have the opportunity to meet a shero of mine didn’t hurt. The workshop also included Lisa Maatz, a women’s financial security lobbyist, and Wendy Matheny, the Feminist Majority’s Campus Program Director, as the moderator. In the course of the discussion, I realized that pay equity issues impact both wage earnings *and* future financial security in the form of social security and retirement plans. Lisa discussed the Paycheck Fairness Act and the Fair Pay Act, the former having recently passed in the House and coming up for vote in the Senate. These Acts strengthen the Equal Pay Act of 1963 by holding employers accountable for workplace discrimination based on sex and will help close the legal loopholes often used to circumscribe employee lawsuits. During the discussion, Lisa answered the questions of many women asking for advice on how to approach workplace exploitation and discrimination, and some participants described their successes in changing the workplace structure. The information I learned here inspired my on-campus Equal Pay Day event, hosted on April 28th, National Pay Equity Day.

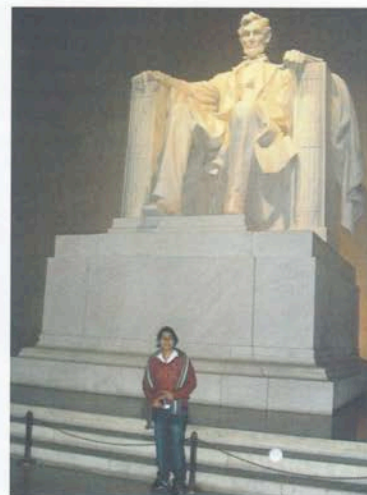
The trip to D.C will always be one of the most astounding experiences in my life. The knowledge I gained as a result of attending the Feminist Majority’s Women’s Leadership Conference is a gift I will never be able to repay, and the stories I heard motivated me to get up and DO something.



Sarah poses with Dolores Huerta at the “Claiming Our Spot at the Top” workshop



Jenean, Sarah, and Mutha visit the U.S. Capitol Building



Mutha poses at the Lincoln Memorial

UTSA at the Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS) Conference 2009

Magda Garcia, Graduate Student



Left to right: Maritza Garza, Sarah Montoya, Elsa Cantu, Dr. Norma Cantú, Candance DeLeon, Irma Rosas, Magda Garcia show off their "Wise Latina" Shirts

Photocredit: Candace de Leon



Left to right: Presenter Christina Guitierrez, moderator Dr. Norma Cantú, and presenter Margaret Cantu pose after their event, "Chicana Feminist Cartographies"

Photocredit: Candace de Leon

The MALCS 2009 Summer Institute took place July 22-25 at New Mexico State University (NMSU) in Las Cruces. It was four days of panels, roundtables, *testimonios*, and plenaries. As a non-presenting attendee, I looked forward to playing spectator and enjoying all the conference had to offer without the pressure of formally presenting a paper. As the conference drew nearer, I was privy to the mounting nerves of those UTSA students who were presenting.

Presenting at a conference is often a daunting prospect for students, and expectedly so. After all, all eyes in the room are on you for an estimated 15 minutes. Even more anxiety-inducing is the Q&A, during which you await your work to be inquired about, probed, or even challenged. The competitive nature of academia, "publish or perish" comes to mind, makes it easy to conjure such a Q&A scenario. However, one of the first panels I attended, "Chicana Feminist Cartographies: Mapping the Borders of Identity, Bodies and History through Food, Education and Testimonio in Chicana Latina Feminist Literature," proved the conference to be a safe and nurturing space for *mujeres* in which knowledge was something to be shared. The panel audience was receptive to each of the panel member's work and the Q&A flowed like a discussion rather than a questioning. Audience member's questions seemed to come from actual interest in the work and many added to the work presented by sharing relevant experiences. After the panel officially ended, many from the audience remained to converse with the panel.

It was also within this safe space that artist Alma Lopez discussed the forthcoming book, "Our Lady of Controversy: Alma Lopez's Irreverent Apparition," which focuses on the stir caused by the piece "Our Lady" and boasts the recent "Our Lady of Controversy," which features *la virgen* sporting red boxing gloves.

MALCS was a great success greatly due to the NMSU Provost, Waded Cruzado, who reached out to all, whether at breakfast or evening events, and took the time to converse with attendees and inquire as to their opinions on the conference. Ultimately, I returned to San Antonio reassured that we, as *mujeres*, are not alone in academia, that we've come far and that while work remains to be done, we have a strong foundation on which to continue building, and knowing that next year the MALCS program will include my name.

The Queer Texas Conference 2009



Maritza Garza, Undergraduate Student

One issue I take with the current trend in the queer rights movement is its increasing stratification and elitism. Gone are the days of community building and discussions of how race, class, and gender affect one's queer identity. These community activities have been traded in for the issue of gay marriage, and any sense of community centers on large, highly-funded lobbyist groups with limited agendas.

The UT Austin's 2009 Queer Texas Conference was a refreshing break from these social mega-organizations. It was small and student-run, so there was a sense of intimacy during the course of the conference. One of the aspects of the conference that struck me as interesting was that participants could pick their own pronoun, and the selection included gender-neutral pronouns such as "ze/hir". The choice to do so ensured the creation of a safe and comfortable space where no one was subject to an assumption about another's gender identity.

Creating queer safe spaces was certainly a goal of the conference. No one felt alienated and inquiries about one another's gender identity and sexual orientation were welcomed. For instance, patrons of the *Trans 101* workshop were invited to explore sex, gender identity and gender expression -- specifically of those that fall under the transgender umbrella. The panelists created a forum for honest and frank discussion, inviting participants to ask any question that they have always wanted to ask about transfolk or the process of transitioning.

The workshop *Be a Movement, Not a Market!* critically analyzed and critiqued corporate advertising and its impact on the LBGTQI movement. The workshop's focus specifically addressed the current state of politics within the military-industrial complex and relationship between purchasing power and political power. The queer movement is in dire need of these types of conferences and organizations that do not seek to place a monetary value on its people. Aside from providing a safe place for dialogue and identity expression, the 2009 Queer Texas Conference created an arena in which to critique our own movements and figure out alternative ways to organize.

The Young Women of the Martinez St. Women's Center

The Martinez Street Women's Center was founded in 1999 by a group of diverse women with the goal of creating a community center to promote women's health in East/Southeast San Antonio. The Center provides information and services that support the active participation of women and girls in the pursuit of their own physical, emotional, and social well-being. On Thursday, March 19th, the Center hosted a special fundraiser benefiting the Studio4FM Girls Empowerment Program. The program, geared towards East/Southeast Girls between the ages of 9 to 14, seeks to educate and empower young women by enhancing the girls' healthy development. Participants work together on projects like the all-girls newspaper, cultural and skill-building events, and also receive mentorship from women leaders in their own community (gathered from the Martinez Street Women's Center website). Keeping in line with WSI's commitment to making connections between the UTSA community and women's organizations in the San Antonio community, WSI proudly co-sponsored the event. It is in this spirit that WSI recognizes and features the work of the young women of the Martinez Street Women's Center.

A Rose Bloom



Linda Yates

Like a rose
I am starting to bloom.
I didn't think this would happen this soon.
My vine is starting to sprout
though I had a doubt.
Just like a seed I used to be
I am blooming each day.

Welcome to my life



Alyssa Marie Newton

In my life all you see is happiness.
On some days I like to play on the computer.
Three things that describe me are happy, sad, and mad.
I dream of going to college.
I think my brother is weird.
I wish I could have a Nintendo DS.
I will go and play on the computer tonight.
I have always wanted happiness on earth.
I love everyone in my family. My family is awesome.
I don't like everyone being mad.
I am also cool.
My name is Alyssa Marie Newton.

Problems in the Purse



Shevonne Elizondo

My whole life is going to be based on a purple purse. The color purple is for my grandma who died. I hold on to her forever like I hold on to a purse. The purse shows that I hold on to my problems. While I'm growing, I'm letting loose all these problems, just like this purse. I'm starting to understand the meaning of moving on with my life. I have to let loose to have less problems. In my purse I hold all my problems. But I don't need a purse with problems, I need to be free of all my problems. I am Free!

Getting To Know Our Bodies

Laura Ramos, Kassandra Aguilar
Zharia Haywood, Aminah Ali

On Tuesday July 14, 2009, Planned Parenthood came to the Martinez Street Woman's center to talk to us about body changes and how girls become women.

They talked to us about starting our cycle, so that we can know about it before it happens. They taught us about our body, and to understand what is going to happen to us. They also gave us information handouts so we can go back and read what they told us. Planned Parenthood is very important to young people. It prepares them for the future. Also we talked about the pressure that teens put on other teens. It is very important to know about your body, especially when you are hitting puberty. But that is not the only thing. They also teach you how to prevent pregnancy and STDs. I like Planned Parenthood because it explains the difficulties girls have with their teenage years. We need to know these things as we get older.



Laura Ramos



Kassandra Aguilar



Zharia Haywood

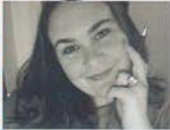


Aminah Ali

Announcements



The UTSA Women's Studies Institute
Proudly Announces the 2009
Women's Studies Scholarship Recipient



Nicole Provencher

Nicole Provencher is a doctoral student in UTSA's English Graduate program. Her winning essay is entitled, "Intersectionality and Identity: African American Feminist Theory and Praxis in the Composition Classroom."

An excerpt: "This paper explores how the use of the African American feminist theory of intersectionality informs student writing - as well as the practice of teaching writing - as an activity that is centered in a cultural time and place and that is influenced not only by the various power structures present in the academy, but also in the negotiations that instructors and students make in their own lives. The African American feminist theory of intersectionality works against the need to "essentialize" student writing (a main criticism of postcolonial theory in composition studies), and instead focuses on interconnectedness (intersectionality) and the various metatextual "performances" of students and how these elements inform the composition classroom - ultimately connecting African American feminism's theoretical ideas to practice writing in the classroom."



Come by WSI and purchase one for an \$8 donation.
Laptop tote features WSI logo design by Mary Agnes Rodriguez.

Interested in earning a major or minor in Women's Studies?

Sign up for the foundational course,
WGS 2013, and visit your advisor.
Visit www.utsa.edu/wsi for detailed info.
on the major and minor!
Drop by WSI for additional information!
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