

CSW update



RHODESSA JONES (CENTER) WITH SUE-ELLEN CASE (LEFT) AND KATHLEEN MCHUGH

NOVEMBER 06

ASSOCIATE VICE CHANCELLOR

Rosina M. Becerra is UCLA's Advocate for Gender Equity and Faculty Diversity

ACHIEVING *EXCELLENCE THROUGH DIVERSITY*
IS MISSION OF OFFICE FOR FACULTY DIVERSITY

IN A 2005 ARTICLE FOR THE *Daily Bruin*, UCLA's Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Diversity Rosina M. Becerra wrote, "For some, the idea of diversity conjures up images of lowering standards and bending rules. In reality, diversity and excellence are not mutually exclusive. As a matter of fact, excellence can be enhanced through diversity. In addition, diversity can lead to creativity, innovation, and boundary expansion. The goal is not diversity for the sake of diversity, but diversity for the sake of excellence. Diversity becomes a means to the end in maintaining a preeminent university."

Chancellor Albert Carnesale identified diversity as one of the areas demanding our immediate and long-term attention when he set out his "Strategy for a Great University" in 1998. As part of the ongoing effort to create and support a diverse student body and faculty, a search for an Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Diversity was undertaken. Becerra, who has been at UCLA since 1975, was selected. During her nearly 30 years on campus, she has been the Associate Dean and Dean of the School of Social Welfare, Chair of the Department of Social Welfare, Chair of Chicano/a Studies, Director of the Center for Child and Family Policy Research, and Acting Director of the Institute for



Industrial Relations. She has a BA in Mathematics and Chemistry, a Master's in Social Work (MSW), an MBA and a Ph.D. (1976) from the Heller School. As Professor of Social Welfare and Policy Studies, she focuses on policy issues relating to children and families. She has conducted large-scale evaluations for the State of California Department of Social Services on welfare reform (1995–1998) and Child Support (1998–2001). Her latest book is *Social Services and the Ethnic Community*.

As administrator, researcher, and professor, Becerra knows that efforts need to be made and resources expended to reach out, recruit, and support a diverse faculty and student body. In an

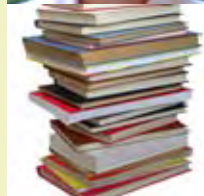
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DIRECTOR:

Kathleen McHugh

EDITOR/DESIGNER:

Brenda Johnson-Grau

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:

April DeStefano

FINANCIAL MANAGER:

Van DoNguyen

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS:

Young Lee, Jessie Babiarz

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS:

Alessandra Brophy, Amy Chen, Sarah Cho

UCLA CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN

BOX 957222
PUBLIC POLICY 1400H
LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-7222

CAMPUS MAILCODE: 722203

310-825-0590
310-825-0456 (FAX)
CSW@WOMEN.UCLA.EDU

PUBLICATIONS UNIT

BOX 951504
2210 ROLFE HALL
LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-1504

CAMPUS MAILCODE: 150402

310-206-5487
CSWPUBS@WOMEN.UCLA.EDU

From the Editor

Brenda Johnson-Grau



This issue highlights the wonderful work of Rosina M. Becerra and the Office of Faculty Diversity. As the first Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Diversity at UCLA, Becerra has been a relentless advocate for diversity among the faculty and students and for gender equity among the faculty. UCLA has not reached its goal but the Office continues to develop strategies to achieve it. By encouraging departments to make the process of hiring faculty more transparent and by developing a toolkit for search committees, for example, the Office has shown that new methodologies can change entrenched attitudes. And the support systems that the Office has implemented will help make sure that new faculty are supported after they arrive on campus and that the environment at UCLA is welcoming and inclusive. Becerra has also been an untiring supporter of CSW and female faculty at UCLA.

Also in this issue, CSW Research Scholar Denise Roman throws down a challenge on the topic of transnational feminism. She argues that women in Eastern Europe have been neglected in the transnational feminism and globalism debates because Western Europe has wrongly come to stand for all of Europe. She argues that theorists need to redress this

imbalance and consider the history of women in Eastern Europe.

Websites continue to proliferate across the Internet and more and more information and materials become available, but Romelia Salinas notes that the information being added may simply replicate stereotypes and informational deficiencies from other venues. In her article, Salinas, a doctoral student in the Department of Information Studies, presents the results of a content-based analysis related to Latinas and the Internet.

Courtney D. Johnson, a doctoral student in the Department of English, writes an appreciation of Rhodessa Jones and her recent impassioned and inspiring performance. Finally, we are pleased to welcome Michael Silverman, a postdoctoral scholar studying issues related to gender and the environment, to UCLA. Among his activities during his two-year residence, he will be giving a public lecture under the auspices of CSW and will be teaching a class through Women's Studies.

I hope that you enjoy the articles in this issue. If you have suggestions or comments, please send them along to cswpubs@women.ucla.edu.



Meet the Authors!

DECEMBER 6 ↻ 4 TO 6 PM ↻ ROYCE 314

Just in time for holiday giving, we gather members of the UCLA faculty and CSW Research Scholars for a celebratory event and book signing. This year's event will feature these authors. Books will be available for purchase.

Emily Abel: *Suffering in the Land of Sunshine: A Los Angeles Illness Narrative*

Jill Cherneff: *Visionary Observers: Anthropological Inquiry and Education*

Alysia "L. Divine" Logan: *Drama High: The Fight and Drama High: Second Chance*

Marina Goldovskaya: *A Woman With a Movie Camera: My Life as a Russian Filmmaker*

Sandra Harding: *Science and Social Inequality: Feminist and Postcolonial Issues*

Sylvia Lavin: *Form Follows Libido and Crib Sheets: Notes on Contemporary Architectural Conversation*

Miriam Robbins Dexter: *The Rule of Mars: Readings on the Origins, History and Impact of Patriarchy*

Mari Womack: *Symbols and Meaning: A Concise Introduction*



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MISSING IN ACTION

On Eastern European Women and Transnational Feminism

BY DENISE ROMAN

TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM and discoursing about gendered practices of globalization appear to be the most widespread feminist theoretical frameworks in women's studies departments across North America. To the student of Eastern Europe, however, this is a closed scholarship, limited only to histories and geographies that circumvent Eastern Europe, as if communism did not fall there seventeen years ago, as if women from Eastern Europe do not have an existence or a voice. I am not talking about the absence of a voice in general, since rigorous studies about Eastern European women's lives do exist in some departments of anthropology, sociology, history, political science, and Slavic studies. I am talking about those very institutionalized outlets (women's studies departments) that should have embraced and encouraged the expression of Eastern European women's issues and narratives through transnational feminism, after more than fifty years of confinement behind the Iron Curtain.¹

The dominance of transnational feminism in women's studies departments across North America today is already a reality—which, since I am also using transnational feminist concepts, I celebrate, although from an Eastern European standpoint. Still, I cannot keep from noticing that the version of transnational feminism prevalent today seems to merely rearticulate, in more sophisticated forms, a postcolonialism of earlier times. Clearly, the topics studied are narratives belonging to the women/gender/sexualities of those nations that have come out of colonialism in the twentieth century and can be located exclusively on the continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Virtually absent are the problems of Eastern Europe, as are those of a modern Europe as the European Union. Is transnational feminism just another name for postcolonial feminism in North-American women's studies departments today? Is it the right time for feminists to regain transnational

continued

feminism by making it more inclusive and thereby addressing not only the problems of the postcolonial world but also those of Eastern Europe, of Europe as the European Union, and of multicultural Europe? In other words, the problems of a Europe that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains? Otherwise, whose transnational feminism are we talking about?

To date, the East-Central and Southeastern European states have joined or are about to join the European Union. Geopolitically, there are almost no separations from Western Europe—other than the historical treatment of Eastern Europeans as “lesser” Europeans, and Eastern Europe as the traditionally “backward,” “uncivilized,” “other,” “Oriental” half of Europe. Larry Wolff and Maria Todorova’s works represent luminary introductions to this (mis)representation.² Here the author’s positionality seems to be crucial. Apparently, it takes an Eastern European to notice what Europe is or is not about. While an Eastern European will immediately see herself as a peripheral European, or a “minor” European—to apply one of Rosi Braidotti’s figurations³—a Western European will almost never see herself as a Western European, but as the European par excellence.

For me, the main source of Eastern European women’s exclusion from transnational feminism as of 2006 is linked to the fact that the transnational feminism prevalent today draws its origins, as stated above, from postcolonialism and its critique of eurocentrism, which targets Western Europe exclusively. Yet this restrictive definition of Europe excludes Eastern Europe altogether. Moreover, it puts the critique of eurocentrism at odds with Eastern Europe’s postcommunist discourse of “return to Europe,” of imagining Europe as a model to be emulated, of a home lost under communism and Soviet political and Russian cultural colonialism.

For historical and geographical reasons, East-Central and Southeastern European states never participated in the history of worldwide colonialism, slavery, and imperialism, as Western European states did. It is true that they practiced ethnic discrimination and a serf-based class system throughout their history, as well as the racial politics of WWII and the Holocaust—inside their borders (as a matter of policies, legislation, or old customs). The only sound international politics these states practiced during most of their history up to modern times was defending, more or less successfully, their frontiers against great historical powers—the Czarist Empire (later the Soviet Union) and the Ottoman Empire. Hence, if one looks for eurocentrism in Eastern Europe, one must locate it in the inner fascisms and racisms, not in colonialism, which is a mark of Western European history.

It is Eastern Europe’s task in postcommunism to positively valorize and rescue, on the democratic side of a multicultural European Union, its discourse of “return to Europe.” Braidotti discusses such democratization of the European Union as a decentering of Europe’s historical role as center, or “major,” into a “minor” European Union belonging in a world of “flexible citizenships.”⁴ Eastern Europe should address this new, inclusive definition of Europe, otherwise its own “return to Europe” could turn to an outright “return to eurocentrism,” and should be countered for the sake of not repeating sad histories.

Nevertheless, for transnational feminism to enter into a dialogue with Eastern European women and a democratic notion of the European Union, first it must be ready to open a discussion and make these distinctions, and not simply spread an indiscriminate and collective politics of “European guilt” from West to East.

Ultimately, it is history that may represent the crux of the problem. As it stands now, transnational feminism appears as a dehistoricized and geographically amorphous theoretical framework. It seems to have in mind a romanticized, generic notion of Europe, as if taken from some prudish nineteenth-century British novel. It may not even be the fault of transnational feminism altogether, since it may unconsciously reproduce, without subverting (which should be at the very essence of postcolonial theory) the dominant European discourse of “Europe as Western Europe exclusively.” It may also be so because transnational feminism in North America comes mainly out of departments of English literature and film studies.

The result is nevertheless the same: the exclusion of Eastern European women’s problematic from transnational feminism, and, insofar as transnational feminism is dominant today, from the majority of women’s studies departments across North America. Another result is blindness to the current transformation of Europe into a multicultural “minor” one, as the European Union—in other words, of redefining Europe in postmodern terms.

Many other issues arise in the process of integrating the problematic of Eastern European women into transnational feminism. Some of them are empirical. For example, albeit within the feminization of poverty, Eastern Europe’s postcommunist marketization was favorable to small and even middle-size businesses led by women. On the contrary, according to postcolonial/transnational feminism, while integral to globalization, marketization hurts small, women-led businesses in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Women are faring better in postcommunism (than women from Asia, Africa, and Latin America) at the mid-sized entrepreneurial level, and one of the reasons is the hard

continued

school of the communist double and triple burden.⁵ Another may be the absence of full-blown globalization and large-scale industrial and agricultural takeover by multinational corporations.

The problems of Eastern European women are not so much about the veil and female genital mutilation—dominant in postcolonial and transnational feminisms.⁶ Nor are they about regions ravaged by war and militarization. Although the wars in former Yugoslavia have brought these issues to light, they surfaced under the rationale of a nationalism ensuing from the fall of communism—not from Western colonialism. There are no great religious divides between Muslims and Christians, especially regarding the position of Muslim women, or between Arabs, Christians, and Jews, as these stem out of postcolonial and transnational feminisms—although ethno-religious minorities of these faiths do live throughout Eastern Europe.

Besides marketization, the problems of Eastern European women are those of unprecedented consumerism. Only recently has the trafficking of women from and through Eastern Europe made it into academic research.

Theoretically, as stated before, there is first and foremost the discourse of “return to Europe.” Thus, there is no antagonism and no anti-European politics or activism comparable to that emanating from the transnational/postcolonial discourse. Marxism is virtually rejected across Eastern Europe because of an identification of Marxism with communism and with the repressiveness of the gulag. But Marxism and post-Marxism stand at the core of postcolonial and transnational feminisms.

In the vein of the postwar, anti-fascist discourse of Europe, Eastern Europe talks about “ethnicity” and “ethno-religious identity,” not about race or color, which is the discourse of the U.S. civil rights and postcolonial movements—and now of transnational feminism. Both the Jewish and the Roma minorities were persecuted in Europe (and in Eastern Europe) for most of their existence on that continent because of their “alien” and “diasporic” nature and due to commercial competition. Yet should we disregard them now simply because they live in the “arrogant” colonizing European subject, which stands at the core of the critique of eurocentrism? In other words, can transnational feminism dialogue with minorities? Are those minorities dwelling within a powerful major subject, such as Europe (or, for a theoretical extension, the U.S.), not worthy of intellectual interaction? Are other “minor Europeans,” such as Eastern European women, not worthy of discussion simply because their assumed Europeanness is stained by the heritage of a colonialist (Western) European past to which they do not belong?

There is also a problem of methodology. As I mentioned before, even when taught in women’s studies departments, scholars from English literature and film studies are the ones predominantly authoring transnational feminism. Granted that these departments were the places propitious to the flourishing of postcolonial literatures in the first place. But Eastern European women’s problematic, on the other hand, is authored by scholars who have predominant social sciences backgrounds (anthropology, sociology, history, political science). Although there are scholars who study Eastern European literatures, this happens only in historical and national contexts, usually focusing on pre-communist times or dissident literatures under communism. Hence, there is no postcolonial approach to Eastern Europe as a region that, for more than 50 years, was under Soviet political and Russian cultural colonialism. This also has an explanation in the preeminence of Russia and the Soviet Union in Slavic studies in North America (that, to this date, continue to incorporate even such non-Slavic cultures in their departments as Romanian, Hungarian, or Albanian).

Ultimately, is the Eastern European discourse of “return to Europe” irreconcilable with the postcolonial/transnational feminist critique of eurocentrism? Braidotti suggests that a sense of dislocated European identity—which the democratic notion of the European Union as “minor” Europeanness provides—can counter the resurgence of fascism and racism on that continent. Since Eastern Europeans are the traditional “European Others” of Western Europe, then Eastern European women’s function becomes crucial for a democratic redefinition of Europe: By assuming and valorizing their historically dislocated Europeanness into an empowered “minor” European identity devoid of racism, fascism, and sexism. It is on these premises that a dialogue between Eastern European women and the European Union is possible, as well as between Eastern European women and transnational feminism. The invitation is hereby extended.

Notes

1. I wrote this article after teaching a few courses in various departments (women’s studies and sociology and anthropology) at institutions in Massachusetts and California. There I discovered that some courses and syllabi, although organized as transnational feminism and critique of eurocentrism, did not include any topics on Eastern European women, the European Union, or any modern definition of Europe other than as perennial colonizer. I began looking at what was being taught in other women’s studies departments and found a similar situation: the near exclusion of Eastern European women as of 2006. True, I did find some isolated courses on select topics about Eastern European women at the women’s studies departments at Stanford University and Bowdoin College, for example, but these represented rare cases, while their course

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MISSING IN ACTION, *continued from page 7*

titles showed that they still functioned under the logic of postsocialist/Eastern European Studies and not of transnational feminism.

2. Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994) and Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

3. Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions: Of Nomadic Ethics* (London: Polity Press, 2006), 70.

4. Braidotti, *Transpositions*, 70, 79.

5. See also Denise Roman, *Fragmented Identities: Popular Culture, Sex, and Everyday Life in Postcommunist Romania* (Lanham: Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield, 2003) and Kristen Ghodsee, *The Red Riviera* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

6. A stereotypical representation that Chandra T. Mohanty also criticizes in her “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, & Postcolonial*

Author’s note: Article © by Denise Roman. Please send comments by email to denizr@ucla.edu. An extended version of this article will appear in Denise Roman’s revised paperback edition of *Fragmented Identities: Popular Culture, Sex, and Everyday Life in Postcommunist Romania* (Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).



A native of Bucharest, Denise Roman has published articles about Eastern Europe in various North American, French, and Romanian journals, such as *Nationalities Papers*, *Balkanologie*, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, *Balcanii*, and *Sfera Politicii*. Dr.

Roman is a Research Scholar with the UCLA Center for the Study of Women and the European Editor of the feminist academic journal *Women’s Studies International Forum*.

◉► Faculty Curator Grants

CSW is seeking applications from faculty interested in proposing a programming concentration for Fall or Winter quarter of the 2007–2008 academic year. Such a concentration might be “Women and the Arts” or “Global Trafficking in Women” or “Women, Science, and Technology.” Ideally, the proposed concentration will represent the research concerns of a number of scholars at UCLA. For more information, visit http://www.csw.ucla.edu/faculty_funding.html

Deadline is December 15 ◀◉



Notes by Katie Oliviero

“Freedom has a sexuality, and it is not queer,” Janet Jakobson observed in her keynote address opening UCLA’s 2006 Queer Studies Conference. With this concluding statement, Jakobson, a professor of Women’s Studies and director of the Center for Women and Research at Barnard College, succinctly braided together the themes of citizenship, heteronormativity, performance, the state, and queer possibilities in a post-9/11 world that threaded through the two-day conference.

In her address, Jakobson described the interplay between religion, morality, and gender in order to explicate how the Bush administration’s rhetoric of freedom ties protestant understandings of heteronormative sex to ethics of war and neoliberal capitalism. She argued, for example, that U.S. aid given to relieve AIDS and malaria epidemics in the world deploys a language of “reducing suffering” and a strategy that when examined more closely, is less about trying to contain the AIDS epidemic than it is about reducing opposition to the U.S. military agenda. “Reducing AIDS suffering” becomes a strategy for—in the wake of 9/11—shrinking potential recruiting zones for terrorism. When that objective is pursued through AIDS policies that evangelize protestant notions of marriage rather than use of condoms and ignore different cultural attitudes towards marriage and chastity, heteronormativity becomes a U.S. military export—and a mandate. In a highly polarized international relations logic configuring a nation or citizen as either “for or against” U.S. military policy, it is also profiles one’s proximity to either terrorism or devout U.S. citizenship. Like unquestioning support for the war itself, marital heterosexuality stages one’s devotion to American notions of freedom and democracy: the good citizen is emphatically straight, and marriage is positioned as a watchdog of core American values.

LATINA WEB CONTENT STUDY

“Lack of Relevant Content” as Component of the Digital Divide

The Latina Web Content (LWC) study spotlights “lack of relevant content” as a vital element of the digital divide that has been overshadowed by discussions emphasizing technology and/or literacy. There are millions of documents available via the web, thus it may seem implausible to suggest that content benefiting everyone does not exist (Carvin 2000). The reality, however, is that content gaps do exist and contribute to the persistence of the digital divide (Children’s Partnership 2000; Taglang 2001; Tomas Rivera Policy Institute 2002). A significant disconnect between the life experiences of minority users and web content has been documented (Barbatsis, Camacho, and Jackson 2004; Dash 1999). The Internet often reflects the culture and interest of its principle users and content creators who are mainly upper-middle-class white males, despite the rhetoric about the declining significance of race, gender, and socioeconomic status in cyberspace (Kvasny 2002). In order to understand and address this piece of the digital divide, analysis of the nature of existing content about and for underserved communities needs to take place to identify gaps and barriers to the information (Chatman 1987; Childers and Post 1975). In other words, if the issue of lack of relevant content is to be tackled, the nature of existing content needs to be known and examined for potential inadequacies so that remedies can be proposed. The intent of the LWC study was to provide a sense of the nature of web-based content about U.S. Latinas, a community that has traditionally been underrepresented in information sources (McNutt, Queiro-Tajalli, Boland, and Campbell 2001). The “nature” of the content was explored

and analyzed by examining attributes such as, type of site, language of site, topic(s), producer(s) of site, technical features, and targeted audience.

While the existence of the digital divide has been amply documented for different populations, scholarly research discussing Internet access/use and Latinas is minimal (Gorski and Clark 2002; Hindman 2000). However, the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) (2002) has reported findings of a dearth of culturally sensitive and language appropriate content for the Latino community in general. TRPI made the following comparison: “Just as Australian or other English-language websites are less interesting to U.S. users than American websites, Latinos prefer websites that are more relevant to their local communities than what Spanish or Argentine websites can offer” (p. 4). Thus, information from Latin America countries is often inadequate in meeting the local and/or daily information needs of U.S. Latino residents.

A review of the literature on the production and representation of content about Latinas within traditional information channels pointed to a number of existing shortcomings. The analysis identified inadequacies such as, scarcity of information (Guzman and Valdivia 2004); cultural commodification (Rojas 2004); marginalization in production of content (Valdivia 2004); pattern of content homogenizing, exoticizing, and sexualizing Latinas (Estill 2000; Guzman and Valdivia 2004; Rodriguez, 1997); scarcity of bilingual or Spanish content (Valdivia 2004); and routine portrayals of Latinas as submissive and

continued



Photo by Dreamstime

subordinate (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1993). These themes and patterns provide markers for the examination of evidence of the reproduction of such deficiency in digital content. This study applied content analysis to a relevant sample of a hundred unique sites about U.S. Latinas, although 1,304 sites were reviewed in order to identify the hundred sites that met the inclusion criteria. As stated the study explored various attributes about Latina web content, but only key findings related to type of sites, language, and topics are shared here.¹

Type of Sites

The majority of the sites, 58%, were commercial, followed by nonprofit at 26%, while the categories of “other” had 7%, educational 6%, and government 3%. The data pointed to a continuation of corporate interests dominating the production of information about Latinas as had been observed with other media. Almost half of the sites were corporate, indicative of a commodification of Latina content. The findings also illustrated the imbalance in the distribution of voices represented on the web. The web has been portrayed as a space where all share an equal voice (Warschauer 2000), however creating a web presence requires what Pierrie Bourdieu calls cultural and economical capital. Those who lack access to such capital, whether it is monetary or know how are excluded or hampered from participating in this space. This may explain why corporate interests are over-represented in this study, whereas community sites comprised only 26% of the sites.

Language of Sites

English-only websites about Latinas were the most common, with 79% of the sites falling into this category (*see table 1*). The pattern of predominate English language content continues in the digital environment. Social reproduction theory indicates that this is another instance of the way the dominant social group ensures their legitimacy by having the technology embody their way of knowing. In this case, use of English consequently makes adoption and use easier for those who share this characteristic than those who do not. Hence, those who possess the cultural capital of being English literate would not only be able to adopt use of this technology more readily, but they would also be more able to derive value from the content.

Topics of Sites

Eighteen categories were used to determine the topic(s) of the sites (*see table 2*). Various sites were assigned more

* For a more complete presentation of the findings see Salinas, R. (2006). A content analysis of Latin web content. *Library and Information Science Research*, 28, 297-324.

TABLE 1: LANGUAGE

Language	
n=1	
English only	79.0%
Bilingual-English	9.0
Bilingual-Equal	7.0
Spanish only	4.0
Bilingual-Spanish	1.0

TABLE 2: NATURE OF TOPICS

Nature of Topics	
n=100	
Pornographic	38.0%
Leadership	18.0
Health / Medicine	15.0
Education/ Academic	13.0
Beauty	11.0
Community	7.0
Culture/History	7.0
Home / Family	7.0
Entertainment/ Travel	4.0
Finance / Investment	4.0
Professional	4.0
Biographical	4.0
Arts	3.0
Community-Web	3.0
News	3.0
Sex / Sexuality	3.0
Mentoring	1.0

than one category, which accounts for the total number of entries being more than 100%. The most frequent topic retrieved was pornographic content with 38% of the sites assigned this category. In the mid-frequency range were leadership-related sites (18%), which promoted and supported the development of leadership among Latina women, health/medicine sites (15%), which were the most developed in terms of the quantity of information, academic/educational (13%), and beauty (11%). Other topics were minimally or not represented at all.

Various implications can be drawn by the results of the topics covered. One implication relates to the heavy presence of pornographic content sexualizing and objectifying Latinas. Pornographic sites were over-represented in Latina content considering that only 12% of all websites are pornographic (Internet pornography statistics 2005) but represented 38% of the review sites. These sites promoted images of Latinas as exotic objects by associating Latinas with language such as, free, bad, exotic, naughty, and sluts. In addition, 11% of the sites focused on beauty, which contributes to the promotion of physical appearance as the

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most valued qualities about Latinas. An unexpected number of the beauty sites were dedicated to beauty contests, such as Miss Latina USA, Miss Latina US, and Ms. Belleza Latina. This bias is especially pervasive for Latina sites targeting teenagers as four of the five teen sites focused on beauty. These findings suggest a continuation of a sexualization of Latinas in digital information

In contrast to the sites discussed above, a smaller portion of web content offered an alternative perspective about Latinas. Sites on leadership skills, health, and education emphasized information for self-improvement and empowerment, and were typically produced by government, educational, or nonprofit agencies. An example is “Soy Unica, Soy Latina,” a bilingual website dedicated to providing young Latinas with information about their body and mind, family history, and making decisions about the future.

Hence, positive portrayals of Latinas are available on the web but not in significant quantities. The results of the study demonstrated a correspondence between digital and non-digital information resources—that is, a scarcity in content on many topics and a continuation of commodification, homogenization, exoticization, and sexualization. Hence, the markers that have plagued past information practices have been socially reproduced in the digital environment continuing the digital divide for the Latina community. Presuming that other elements (technology and skills) of the digital divide can be addressed, lack of content will continue to perpetuate the divide unless the nature of the content is changed.

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Romelia Salinas is a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. Her primary research interests are in information equity primarily within the digital environment, the information-seeking behavior of undergraduate students, and library and information services to the Latino community. She is also the Social Sciences Librarian at the California State University, Los Angeles. She holds a MLIS from UCLA and a dual BA in Law and Society and Chicano Studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara.

RHODESSA JONES



ON OCTOBER 16, CSW and the Center for Performance Studies hosted an appearance by Rhodessa Jones as part of a weeklong series on African American performance, and her performance/discussion was a rousing and poignant exploration of the role of art in the transformation of both hearts and politics.

continued

*Saving
Lives
through
Song
and
Story*

by Courtney D. Johnson

For close to two decades, Rhodessa Jones, the sister of renowned dancer Bill T. Jones, has been using dance and theater to transform the lives of incarcerated women. Her work began when she was approached by the California Arts Council to teach aerobics to women at the San Francisco City Jail. In artistic response, she and Cultural Odyssey created and toured “Big Butt Girls, Hard Headed Women,” a series of monologues based on interviews with the women she met. Jones then created *The Medea Project: Theater for Incarcerated Women*, a visionary cultural initiative combining artistic rigor and political activism, and continues to work with incarcerated women to create original performances. Since beginning, Jones has brought her workshops to prisons worldwide, including Johannesburg, South Africa; Trinidad; and Torino, Italy. When asked about what inspires her, she said that she does it because she’s trying to save her own life by helping other women save theirs.

While developing a form of theater that blurs distinctions between life, politics, and art, Jones supports inmates’ efforts to take control of their lives. Therefore, she’s adamant about there not being an “us/them” opposition when it comes to incarcerated women. When talking about the beginnings of *The Medea Project*, she said that the number of women in jail fascinated her; she thought prisons held only men. She remembers being fascinated by the language of the women and wanting to recycle it and “put it in my own mouth.”

In addition to showing a video—*We Just Telling Stories*—related to *The Medea Project*, Jones performed three pieces: “Raining Down Stars,” “On the Last Day of His Life,” and a monologue—“The Angry Vagina”—from Eve Ensler’s *The Vagina Monologues*. Jones made everyone (including herself!) laugh during her impression of a vagina and also joked about how Black women always seem to get “The Angry Vagina.” In “Raining Down Stars,” Jones evoked the “Myth of Flying Africans” and inhabited the body of a raped slave girl. “On the Last Night of His Life” was based on the day that Arnie Zane, her brother’s partner and also a dancer, died. Her mother sang and prayed to Arnie and Jones described death—again evoking the “Myth of Flying Africans”—as a release and a flying away. Such themes of transformation and freedom permeate Jones’s work on many levels.

A self-described “theater goddess,” Jones told the audience that she brings magic to the theater and believes strongly in the transformative power of drama. She also discussed the ways in which she has had to struggle against the stereotypical language and images of Black women: “Mammy,” “Sapphire,” and the “neck-rolling colored

woman.” It was a joy to hear Jones speak about her theories about what drama can do, particularly for women who have had few opportunities to be heard and to be creative. The productions are full of poignant, autobiographical stories depicting conditions of poverty, physical abuse, and dreams deferred. Created in prison and presented to the public (to rave reviews!), *The Medea Project* performances use narrative, dance, and myth to break down myths and stories that circulate about incarcerated women.

When asked how the work has changed her, Jones answered that theater saved her life. Now that America has become the undisputed world leader in rates of incarceration—with over two million Americans currently in prisons, jails, and correctional facilities—and now that California houses the largest women’s prison in the world, perhaps theater can save all of our lives and point the way towards the transformation of our carceral society.



Courtney D. Johnson completed a Women’s Studies concentration and is a Ph.D. candidate in English at UCLA. Her research and teaching interests include African-American women’s literature, feminist and queer theories, and American prison literature. Her dissertation title is “Celling/Selling Black Women’s Bodies: The Sexual Economies of Crime and Prison in Black Women’s Literature.”

Michael Silverman

POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLAR IN GENDER
AND THE ENVIRONMENT

...True places are not found on maps...places are found interacting with people, planting seeds and nurturing their growth, inhaling the air, exhaling shared knowledge...



WORKING OUT OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE ENVIRONMENT and in collaboration with the Women's Studies Program and the Center for the Study of Women during his two-year postdoctoral stay at UCLA, Michael Silverman will be teaching a course on "Gender Analyses of Urban Environmental Issues" in Spring quarter. Gender analyses provide methods to investigate social issues by considering women's vis-à-vis men's roles, needs, capacities, knowledge, and vulnerability. Using a gender framework, students will inquire and investigate urban environmental issues through field experiences and hands-on exchanges from, with, and for both communities and the environment in Greater Los Angeles. Topics may include urban farming, consumer and industrial waste, urban parklands, and sustainable living. Check future issues of the newsletter for more information on the class.

Silverman's current research is both theoretical and empirical. He is investigating conceptual models and principles of gendered and ecological pedagogy. His fieldwork, using largely ethnographic approaches, has primarily been on gender mainstreaming in conservation/development projects in Thailand and Vietnam. Recent papers include: "A Gender Analysis of Vietnamese Women's Role in Coastal Resource Management: Trao Reef Case Study" and "Gender Vulnerability in a NGO's Non-formal Education Program: Power and Knowledge in a Coastal Community's Development." His research on gender in environmental issues in Southeast Asia is ongoing with fieldwork: he is researching the "Iron Ladies" organizing community action at a proposed potash mining site and a community regeneration project in minority fishing villages affected by the tsunami of 2004. In addition, he is a collaborator with a Vietnamese NGO implementing gender-sensitive marine

conservation and livelihood programs and is a research advisor for two experiential education programs for U.S. students studying in Thailand.

Silverman received a Ph.D. in Education (USC 2004), specializing in International and Intercultural issues, concentrated on non-formal and informal education in NGO-led conservation projects in Southeast Asia. He discovered during his research that as in other development contexts, gender issues were particularly significant. Women and men—who frequently depend on natural resources for their livelihoods—are at the forefront of contesting issues of access, use, benefit, and control of their environment. Many conservation/development projects had gender mainstreaming components but did little more than disseminate concepts. On these projects, facilitation of leadership and allocation of funds barely recognized gender inequities. Thus, the need for research on gender and the environment—theoretical and, more importantly, applied—is timely.

Gaining fluency in Thai, Vietnamese, and Bahasa Indonesian in Southeast Asia, and Spanish, which was an emphasis of his master's degree research (UCLA 1992) that was conducted in Guatemala and Los Angeles, has been a result of his academic research. His proclivity for environmental research streams back to his undergraduate major in Environmental Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and countless idyllic weekends beachcombing and hiking during his childhood in New England. Experiences in Los Angeles, Guatemala, and moreover in Vietnam, were the awareness-raising moments that broke that idyllic dream and led towards his current research and personal commitment to advocacy on gender and environmental issues today.

interview published in *UCLA Today* in 2005, Becerra stressed the importance of diversity among the faculty, “A diverse faculty is needed to attract and support a diverse student body. Students see faculty members as role models. Whether they are women or members of underrepresented groups, students can envision their own potential through these faculty, many of whom had to overcome the same obstacles and barriers these students may encounter. It’s our responsibility to help students find a way to get through, over or around those barriers.”

Since being appointed in 2002, Becerra has been instrumental in ensuring that UCLA continues to foster faculty diversity as a crucial element of institutional excellence. Collaborating with academic leaders, faculty, and administrators, she works to make sure that diversity planning is integrated into the campus’s overall strategic planning. She is UCLA’s chief academic affirmative action officer and is a member of the Chancellor’s Advisory Group on Diversity and she directs the Office for Faculty Diversity.

Achieving and then sustaining faculty diversity is the Office’s mission; communication, education, and collaboration are the means. To make information on its activities available across the campus and beyond, the Office for Faculty Diversity maintains two websites: <http://www.diversity.ucla.edu/> provides a wide range of information on issues of diversity at UCLA and

<http://faculty.diversity.ucla.edu/> provides information for faculty and presents current and historical reports and analyses, including reports on gender equity. To help create a climate that is welcoming and supportive to new faculty, the Office sponsors programs that provide networking and development opportunities for faculty, including awards and lectures, networking luncheons, and informational

meetings on career advancement. The Office partners with other committees and offices to promote faculty diversity as a goal for the whole university.

Each year, the Office also publishes monographs of demographic data on the faculty at UCLA, including Regular Rank Faculty and the School of Dentistry and School of Medicine; an annual report on faculty demographics, current

The relationship between CSW and Rosina Becerra’s office is essential. Both share the mission of supporting gender diversity and equity at UCLA. I frequently approach her about the issues facing women scholars at UCLA. CSW has enjoyed her support on such projects as the Sister Scholars Embodiment research group. Rosina was also instrumental in retaining two of our distinguished senior women faculty, Professor Helen Deutsch (English) and Professor Shu-mei Shih (East Asian Languages and Cultures, Comparative Literature, and Asian American Studies). We are delighted that UCLA was successful in keeping both of them.

– Kathleen McHugh

Rosina M. Becerra, *continued from page 1*

programs, and future plans related to faculty diversity; and a search committee toolkit, which is a valuable resource for departments.

Hiring is only the first step toward achieving diversity. As Becerra said in her *UCLA Today* interview, “Supporting diversity... is about building a welcoming environment in this institution where all faculty want to come and want to stay...UCLA has to be a place that supports your interests, recognizes your contributions and welcomes you into its community of scholars.” Promoting a culture of inclusiveness at UCLA can take many forms including fostering cooperative research activities or supporting individual faculty. As Kathleen McHugh notes, for example, “The relationship between CSW and Rosina Becerra’s office is essential. Both share the mission of supporting gender diversity and equity at UCLA. I frequently approach her about the issues facing women scholars at UCLA. CSW has enjoyed her support on such projects as the Sister Scholars Embodiment research group. Rosina was also instrumental in retaining two of our distinguished senior women faculty, Professor Helen Deutsch (English) and Professor Shu-mei Shih (East Asian Languages and Cultures, Comparative Literature, and Asian American Studies). We are delighted that UCLA was successful in keeping both of them.” Ensuring faculty diversity and gender equity is a large task and progress is not as rapid as we might like but, as Becerra also



Front page of one of the two websites maintained by the Office for Faculty Diversity.

told *UCLA Today*, “We are making progress. One day we won’t need my position any longer, because enhancing diversity in all aspects of the campus community will be occurring spontaneously.”

As of now, UCLA still needs Becerra, as her own Office made clear in a recent report that detailed, for each department and division, the number of women, African Americans, Chicanos/Latinos, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans on the faculty. That number was then compared with the estimated number of faculty available in each discipline nationwide. The difference between the two percentages is the

“underutilization estimate” for that academic unit. As Becerra points out, “This report gives departments information about where they need to put more effort in generating their applicant pools. The argument that the applicant pool doesn’t include women or minorities because they’re not graduating in a field isn’t based on reality in some cases. I’m trying to let everyone know where we stand. We’re not the best; we are not the worst. But I believe that, with some more effort, we can be the best” (interview from *UCLA Today*). UCLA is fortunate to have an Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Diversity as expert and committed as Becerra.