

APR10

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CSW
update

Q&A BY JAIMIE BARON



Vivian Sobchack

FILM THEORIST WILL GIVE A CSW SENIOR FACULTY FEMINIST SEMINAR ENTITLED "ASSIMILATING STREISAND: WHEN TOO MUCH IS NOT ENOUGH"

Vivian Sobchack, Emeritus Professor of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA, was the first woman elected President of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies and served on the Board of Directors of the American Film Institute for more than a decade. Her essays have appeared in journals such as *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *Film Comment*, *Camera Obscura*, *Film Quarterly*, and *Representations*. Her books include *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*; *The Address of the Eye: A*

Phenomenology of Film Experience; and *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. She has also edited two anthologies: *Meta-Morphing: Visual Transformation and the Culture of Quick-Change* and *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*. In 2004, she co-edited with Kathleen McHugh a special issue of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* entitled "Beyond the Gaze: Recent Approaches to Film Feminisms" (30:1). Her research interests include American film genres, philosophy

and film theory, history and phenomenology of perception, historiography, and cultural studies.

Sobchack will be giving a CSW Senior Faculty Feminist Seminar, entitled "Assimilating Streisand: When Too Much is Not Enough" on May 4, at 4 pm, in Royce 314, with Helen Deutsch, Professor of English at UCLA, as respondent. Recently, Sobchack generously agreed to talk with us about her life and work in academia.

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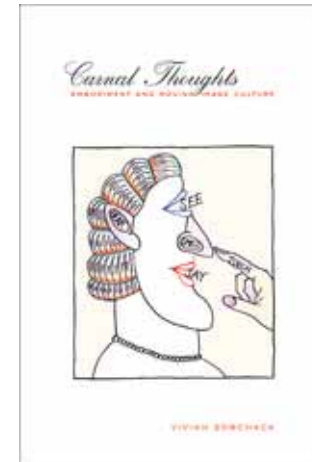
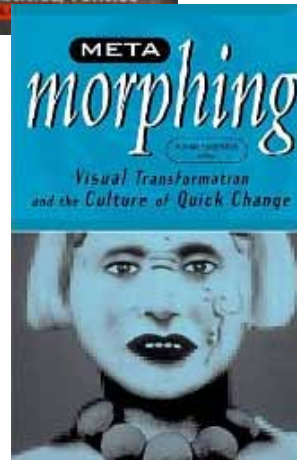
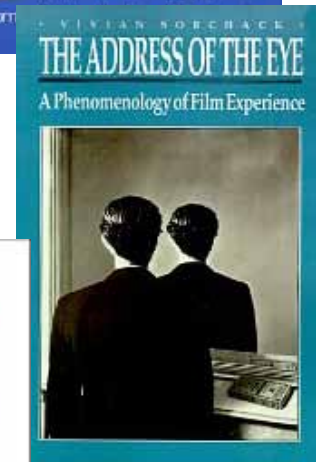
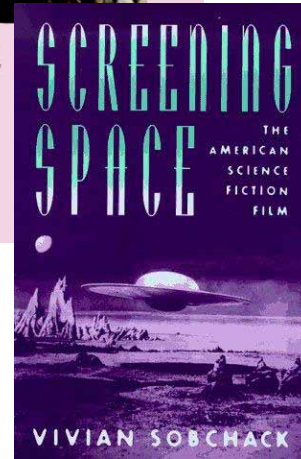
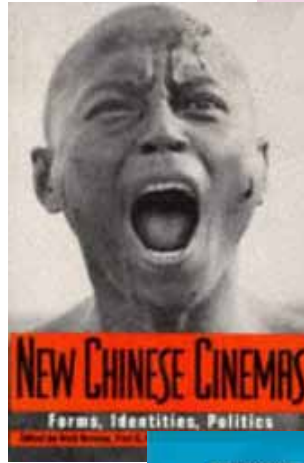
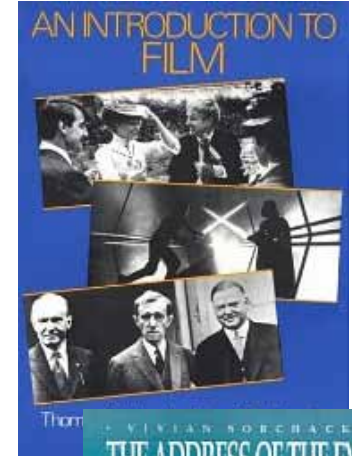
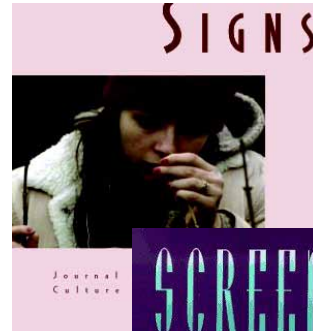


in this issue

Vivian Sobchack, continued from page 1

How did you get started in your career as an academic? What led you in this particular direction?

That's a huge question. Let's just say that at first I had no notions of an academic career at all. I first started teaching because I had followed my husband to his first academic job teaching literature at the University of Utah. We went because it sounded exotic. At the time, I just had a B.A. I had always been interested in movies, and I knew there were film schools but I thought they were primarily for teaching filmmaking, which they were at that time. I read movie reviews and so on, and I had this great movie education from living in New York near some great retrospective theaters. I was first actually asked to teach because I had published some poetry and some short fiction, and, at the time, there were too many freshmen composition classes and not enough TAs. I found I enjoyed teaching very much and seemed to be good at it. Then, in the early 1970s, many younger academics like my husband began to offer film classes for the first time and hordes of students enrolled. That's when I first started teaching film.



I was then encouraged by a visiting scholar to get my M.A. at UCLA when my husband went on sabbatical. I had a 3-year-old son at the time, and we came to LA and lived in an apartment in Santa Monica with the most awful green shag carpet. I finished all the coursework for an M.A. in Film Studies that year and, not knowing any better, I decided that I was going to write a book on the science fiction film as my thesis. I had grown up in the 1950s and the science fiction films of the period meant a lot to me. I was also fascinated with the emerging work on film genres at that time which gave me a rationale for dealing with the science fiction film from a scholarly perspective. I had no idea what I was getting into nor any of the fear attached to writing a book. I just did it.

You didn't necessarily need a Ph.D. in Film Studies to teach at that point but, eventually, in the 1980s, I decided to go back because I wanted a tenure-track job. I had published a lot by then—the science fiction book, the *Introduction to Film* book (co-written with my husband), and a number of articles. So I started a doctoral program at the age of forty. I was sort of resentful about going back since I'd already taught the classes that I would have taken in many cases and had published

a great deal, and I certainly didn't need more teaching experience. I also decided not to go back into a film program, but something allied. I ended up in a very large Speech Communication Department at Southern Illinois University. I had never even looked in the catalog but when I showed up I found this little area of specialization called Philosophy of Language, where I got this extraordinary training in theory and theory construction, in semiology, and in philosophy, particularly phenomenology, hermeneutics, and rhetoric. They didn't care that I was writing about film as long as I would be working within the issue of communication. That's where I conceived what some people think of as my magnum opus, which was my doctoral dissertation and which eventually became *Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (1992). The following year, in 1984, I became a Visiting Professor at UC Santa Cruz, and when I finished the dissertation in 1984, I was promptly made an Associate Professor. Soon after, I became a full Professor and eventually Dean of the Arts. I didn't waste any time! When I got to UC Santa Cruz, there were a lot of women who were returning to college after a long gap in their education and were somewhat older—just as I had been. I loved

having those women as students. They were very encouraged when I told them that I had just started my Ph.D. when I was 40 years old and that you can always catch up by being good at what you do. I don't mean that arrogantly. I just mean that you can catch up.

Has being a woman in academia and particularly starting your Ph.D. at 40 shaped your career in a fundamental way?

If anything shaped my career in terms of gender issues I think it had to do with my childhood. I was the oldest of two daughters and, in my family, it was always assumed that I and my younger sister would go to college, get a really good education, and have careers. My mother had a career as a teacher. Nonetheless, I was very male-identified through a lot of my early childhood, because I was praised constantly for my independence and for being outspoken and precocious and a little snotty. This became problematic of course when puberty struck. At that point, I felt I was neither a good enough girl nor a good enough boy. So, from about the time I was eleven on, gender was an issue for me. I remember—this sounds so incredibly innocent—standing in front of a mirror and pushing all my long

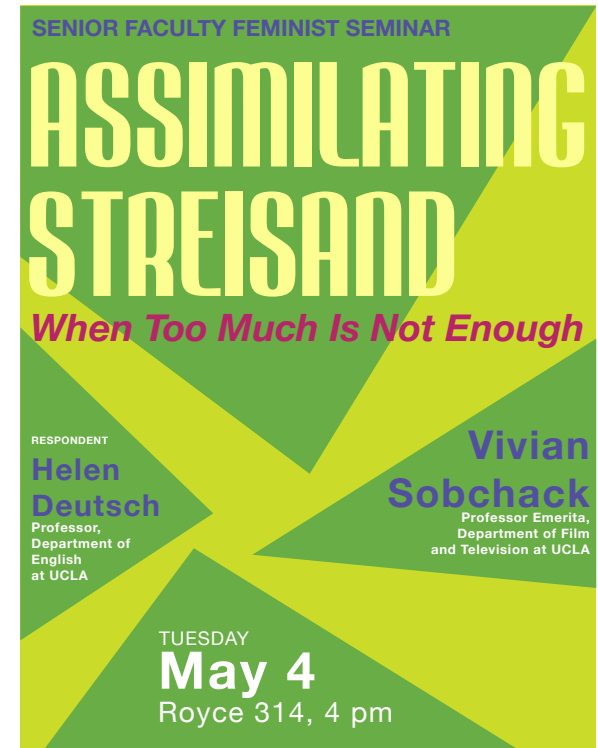
hair back and looking at my face and thinking, “Could you really tell without my hair if I was a boy or girl?” Gender seemed so arbitrary and so relative to me.

You never had to deal with a boy’s club atmosphere?

I did when I became a dean and I was the only woman in the room. Early on, though, I recognized that humor is a great leveler. And also—and I mean it partly to be funny, but also partly serious—I’m short, and that has its advantages. When I had to criticize a male colleague or argue in a group of men, I was often amused because I realized, “Well, I can win this part of the argument because I have power and logic behind me, but they can always look down on the top of my head.” This was sort of a phenomenological recognition of these men’s subjective experience of something that qualified and softened the objective fact that I had won the argument. It wouldn’t have worked if I was 6 feet tall.

Can you describe some of the things you wanted to accomplish in your recent book, Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture (2004)?

I wanted to make phenomenology accessible as a method that deals with experience in a rigorous way without killing it. The essays in the book add up to a coherent whole as a philosophy and as an approach to films and other aspects of visual culture. Since *The Address of the Eye* was written at a time of high theory, it was rather bereft of concrete examples and so, in *Carnal Thoughts*, I wanted to connect phenomenology to very everyday things, to make it utterly comprehensible in the actual act of doing it, whatever the object you were examining. For example, the first essay in the book, “Breadcrumbs in the Forest: Three Meditations on Being Lost in Space,” had to do with issues of being located or disoriented in space. I asked: what’s the shape of being lost? I didn’t like getting lost and started to think about it and ended up using a whole range of texts in the essay, including not only scholarly work but also self-help books—“Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus”—and jokes about men not wanting to ask for directions. I teased out three very different modes of being lost in space and time. One is going around in circles, which is about constantly returning to the past and not moving ahead. Another is not knowing how to get to where you want to go, which



is very future directed, very pragmatic and linear. And the worst, the most existentially threatening, is not knowing where you are. I was thinking about these things not only in terms of films but also in terms of gender, but I was illuminating the issues involved through films, through jokes about men not asking for directions, the like. Ending up as a feminist piece, the essay was focused on the descriptions of experience but also the differentiations of experience.

What was the genesis of the piece on Barbra Streisand?

I was asked by a former student of mine (now a professor) to a conference called “The Stars of David,” at Arizona State University. I decided to write on Barbra Streisand because I’ve always felt very conflicted about her. On one hand, she is a very strong, assertive woman who comes from a background somewhat similar to mine, and we’re close in age. On the other hand, there are things about her that make my skin crawl. I wasn’t sure what they were but they were there. The paper emerged from exploring why many people hate Barbra Streisand—and hate her vehemently. It’s about what it is to be female, Jewish-American, and an ever-extensible hyphenate. It was a very painful paper to write and I was very nervous delivering it because I thought I might get stoned by the audience—I ultimately find Streisand, despite her talent and power, very abject.

How do you balance being a scholar, a teacher, and a mentor?

I don’t. I am constantly complaining about how I don’t have enough time—and

I’m retired! I, like Streisand, want to do everything. I can’t just write. It’s too isolated, and I’m a social person. Teaching provides balance to writing, the isolation of it, and the fact that when you write something, it’s fixed on the page. In a classroom, there’s this wonderful sense of play. I’m always aware that I can say the stupidest or silliest things and they will just disappear into the air. Sometimes I do this purposely so that everyone in the class has the same license—because the stupidest or silliest thing may, in fact, end up being the most heuristic, the smartest. To me, writing and teaching are the yin and yang of what it is to be a professor. While I’ve cut back on my teaching, I can’t seem to give it up, even though it would give me more time to work on a book. Both are necessary parts of my life.

When I was a dean I never stopped writing and publishing. One thing that younger scholars should know is that being an administrator uses a different part of your brain than scholarly work. When you are thinking about money and building buildings and personnel issues, you’re not dealing with abstractions. Administrative work gets you out there in the larger world of the university. It’s interesting in its own

way and its practical necessities feed into your scholarly work. Doing your scholarly work takes on this extra zing because it’s a relief from the less interesting, bureaucratic aspects of administration. I never used the administrative position as an excuse not to write or be a scholar. I think it made me be a better administrator, because I didn’t need the job. I mean, if you see yourself as primarily a scholar and teacher, you can say, “Take this job and shove it.”

Do you see a change in terms of the context in which you became a scholar and the context in which rising female scholars are emerging now?

Early on I didn’t really align myself with academic feminism. This was a wonderful and extremely influential period but I had problems with feminist theory in Film Studies. I felt that it was oppressive and dogmatic in some ways, particularly in its embrace of psychoanalysis and “lack” and its binary notions of sexual difference. Today, I think “rising female scholars” do not necessarily or explicitly self-identify as “feminist.” Indeed, a lot of what was earlier won is taken for granted and become the backdrop for a more open

sense of inquiry and a more global form of identification. There is much more awareness of a world out there in which there are very different ways in which to be female or male, or gendered. And this seems to me a very good thing.

Indeed, I think younger women scholars tend to do what I've done from the beginning of my career. That is, I've written quite a number of feminist pieces but I never sat down with the intent to write a feminist piece. I don't like putting templates on things—knowing how my inquiry is going to turn out before I've even begun it.

I also think there are larger questions with implications for issues of gender and race that might be articulated so as to be less exclusionary. For example: what does it mean to be an ethical person in “x” circumstances? One wonders whether if we really think through a larger question like this if discriminations like race and gender will take their proper place within a much larger ensemble of who we are as human beings—this without any kind of essentialism or for that matter without necessarily naming that which is “other” as a group. Each of us is “other.” We are “other” to ourselves as well. (In this regard, I have always preferred coalition politics to identity politics.)

When I wrote *Address of the Eye*, “sexual difference” was the fulcrum of feminist theory. It was thought of in very binary terms, and I just couldn't buy into it. For example, Laura Mulvey wrote that narrative was male and spectacle female in Classical Hollywood Cinema. This may have been true to a degree but it was not the whole story. I didn't publish my dissertation for quite a number of years because I was trying to find a way to talk about sexual difference that wasn't binary. And it came to me as a title of a section called “Sexual Difference and Other Bodily Discriminations.” I realized, okay, you can just line them up. There's the sexed body, the raced body, the ill or diseased body, the impoverished body, and so on. You could start talking about all of these bodies in which certain elements are singled out and the person thereby is defaced. Now it's quite true, socially, that some of these things bear more weight than others, or have greater consequences. But what, for example, is the lived structure—subjective as well as objective—for a body marked as “impoverished” on skid row? Or a “fat” body? Although I wasn't an amputee as I am now when I wrote *Address of the Eye*, I was aware from observation how space, time, and the world were different to a body that was marked as ill or diseased. These are all markers that people

can see as visible on the body. This puts race, ethnicity, sex, and gender in a continuum that's not hierarchical or binary. They're a set of discriminations, made culturally and historically. In this context, the word “discrimination” resonates.

Has CSW been important to you in your experience at UCLA?

Extremely important. When I came to UCLA, which is such a vast place, early on I went to CSW lectures and gatherings. I realized that CSW was a great way to meet women whom I would otherwise never meet on this campus, women from disciplines with which I would otherwise never come into contact. CSW is really terrific in this regard. It serves as this meeting place—dare I say, the matrix—of both scholars and issues across disciplinary lines, methodologies, and life experiences. I think the entire UCLA campus would be greatly impoverished were there no CSW. It's one of the university's greatest resources.

Jaimie Baron is a PhD candidate in the Cinema and Media Studies Program in the Department of Film, Television and Digital Media at UCLA. She is a staff writer for CSW Update.



DEVIL BUNNY

IN BONDAGE

Challenges Essentialist Identities

The sound of electronic beats and a video projection of a swirl of shifting colors and shapes set the tone as a woman dressed all in white—from her suit to her boots—walked onto the stage and began to read a manifesto.

Gigi Otálvaro-Hormillosa, also known as the Devil Bunny in *Bondage*, is a San Francisco–based performance and video artist, activist, curator, and percussionist. She hails originally from Miami and received her B.A. from Brown University, where she created her own major entitled “Hybridity and Performance.” Since then, she has worked with various nonprofit arts organizations as well as HIV-prevention service agencies and has collaborated with artists including Pearl Ubungen, Guillermo Gomez-Peña, Elia Arce, and Afia Walking Tree.

Her timely manifesto, entitled “Hot Lesbians in Action!,” responded to the simplistic and implicitly racist statements made in the wake of the passage of Proposition 8, the 2008 amendment banning gay marriage in the state of California. Many pointed fingers at the black community for voting for Obama and for Proposition 8 at the same time, saying that blacks were betraying the history of the civil rights movement by treating gays as second-class citizens. “This is how we can divide our community!” Devil Bunny cried ironically. She went on to describe the ways in which many people feel the

Yet, she suggested, some people “multitask,” asserting multiple identities at once without ranking them. As a multiracial queer artist, Devil Bunny is one of those people. She refuses to allow her identity to be categorized and defined and thereby made safe for consumption by others.

need to privilege one of their identities—be it race, gender, class, or sexuality—over others. Yet, she suggested, some people “multitask,” asserting multiple identities at once without ranking them. As a multiracial queer artist, Devil Bunny is one of those people. She refuses to allow her identity to be categorized and defined and thereby made safe for consumption by others. (In particular, she pointed to the fact that lesbianism is frequently co-opted by mainstream media and porn as something “hot” that straight men like, thereby denying lesbianism’s radical rejection of patriarchal social norms.) She also argued that rather than making the issue about what member of what races voted for Prop 8, we

should focus on the fact that many people of all races and backgrounds in this instance voted for discrimination. Tying the division between gays and blacks as a result of Prop 8 to the colonialist strategy of dividing and conquering the colonized in order to maintain colonial power, Devil Bunny insisted that “No one is free while others are oppressed.”

Then the white-clad figure disappeared from stage and, as part of a piece called “The Dimension of IS,” Devil Bunny reappeared onscreen as an on-the-scene reporter announcing the fact that the group Dykes on Bikes had been denied a trademark by the U.S. Office of Trademarks and Patents on the grounds that the word “dyke” is

She says the word “devil” refers to the common image of woman as a devilish, seductive vixen; the word “bunny” suggests the societal expectation for women to behave like Playboy Bunnies and to procreate; and “bondage” refers to both oppression as a form of enslavement and to the stereotypes of queers as sexual deviants. She says she tries to undermine multiple stereotypes at once.

“vulgar” (from an office that did allow NASA to name a weapon a “God rod”). Suddenly, the video shifted to another location, identified as “Military Industrial Complex, Earth,” where three futuristic military industrialists led by the “Global CEO” describe a plan to attack alien civilizations with “God rods” so as to attain alien weapons known as “infinity spheres” and thereby protect their power and to make more money. Meanwhile, the alien “Elders,” dressed in elaborate costumes, shake their heads at these greedy earthlings and muse about the ways in which

humans have put other humans on display for entertainment and profit—images of Filipinos displayed at the 1904 World’s Fair appear briefly onscreen—and suggest that perhaps they should capture humans and put them on display. Eventually, the Elders confiscate the “God rods” and give the humans a “shot of pacification,” generating a montage of documentary footage of happy people at gay pride festivals and a confirmation that the Dykes on Bikes have been granted their trademark protection.

The next piece, entitled “Big Pink,”

involved an interaction between Devil Bunny wearing a hot pink wig onstage and a hot pink gorilla—Big Pink—on the video screen. This piece introduced by a song containing the refrain “there’s a monkey on your back.” Devil Bunny and Big Pink discussed the pressure on lesbians to procreate, the “death of feminism,” and substance abuse among gays. Throughout the video, Big Pink continually urged Devil Bunny to get drunk, pop pills, go to a “dyke bar,” and celebrate “depoliticized art.” Finally, a boxing glove emerged in the video from offscreen and punched the gorilla out in a symbolic rejection of the monkey on Devil Bunny’s back.

Another short video followed, documenting a performance piece called “Bliss” in which Otálvaro-Hormillosa inhabits the persona of “Cosmic Mestiza,” her head shaved and painted blue, dancing in what looked like football shoulder pads inside a glass box while spectators watched her smile and dance.

After these three video pieces, Otálvaro-Hormillosa appeared onstage in casual clothes to give an artist’s talk. She explained that Devil Bunny in Bondage is a performance persona she created in order to deconstruct

stereotypes of women, people of color, and queers. She says the word “devil” refers to the common image of woman as a devilish, seductive vixen; the word “bunny” suggests the societal expectation for women to behave like Playboy Bunnies and to procreate; and “bondage” refers to both oppression as a form of enslavement and to the stereotypes of queers as sexual deviants. She says she tries to undermine multiple stereotypes at once.

Her arts organization, (a)eromestiza, which promotes the art of women and people of mixed races, also attempts to undermine any essentialist notion of identity. The term “mestiza” refers to racial, cultural, and religious mixing in Latin America and to people who hold multiple identities. The name “(a)eromestiza” is meant to evoke both the idea of fluidity (aero) of identity and the erotic (eros). She says that as a queer person of color, she insists on questioning the assumptions made by people of all gender, sexual, racial, social, and political persuasions. Clips from another performance piece called “Inverted Minstrel” showed her inhabiting characters of other races and genders in order to destabilize stereotypes.

When asked during the Q&A session about the most challenging part of making her art, Otálvaro-Hormillosa answered “funding” but noted that nearly all artists struggle with this particular problem. It is also a challenge, she said, for her to see how well her solo pieces are working since she is the only one in the piece. She seeks out the responses of others so that she can gain perspective. Asked about how audiences have responded to her work, she said that she gets a range of responses from anger to affirmation. Although she has received some hate mail and threats, she suggested that any artist who “pushes the envelope” will get a lot of different reactions, some not necessarily positive. Asked how she balances the aesthetic with the didactic/political aspects of her work, she replied that she switches modes from piece to piece, emphasizing the politics more and sometimes less.

While Otálvaro-Hormillosa’s works were sometimes difficult to fully engage with—particularly those that were videotaped performances that occurred elsewhere—it is clear that she is using video and performance to put identities in question and to find common ground between different groups of people.

In opposition to those who would divide our community into mutually exclusive demographic categories, she sees all identities as overlapping with the potential to coexist and thereby unite all people across their differences.

Jaimie Baron is a PhD candidate in the Cinema and Media Studies Program in the Department of Film, Television and Digital Media at UCLA. She is a staff writer for CSW Update.

Photo credits: from left to right, “Cosmic Mestiza,” by Nacho Gonzalez; “Mestizo Best,” by Nacho Gonzalez; and “Big Pink,” by Heather Cox.

Fighting Fat Fear with Marilyn Wann

IF YOU WERE WALKING PAST

THE Dodd lecture hall on March 1st, you may have been startled to hear a group of people yelling “fat” at the top of their lungs. Usually, a single utterance, or worse, a cheerleading-style chant of the word “fat” is not a good thing—someone is probably being insulted or harassed. On this day,

however, activist/scholar Marilyn Wann asked the gathered students and faculty to do just this, to shout out the word “fat” to launch the beginning of her talk, “Fighting Fat Fear During the War on ‘Obesity.’” Wann’s talk was the third and final talk in the Center for the Study of Women’s Winter 2010 Faculty Curator lecture series, “Gender and

Body Size,” curated by Professor Abigail Saguy, Department of Sociology at UCLA.

For Wann, “fat” is the most neutral descriptor available and one that she embraces in her own self-description. “Fat” does not automatically carry the judgment that words like “overweight” or “plus-size” do; these words imply

Most importantly, love your body—it's the only one you've got and your love for it shouldn't be conditional.



that there is an ideal of which individuals are in excess. “Fat” is also devoid of the connotations and consequences of a word like “obese,” a category created and perpetuated by insurance companies, the medical industry, and government agencies to classify individuals as unhealthy and unworthy.

Wann has not always identified with the word “fat.” Her transformation into a fat activist was sparked by what she refers to as her “really bad day.” On the same day that she was denied health insurance coverage because she was considered “morbidly obese,” a man she was interested in

admitted that he was embarrassed to introduce her to his friends because she was fat. These two events led Wann to “come out” as fat. As Wann herself noted in the talk, the notion of “coming out as fat” seems counterintuitive. “It’s not as if it’s a secret,” Wann quipped, gesturing towards her body. Wann’s

invocation of the language of coming out, however, speaks to the profound personal and social difficulties most people have accepting, much less celebrating, their body size. Body size is often viewed as a transient state of being, a temporary state perpetually on the cusp of a diet-driven transformation. According to Wann, most people think to themselves, “This isn’t really me. In the future, I will be different.” This way of thinking is perpetuated by a multibillion dollar weight loss industry that encourages individuals to think of themselves as a constant work-in-progress, just one New Year’s resolution shy of “the real me.”

Since Wann’s “really bad day,” she has become a leading member

“If you can’t be at home in your body, where are you supposed to go?”

of the fat activist movement, becoming a board member of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA), publishing the zine *Fat?So!* and a book of the same name, as well as performing with the Padded Lilies, the Phat Fly Girls, and the Bod Squad. She received national attention in 1999 when she organized a protest of a franchise fitness club at their San Francisco location, a story she recounted during her talk. The fitness club ran

a billboard advertising campaign featuring a space alien with the words, “When they come, they’ll eat the fat ones first.” In protest, Wann and other fat activists carried “Eat me” signs, handed out lollipops, and conducted their own aerobics class outside the gym. Their activities drew attention from both local and national media as well as from city officials. In response, San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors called for hearings to examine the



for people who don't apologize for their size

BMI (the Body Mass Index of fat culture)

Number of weight control services in the Oakland yellow pages: 55
Number of battered women's shelters in the Oakland yellow pages: 1
Percentage of clothing stores in Oakland that carry size 14 or larger: 10
Percentage of American women who wear a size 14 or larger: 40
Marilyn Monroe's dress size in 1960: 16
Twiggy's weight in pounds when she appeared on the cover of Vogue in 1967: 91
Number of times Twiggy graced the cover of Vogue that year: 4
Average hip measurement, in inches, of female department store mannequins between 1920 and 1950: 34 In 1993: 31
Average hip measurement, in inches, of a young adult woman in 1993: 37
Number of people who enrolled in commercial weight loss programs in 1991: 7.9 million
Amount of revenue, in dollars, those programs generated that year: 2 billion
Percentage of weight loss program enrollees who are women: 95
Percentage increase in likelihood that a woman will live in poverty if she is fat: 10
Sales price, in dollars, of the 17-year-old Weight Watchers Empire in 1978: 100 million
Number of dollars American businessmen sacrifice in salary for every pound they are overweight: 1,000
Average difference, in dollars, between a fat woman's household income and that of a thin woman: - 6,710
Percentage of dieters who will regain the weight they lose within three years: 95-98
Percentage of Americans who believe in miracles: 70

- compiled by Sondra Solovay

Sources: Pacific Bell Smart Yellow Pages; Glamour; MENSA Magazine; Working Woman, October, 1992; UC Berkeley School of Public Health Wellness Letter, December, 1993; Marketdata Enterprises; Never Too Thin, by Eva Szekely; the New England Journal of Medicine, September 30, 1993; Working Woman, October, 1992; New York Times article, Obesity: A Heavy Burden to Bear by Gina Kolata; the New England Journal of Medicine, September 30, 1993; the 1994 World Almanac.

Sondra Solovay is a performance artist currently operating undercover as a law student.

issue of weight discrimination, which led to the adoption of a height/weight anti-discrimination ordinance, making San Francisco one of only a few cities to have such an ordinance.

The San Francisco gym protest is indicative of Wann's general approach. If Wann is involved, there's a good chance that fun and humor are going to be involved, too. Indeed, the most striking aspect of her lecture was the amount of laughter that consistently filled the room. It is no small feat to take a subject that has a tendency to generate a great deal of anxiety and turn it into a source of inspiration, humor, and joy. This directly relates to the principles of Wann's "Health

at Every Size" philosophy: "Love your body, eat well, and go outside and play." This philosophy sounds a lot better than the principles of punishment and denial that typically accompany discussions of weight, eating, and exercise. Don't like celery sticks? Then don't eat them. Eat vegetables you do like. Hate running? Don't do it. Do activities that you do give you pleasure. Most importantly, *love your body*—it's the only one you've got and your love for it shouldn't be conditional. As Wann asks, "If you can't be at home in your body, where are you supposed to go?" Given the energy in the room after Wann's talk, I wouldn't be surprised if some attendees join the front lines alongside Wann. Her version of "go outside and play,"

after all, sounds like a pretty good time.

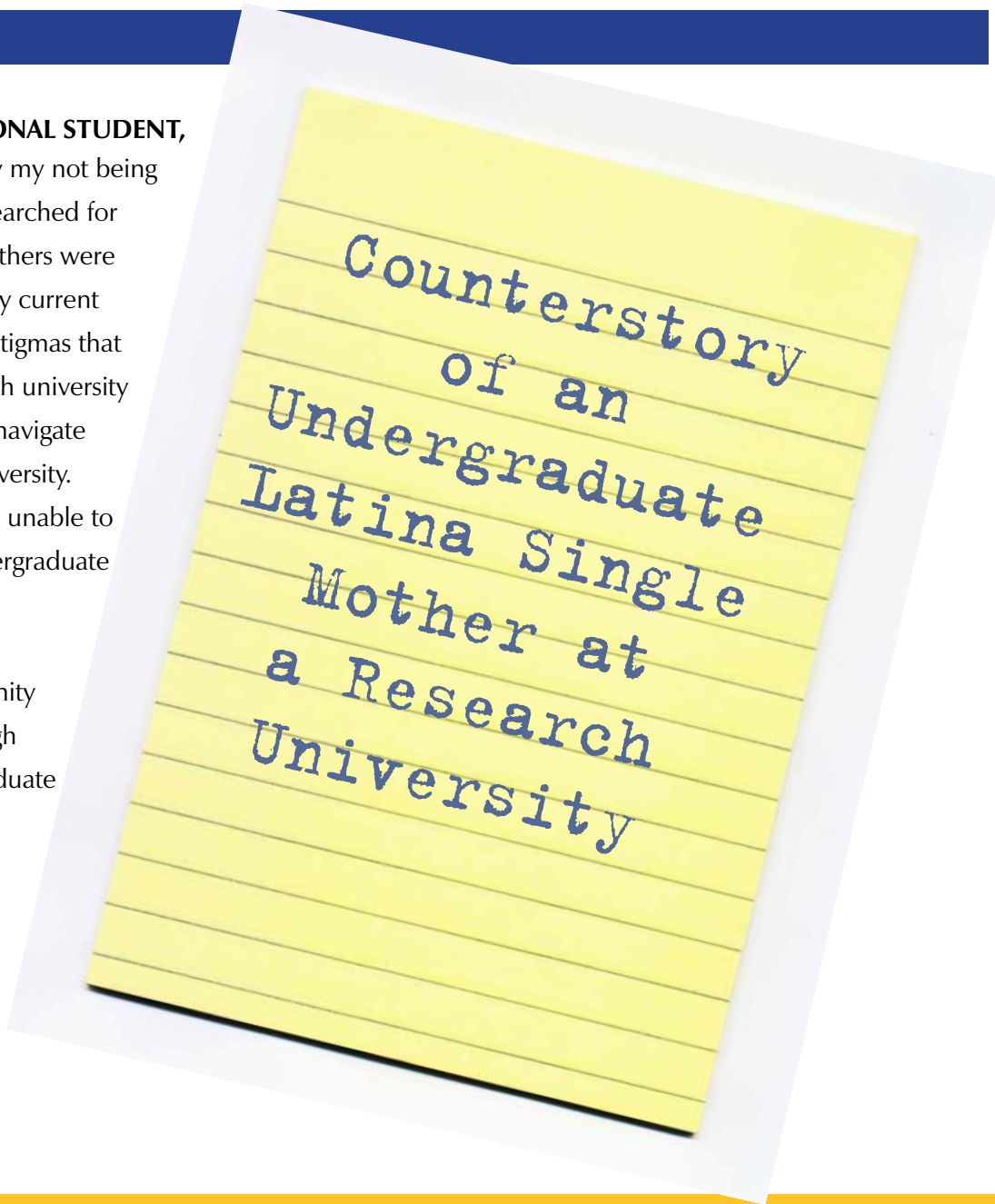
Anna Ward is a PhD candidate in the Department of Women's Studies at UCLA. With Professor Abigail Saguy, she is co-author of the article "Coming Out as Fat: Rethinking Stigma," forthcoming in Social Psychology Quarterly and her article "Pantomimes of Ecstasy: BeautifulAgony.com and the Representation of Pleasure" is forthcoming in the journal Camera Obscura. She is the recipient of a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Humanities at Swarthmore College.

Note: You can view a video of Marilyn Wann's talk on UCLA's YouTube channel.

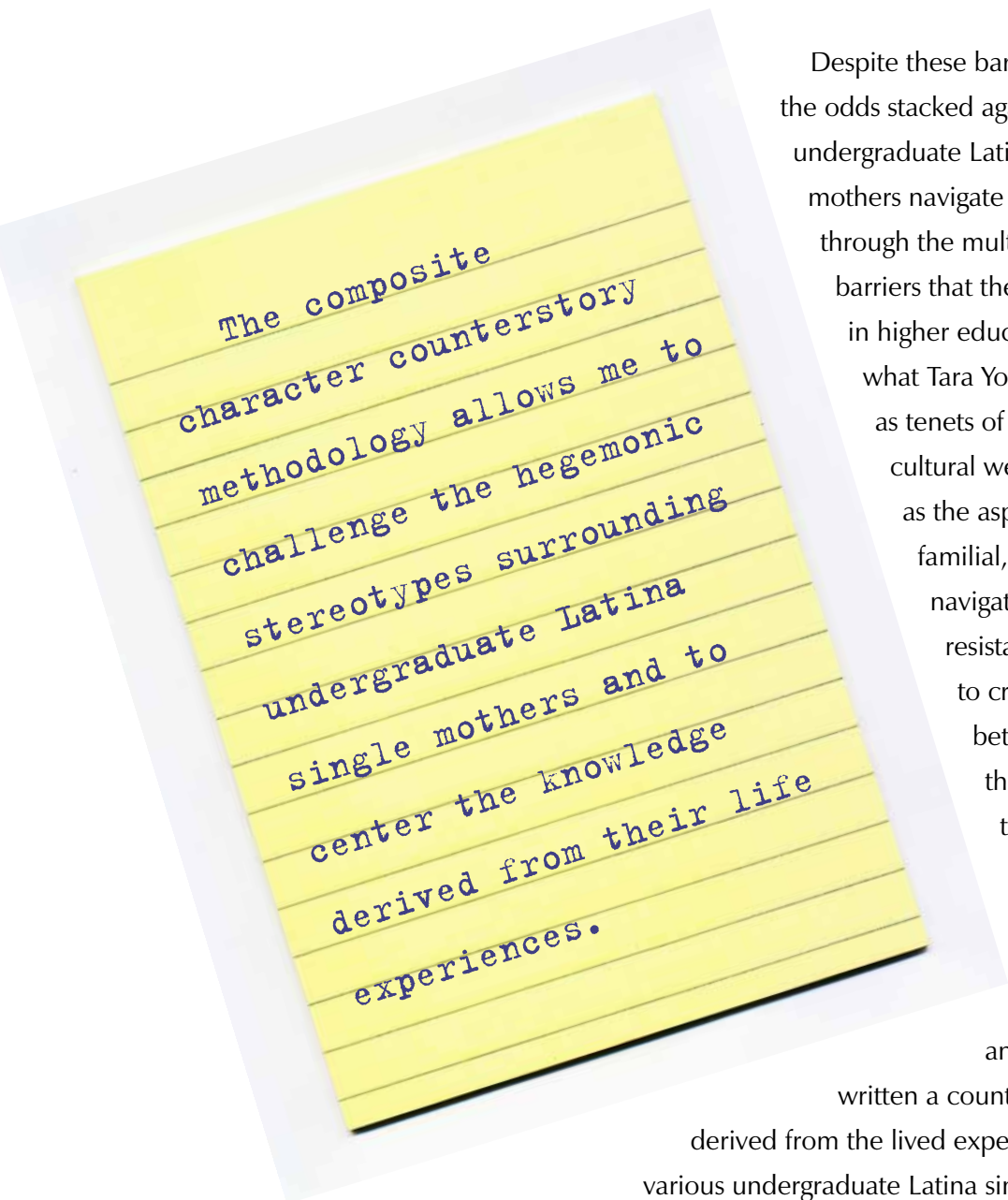
Credit: Photo of Marilyn Wann by L. Garber.

UPON MY ARRIVAL AT UCLA AS A NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT, I experienced transfer shock that was aggravated by my not being able to find a community of parenting students. I searched for literature that discussed how other undergraduate single mothers were able to navigate the academy but found none. This led to my current research project. My research looks at the obstacles and/or stigmas that undergraduate Latina single mothers experience at a research university and the navigational strategies that they employ in order to navigate their way through the educational pipeline at a research university.

After an extensive review of the literature in which I was unable to find works that spoke specifically to the experiences of undergraduate Latina single mothers, I decided to expand my research into ethnography by gathering women's *testimonios* (experiential knowledge) in conjunction with critical race theory, community cultural wealth theory, and Chicana Feminist theory. Although barriers exist for all undergraduate single mothers, undergraduate Latina single mothers' experiences with an "antagonistic institutional climate stemming from negative policies and attitudes towards single mothers and being stigmatized by classmates, professors, and administrators," (Duquaine-Watson, 2007) are compounded by cultural and genetic determinist models that influence institutions of higher education to have lower academic expectations of Latina/o students.



Counterstory
of an
Undergraduate
Latina Single
Mother at
a Research
University



The composite character counterstory methodology allows me to challenge the hegemonic stereotypes surrounding undergraduate Latina single mothers and to center the knowledge derived from their life experiences.

Despite these barriers and the odds stacked against them, undergraduate Latina single mothers navigate and push through the multitude of barriers that they encounter in higher education using what Tara Yosso describes as tenets of community cultural wealth such as the aspirational, familial, social, navigational, and resistance capital to create a better life for themselves and their children. I have created a composite character and have written a counterstory derived from the lived experiences of various undergraduate Latina single mothers at UCLA. The research and theories of

Dolores Delgado-Bernal, Emma Pérez, Lindsay Pérez Huber, Octavio Villalpando, Daniel Solórzano, and Tara Yosso have all informed my methodology. The composite character counterstory methodology allows me to challenge the hegemonic stereotypes surrounding undergraduate Latina single mothers and to center the knowledge derived from their life experiences. The composite character's name is Juana Soto, and she is a 31-year-old undergraduate Latina single mother at University of the West in California. She lives in university family housing with her two daughters, 7-year-old Esperanza and 4-year-old Gloria.

Recently Juana's political science teacher required her students to attend a lecture on campus. A five-page response paper about the lecture would be worth 10 percent of their class grade, making attendance at the lecture mandatory. The challenge for Juana was that the lecture was at 6 pm. This meant that she had to skip her afternoon political science class so that she would have enough time to take the bus back home, get her car, pick up her daughters from childcare, drive them out to her mother's home in Koreatown, and drive

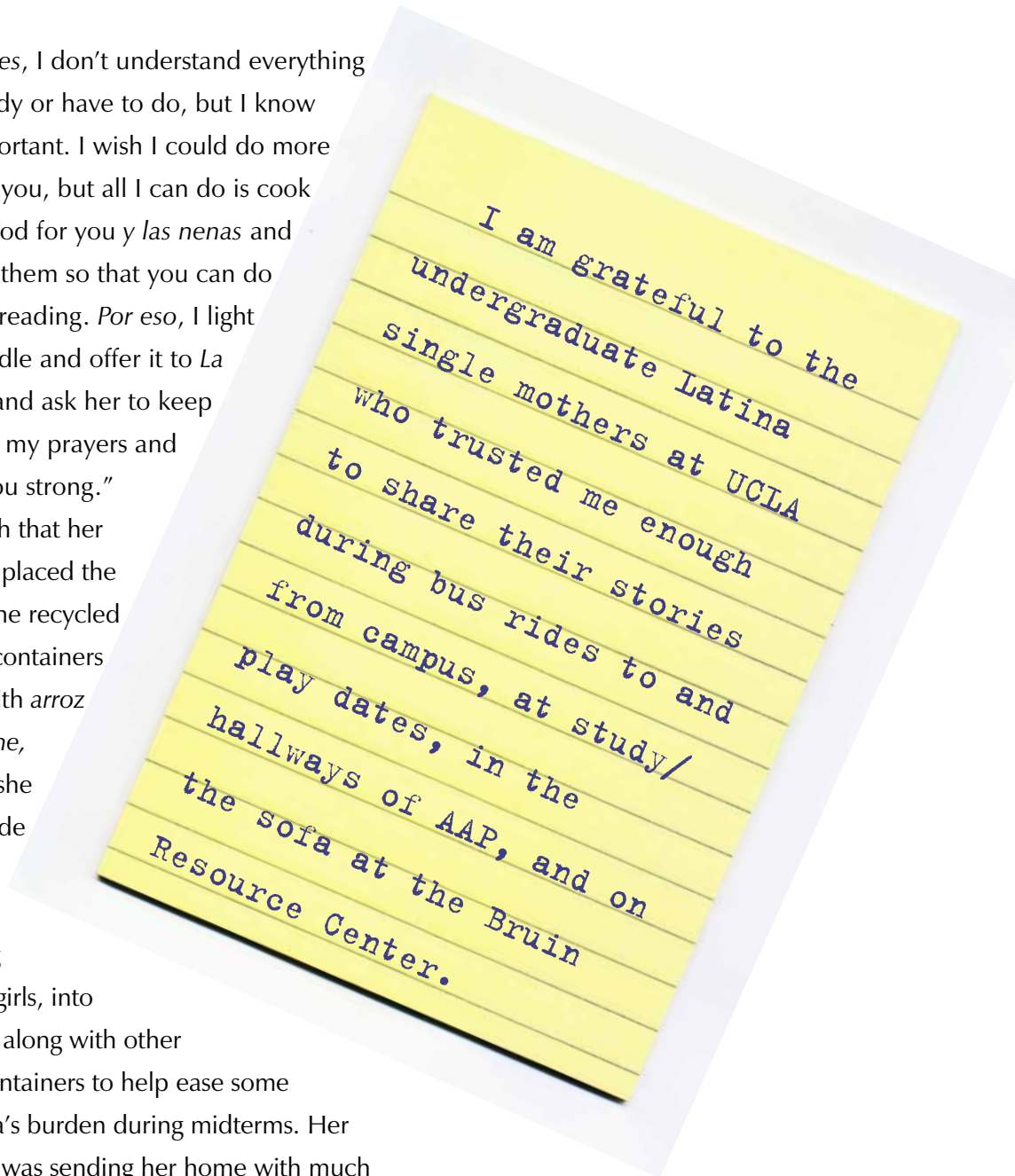
back to campus in order to attend the lecture. The lecture was over shortly after 8 pm, when she then had to drive back downtown to pick up her girls. As she drove back to her mother's home, Juana counted her blessings that not only had she been able to find childcare so that she didn't have to miss the lecture but more importantly that her girls were in a safe space. This allowed her to focus on the lecturer and take notes.

When she arrived at her mother's apartment to pick-up the girls, they were asleep on the sofa. Her mother was in the kitchen packing up containers of food for Juana to take home with her. As Juana walked past her mother's bedroom toward the kitchen she noticed a flickering light dancing against the bedroom door. Her mother had lit a small white votive candle and placed it next to a small brown clay statue of the Virgin de Guadalupe that sat on the dresser in the corner of the bedroom surrounded by family photos.

When she asked her mother why she had lit the candle her mother responded, "*Mija*, I see how hard you work and struggle so that you can give your babies a better life. Every night I pray and I ask *La Virgencita* to help

you. *Pues*, I don't understand everything you study or have to do, but I know it's important. I wish I could do more to help you, but all I can do is cook extra food for you y *las nenas* and babysit them so that you can do all that reading. *Por eso*, I light the candle and offer it to *La Virgen* and ask her to keep hearing my prayers and keep you strong."

With that her mother placed the last of the recycled yogurt containers filled with *arroz con leche*, which she had made earlier that evening for the girls, into the bag along with other food containers to help ease some of Juana's burden during midterms. Her mother was sending her home with much



I am grateful to the undergraduate Latina single mothers at UCLA who trusted me enough to share their stories during bus rides to and from campus, at study/play dates, in the hallways of AAP, and on the sofa at the Bruin Resource Center.

more than food; she was also sending her home with what Yosso and Pérez Huber refer to as community cultural wealth.

During her drive home back to university family housing, Juana reflected on how, with the support of her family, friends, community, academic counselor and certain professors, she had been able to come so far. There had been many times when she had just wanted to quit school and go back to work, but she knew that quitting wasn't an option for her—she had to push ahead. It had taken her four years at the community college and now three years at University of the West, but in just five weeks she would be graduating with her B.A. in Political Science.

When Juana first transferred to University of the West she experienced what researchers Solórzano and Yosso call “transfer shock,” in that she often felt lost navigating such a large university where it seemed as if she was nothing more than a number. Often she was the only Latina in a class and more often than not she was the oldest—a very different reality from what she had experienced at community college—adding to her transfer shock. At University of the West she felt academically

and socially marginalized, which was further compounded by the fact that she was navigating academia as a single mother.

Unfortunately, popular beliefs and cultural-deficit theories say that it is expected for Juana to find academic and social life at research universities challenging—after all she is a Latina and she is a single mother. During her second semester at University of the West, Juana had asked to meet with her chemistry professor outside of his regular office hours, which were from 8 to 9 am. She explained that she had to take her daughter Esperanza to school and then catch the bus to campus where she dropped off her youngest daughter Gloria at campus childcare. When Juana was finally able to meet with her professor, he gave her some unsolicited advice. He told her that “University of the West isn't really the place for undergraduate mothers, let alone single mothers. You should really consider going to a state school. I'm not sure why, but Hispanics seem to do much better at the state schools. Plus, a state school will allow you to be a real mother. ”

At first Juana was stunned. She paused for a moment to collect her thoughts. In that

moment she remembered a quote from Emma Pérez, whose work she had read the previous quarter in her Chicana Feminist course. Emma Pérez stated, “...women need a specific moment of consciousness when they can separate from the law of the father into their own *sitio y lengua*,” (1998, 171). Juana had come too far to allow the professor's comment to push her out of the educational pipeline. Instead of internalizing his comment and/or following his “fatherly” advice, Juana decided to use her *lengua* in the form of words to defend her *sitio*—her space.

Juana exercised her agency and pushed back against the professor's comment. She let out the breath she had been holding in and told him, “The type of training and preparation from University of the West will increase my chances of getting a better-paying job and I have two little girls who are counting on me. I worked just as hard as all of my classmates to get into University of the West and this is where I plan on finishing. Besides, I want to conduct research and there are so few research opportunities at the state university. I have the ability, talent, and skills to be a great scholar and researcher not in spite of being

a Latina single mother, sir, but because I am a Latina single mother.”

I am grateful to the undergraduate Latina single mothers at UCLA who trusted me enough to share their stories during bus rides to and from campus, at study/play dates, in the hallways of AAP, and on the sofa at the Bruin Resource Center. Juana’s story is not fiction in that the experiences described in her counterstory come directly from empirical data collected via the lived experiences of undergraduate Latina single mothers at UCLA. As a Chicana Studies major and a McNair scholar I am privileged to have been exposed to what Gloria Anzaldúa described as “theories that cross borders, that blur boundaries—new kinds of theories with new theorizing methods” (1990, xxv). It is these new theories, such as Chicana Feminism, Critical Race, and Community Cultural Wealth, that allow new developing scholars to examine the “nontraditional” ways in which undergraduate Latina single mothers are getting through the educational pipeline of a research university, not in spite of being Latina single mothers, but because they are Latina single mothers—therein inspiring other parenting students to do the same.

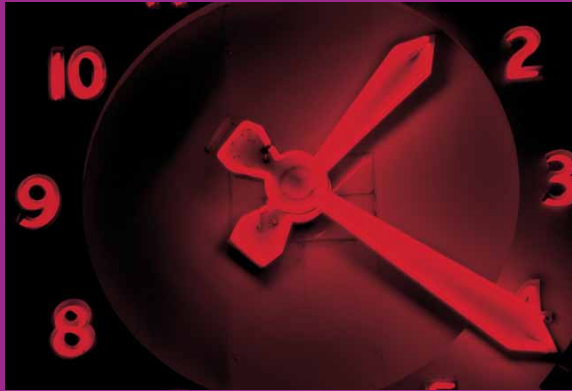
Sombra Libertad Ruiz is an undergraduate with a major in Chicana/o Studies and a minor in Women’s Studies. She is McNair Research Scholar. Her faculty advisors are Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Chair and Professor, César E. Chavez Department of Chicano/a Studies at UCLA, and Daniel Solórzano, Professor, Division of Social Science and Comparative Education in GSEIS at UCLA.

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CLIMATE, CLOCKS, AND KIDS!

**CSW WORKSHOP GIVES TIPS
ON TIME MANAGEMENT,
CLIMATE ISSUES, AND WORK/
LIFE BALANCE FOR
FEMALE ACADEMICS**

by Daniella Perry

When I received a notice from CSW about an upcoming workshop on time management, climate issues for female academics, and work/life balance, I was eager to attend. Though single, at 30 years old I find that the biological clock is ticking loudly. After receiving a BS in Department of Physiological Science (now Department of Integrative Biology and Physiology) at UCLA, I decided to pursue a PhD in the Department of History instead of going to medical school because I thought I would have more flexibility and stability. After spending two and a half years in graduate school, seeing two relationships come and go, teetering on the tightrope of

the poverty line, and periodically phoning my sister for help getting through panic attacks, I certainly need tips! From what I understand, I am not alone. Anxiety among graduate students is endemic. Yet women have an added pressure. What do we do, should we do, or can we do when and if we become pregnant during graduate school or as junior faculty? My friends in the private sector feel similarly, though, and tell me that whatever I do, do not quit because the corporate world is no more forgiving. Is it, though? PhD programs have the added pressure of financial instability and often intense lonely hours. Graduate students do not have support—financial or

otherwise—for raising children, and junior faculty face additional challenges, namely, the pursuit of tenure.

CSW Director Kathleen McHugh introduced the workshop, which is part of CSW’s new mentoring initiative, noting that the issue of women and family planning is a topic in academia that is not necessarily explored in the professional context. The question she asked of the speakers was: “How can one be an academic and have a life and family?” Together, the speakers answered this question with caution and hope. They suggested that women graduate students need to be proactive in researching institutional support and to become very clear about their wants for their future, and they argued that the more conversations that occur on these issues, the faster institutions will provide assistance for families and family planning.

Laura Foster, a human rights attorney and PhD candidate in the Department of Women’s Studies at UCLA, discussed her experiences being pregnant as a graduate

“HOW CAN ONE BE AN ACADEMIC AND HAVE A LIFE AND FAMILY?” TOGETHER, THE SPEAKERS ANSWERED THIS QUESTION WITH CAUTION AND HOPE.

student and pointed to the importance of finding “mommy networks,” committing to a schedule, and negotiating the politics of academia. There is no real “good time” to have a child, Foster said. We cannot control institutional structures already in place, and so we should feel confident about having a child when we are *ready*. Having her first child in her fourth year of graduate school made sense to Foster because she wanted her children to know their grandparents. Furthermore, she felt she had established an academic reputation and had more flexibility as a graduate student than she would have if she were a new faculty member. It was not easy—she defended her

dissertation two weeks before giving birth and was scheduled to do field research in southern Africa nine months later! Her first years in graduate school, however, had allowed Foster to take the time to find mentors and a committee that would be friendly and supportive of her having children while in the program. The importance of seeking out such support was a point highlighted by each of the panelists.

Financial support is a glaring concern. When worried about where the next round of funding comes from, it is difficult to imagine providing for a child whether or not you have a partner. Foster benefitted both from

[LOPEZ] DISCUSSED HER EXPERIENCE LOOKING FOR AN ACADEMIC POSITION WHILE PREGNANT.

California's paid family leave for domestic partners legislation and insurance benefits at UCLA. Graduates and those fresh on the job market should be sure to find out the policies that are in place in their state and institution.

Once you have a child, planning a schedule is equally important. Foster shared hers. A standard 8 to 5 workday, with a lunchtime workout, allows her to spend her evenings and weekends with her family. She and her husband are vigilant about this schedule, incorporating some weekends alone as well. The added benefit for her was that she became more efficient and productive with her time on the job. Foster concluded with

tips on dealing with academic politics: We can and should be selective about where we choose to go for graduate school, post-doctoral programs and faculty positions. We must go to locations where policies work for us, she recommended, and where and when discrimination is encountered, we must make it known.

According to Marissa Lopez, Assistant Professor in the Department of English at UCLA, the only way to widen the options for women is to start and continue a dialogue. She stressed this point as she discussed her experience looking for an academic position *while* pregnant. Hers was a precarious

situation because women on the job market have been made to feel they need to hide their desire or plans to have children. Lopez could not hide the fact that she was pregnant, nor did she want to. Her experience, however, proved to be positive, and she received five job offers and numerous invitations to lecture. Her motto during her job search was "confidence is competence," adding that this is true "even if you have to fake the confidence." Lopez also found support in a book, *Mama PhD: Women Write about Motherhood and Academic Life* (Rutgers, 2008), edited by Erena Evans and Caroline Grant (see <http://www.mamaphd.com/>). This volume, which was also recommended by others in the workshop, contains essays by mothers who hold PhDs or are pursuing them. Lopez ultimately chose UCLA because the UC system is one of the most family-friendly, offering spousal hires. (Lopez's husband was offered a lecturer position at UCLA.) By making women's needs known, more institutions may be more likely to adopt similar policies.

Despite landing a position for both herself and her husband, Lopez wants to wait until she is closer to having tenure to have her second child because the emotional stress can be overwhelming. She was candid in noting that it took her a while to “get her brain back” after her first child was born. Once she did, she found parenting conducive to being productive. Like Foster, she said wanting to spend time with your new family is great incentive to get your work done! Lopez tries to finish by 4 pm every day and plans her meetings accordingly. A small, yet important tip she gave was that it is okay to say *no* to talks and colloquia. In this, as academics, we do have a luxury that those in the private/corporate world often do not have. Being selective about how much time you give to extracurriculars in your department is something graduate students often struggle with. Flexibility in this respect is a rare commodity. We should learn, she suggested, to take time for ourselves as well as our families.

MOORE CONCLUDED BY SAYING: “DON’T ALLOW THEM TO DEFINE YOUR WORLD.”

Lopez concluded by saying that your choice of partner is the most important decision; that you should research institutional policies; that you can never be too organized; that you should not feel bad for feeling brain dead sometimes or wanting to be a stay-at-home mom; and, lastly, that once you give birth, life will revolve around the baby. It is possible to balance work and family, but to make it happen you have to believe that it can.

Mignon Moore, Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at UCLA, spoke from a somewhat different position. Moore does not have children. As a gay woman, she noted that it is not so easy to “just start trying” to

have a child—it takes *work*. While Moore feels some social pressure to become a mother, she has not yet made a decision on whether to pursue this course in life. What Moore has been contending with as an academic is her gay identity, but she says she has experienced only encouragement and support from her UCLA colleagues. She believes this is because she has been open and straightforward about her sexuality. Having strong women in the department in which you choose to work, she added, is an asset.

It is important, she advises, for graduate students on the job market to understand the culture of the department/institution in which

THE ANSWER, SAYS WATFORD, IS TO BREAK THE SILENCE. WOMEN MUST LEARN TO FEEL CONFIDENT IN ASKING FACULTY ABOUT THEIR OWN FAMILIES AND EXPERIENCES.

they hope to get a job and their expectations for how work gets done. Moore's own dissertation was based in quantitative research, and she took a chance accepting a position in a department that generally favors qualitative/ethnographic methods. She says that this kind of difference can be an asset; the department also benefits from the unique abilities of each member of their faculty. She also notes that applicants can negotiate for a higher salary, which is often a source of anxiety for women. Know your academic assets, she advised, and be prepared to use them as leverage. (For more interview strategies, please see "Interview Success" by Jaimie Baron in the

January 10 issue.) Sharing your successful strategies with others is essential to expanding opportunities for women. Moore concluded by saying: "Don't allow them to define your world."

Tara Watford, Director of Research at UC/ACCORD in the Department of Education at UCLA, concluded the workshop by elaborating on the issue of starting and continuing a dialogue about the scarcity of support and information that is available for women in academia—also the subject of her dissertation. Watford found it curious that the majority of PhDs granted in the last twenty years in sociology, education, and

psychology were given to women, but the majority of faculty positions were taken by men. She conducted ethnographic research on women doctoral students, asking them about their experiences as women in academia and their knowledge of support for women and children in their programs. What she found most prominent is a general attitude among graduates that in order to be a scholar, you must be productive all the time with no time off. Since taking care of a family is likewise a full-time job, one cannot do both. If you choose to have a family, your career possibilities will be severely limited. One woman reported that her advisor said explicitly that she would not be able to "jump back into tenure" if she took time off to have a child.

In wrapping up the workshop with suggestions about what should be done, Watford said that there is a loud silence in graduate programs about family and relationships. Many graduate students she interviewed did not even know whether or

not their advisors had children of their own. Women read into this that they are not supposed to talk about family, or worse, not supposed to *have* one. The women interviewed often reported that their faculty and advisors assumed that they were too young to be thinking about these issues. Because they were not married or pregnant, it was not the time to discuss options. The answer, says Watford, is to break the silence. Women must learn to feel confident in asking faculty about their own families and experiences. Women must be proactive in finding out about institutional policies for support and discussing family planning not only with a partner but also openly within the academic setting. As graduate students, women can form student groups to share resources, experiences, and child-care options. According to Watford, there is a disconnect between what is available

and what job applicants know. Moore also underscored how important it is to voice your concerns to hiring institutions. Faculty should, in return, be equipped to discuss these concerns during searches as well as when advising graduate students.

The panelists addressed many of my concerns with respect to timing but gave me new concerns with respect to time management and institutional support. I want to work in a university that will foster a healthy family environment. It is unfortunate, but currently the onus is on women to ask questions about family planning and ask our advisors about their own experiences with having children. Discussions like this should be open to all students, faculty, and administrators, and they should include men. The state of affairs for women in academia is not yet ideal, but this workshop is an example of what sort of dialogue needs to happen between students and faculty on all campuses.

Daniella Perry is a doctoral student in the Department of History at UCLA. Her research addresses the development of genetic and psychological counseling; evolving theories of race, gender and intelligence; and the social and legal changes on reproductive rights with respect to infant screening.

WHAT CAN THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT LEARN FROM FEMINISM?

in December 2009, 40,000 people representing nations and UN agencies, nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations, media and environmental activists, and indigenous peoples descended upon the city of Copenhagen for the United Nations Climate Change Conference. This meeting was the culmination of two years of negotiations over climate change action under the Bali Roadmap, launched

in December 2007. Many hoped that the Copenhagen Climate Conference would deliver an ambitious and equitable plan to curb climate change. The talks began with a flurry of controversy over transparency, slights by government leaders, and disputes over process. When the dust settled, the result was a weak outline of a global agreement acknowledging the scientific case for preventing temperature increases over 2°C

this century, yet refraining from setting binding emissions reductions. The deal, negotiated between China, South Africa, India, Brazil, and the US was disappointing to countries of the global South who were advocating for stronger emissions reductions to keep global temperature rise under 1.5°C. The frustrating outcomes of the Copenhagen conference have left many environmentalists wondering what the next line of action should be.

At this critical moment after Copenhagen and in the wake of an economic crisis that has posed a serious challenge to neoliberal economic policy, environmentalists should take a lesson from developments in the feminist movement in the 1970s and 1980s. The environmental movement faces the same political economy faced by the feminist movement: a capitalist system and mode of production. Feminists have navigated within or fought against this system on the ground level with their struggle for equal opportunity employment, re-valuing productive work such as childcare, decreasing the gender wage gap, and fighting sexual harassment. Feminist confrontations with capitalism were also manifest in the intense theoretical debates that took place during second-wave feminism in the 1960s and 70s. Liberal, Marxist, and radical feminists posited different answers to the foundational question of how to position oneself within or against a capitalist political economy.

Development of Feminist Politics

The liberal feminist position has generally been to extend the traditional liberal

principles of equality, rationality, and individualism to women through political and legal reform within the capitalist system (Jaggar; Mill). This form of feminism contends that women possess the same capabilities of intellect and rationality so valued in men, but fail to develop them due to lack of opportunity. Radical feminists like Shulamith Firestone, on the other hand, reject the patriarchal values of power, domination, individualism, and competitiveness, which they believe characterize the capitalist social structure. Marxist feminists take on capitalism most directly, proposing that feminist goals of gender equality can happen only with a transformation of the social and economic structure. Certain Marxist feminists maintain that two systems, capitalism and patriarchy, create women's subordination by placing limits on women's access to resources and restricting women's sexuality. In their view, these "dual systems" relegate women to the devalued work of childrearing and housework and facilitate women's economic dependence on men (Hartmann 1981). Other theorists maintain that capitalism and patriarchy form *one* system of which male dominance

and oppression of women is a fundamental attribute (Young, 1981). Regardless of whether capitalism and patriarchy form one system or two intertwined ones, Marxist feminists generally agree that capitalist relations of production and reproduction must be transformed in order to establish gender equality and end women's oppression.

Recent work by Hester Eisenstein and Nancy Fraser provides a retrospective look at the feminist movement's historical development alongside capitalism. These works illustrate how feminism and capitalism have become strange bedfellows within the context of state-organized capitalism and modern-day neoliberalism. They argue that second-wave feminism was at its core a critique of androcentric, state-organized capitalism. Feminists of this period challenged the interlocking economic, cultural, and political dimensions of this system that created gender injustice (Fraser 2009). In the 1970s and 80s, however, these three strands of feminist critique were unraveled, co-opted, and resignified by the state. Post-second-wave feminists' claims for justice were placed second to claims for recognition.

Take for instance the hallmarks of second-wave feminism: struggles for women's individualism and participation in the labor market. While self-determination and economic independence undoubtedly improved women's conditions, the hegemonic idea that women should participate in work outside the home contributed to the decline of the family wage and the abolition of traditional welfare support (Eisenstein 2005). Corporate boardrooms filled with white men simply added one female board member as a superficial symbol of gender equality. As a discursive construct, feminism has been co-opted and watered down, so that even Sarah Palin, in a 2008 interview, could claim to be a feminist. The state along with big business has been able to selectively appropriate aspects of feminist ideology in order to pull the social safety net from under poor, single women and to allow wages to stagnate. While many feminists have sought to challenge the tendencies of capitalism particularly in the workplace, some tenets of feminism about female empowerment and equality have been co-opted into the capitalist project of privatization and the withdrawal of the state from social services.

Fraser's historical analysis demonstrates that feminist ideology has in many ways served the very interests of capital it initially set out to challenge. Fraser offers suggestions for the future of feminism, arguing that post-neoliberal feminists must reconnect the feminist critique with a critique of capitalism and reestablish feminism on the left of the political spectrum. Post-neoliberal anti-androcentrism must focus on severing the tie between feminism's nuanced critique of the family wage and the adoption of a system of flexible capitalism. Moreover, rather than relying on experts, feminists must reconnect the movement to participatory democracy and break the link between feminist critique of statism and the reign of the free market. Lastly, in favor of a more transnational and global feminism, Fraser argues for the breaking of "identification of democracy with the bounded political community" (Fraser 2009: 116).

Lessons for Environmentalism

Fraser's analysis of the feminist movement provides a useful model for critically evaluating the successes, failures, and future of the environmental movement. Just as

the neoliberal regime co-opted strands of feminist thought to achieve goals and policies antithetical to feminism, environmentalism has been adopted by corporate entities. Wal-Mart is a major distributor of organic food, and British Petroleum and Exxon are portrayed in their commercials as environmentally friendly corporations doing good deeds in the Global South. Under the cap-and-trade system, which was the leading solution to global warming discussed in the climate talks in Copenhagen, nations would establish limits on carbon emissions through the distribution of certain amounts of pollution permits to particular nations, with the idea that fewer permits would be distributed each year. Innovative companies with a reserve of carbon permits could sell them at a high price to companies still needing them (Lohmann 2006). Carbon brokers and energy trading firms that facilitate trading could also take in huge profits.

Though the system sounds like a win-win situation for both big business and environmentalism, the partnership has several negative drawbacks. First, the ever-increasing drive for profits and such free-market solutions offer precarious not stable solutions for

global warming. The same logic that brought about the recent economic crisis would be implemented in a new type of market, the carbon stock market. Not surprisingly, proponents of cap-and-trade policy include Enron and Goldman Sachs.

Secondly, the cap-and-trade system mandates that a large portion of the permits be given to industrial polluters for free in order to incentivize big polluters to get on board with the policy (Viard 2009). When this system, which some critics have renamed “cap and giveaway,” was implemented in Europe, it proved thoroughly unsuccessful in reducing emissions, and polluters made billions in windfall profits (Adam 2008). Environmental policy failed to achieve its direct goal of curbing greenhouse gases (GHGs). Meanwhile, wealthy, Western nations are transferring the cost of their polluting to the Global South. Joan Martinez-Alier, an ecological economist, defines this as “ecological debt.” She writes that “ecological debt is the debt accumulated by Northern, industrial countries toward Third World countries on account of resource plundering, environmental damages, and the free occupation of environmental space

Such “greenwashing”—hitching environmentalism to capitalism—does not change the root causes of environmental degradation such as overconsumption, inequality, and profiteering

to deposit wastes such as greenhouse gases, from the industrial countries.” In other words, the Third World (or the Global South) reaps the consequences of a problem it did not create. Under such a system, corporations from the Global North can continue to exploit the resources of the Global South without consequence as long as they purchase carbon offsets. The proposed system demonstrates how social and political critiques made by environmentalists are now being disregarded in the name of environmentalism.

Other critics of cap-and-trade maintain that emissions trading is a distraction from alternatives that could provide genuine solutions. The Climate Justice Action of Copenhagen draft outlines several

solutions including reasserting peoples’ and communities’ control over production, relocalizing food production, reducing overconsumption in the North, and leaving fossil fuels in the ground. Since such alternatives propose regulation on markets that are in direct contradiction to neoliberal political ideology, they are being considered by governments of the Global North. Environmentalism is enlisted as justification for policy that ignores the ecological debt of the North and ultimately promotes the profiteering of corporate capital.

With environmental policy left dangerously “up in the air,” it is critical for the environmental movement to reevaluate its platform and direction. The global

financial and sub-prime mortgage crisis, the consequences of which are still reverberating throughout the US, should serve as a warning to the environmental movement. A cap-and-trade strategy that makes use of the same profit-driven principles that caused the global economic crisis cannot solve the even more daunting problem of climate change. Instead, the movement should recognize that skepticism about neoliberal policies could offer an opportunity and chance for renewal of the environmental movement. The strategies and policies being implemented in the name of environmentalism need to be scrutinized.

The current changing political and economic context represent an important opportunity for the environmental movement to evaluate itself not only as a movement but also as a discursive construct used by both environmentalists and capital. As a group, environmentalists must demand support for environmental protection that goes beyond words and translates into structural and institutional changes. The environmental movement must grapple with the fact that terms it has created and employs, such as

“green” and “sustainable,” are now being used to describe corporations, businesses, and consumer products that fall far outside their originally intended purview. Such “greenwashing”—hitching environmentalism to capitalism—does not change the root causes of environmental degradation such as overconsumption, inequality, and profiteering. More importantly, capitalist co-optation pushes aside important redistributive, representative, and social justice dimensions at the core of environmentalism. To bring these dimensions back to the center of the movement, environmentalists should take a cue from recent feminist theory and reconnect ecological critique with a critique of capitalism.

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