

MAR09

CSW

NEWSLETTER OF THE
UCLA CENTER FOR THE
STUDY OF WOMEN

update

by Kerri L. Johnson

social vision

VISUAL CUES COMMUNICATE SOCIAL
CATEGORIES TO OBSERVERS



SOCIAL VISION

Kerri L. Johnson



UPDATE ON MAZER PROJECT

James Hixon



**Director's Commentary
GETTING TO KNOW YOU
(AND WHAT YOU DO)**

Kathleen McHugh



MUSAWAH MOVEMENT

Azza Basarudin



DEPARTMENTS

Staff **18**



Getting to Know You (and what you do): CSW Spring Symposia

UCLA is a very big place. I am probably not alone in having the experience of meeting a faculty member from another department and being shocked that I did not already know them, either because their research interests overlap with my own or because I know of them by reputation and did not know they were at UCLA or just because the work they are doing is fascinating and I wished I had known about it sooner. One of CSW's crucial functions is to facilitate interdisciplinary connections across departments and divisions and to create a vibrant intellectual community of

scholars working on gender, sexuality, and women's issues throughout the university. We fulfill this function by introducing faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates to each other and each other's work in our newsletter, in workshops, and in speaker's series featuring CSW affiliated scholars and faculty development grant recipients. While the newsletter and workshops have been very successful, we have found in our speaker's series that attendance tends to fall along disciplinary lines. To shake things up a bit, this spring quarter, we are going to implement a

plan (suggested by Sue-Ellen Case) and host two faculty symposia titled "Works in Progress I" (see page 4 for the presenters) and "Works in Progress II" (see page 5 for the presenters) Each symposium will feature several of our faculty development grant recipients giving a brief summary of their current research projects. We intend these symposia to convey a sense of the rich and diverse research in our mission areas being done at UCLA. We invite everyone to come and join us for these exciting interdisciplinary symposia. I hope you'll mark your calendars and plan on joining us.



Works in Progress I

– Kathleen McHugh

Works in Progress I, on Wednesday, April 29th, from 4-6 pm, in 314 Royce, will feature Mona Simpson (English), *The American Cousins* (a novel); Lois Takahashi (School of Public Affairs/Urban Planning), *Patriarchy/Matriarchy Versus Blood Quantum: Cultural Significance as Evidenced in Hawaii Land Commission Grants*; Elisabeth Le Guin (Musicology), *Jacaras & Tornadillas: Female Musical Ruffians in Early Modern Spain*; Denise Mann (School of Theater, Film, and Television), *Gender and Marketing in the Post-network Era—An Ethnographic Analysis of the TV Workplace in the Age of Wikinomics*; Andrea Goldman (History), *The Staging of Urban Culture in Beijing, 1770–1900*; Miriam Laugesen (Public Health-Health Services,

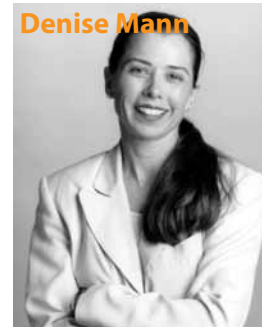


Mona Simpson

Photo: Amy Etra/Outline



Andrea Goldman



Denise Mann



Miriam Laugesen



Lois Takahashi



Elisabeth Le Guin



Works in Progress II

The Politics of State Policies on the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccine.

Works in Progress II, on Wednesday, May 12th, from 4-6 pm, in 314 Royce, will feature Gil Hochberg (Comparative Literature), *Queer Politics and the Question of Palestine*; Rachel Lee (English), *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America*; Susanne Lohmann (Political Science), *Men, Women, and Universal Higher Education*, Victoria Vesna (Design/Media Arts), *Science Games for Girls: NANO BIO_BODS*; Kerri L. Johnson (Communication Studies), *Studies on the social and contextual circumstances that prompt changes in the expression of gendered cues*; Patricia Greenfield (Department of Psychology), *Social Change and Shifting Women's Roles in a Maya Community*; and Kendra Willson (Scandinavian Section), *Name Law and Gender in Iceland*.

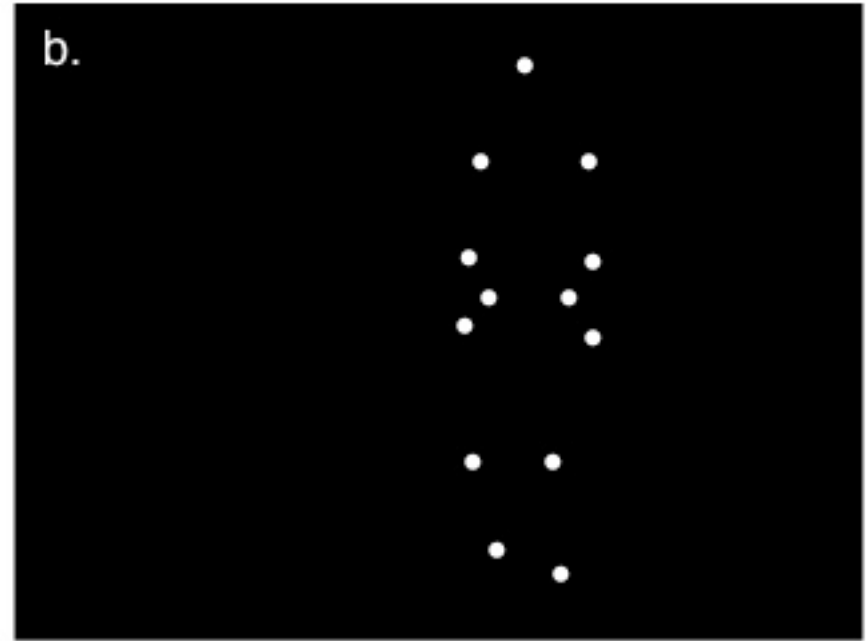
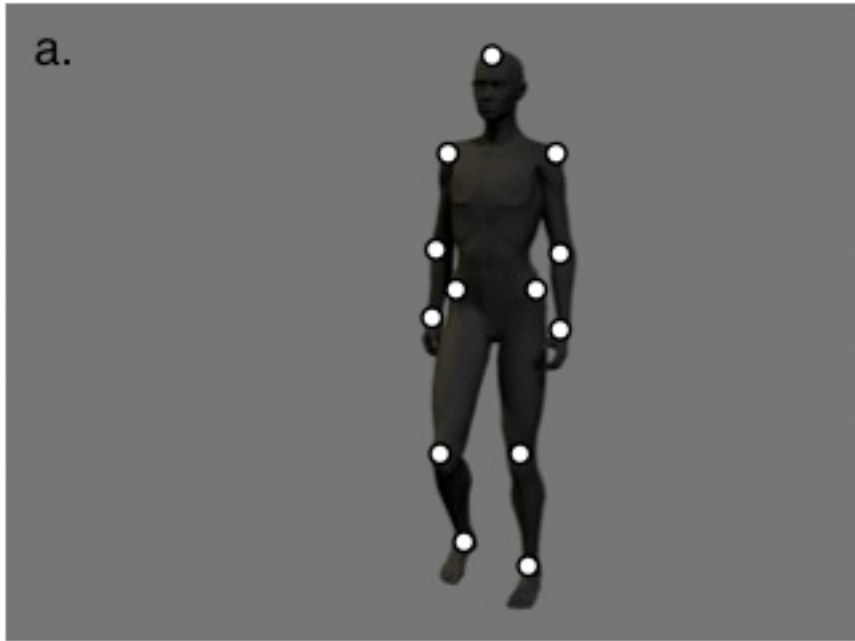


DORIS TROY FAMOUSLY SANG, “JUST ONE LOOK, THAT’S ALL IT TOOK.” INDEED, RESEARCH ON PERSON PERCEPTION CONFIRMS THAT MEANINGFUL SOCIAL INFORMATION IS RELIABLY DISCERNED FROM JUST ONE LOOK.

This information ranges from appreciating category membership to evaluating more enduring traits and dispositions. These aspects of social perception appear to be highly automated, some would even call them obligatory, and they are heavily influenced by two sources of information: the face and the body. From minimal information such as brief exposure to the face or degraded images of dynamic body motion, social judgments are made with remarkable efficiency and, at times, surprising accuracy.

Scholars have long recognized that one aspect of social perception in particular—social categorization—plays a critical role in our perception of others. Why might this be the case? In his early research, Gordon Allport suggested that people tend to think about others in categorical terms because knowing a person’s



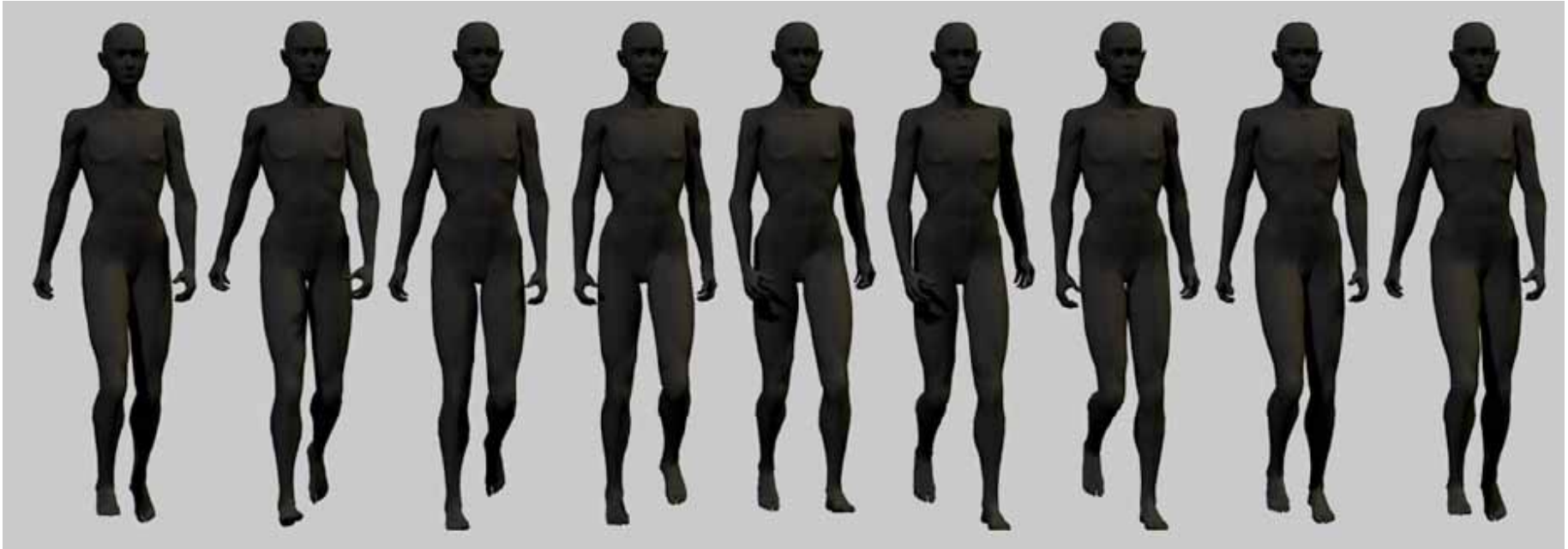


sex, race, or age is informative. Specifically, social categorization brings to mind stereotypes associated with the relevant social category (girls like pink, for example, and old people like Florida). Regardless of their veracity, stereotypes were presumed to affect social interactions by establishing expectations. The vast majority of such research has focused heavily on two aspects of this stream of events: a) determining the inevitability of social categorization, and b) examining the consequences of perceiving social categories. Only recently have scholars begun to appreciate the importance of understanding the process of social categorization beginning with the visual perception of others as a precursor

to the product commonly explored by social psychologists. This nascent field of Social Vision is providing key insights into these dynamics of social perception that are essential to understanding both intergroup perception and interaction.

As it turns out, not all social categories are equally likely to be perceived. Sociologists have described master status categories as those categories that provide a lens through which other aspects of social perception and interaction are viewed. In this way, social categories become context that has a pervasive impact on other aspects of social perception. Three categories emerge as the most likely candidates for social

perception: sex, race, and age. Evidence is mounting that sexual orientation is a likely candidate to be added to this list. Recent evidence, however, suggests that under some circumstances, perceivers may be able to resist the tendency to categorize others according to race and age, but not by sex. Perhaps this is not surprising given the pervasive importance of sex categorization in modern society. The importance of sex categorization begins even before birth, as parents proudly proclaim to friends and family, “It’s a boy!” or “It’s a girl!” The impact persists throughout the lifespan, dictating where we may go (for example, men’s room versus ladies’ room), what we may wear



(for example, neckties or skirts), and which traits and emotions are appropriate for us to express (for example, sadness versus anger; communion versus agency). An individual's conformity—or lack thereof—to such norms has implications for how they are evaluated by others. Put simply, sex categorization appears to be compulsory, and it provides a lens through which other social factors are perceived and evaluated.

Research being conducted in my Social Communication Lab at UCLA is examining how the perception of one social category contextualizes other domains of person perception. For instance, in one set of studies my colleagues and I examined how sex-specific

stereotypes of emotion expression bias the visual perception of body motion. We began with the observation that perceivers are able to extract meaningful social information about others based only on the body's motion. From films that depict only points of light affixed to the body's joints, observers readily perceive social information including sex category membership, identity, behavioral intent, and even emotion state. Of these domains, there is some evidence that the emotion state of a target can be processed without intent, and that its perception affects other aspects of motion perception.

We showed point-light displays that varied emotional body motion (angry, happy, neutral,

and sad) to research participants who judged the sex category of each target. Across multiple studies that implemented a variety of controls, the results were telling. Displays depicting angry body motions were overwhelmingly judged to be men, and participants were highly confident of their judgments; displays depicting sad body motions were judged to be women. Put simply, the gender typicality of the emotion being expressed in body movements biased observers' perception of sex category membership.

In other research, I have found that the perception of sex category is inextricably tethered to the perception of race category, even though the two factors vary orthogonally



in reality. In this research, my students and I reasoned that the perception of one social category (for example, sex) may be affected by another social category (for example, race) to the extent that the two share overlapping stereotype content. The stereotypes for Black and Men, for example, share characteristics such as aggressive and competitive, and the stereotypes for Asian and Women share characteristics such as soft-spoken and familial. We predicted that such overlapping stereotypes may exert a top-down bias on the perception of faces.

To test this, we generated a set of face stimuli that varied continuously from Black to Caucasian to Asian. In one study we found that when the gender of a face was ambiguous, participants' sex category judgments varied systematically with race category. Asian faces were more likely to be judged as women; Black faces were more likely to be judged as men. In another study, we tracked the trajectory of mouse movements as participants categorized faces to be men or women by clicking boxes that appeared in the upper portions of the computer monitor. Rarely did participants make mistakes when categorizing the faces, but the trajectory of their mouse movements as they rendered judgments was revealing. We found that when the sex and race categories of a target shared a high degree of stereotype overlap (for example, Asian Women and Black Men), mouse trajectories were relatively direct toward the correct sex category button. When the sex and race categories shared little stereotype overlap, in contrast, mouse trajectories were less direct. Instead, these trajectories revealed a significant departure from a straight line toward the correct category, instead veering toward the incorrect alternative that appeared on the opposite side of the monitor. We interpreted these effects as evidence for top-down mediation of sex categorization via stereotypes. Indeed, in an additional study we found that the degree of implicit associations between the categories

Black and Men and the categories Asian and Women predicted the interference of mouse trajectory on low overlap trials.

Finally, we have examined not only how the body communicates sex category membership to observers, but also the development of observers' ability to exploit such cues for making judgments, and the evaluative implications therein. In one set of studies, for example, my colleagues and I used corneal-reflection eye-tracking to determine where observers looked as they visually scanned bodies. Not surprisingly, observers concentrated their visual attention in a sexually dimorphic region of the body, the waist and hips. Yet this distribution of scanning changed when we pre-specified the targets' sex. Under these conditions, scanning of the waist/hips dropped to chance levels, highlighting the importance of the waist/hips for sex categorization. This pattern of visual behavior indicated that the body's shape was a critical cue that informed sex category judgments.

Having established the link between body shape and perceived sex category, I examined how sex categorization constrains the interpretation and evaluation of other gendered cues. Observers judged the sex, masculinity/femininity, and attractiveness of animations that varied in body shape and motion. Across multiple studies, sex judgments relied quite heavily on body shape; attractiveness judgments incorporated both perceived sex and masculinity/

femininity. Images that were judged to be men based on body shape were judged to be more attractive when they walked with masculine, relative to feminine, body motion. The opposite was true of walkers judged to be women. Sex categorization changed the evaluative implications of sexually dimorphic body motion.

In other studies, I have found similar effects for perceptions of a concealable social category in how observers use sexually dimorphic cues to judge the sexual orientation of others. In this research, I included both animated stimuli and videos depicting real people walking. Participants judged the sexual orientation of these targets that varied in body shape and motion. Once categorized according to sex, the gender typicality of walk motion determined whether perceivers judged a target to be gay or straight. This heuristic led to increased accuracy for judgments, especially for male targets. Once again, sex categorization provided the foundation for observers to determine whether a target embodied gender typical or atypical characteristics, and they used this to infer sexual orientation. It is important to note that although this categorization is not inherently evaluative, judging a person to be gay or lesbian assigns them to a stigmatized social group, and is therefore likely to have broad interpersonal implications.

Collectively, the results of the research I have described highlight an important role for sex

categorization as context for other aspects of social perception, including judgments of other social categories (for example, race, sexual orientation, and emotion state) and social evaluations (for example, attractiveness). Currently, my students and I are examining how individuals strategically exploit such tendencies (for example, by systematically altering the gender typicality of expressions, movements, and appearance) to communicate their identities to others.

Kerri L. Johnson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Studies and Director of the Social Communication lab at UCLA. Her current research interests include the communication of identity through nonverbal means, the production and perception of sexually dimorphic body motion, and the efficiency of "thin slice" modes of communication. Additional information about Kerri's research can be found at her website: http://web.mac.com/kerri.johnson/Kerri_L._Johnson,_Ph.D./Home.html. She received a Faculty Development Grant from CSW to support her research.

Works in Progress



A Symposium featuring
these recipients of CSW Faculty
Development Grants :

Gil Hochberg

Rachel Lee

Susanne Lohmann

Victoria Vesna

Kerri L. Johnson

Patricia Greenfield

Kendra Willson

Wednesday, May 12th,
4-6 pm, 314 Royce

From the Archives

An Update on the June L. Mazer Archives Project

DIGITIZING ORGANIZATIONAL RECORDS FROM THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
WOMEN FOR UNDERSTANDING (SCWU)

by James Hixon

As a graduate student researcher for the Center for the Study of Women, I have been working on a grant-funded project to digitize several collections from the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives in West Hollywood. Among these are the organizational records from The Southern California Women for Understanding (SCWU), which was established in 1976 and grew to be one of the largest lesbian organizations in the country.

At the time, SCWU was well aware of the important contribution its records could make to the construction of lesbian history. In an issue from SCWU's 1982 newsletter, Bunny MacCulloch, a longstanding member of the Board of Directors and the organization's archivist, wrote about the challenges that she and her contemporaries faced in developing lesbian identities without having any historical

documents upon which they could look back. She writes: "We each examined, therefore, only our own corner of the closet. Each of us invented for herself, through trial and error, ways to interpret the world and ourselves so that we could manage to fit ourselves into it in spite of the nearly universal contempt in which homosexuality was held. There was no gay press to speak of, nor any of the usual time-binding structures that cultures traditionally form in order to perpetuate and improve themselves, such as schools, museums, archives, cultural centers, libraries, and so on."¹ The establishment of such community-based archives as the Mazer Archives fills a critical gap in the documentation and preservation of lesbian history.

Inspired by the metaphor of Janus, the two-faced Roman god who was said to guard the doorways of the ancient archives by looking

both backward and forward, I want to suggest that these records are valuable not only for the evidence they garner regarding lesbian histories; rather, they also impart knowledge about the struggles that persist in the present and future of the LGBT movement. Spanning 22 years, the SCWU newsletters provide a fertile ground for exploring some of the close connections between the early lesbian and gay rights movement and contemporary LGBT issues. Several key newsletters help explicate these connections.

In 1978, SCWU and other California gay and lesbian organizations fought against the Briggs initiative, or Proposition 6, that would ban homosexuals and their allies from teaching in schools. Revealing how gay men and lesbians successfully overcame their often separatist agendas to form a strong political campaign, the SCWU newsletters from 1978 to 1979

document the trajectory of activism against this insipid proposition. Though in some ways they are very different, Proposition 6 and the recent Proposition 8 represent similar attempts to defend dominant social institutions against the perceived threat of homosexuality. In reading about the challenges that those who fought against Proposition 6 overcame, one can't help but feel that these lessons could have been significant for the recent campaign.

Many of the racist and classist assumptions inherent in the "No on 8" campaign came to the forefront after its passage. Likewise, it is no secret that the LGBT movement has had a long history of promoting a white, middle-class representation of homosexuality that would easily assimilate into and be accepted by mainstream culture. In the SCWU newsletters, however, we can also see a challenge to that agenda. As an example, a 1989 newsletter contains several articles about racism within the lesbian movement, one of which dates back to the mid-1970s. These powerful articles challenge white liberals to confront the racism that they have inherited and from which they continue to benefit. An article from an early 1989 newsletter takes up the issue of classism specifically. In it, Carol Matthews writes that "[a]s lesbians, when we suffer the pains of internalized homophobia, when we separate ourselves from our sisters along lines of color and class, we not only lose the relatedness that is so essential to

our personal growth, we also severely weaken our community."² In the wake of Proposition 8's passage, as we confront the inability of the campaign to bridge borders of race and class, Matthews' insight is particularly powerful.

In short, these newsletters provide a rich sense of the complexities of the lesbian movement, and in them, we can find evidence of the profound work that has been done by the activists that came before. As records, these documents reveal the diversity and multiplicity of lesbian historical narratives. But they are not only documents of the past. They also have the power to inform the present, and future, of this movement.

James Hixon is a graduate student in the Department of Information Studies at UCLA.

Notes

1. MacCulloch, Bunny. 1982. "Oldies But Goodies Wanted." *SCWU*, April-May, 1982, p. 7.
2. Matthews, Carol. 1989. "Hanging Together: A Viewpoint on Classism and Internalized Homophobia." *The SCWU Newsletter*, December, 1988-January, 1989, p. 5.

DON'T MISS THIS EVENT IN
SPRING QUARTER OF 2009!

Mazer Symposium

This event will feature presentations on the 2-year project and will bring together representatives of the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, the UCLA Center for Community Partnerships, and the UCLA Center for the Study of Women.

Check the CSW website for information on the date and time for this public event.


Seeking Equality and Justice in Muslim Family Law

Musawah Movement

BY AZZA BASARUDIN

In Saudi Arabia, a female lawyer was banned from practicing law because of her gender. An advocate of women's rights in Afghanistan laments that women are the property of males in their family from infancy to death. A young British Muslim woman reflects how fatawa passed in Muslim majority countries govern the lives of Muslims in her home country despite differing social realities. In Gambia, a woman activist explains how Female Genital Mutilation is a primary source of gender inequality since clerics argue that it is an injunction of Islam.

THESE PERSONAL STORIES from Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Britain, and Gambia, among others—signifying the contention between law, lived realities, and experiences, and illuminating the need for equality and justice—emerged in Kuala Lumpur during the launch of the Musawah (“equality” in Arabic) movement. Between February 13 and 17, 2009, Malaysia bore witness to the courageous and necessary search for equality and justice in Muslim Family Law through the meeting of a transnational network of activists, academics, NGOs, grassroots organizations, policy makers, and those committed to reclaiming Islam for themselves in their struggle to (re) envision the role and meaning of their faith in the twenty-first century. No longer the nameless, faceless, and voiceless Muslim women that permeate Orientalist literatures and popular culture, this select group of believers and their allies claims that Islam promotes gender justice, though the realization of equality remains elusive due to authoritarian and unjust interpretations of Islam.



Global Movement for Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family

مساواة : حركة عالمية من
أجل تحقيق العدالة والمساواة
داخل الأسرة المسلمة

Mouvement mondial pour
l'égalité et la justice dans
les familles musulmanes

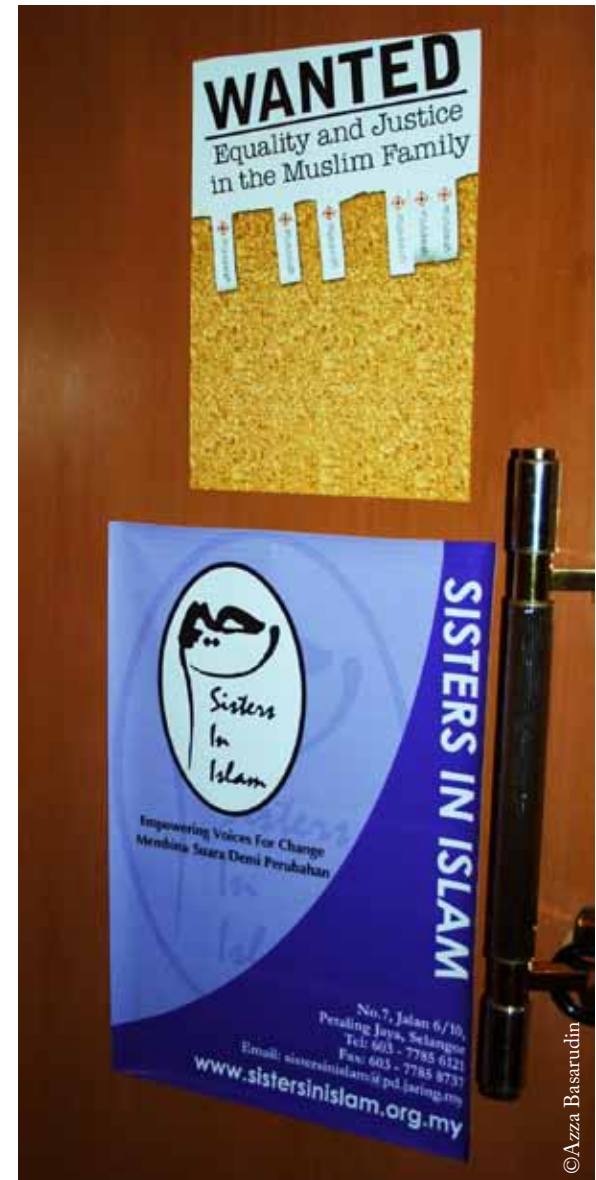
©Azza Basarudin

United by personal and professional concerns for a contextualized understanding, interpretation, and legislation of sources of Islamic tradition, the proponents of this movement argue that the foundation and legislation of Muslim Family Law are rooted in universal principles of human dignity, justice, and equality. The Musawah movement encourages Muslims to actively participate not only as believers, but as citizen-believers in defining faith for themselves rather than leaving it in the hands of religious experts. The group calls the monopoly of Islamic knowledge production and women's exclusion from interpretive and faith communities into question, and asserts that women's ways of knowing and their lived realities, whether in Muslim majority or minority countries, need to be accounted for in the legislation of laws and public policies.

The five-day meeting was coordinated by Sisters in Islam (SIS), an organization of Muslim professional women in Malaysia dedicated to "empowering voices for change" by working from within their religious and cultural frameworks. Registered as an NGO in Kuala Lumpur in 1993, SIS's research and advocacy raises public awareness on the rights of Muslim women and reforms discriminatory family laws that impact

women's lives and realities. I conducted field research with SIS for 9 months from 2006 to 2007, and I am currently writing my dissertation on feminist political engagement of religious and cultural transformation in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. During my fieldwork, Musawah was still in its early stages of conceptualization. While conducting the Egyptian portion of my field research in December of 2007, I was invited by SIS to one of the planning meetings in Cairo and have since integrated a significant analysis of Musawah into my dissertation. As such, I was delighted to receive an invitation to the launch of this ambitious event, an opportunity that did not disappoint.

The idea for the Musawah movement materialized in 2006 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, during SIS's International Consultation on "Trends in Family Law Reform in Muslim Countries." Scholars and activists from Southeast Asia, West Asia, Morocco, the United States, and Britain shared best practices strategies and cited successful family law reform campaigns in Turkey and Morocco as models for ensuring equality without exception. Conceptualized across national borders and inclusive of the diversity in the lives of Muslim believers, this initiative suggests that "women's demands for equality and justice are



Sisters in Islam is an organization of Muslim professional women in Malaysia.

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neither alien nor a threat to Islam, but are rooted in the Islamic tradition.”² The objectives of Musawah are:³

To introduce the movement, its principles, processes, objectives, resources, tools, and conceptual framework

To empower women’s groups, activists, and practitioners through the sharing of knowledge and experience

To build support and alliances

To agree on the way forward for Musawah

Musawah is made up of committee members from Egypt, Qatar, the United States, Turkey, Morocco, Iran, Britain, Pakistan, Gambia, Nigeria, and Indonesia. The organization is committed to the diversity of Muslim practices, beliefs, and laws in localized realities. As a space of solidarity, alliance building, and comparing/sharing strategies, the gathering brought together various spectrums of religiosities and was characterized by vibrant discussions on the meanings of non-discriminatory struggles within the entanglement of Islamic principles and constitutional and international human rights law. This meeting showcased renowned intellectuals at the forefront of dynamic scholarship in gender in Islam, Islamic law, and history. Participants

included Qur’anic scholar Dr. Amina Wadud, historian Dr. Amira El-Azgary Sonbol, legal anthropologist Dr. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, and Dr. Muhammad Khalid Masud, head of the Islamic Ideology Council of Pakistan.

For five days, the multilingual movement (English, French, and Arabic) featured wide-ranging discussions consisting of panels, caucuses, and breakout sessions with more than 200 participants from 49 countries. Topics included “Genesis of Muslim Family Laws,” “Family Law in Contemporary Muslim Contexts,” “Islam Beyond Patriarchy Through Gender Inclusive Qur’anic Analysis,” “Fiqh as Social Construction,” “Towards Gender Equality: Muslim family laws and Shari’ah,” “Moroccan Moudawana: Marriage as Partnership of Equals,” “Impact of Polygamy in the Family,” “Resisting and Challenging Fundamentalisms,” “Faith and Freedom,” “Tensions between Constitutional Guarantees of Equality and Family Laws,” and “Culture and Inequalities: International Human Rights Instruments as a Tool for Change.”

It was thrilling to listen to participants discuss changes that have taken place in their local legal systems. For example, Morocco has a family law describing marriage as “an equal partnership”; Turkey has amended its civil and penal code to ensure women are treated as equals in the law; and Afghanistan, despite the country’s unstable

environment, has managed to pass a law allowing women the right to contract their own marriage rather than through male relatives. However encouraging these changes are, the fact remains that equality in the law does not automatically translate into equality in lived realities. Questions of who is equal in the eyes of the law must also be balanced with who has access to the legal system. The hard work to reform laws is not only tied to exclusive knowledges, but also to entrenched normative attitudes of male superiority and patriarchal control.

Another interesting panel was an interfaith session where Jewish, Catholic, Buddhist, and Hindu women shared their stories of gender-based discrimination within their religious traditions, casting a wider net over the struggle for rights from within.

The chosen term “Muslim”—as opposed to “Islamic”—Family Law is intended to foreground the notion of human agency and fallibility in the processes of interpretation and codification of laws. The aim of Musawah is also to contest the notion of “expert,” which is often taken for granted and sustains religious monopoly, betraying human need for active and continuous engagement with sources of Islamic tradition. Agency imbued with principles of justice is necessary if individuals are to take control over the meaning of faith in their lived realities.

This was exemplified at the opening of *Musawah* by one of the movement's core initiators, Zainah Anwar, who stated "we are all experts here" with the authority "to think, to feel, to question what it means to be Muslim in the 21st century." The movement's vision of a responsible citizenry is consistent with Sudanese legal scholar Abdullahi An-Nai'm's conception of human agency: "to call on people to take responsibility for the relevance and meaning of their religious beliefs to their own lives, instead of perceiving themselves as passive objects of manipulation by forces beyond their control."⁴

While celebrated as groundbreaking, the Musawah movement is not without controversy. Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, the former Malaysian Minister for Women and Social Development Affairs and currently the special advisor to the Prime Minister on Muslim women's issues, opened Musawah on February 13, 2009. She was slated to chair a panel on the third day but pulled out due to criticisms that she put her stamp of approval on the meeting before consulting with state religious agencies. Objections to Musawah were raised by the Pulau Pinang branch of the Ulama Association of Malaysia (PUMPP) on the grounds that such an initiative challenges basic principles of Islam in the areas of Shar'ia laws related to women and family that have found consensus and are accepted by



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Musawah is made up of committee members from Egypt, Qatar, the United States, Turkey, Morocco, Iran, Britain, Pakistan, Gambia, Nigeria, and Indonesia. The organization is committed to the diversity of Muslim practices, beliefs, and laws in localized realities.

renowned Ulama. The Musawah movement is accused of painting a negative perception of Malaysia as a country that practices discriminatory laws against women. Moreover, Malaysian authorities have been encouraged to investigate funding for Musawah on the grounds that it originates from “Western” donors intending to “liberalize” Islam.⁵

Musawah ended on February 17, 2009, with a constructive proposal for a way forward, which includes refining principles, processes, and objectives. SIS will remain the Secretariat for the next two years. An edited collection entitled, “Wanted: Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family Law” featuring scholarly articles from a broad range of disciplines that support the movement’s theoretical foundation was launched alongside a booklet, “Home Truths: A Global Report on Equality in the Muslim Family,” containing a summary of family laws in 30 countries. The Musawah website, which contains tools and resources on family law reform, personal narratives, and advocacy strategies from over 30 countries, was also launched.

The historic meeting in Kuala Lumpur concluded appropriately with a session evoking the struggles and sacrifices of notable female figures of monotheistic religion (Eve/Hawa, Sarah, Hager/Hagar, Mary/Mariam and Aisha) by asking the divine to grant the participants and their

allies the strength, perseverance, and intellectual capacity to lead the struggle for gender equality and justice in Muslim families. As I reflect on five inspiring and educational days in Kuala Lumpur, reminiscing with old friends and connecting with new ones, I also look forward to the possibilities that this movement for justice and equality has to offer in inspiring family law reforms in Muslim societies.

Azza Basarudin is a PhD candidate in the Department of Women’s Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Basarudin’s research and teaching interests are Gender and Religion, Islamic Societies and Cultures, Transnational Feminist Analyses, Middle East Studies, and South-east Asian Studies. She is a member of the Radical Arab Women’s Activist Network (RAWAN) and the Secretary for the Association of Middle East Women’s Studies (AMEWS). She is also a recipient of awards from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), and the National Science Foundation (NSF), among others.

Notes

1. An authoritative but non-binding legal opinion on an issue of Islamic law issued by a recognized religious authority or scholar
2. Musawah Framework for Action.
3. Musawah Framework for Action

4. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im, “The Future of Shari’a and the Debate in Northern Nigeria,” in Philip Ostien, Jamila Nasir and Franz Kogelmann, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Shari’a in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2005), 327–357.
5. “PUMPP Selar Musawah” (PUMPP Criticize Musawah). See: pumppp.wordpress.com/2009/02/12/pumppp-selar-musawah. Translated from Bahasa Malaysia by the author.

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