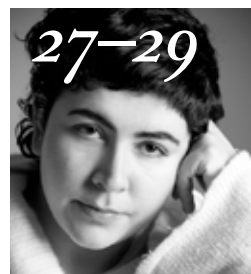
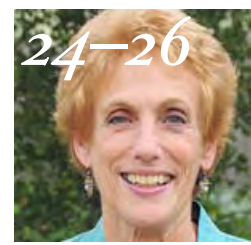


NOV08

NEWSLETTER OF THE
UCLA CENTER FOR THE
STUDY OF WOMEN

CSW update





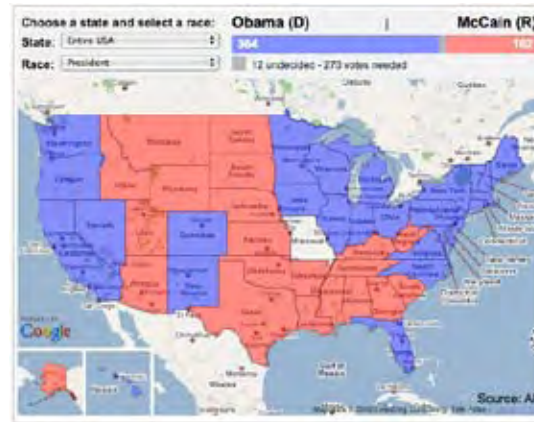
DEPARTMENTS

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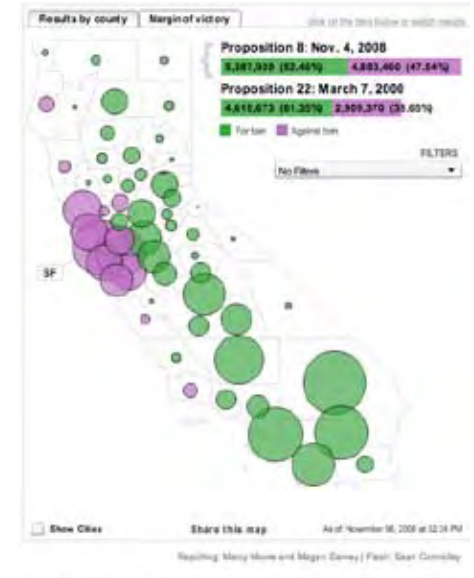


Change and More Change

Senator Barack Obama became the President-Elect of the United States on November 4th very early in the evening—the minute polls closed on the west coast. He won in a landslide with record number of voters turning out to endorse his message of change. It was a joyous evening with much celebrating, champagne, and dancing in the street. At the same time, voters in California saw fit to pass Proposition 8, forbidding gays and lesbians the constitutional right to marriage. Inequality is always galling, but for me, it was personal. Several weeks ago, I officiated at the marriage of two friends, and it also was a very joyous event. On election night, the newlyweds left the party early, happy about Obama, but very distressed about the numbers on Prop 8. Across the country,



anti-gay marriage initiatives were passed in Colorado and Florida, while in Arkansas, a measure passed forbidding anyone but married couples to adopt children. The election of Barack Obama is a momentous, transformational change, and clearly, we have more changes to make.



above, map showing vote on Prop 8 (Source: LA Times website); left, map showing presidential results (Source: Google/AP)



This week brought other news for CSW. In 2004, a longtime CSW research scholar, donor, and affiliate, Jean Stone, passed away leaving

a considerable fortune to family and institutions that she and her husband Irving had patronized during their lifetimes. Jean Stone had had a long and productive relationship with CSW that began in the late 1980s with her participation in the Friends of CSW. Professor and former CSW Director Kate Norberg got to know Stone at this time and involved her in the Center's activities. While Jean Stone was still in good health, she attended many CSW sponsored talks and, after 1990, when she made her first contribution to CSW, she never missed the annual Awards Luncheon. CSW Directors Kate Norberg, Sandra Harding, Miriam Silverberg, and Chris Littleton fostered Jean Stone's relationship with the Center,

picking her up and driving her to the CSW Annual Awards Luncheon and Fall Reception. Jean Stone cared deeply about the graduate students whose research on women embodied the promise of the next generation of women scholars. She endowed two dissertation fellowships at CSW, and on more than one occasion, she noted how much pleasure she derived from supporting stellar young scholars and their research.

In recognition of Jean Stone's relationship with CSW, the Irving and Jean Stone fund has endowed CSW with \$2 million to enable us to support outstanding young scholars in perpetuity with four dissertation-year fellowships, administered in collaboration with UCLA Graduate Division, a Women's Studies recruitment-year fellowship, and three research fellowships. Details about these CSW Irving and Jean Stone Fellowships will be forthcoming on our website.

– Kathleen McHugh



top, Scott Waugh with Jean Stone at CSW event; bottom, Carol Cini, Jane Roddy, Jean Stone and Virginia Coiner receiving flowers at CSW Awards luncheon in 1999.

The Art of Melancholy

A SELECTION OF FILMS BY LESLIE THORNTON

An overview by Ben Sher



“If you actually processed, consciously, all the things that are around you all the time, you’d be nuts,” said renowned experimental filmmaker Leslie Thornton. This quotation, perhaps, ex-

plains why her films sometimes induce a feeling of temporary insanity. They force the audience to process, consciously, many of the unnoticed things that surround us all the time.

Thornton, who has also taught in Brown University’s Modern Culture and Media department since 1984, showed a selection of works from throughout her lengthy career in a CSW-sponsored presentation, titled “The Art of Melancholy,” on October 15, 2008.

“I’m not going to present a thesis exactly, on melancholy,” said Thornton. “I’ll just say that I know it’s the place that I work from, and it is a kind of position regarding that which is around us, that has been medicalized and demonized. I’m just going to show you the work, and we’ll just



see what we can say about that.” Thornton began the series of screen-

ings with a film titled *Novel City* (2008), which recently had its premiere at The 46th Annual New York Film Festival. Thornton made the film during her recent, first visit to China. Shot on the day of a typhoon, from the window of the Jin Jiang Motel (Mao Tse-tung’s favorite), *Novel City* creates a stark vision of an industrialized, economically transformed country.

Thornton has long been interested in Chinese culture and history and, perhaps especially, Western culture’s exoticized, largely offensive reappropriation of them. According to Thornton, her well-known and influential early film *Adanyata* (1981), which is excerpted in *Novel City*, “sets itself up as a ‘guilty object-lesson,’ [in that] it creates an Orientalist spectacle, but in a manner so



extreme, and so vulgar, as to reveal itself. It was intended to bring about a

critical response, a simultaneous attraction and repulsion that provoke an instance of cultural self-awareness.”¹ However, despite her years of research on Chinese culture, she was surprised and disturbed by what she found during her visit. “I went through a state of culture shock that was so unanticipated and profound. I was really frozen,” said Thornton. “I haven’t traveled a whole lot, though I’ve traveled quite a bit in North Africa, and I thought that that would have prepared me to be the intrepid traveler, and it sure didn’t. I don’t know how many of you have been to China recently. If you like capitalism you’ll love being

1. Martin, Katy. “Interview with Leslie Thornton.” April, 2008 (distributed at screenings of Thornton’s work in Shanghai).



there. If you love construction and people who look like they just saw an atom bomb explode,

being pushed out of their houses, you'll love being there. But, if that doesn't sound attractive... it's really scary."

Emphasizing her ongoing interest in exploring the connections (and disconnections) of various cultures at various times, Thornton has called the next film she screened—*Sahara Mojave* (2006)—“a little trip to Hollywood via North Africa, circa 1900.”² The film's collage of imagery predominantly melds and juxtaposes a collection of vintage erotic North African postcards (of posed, topless women) and video footage that Thornton shot at Universal City, Los Angeles. It is accompanied by an even more dense audio collage, which incorporates—among other things--narration from an archival documentary on the Sahara and Bedouin people of North Africa, the whir of a running film projector, and tidbits of Thornton's voice discussing the film as she shot and edited it.

2. Program, 2009 International Film Festival, Rotterdam, 38th Edition (<http://www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com/eng/search/film.aspx?ID=c2507d90-bb34-4c58-9bb6-bb81687270fo>)



“From the beginning, one of the things I've had to do is to focus on the

narrative...that holds our perceptions together and allows us to, you know, get in the car and go to the grocery store, and actually buy groceries, and not get stuck every half block with another realization of: you see somebody happy, you see somebody sad, you see something you're interested in, you almost get in a car accident... So you have to buckle it up just to walk down the street,” says Thornton. “One of the things I've done in my work from the beginning... is to just set up this kind of blank stare through which all of the material that's been given to us, that we're having to process, is not contextualized easily, into this narrative that helps us get down the street.”

“So we all have this narrative, it's all stuff that's sort of familiar... If we looked at these postcards, for instance, and they haven't been put into a thesis about these postcards, or they haven't been received in the nineteenth century as something in the mail, what do we do when we look at those images now?... Everybody in the room is doing something different, I'm sure. But there might be some common ground, because I am setting up a



context. If nothing else, in that piece, I am setting up a context

that unsettles your regard for those images, and that asks you what the context is.”

Another Worldy (1999), the next film presented by Thornton, further demonstrates the filmmaker's interest in finding the unlikely, sometimes peculiar, similarities between different cultures and periods. Thornton started with a compilation of footage from '40s musicals and ethnographic documentaries about the role of dance in “primitive” cultures, and overlaid them with German techno music from the 1990s (sometimes reminiscent of the music used to score contemporary horror films). The dances cohere with this “incongruous” music to a surprising extent, but they also become off-kilter and disturbing. The smiling faces of the dancers seem to reveal brief glimpses of misery and tedium. To quote one of Thornton's critics and colleagues, Mary Ann Doane, “What are presented as norms of Western movement become invested with the pathological.”³

3. Doane, Mary Ann. “In the Ruins of the Image: The Work of Leslie Thornton” in *Women's Experimental Cinema: Critical Frameworks* (Robin Blaetz, ed.). Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

The story behind the making of *Old Worldly* (1996), from which *Another Worldly* was edited and expanded, emphasizes one of Thornton's qualities that seems to be fundamental to her work: her desire to watch, hear, touch, and evaluate as many pieces of information that cross her path as possible. "There was a roll of film, an hour long, and it was just labeled 'ARMY,' and it was \$15, so a friend and I bought it on the street one day. And my projector's sound bulb was broken, so we took it home, and we threw on this German techno sampler CD that somebody sent around the same time, to be the soundtrack," said Thornton. "It was amazing that these two cultural artifacts, one from the 1990s in Germany and one from the 1940s, America, had this sort of 4/4 rhythm. They kept finding each other."

When Thornton began screening *Old Worldly* and *Another Worldly*, the films polarized audiences. Some complained—as they did after screenings of *Adanyata*—that her film carried the viewer away with the pleasure and beauty of offensive material. Thornton, however, argues that it is important to take into account the intoxicating pleasure inherent in some of the offensive materials that she re-contextualizes.

"I am a 'have your cake and eat it too' person, in my work," said Thornton. "So I want this pleasure factor to be there, at the same time that this questioning or thoughtfulness is there, all the time. Please, take it all at once. It doesn't have

to be just one or the other. Also, I'd say I want to not be afraid to work with material that can be harsh or offensive or, you know, has been kind of hideous... I want to look at it, and look at it again, and say 'Look at this again! Maybe a little differently. Denaturalized from its environmental context, its original purpose.' Denaturalized."

Thornton concluded her presentation with the first episode of *Peggy and Fred in Hell* (1985), perhaps her most famous work. Using imagery drawing on cultural movements from direct cinema to science fiction, the film chronicles the experiences of two children in a strange, postapocalyptic world. *Peggy and Fred's* numerous layers of audio evoke the many disparate elements that lead to conscious or unconscious human development. In one sequence (which, like *Another Worldly*, is both oddly amusing and extremely disconcerting) Peggy sings the chorus of Michael Jackson's "Billy Jean" over and over again. "A man's song about a woman being ripped off, sung by a little girl who loved the song," said Thornton. "She sang it all the time."

Peggy and Fred in Hell was Thornton's first serialized project. In addition to making several additional episodes of the film, she has continually reconfigured footage from the earlier episodes, using them in later episodes and in installation art pieces. Thornton feels that her work becomes archival material, ripe for revision, as soon as it has been "completed." As with her incorporation

of footage from *Adanyata* in *Novel City*, Thornton's work suggests that art inevitably becomes vastly different (for the creator, for the audience) with each piece of new information that each person acquires.

Thornton cannot process all the things that are around her all the time without going nuts, but her work makes it seem as though she can process about twenty times more than most of us. Luckily, she is eager to share.

Ben Sher is a second-year M.A. candidate in UCLA's Cinema and Media Studies department. His film criticism has appeared in *Back Stage Magazine*, *Fangoria Magazine*, *Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide* (2007 and 2008 eds.), and *The Albany Times Union*.

Illustrations: On page 1 is an image from *Peggy and Fred in Hell* (1985); on page 5 are images of Leslie Thornton, *Novel City* (2008), and *Adanyata* (1981); on page 6 are images from *Sahara Mojave* (2006), *Another Worldly* (1999), and *Peggy and Fred in Hell* (1985).

Feminist Anthropologist, Faculty Activist

COMMEMORATING THE WORK OF KAREN BRODKIN



ON MONDAY, October 20, students and scholars from various institutions gathered in Royce Hall to attend *Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality*, a conference organized to honor the life and scholarship of retiring UCLA Professor Karen Brodtkin. Speakers from the UC system and beyond populated panels focused on identity and social justice, new approaches to labor, and directions in counter-hegemonic research in order to consider the lasting impact of the work of one of the academic community's foremost faculty activists and feminist anthropologists.

In the words of Sondra Hale, Professor of Anthropology and Women's Studies, "Karen

Karen has made invaluable contributions to studies of gender, race, class, Africa, colonialism, and counter-hegemonic movements. Her astute eye and always powerful analyses have influenced generations of students and peers alike. I know that her progressive voice will continue for some time to come. It was amazing at the symposium in her honor October 20th how many people, often coming from very diverse theoretical, regional, and topics backgrounds, have felt her impact. It was clear what a major impact she has made to the UCLA campus and far beyond.

– Sondra Hale

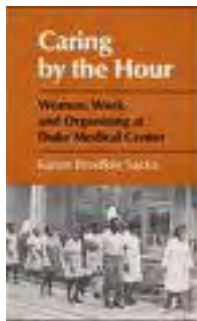
Karen was a really wonderful mentor. She was very supportive, but also pushed all of us to do rigorous work. Her ability to connect empirical observations with theory is amazing, and she communicated that very well in the graduate courses she taught.

– Cynthia Strathmann

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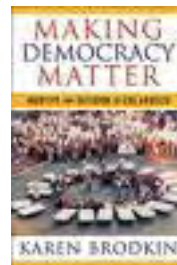
A longtime Professor in the Department of Anthropology, and a former Director of the Women’s Studies program (1987–1993), Professor Brodkin’s contributions to scholarship, activism, and intellectual life on the UCLA campus have been substantial. Having penned five books and numerous influential articles, her prolific research in the field of Anthropology and Women’s Studies is notable for its interdisciplinary approach to the complexities of race, class, gender, and sexuality. “I’ve always been particularly impressed by her ability to use material from multiple disciplines to speak to a particular issue,” says Cynthia Strathmann, a former student and current Research Assistant Professor of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at USC.

Brodkin’s first book, *Sisters And Wives: The Past and Future of Sexual Equality* (Greenwood, 1979), employs Marxist and feminist theoretical frameworks to explore the interconnected-



ness of kinship and economic institutions. Her second book, *Caring by the Hour: Women, Work And Organizing At Duke Medical Center* (University of Illinois Press, 1988), combines written and oral history, medical sociology, feminist theory, and ethnography in a study of

the work experiences of black and white women who comprised a labor union at Duke Medical Center. *Caring by the Hour* was awarded the Conrad Arensberg Award from the Society for the Anthropology of Work. Though these earlier works firmly established Brodkin as a pioneering feminist anthropologist, she has continued publishing book-length studies throughout her career. One of her recent projects, *Making Democracy Matter: Identity and Activism in Los Angeles* (Rutgers University Press, 2007), chronicles the reach and scope of grassroots immigrant and labor rights projects in present day Los Angeles. The book, in its focus on the organizers of social movements and the kinds of political subjectivities their work makes possible, offers a theoretical approach to the idea that ordinary people can have an impact on, and make a change in, the world around them. In a review of the book, Dana Frank, University of Cali-



fornia, Santa Cruz noted, “During the 1990s an amazing new generation of young activists, mostly women, immigrants, and people of color, transformed the Los Angeles labor movement, bringing a new vision of democracy to organizations not always ready for change. Now Karen Brodkin gives us their story in this wonderfully inspiring book, bursting with wisdom, dedication, imagination, and, best of all, models for how the labor movement can become a dynamic and embracing social movement seeking justice for all.”

Professor Brodkin’s own impact has been felt not only in her published work but also in UCLA classrooms. She has taught both graduate and undergraduate courses, both in the Department of Anthropology and the Women’s Studies program. She is remembered by her former students as an exemplary faculty member who demonstrated a sincere dedication to a younger generation of scholars. Cynthia Strathmann notes, “Karen was a really wonderful mentor. She was very supportive, but also pushed all of us to do rigorous work. Her ability to connect empirical observations with theory is amazing, and she communicated that very well in the graduate courses she taught.” In a recent interview with *UCLA Today* (October 10, 2008), Brodkin graciously commented on her relationship to her students: “I’ve been very privileged to have worked with so many superb grad students, and to have helped many of them create ways to combine their commitment to activism with their love of scholarship.”

THE STATE OF THE UNION

Marriage in the Shadow of Electoral Politics

CONFERENCE COMMENTS BY KATIE OLIVIERO WITH VANGE HEILIGER

In the days leading up to the 2008 election, the airwaves were peppered with commercials about Proposition 8, the California ballot initiative to ban same-sex marriages and amend the state constitution to limit the definition of marriage to a union between a man and a woman. An unprecedented fundraising campaign, second only to that of Barack Obama, generated over \$74 million. Proponents associated “traditional” heterosexual marriage with the well-being of children, tradition, and the moral content of early-childhood family education. Their opponents countered that marriage confers dignity, equal

protections, and full citizenship rights upon gays, and is a core part of the equality movement. As an institution that is legally and culturally associated with the private spheres of love and family, the debate over government definitions of marriage restages its emphatically public, state-centered parameters.

Ten days before the election, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women hosted a conference that specifically explored how marriage is imbricated with state regulation and cultural recognition. Kathleen McHugh and Juliet Williams, co-organizers of “State of the Union: Marriage in the Shadow

of Electoral Politics,” positioned the event as investigating how the law seeps into marriage, and how in turn matrimony protects and produces various experiences of intimacy. Not only same-sex marriage debates but also political sex scandals, immigration policy, polygamy prohibitions, and welfare reform emerged as salient sites staging some of the most heated controversies over the proper role of the state in recognizing and



regulating sex, sexuality, intimacy, and national citizenry.

★ LAWS of LOVE

The opening panel, “Laws of Love,” examined how culture and laws produce and police some forms of intimacy, while excluding others as perverse. Paul Apostolidis unpacked these relations in his examination of how sex scandals are enjoined to biopolitical discourses of immigration to recuperate the sexual indiscretions of political figures. The Whitman College Professor and Chair of Political Science

pointed out that salacious fascination with sex scandals reveals a voyeuristic pleasure in watching the most powerful figures fall. The public disgrace of Eliot Spitzer, John Edwards, and Bill Clinton, among others, rewrites their sexual dominance and centrality as deviant, redressing in part broader inequalities in social and sexual power. Apostolidis observed, however, that many of these men are able to recuperate their public image and position of power through publicized apologies and counseling. These performances of contrition have the ideological effect of reasserting control over what was their overzealous sexuality, restaging the myth of masculine self-restraint and autonomy.

When we refract sex scandals through the Foucauldian lens of biopolitics, Apostolidis suggested, we start to see how the recuperation of political figures' public stature is reliant upon denying marginal groups social and political visibility. Biopolitical power disciplines individuals and populations by promoting health,

vitality, and economic productivity to optimize a state of life. But it doesn't affect all groups equally: the vigor of dominant groups such as political celebrities rely upon exposing to physical or political death those groups that are constructed as threatening. Apostolidis argued that immigration is one biopolitical site that enables the recuperation of political figures' public lives and illuminates the muted contours of race in sex scandals. Historians have understood anti-immigration sentiment as fueled by the perceived threat of a degenerate population polluting the cultural purity and reproductive future of the nation. This older discourse of moral degeneracy haunts contemporary immigration debates. Unprecedented incarceration, detention, and deportation of immigrants signal that the specter of moral degeneracy has returned in the guise of protecting national security. Fears over undocumented women's reproductive excess and so-called "anchor babies" (American-born children who could insulate their mothers against



*Silda Wall Spitzer
with disgraced husband
Eliot*

deportation proceedings) are layered over concerns about insecure borders to characterize national identity itself as at risk.

Apostolidis argued that public figures' ability to recuperate their political status and sexual self-control relies upon the specter of racialized, moral degeneracy in immigration discourse. Their reprieve relies upon discourses of racialized hypersexuality to reinforce the unmarked norms and morality of

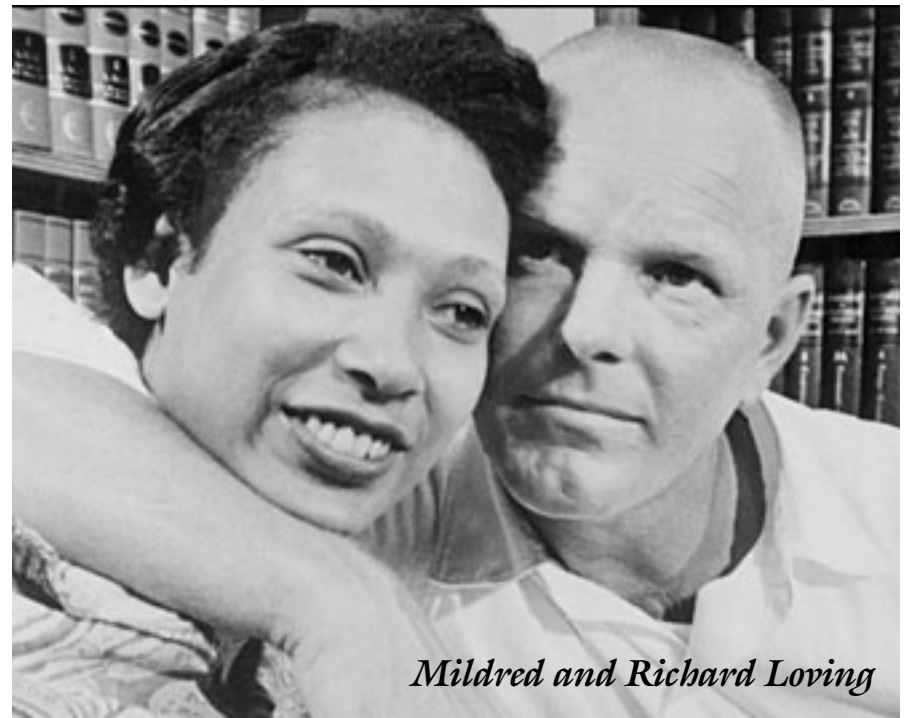
white sexual privilege. If the Nativist movements at the turn of the nineteenth century outlawed abortion and birth control to boost the declining fertility of white women, then Apostolidis hypothesized that abstinence-only education may be the new eugenics program. Bristol Palin's pregnancy is less of a sex scandal when positioned as a means of regenerating the biological viability of the white race. At a time when undocumented immi-

grant women's choice to continue a pregnancy is considered a threat to the body politic, the public's relatively easy acceptance of Bristol's pregnancy as a private family matter exposes a form of biopolitics where white reproductive life is valued through a denigration of the reproductive capacities of women of color. Cultural scripts of nationally accepted intimacy and sexual recuperation are once again reliant upon racialized asymmetries in biopower.

The unstable production of national intimacies is evident in the ways that we are making sense and nonsense of identity politics and cross-racial coalitions in the 2008 election. Susan Koshy, a professor of English and American Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, argued that coalitions across identity politics for both Obama and McCain render race, gender, and sexuality uncertain and unrecognizable, – what Freud referred to as “uncanny.” The campaigns attempted to restore identity-based legibility through strategies of tokenism and moral

discourses of family values. Sarah Palin's femininity is thought to counterbalance Barack Obama's blackness. It is a token of gendered difference that is supposed to be easily fungible with and equal to that of race. Koshy argued that this simultaneous marking of bodily difference and disavowal of its significance exposes conservative cooptations of identity politics' and civil rights discourse. Tokenism is what remains after their radical potential has been appropriated and emptied.

The stable ground of essentialized identity difference is also recuperated through a discourse of family values and moral authority. As Anna Marie Smith also highlighted in a later paper, Obama's fatherhood initiatives inoculate undecided voters against the threat of his blackness. Because conservatives depend upon racist assumptions that black fathers are delinquent, family-values proposals sooth anxieties over African Americans' rising political power, reassuring them that an empowered black father will displace the sexual excesses of overly dominant, single



Mildred and Richard Loving

black mothers. With “soft-lighted global cross racialization” and by “cherrypicking family values,” campaigns can sooth the anxiety stemming from the political uncanniness surrounding a black presidential candidate. Palin also deployed the moral authority of her motherhood in this way. Rather than making her an outsider, her strength and enthusiasm for such traditionally male, rural pastimes as hunting are balanced by her femi-

ninity and fecundity. She embodies a kind of frontier feminism, where her risks of motherhood should be rewarded with political power. Thus normative gender, heterosexual, and family values conceal, normalize, and nationalize gender and racial uncanniness.

The panel's final paper, “Loving and the Legacy of Unintended Consequences” explored how a kind of uncanniness is

transmitted in legal understandings of marriage and their social movement applications. Rachel Moran, a Professor of Law at UC Berkeley, argued that we are just starting to understand the curious consequences of *Loving v. Virginia*, the historic 1967 Supreme Court decision overturning anti-miscegenation statutes forbidding interracial couples from marrying. *Loving* is frequently cited as precedent for contemporary gay rights frameworks, including the movement for same-sex marriage. Moran notes, however, that *Loving* may have actually reinforced ideological and essentialist understandings of marriage and race. Marriage is designated as a foundation of the nation, producing moral order and social good whose denial is damaging. At a time when the culture and law were starting to be able to grapple with the complexities of interracial identity, *Loving* relied upon a dichotomous understanding of race as either black or white. In stabilizing changing meanings of marriage and race, the decision legally codified nationalist under-

standings of matrimony and a form of colorblindness that appealed to both liberal and conservative proponents. In challenging Jim Crow, the ruling satisfied liberals, but because colorblindness inhibits our ability to name and challenge the structural racisms and power asymmetries creating de facto social and school segregation in a post-Brown era, the verdict appealed to conservatives as well.

This consequence complicates the easy transmission of *Loving*'s legacy. Its heirs, particularly multiracialism and same-sex marriage, attempt to broaden state-recognition of racial complexities and marriage by using a decision that stabilized them. They are trying to expand the penumbra of marital protections through a state-produced form of intimacy that valued tradition and concealed that multiracial complexity.

✦ THINKING through SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

By mapping a range of political, national, interracial and

marital intimacies, the opening panel implied that contrary to narratives of progress surrounding same-sex weddings, marriage functions conservatively as well as radically. The final two panels take up the implications. The first, "Thinking through Same-Sex Marriage," complicated the well-established queer critique of same-sex marriage as "homonormative." Gay matrimony is charged with retaining heteronormative models of the family that enlist the state to authorize those relations. This homonormativity mandates that same-sex marriage always take place in an exclusionary system, where "good gay sex" must reauthorize the monogamous reproductive family, producing once again a category of "bad queers" practicing perverse forms of nonprocreating, promiscuous, and public sex.

Tom Boellstorff noted in his talk "Queer Normativity and New Orders of Same-Sex Marriage" that all factions of the marriage debate—conservative, gay, or queer—rely upon a shared paradigm of linear, apocalyptic time. Narratives of causality

and progress imply that the events of the past inevitably lead to the present and future. For conservatives, the purportedly heterosexual tradition of marriage's past cannot co-exist with contemporary initiatives to include same-sex couples, leading to an apocalyptic future where marriage can only be destroyed. This linear framework—what Boellstorff dubs "straight" and "apocalyptic" time—is evident in same-sex proponents' progress narratives. Marriage is historically associated with civil rights and social dignity, and consequently expanding it to include gays will bestow these privileges upon us. Queer critiques, too, replicate these apocalyptic temporalities where the imbrications of marriage with heteronormativity and the state ensure that queer difference and political potential most be subsumed by them. All three factions employ a mode of straight time that cannot take into account the co-presence of multiple meanings of marriage with very different political effects. In this temporality, traditional and

queer understanding of marriage cannot coexist, full civil rights are inconceivable without civil matrimony, and it is impossible to support gay marriage or to be married without betraying queer commitments to subvert normativity.

Boellstorff argued that queer critiques of homonormativity reproduce a fantasy of being outside of power relations. It risks reasserting binaries of false consciousness, and forecloses our ability to consider why marriage is still desired in spite, or perhaps because, of its association with the normative state, or how gays can transform marriage by engaging with it. In turn, the convergence of queer opposition to gay marriage with conservatives is ignored, and we are unable to theorize why queer marriage rites are considered such a threat by the political and religious Right. Instead of focusing on the binary of whether we should or should not marry, Boellstorff urged us to ask whether same-sex marriage can act from within dominant social systems to do more than sustain them.

Because it is impossible to ever step outside of normativity, we should contest the ontologization of the meaning of marriage, intimacy, and queerness. He advanced a notion of “coincidental time,” a temporality where gay and straight marriage could be co-present but not equivalent, as a point of intervention. Doing so would open up the possibility for differentiating between conservative and alternative forms of marriage and for acknowledging the myriad family forms and heterosexual couples who work to diversify the relationships between the state, sexuality, morality, and marriage.

Mignon Moore, Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at UCLA, elaborated upon some of these more coincidental possibilities in her paper “Gay Marriage and the Search for Respectability among People of Color.” In contrast to queer critiques of normativity, when a culture persists in associating people of color with deviance and promiscuity, marriage functions as

a mode of legitimation and respect that counteracts the stigma of the black family and sexuality. African American opposition to homosexuality and gay marriage may be framed by some in the community as compromising this fragile bid for dignity. Moore points to the possibility of hitching these respectability politics to larger anti-poverty and anti-racism frameworks to advance gay rights among people of color. Thus the middle-class lesbians she interviewed need to publicly perform their marriages and commitment to reassert their respectability within their black community and larger social fabric. The respectability conferred by their professional and educational accomplishments often counterbalanced stigma within the community over their sexuality. Visible political mobilizations around bisexuality are often suspect because they can be perceived as forming an alliance around sexuality that might marginalize other commitments to the African American collectivity. But when members of the black

community connect gay rights with such bread-and-butter issues as poverty, mobilizations around gay marriage are more successful. In contrast to queer critiques disavowing marriage for its assimilationist valence, Moore highlights the more intersectional meanings of marriage where respectability coincides with normativity to redress persistent stigmas of hypersexuality and the deviant family. By retaining the dignity associated with marriage and conferring it upon marginalized queers and people of color, the conservatism of marriage is tactically used to broaden a democratic agenda.

Nancy Polikoff, a Professor of Law at American University, delved into some of the more pernicious consequences of this conservative valence. “Beyond Straight and Gay Marriage” unpacked how the conferring of any special rights upon marriage—straight or gay—disavows the everyday lived experiences and needs of a majority of the population. Early

feminist and gay rights movements pursued legal and cultural strategies to make marriage matter less. They challenged laws around adoption, illegitimacy, and social security distribution to emphasize that situations of *dependency*, and not state-recognized marriage, should dictate state and caretaking responsibilities. For example, when the state attempted to disincentivize premarital and extramarital sex by drawing legal distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate children, these movements fought hard-won battles to emphasize that it is parent's biological, and not marital, ties to their children that generate their responsibility. But over the past 25 years, the New and Religious Right has striven to retain the special rights attached to marriage and to make matrimony the monolithic gateway to respectability, healthcare, and a very limited menu of social welfare benefits. Despite the larger movement's commitment to a broader social justice agenda, same-sex marriage equality initiatives maintain these

special entitlements, only narrowly expanding their scope. Such measures still leave out the majority of US households, who are organized according to a diverse potpourri of cohabitation, co-parenting, caretaking, queer, and multigenerational arrangements that go beyond the singular model of marriage, gay, or straight.

Polikoff argued that the focus on same-sex marriage forecloses public policy initiatives to recognize this diverse array of households; however it would be rhetorically impossible to argue for extending the special right of marriage to a range of nonmarital arrangements. The backlash against gay marriage has generated a patchwork of statutory and constitutional Defense of Marriage Acts (DOMA), which in many states not only define marriage as between a man and a woman but also forbid legal recognition and transmission of benefits of all other cohabitation, kinship, and caretaking forms. For example, the successful 2008 ballot measure banning same-sex marriage in

Florida also prohibits the recognition of such "substantial equivalents" as domestic partnerships. Arkansas passed a measure excluding unmarried cohabitating "sexual partners," gay or straight, from adopting or fostering children.

Instead of focusing our economic resources and cultural capital on gay marriage, Polikoff argued that we need to pursue local, state, and federal initiatives that make available the special rights of marriage to a range of caretaking and kinship forms. Even if President Obama does not fulfill his promise to repeal the 1996 federal DOMA, the array of domestic partnership, power of attorney, second-parent adoption, federal and private benefits arrangements, and healthcare registries provide existing means to democratize many of the rights currently tied to marriage. Thus when Hawaii and other states permit individuals to domestically partner with someone over the age of 62 or the District of Columbia extends this arrangement to siblings, they generate frameworks for provid-

ing legal recognition of caretaking relationships. Marriage becomes only one of many ways to recognize the diverse dependencies, commitments, and desires through which people structure their lives.

✪ INTIMACY and INTERSECTIONALITY

The conference's final panel, "Intimacy and Intersectionality," highlighted how racialized and masculinized understandings of respectability and responsibility determine which types of intimacy are legitimate. Anna Marie Smith's paper, "Obama's 'Responsible Fatherhood' Discourse and the Unacknowledged Promotion of 'Simulacra Marriages' in Poverty Law," unpacked how limiting our understanding of family to marriage generates public policies that recreate racialized binaries of morality and deviance. Marriage promotion initiatives were prominent in 1996 Welfare Reform as well as the 2001 and 2005 Deficit Reduction acts. Smith, a Professor of Government at Cornell University, argued that poor women's access to a very limited pool of social benefits

was often conditioned upon revealing the identity of their children's father so that the state could ensure these "delinquent fathers" would contribute to child support. These "paternafare" provisions reveal the overlap of the conservative marriage and fatherhood movements with public policy. The identified fathers are criticized for having marginal economic impact—they are often poor themselves—while reinforcing outmoded, patriarchal family models and exposing poor and nonwhite men and women to state surveillance and regulation. Echoing Susan Koshy's application of the uncanny, Smith argued that Obama has drawn upon components of the fatherhood movement in ways that revitalize sexist and racist assumptions about black sexuality and the family.

The fatherhood movement is comprised of two wings: The Religious Right and Civil Rights. Obama adopted components of the latter in his arguments that the lack of economic activity for black men leads to shame and frustration in not being able to provide for a family. His vision for a more perfect

parental union are vulnerable to decades-old critiques from women of color feminists who point out that this rhetoric ignores the needs of black women and rewrites their mothering as another form of sexual deviance. It also revitalizes racist associations of black fatherhood with delinquency, while reassuring conservatives that the rehabilitated father will contain and displace the purported excess of black maternal power and promiscuity.

Smith acknowledged that Obama's fatherhood initiative improves upon previous ones: 100 as opposed to 50 percent of paternal child support money would "pass through" to the mother, and there would be additional protections for those women and children at risk of domestic violence. But the moral impetus betrays how more religiously-oriented Fatherhood Initiatives are still evident in this overtly rights-based one. Paternity identification still invades a woman's sexual privacy, forces a relationship that potentially exposes women to intimate violence, privileges biological fatherhood over caregiving, and ascribes a moral value

to marriage. It diverts precious public funds away from effective anti-poverty initiatives, substituting the fetish of marriage as a cure for our social ills. The marital family is presumed to have the moral and national obligation to protect their own from economic insecurity. This neoliberal displacement of distributive justice and socioeconomic rights improperly positions the family as "the first port of call" for these problems.

Judith Stacey, an NYU Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis, observed in her paper "The Race to Marriage: Lessons from South Africa," the strange ways that polygamy, gay marriage, and incest are linked with one another in the public imaginary. Juxtaposing media accounts of polygamy and same-sex marriage in the US and South Africa, she illuminated how the often-overlooked factor of race differently determines the legal and social acceptability of these forms of marriage, to the detriment of many forms of intimate relationships. Tropes of parental responsibility and the wellbeing of children

are mechanisms deployed by the state to further legitimize the policing of sex, sexuality, intimacy, and family. The April 2008 raid on the Yearning For Zion (YFZ) ranch in Eldorado, TX—a polygamous, Fundamentalist Mormon compound led by Warren Jeffs—televised images of hundreds of children in prairie garb being torn from their mothers, despite no evidence of abuse, neglect, or endangerment. State social services and law officers presumed that polygamists lack responsibility and caring for children, while regularly engaging in incest and child abuse. Stacey notes that Mormon association with polygamy marked them as sexually deviant and historically racialized them as nonwhite. This suggests that contemporary policing of polygamist communities for abusing child welfare are animated by similar discourses of deviance leading to the hyper-surveillance of communities of color. Polygamists have been accused of being "race traitors," who participate in "barbaric African and Asiatic practices"—a startling contrast with the ultra-white bodies of many US

Mormons and a history of racism within the Church of Latter Day Saints.

Polygamy and same-sex marriage are legally entwined in ways that neither side may be comfortable with. In May 2008, six weeks after the YFZ raid, a ruling came down in favor of same-sex marriage in California, a decision upheld as a right embedded in the California constitution. Interestingly, Chief Justice Ronald George did not merely rule in favor of same-sex unions, but took this as an opportunity to reinforce the constitutional soundness of prohibitions against polygamy and the marriage of close relatives. This distancing of same-sex marriage from polygamy is a tool used frequently by same-sex marriage advocates, and Stacey argues that we must scrutinize such attempts at “respectability” if we are to understand how race is deployed both to legitimize and demonize diverse intimate practices.

South Africa stands as a foil to US marriage and racial ideologies. A January 2008 newspaper simultaneously published two joyous accounts: Zackie Achmat,

a well-known AIDS activist, wed his longtime male partner in an interracial, same-sex ceremony. On the same day, Jacob Zuma, president of the African National Congress, celebrated a polygamous wedding to the mother of two of his children in a Zulu ceremony. Neither group felt the need to distance their wedding from the other. While this seems on the surface to reflect a more progressive South African view towards both same-sex marriages and polygamy, the latter is only legal in South Africa for indigenous black men. This limitation reproduces complicated understandings of polygamy as rooted in cultural practices that are at best, only appropriate for indigenous black Africans, and at worst, “barbaric” cultural practices tolerated only among backward indigenous peoples. At the same time, Achmat’s same-sex union can be seen both as progressive on the grounds of race and sexuality, and as reinforcing stigmas by linking the mixing of race with the sexual “impurity” of homosexuality.

The juxtaposition between South African and US marriage



ideologies reveal an uneasy linkage between racial impurity, racial inferiority, polygamy, and homosexuality. It is complicated by the ways both polygamists and homosexuals try to distance themselves from the other’s association with incest and pedophilia, while some polygamous groups try to draw comparisons in the ways they are similarly oppressed. Polygamy and same-sex marriages are newly linked in the public imaginary

through the television show *Big Love*, in which the wives in a polygamist family consistently draw comparisons with homosexuals by referencing “being in the closet,” “coming out” as a polygamist, and struggling to have their polygamist intimate family arrangement legally protected, culturally accepted, and socially respected. The character modeled after YFZ leader Warren Jeffs explicitly references the decriminalization of sodomy and

the Massachusetts's legalization of same-sex marriage to forge a case for his community's right to be let alone. In light of both marital forms' associations with sexual deviance, and the implicit racialization of that stigma, their jockeying over who is more respectable than the other recreates hierarchies of sexual degeneracy that reference race even as it conceals it.

Paralleling Moore's paper on black lesbians' search for respectability and Polikoff's contention that we need to make marriage matter less, Stacey criticized gay marriage advocates for having a weak racial and kinship vision. She argued that marriage is always about inequality—it will never apply to everyone. Gay marriage advocates would be more successful if they focused not on the love between two people in a same-sex union, but rather on the issues that affect many who are denied rights afforded only through marriage: housing, food, healthcare, legal protection, and family medical leave, among other benefits. This means making cross-racial, cross-class, and cross-sexual alliances, and working to de-link the benefits of

marriage from the institution of marriage. This includes fighting for respect and legitimacy of consensual polygamous family arrangements. Referencing Smith's work on absent fathers and welfare, Stacey asked why it is that we punish men "for sticking around, not for having children with multiple wives."

Although polygamy and same-sex marriage have very different historical trajectories and constituencies, both types of marriage challenge the primacy of a monogamous heterosexual marriage that has come to be identified as embodying the ideal American sexual and familial arrangement. As such, they highlight the stark differences between intimate practices, and the mainstream ideologies that inform "proper" sexual and familial relationships.

The conference's participants highlighted how the state is foundationally invested in producing and policing intimacies, within and beyond marriage. It maps how a range of neoliberal, religious, and conservative interests deploy matrimony as a proxy through which they create political traction for

more explicitly moralistic parenting, sexual, class, and racial narratives. For instance, California Proposition 8 proponents successfully broadened their campaign beyond the question of marriage, framing it as involving the infringement of the state upon parenting and religious rights. Same-sex marriage became an effigy to transmit fears that public school children would be indoctrinated with the moral acceptability of gay marriage and sexuality; that churches would be sanctioned for refusing to perform same-sex blessings; and that the tradition of marriage itself would come undone. This apocalyptic narrative frames civil marriage as a gatekeeper protecting families' purportedly private parenting and religious decisions. It is the border patrol guarding against the illegal incursions of an overzealous state.

But as the successful Arkansas initiative forbidding unmarried couples to adopt or foster children attests, a narrow definition of marriage—and not broader understandings of privacy, equality, or even family—is the primary entity invested with defining who is legally and morally defined as family, and who

is not. Marriage then is not only a site of state regulation, but produces what citizens the state should recognize. Protecting patriarchal and heteronormative understanding of marriage is code for shoring up the traditional understandings of nation as well. Beyond the passage of Proposition 8, the success of this rhetoric is evident in the fact that the majority of the more than \$40 million in funds raised to support the ballot initiative came from outside California, representing every state but Vermont.

The contemporary, conservative marriage movement is retrofitting not only well-worn moral arguments for the twenty-first century, but racial ones as well. This is particularly evident in the sense made of voter demographics: exit polls show that a narrow majority of the white population opposed Proposition 8, and a similarly lean margin of Latinos upheld it, while African Americans supported it by a 2 to 1 margin. The narratives making sense of these statistics acknowledge that heterosexual marriage hails African Americans into moral discourses of sexual normativity and dignity.

They then conflate this appeal to dignity with homophobia, concealing how new forms of racism and sexual deviance in a compulsory heterosexual culture may compel this social distancing. The association of gay rights with civil rights in “No on 8” ad campaigns, and their analogization with segregation and anti-miscegenation laws has generated a discourse where African American support for Proposition 8 is cast as at the very least perplexing and more often a hypocritical betrayal of their own history. These “explanations” serve to shift focus from the state to an already marginalized social group with diverse sexual practices and family arrangements, rather than shining a light on the state’s investment in using marriage to legitimize intimate relations. This minimizes the sexual intolerance and fear of white Proposition 8 supporters, championing their ideological opposition to gay marriage as morally consistent, while paradoxically condemning that of African Americans as another form of sexual deviance.

In the historic shadow of Obama’s election, the state of the

union—both national and marital—is in flux. When protestors bedecked in colorful “Stop H8” and “No More Mr. Nice Gay” signs took to the streets on November 5th in West Hollywood to oppose this amendment, and when the ACLU, NCLR, and Lambda Legal file suit, it is clear that gay marriage has an enduring practical and emotional purchase. The subsequent question should not be whether or not social justice paradigms—queer or otherwise—should or should not support gay marriage, but how to combat its conflation with monolithic visions of respectability and national security. This starts by taking seriously how the Right is deploying marriage as a placeholder to reinvigorate patriarchal and neoliberal narratives. It closely examines the arenas where state recognition is invited, such as legally codifying marriage as only between one man and one woman, and where it is constructed as a privacy-threatening incursion, evident in fears that gay marriage threatens parental control over children’s education. It confronts how gay marriage equality initiatives foreclose the ability to legally and culturally recognize the diverse

family forms in which people actually live. It must also take seriously the immensely varied reasons why people still desire to marry.

This electoral moment is heralded as another threshold in the history of race relations, of economic insecurity, of global relations, and of sexual mores. History shows that times of crisis such as these often revitalize dominant power relations, and reassert older narratives of sexual, social, and political deviance. As the shadow of electoral politics not so much recedes as flickers with the uncertain social and legal ramifications of recent cultural and public policy initiatives, we might have a narrow moment to redefine the relationship of marriage to the state of the union. Making marriage matter less, and democratizing its special rights to all, includes diversifying the meanings attached to marriage beyond heteronormative and homonormative, regressive and progressive, conservative or radical, to work from their interstices. This prepares the ideological ground to expand upon existing legal forms that recognize the myriad ways of

caretaking, kinship, living, and loving that structure people’s lives.

Katie Oliviero is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Women’s Studies at UCLA. Her dissertation explores how sensationalism, performance, and effigies are used by twenty-first century conservative movements to construct the national citizenry, heterosexuality and human life as vulnerable. Her research interests include performance, socio-legal, American and cultural studies, with an emphasis on the roles of embodiment, memory, and pedagogy.

Vange Heiliger is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Women’s Studies at UCLA. Her dissertation research utilizes a feminist analysis of class, shopping, and branding to investigate how social marketing campaigns of ethical capitalisms deploy race, gender, poverty, and morality to bolster neoliberal narratives touting the redemptive power of transnational capitalist trade. Her research interests include media and cultural studies of economics and development in the Americas, discourses of sustainability, and the new political ecology, with an emphasis on the discursive and embodied intersections of poverty, sexuality, race, religion, gender, rurality, and the environment.

SENSATIONAL VULNERABILITIES

EFFIGIES OF PERSONHOOD, INTIMACY AND CITIZENSHIP IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SOCIAL CHANGE

As an undergraduate I became fascinated with the relationships between performance and protest. One production I collaborated upon used spoken word, skits, interviews, and archival footage to explore contemporary collisions between gender, race, and sexuality at my small, privileged college in New England. It sparked some thoughtful discussions among the student body about how varying degrees of disprivilege condition values and standpoints. Interestingly, several protests challenging the power inequalities and cultural callousness derived from those asymmetries in power

were less successful, despite being couched in the same language. This disparity between the effect of performance and that of protest sparked my interest in how these mediums interact with their context and audiences, creating different possibilities for dialogue and change. After teaching for a few years at a public high school in rural New Hampshire, I returned to graduate school to explore the role of performance in social protest. In my four years in the Women's Studies doctoral program, I have become intrigued by how more dominant ideologies and political agendas are able to harness theatricality to shore up





their power. In the months leading up to the 2008 election, the role of sensationalism and spectacle-oriented distractions seemed particularly central.

Consequently, my dissertation examines how sensationalist, activist performances generate symbolic and political purchase for three-*tw*-*ty*-*fi*-*st* century conservative movements opposed to liberalized immigration, abortion, and gay marriage laws. Xenophobic immigration discourse, proliferat-

ing Defense of Marriage Acts, and renewed “pro-life” platforms warn that American culture, heterosexual intimacy, and human life are positioned as vulnerable and on the brink of extinction. Their conservative supporters use highly visual, dramatically oriented tactics—repertoires— to generate emotional outrage in response to this sense of vulnerability, as well as a moral identification with being at risk. By focusing on the repertoires of the anti-immigration, anti-abortion,

and anti-queer movements, my research maps how vital understandings of masculine citizenship, personhood, and intimacy are being reworked, often in ways that reinvigorate seemingly archaic, but actually quite pervasive, racist, gendered, and homophobic habits. I examine how each movement deploys visual imagery, figurative language, and performance to generate an emotionally persuasive repertoire that attempts to influence contemporary ideologies of nation, life, intimacy, and security.

Garbed in pioneer or militia clothing and wielding signs such as “An Illegal Immigrant Stole My Identity,” the Minutemen self-deputize themselves to monitor significant crossing points on the US–Mexico border. Anti-abortion groups such as the Genocide Awareness Project juxtapose photographs of live smiling infants, with toddlers killed as casualties of war, with presumably post-abortion dismembered fetuses to equate the military and biological tragedies of the latter two with risk to the first.

And after the May 2008 California Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage and granted sexual orientation the same robust anti-discrimination scrutiny extended to race, the conservative Family Research Council published full-page advertisements in major US newspapers urging readers to enjoy what might be the last Father’s Day, since the status of “husband” is being rewritten as “spouse” on state marriage licenses, and “father” might meet a similar fate.

Despite their sensationalism, these strategies have garnered significant cultural and political traction. The 2007 US Supreme Court decision upholding President George W. Bush’s “partial birth abortion” ban legally enshrines what had been an anti-abortion symbolic tactic pitting mother against fetus. To date, 45 states have exclusively defined marriage as a heterosexual institution through legislative and ballot-based Defense of Marriage Acts. And the Minutemen’s video surveillance of border activity has direct feeds to

open-virtual networks and in some cases, the Department of Homeland Security.

Rather than signaling grounds for dismissal, it is precisely the sensationalist tenor of these activist campaigns that makes them effective. If anxiety accompanies the transformation of ethnic demographics and sexual values, then these conservative activists use sensationalism to sharpen that anxiety into a feeling of vulnerability. When they monitor the border in pioneer-reminiscent clothing or declare abortion to violate the civil rights of the unborn, performance-oriented tactics endow formerly abstracted tropes of citizenship with a more material salience. By often literally embodying emotion-laden American mythologies (that is, the frontier, liberty, the family), these strategies retrofit them with contemporary emotional purchase. The Minutemen, for example, refract pop-historical understandings of moral rebellion through the modern lens of terrorism and global capitalism to position the

nation itself as insecure and in need of militarized protection. Corporeal, emotional, and theatrical tactics flesh out abstracted notions of a vulnerable body politic with a heightened emotional urgency that often translates into political action—what I term *political affect*.

Social movement scholars contend that disenfranchised groups must employ theatrical, public tactics to cultivate cultural support when more mainstream political channels are denied them. Consequently, it is notable that these resource-rich, conservative groups, too, deploy a highly symbolic repertoire of dramatic and corporeal strategies to make their political claims of vulnerability and insecurity. Because they frame their struggles in terms of *retaining* or protecting “traditional” icons (the border, the baby as newborn citizen, and the institution of marriage) of national identity rather than transforming or petitioning for inclusion within them, conservative social movements can arguably leverage symbols *more* persuasively in visual

and dramatic activist modes. Rather than leading to easy dismissal, sensationalist tactics generate *more* political traction precisely because they conflate emotional and corporeal sensations with politics.

This dissertation, then, takes an alternative look at the political valences and the effects of activist repertoires, particularly their sensationalist configuring of vulnerability and corporeality. Vulnerability, fear, and insecurity have particularly potent political affects that many humanist-oriented scholars have championed as a generative site for responsive social change. Judith Butler and Martha Fineman, among many others, observe that by acknowledging the shared human risk of bodily vulnerability we can generate a politics of compassion across disparate economic, national, and ideological differences, without obscuring how some groups are more systematically exposed to vulnerability than others. By reorienting ontological, legal, and human-rights frameworks to address vulnerability, particularly

the body at risk of pain, we are better able to substantively address these structural power asymmetries than arguments for equal protection or liberty allow.

What needs more attention is how it is precisely corporeal vulnerability that is also used to ideologically justify violence and discrimination, such as the invasion of Afghanistan or proliferating Defense of Marriage Acts. Conservative political platforms particularly rely upon valuing the physical vulnerability of some constituencies while obscuring that of others. This is evident in the revived protection of the “fetal person” in the law and public policy and the simultaneous shrinking of social welfare and civil rights protections for poor pregnant women and women of color. Indeed, vulnerability is among the conditions of possibility authorizing discourses and public policies espousing a national state of emergency and protectionism of an insecure body politic.

It is my preliminary contention that vulnerability—including but

not limited to corporeal vulnerability—is more easily intelligible when wielded by conservative ideologies. Across political topographies, the vulnerable body—especially the body in pain—is supposed to act as irrefutable evidence testifying to violations of basic human rights. The dismembered hand of a fetus can only signal the violence of abortion a moment ago, off-frame. Consequently, the wound is supposed to be immune to ideological manipulation of its meaning. It functions as an icon of the real that can quell political quibbling and expedite moral action and justice.

But conservative movements fix the meaning of vulnerability and pain outside of history and discourse, using the realness of the body as a placeholder, an effigy, for narratives that are now invested with the same irrefutability attributed to the corpse. The fertilized egg or a fetus is equated with a born person, the particular fragility of unborn or new life generalized to all humanity, irrespective of their

social situatedness. Consequently, the body in pain is paradoxically used to detach vulnerability from the physical realm and asymmetries in power. It allows abortion to be analogized with war, the aborted fetus equated with a victim of genocide.

In this process, the right draws upon dominant national imaginaries of security and homogeneity: persons should be whole, American culture uniform, marriage heterosexual. Sensationalized vulnerabilities become a means of reminding us of our failure to fulfill these fantasies, as well as their potential recovery through conservative social and political change. When a Genocide Awareness Project activist cradles a live infant in one arm and waves macabre placards of dismembered fetuses with the other, the wholeness of the toddler petitions for the right to life of the fetus. Fantasies of a homogenously white, monolingual United States are resurrected in English-only local initiatives. And nostalgia over the lost paradise of uncomplicated

heterosexual families is supposed to be sharpened by images of two women in suits getting a marriage license. Sensationalized vulnerabilities emerge as a potent political tool that performs fears of personal and cultural insecurity to refresh an affective, sense-based nationalism.

By starting on the right rather than the left as social movement, performance, and cultural projects often do, I hope to better understand how aesthetic-oriented tactics of -twenty-first-century social justice campaigns across the political spectrum generate cultural and political change, register the conservation and transformation of vital national mythologies, and gesture to the limits of our political and social frameworks. I assess how these movements' strategic repertoires draw upon dominant cultural myths and nationalist iconographies to engender political affect, gain cultural traction, and generate rights claims that are codified into public policy change. How do these performance idioms revitalize lackluster positions with new interest,

appealing to— variously—nostalgic ideals of belonging, classically republican notions of personhood, anti-intellectualism, and fears over a vulnerable body politic? What nationalist mythologies and racial and gendered inequalities are supported in this pursuit and what alternative configurations are forgotten or distorted? And finally, what do these mobilizations have to teach us about the anatomies, potentialities, and limits of our political frameworks and social change idioms themselves? As part of a larger transformative political project, I want to intimately learn the anatomy of that critical place where the repertoires of democracy stiffen into rote reiterations of fearful cultural mythologies.

Katie Oliviero is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Women's Studies at UCLA. Her research interests include performance, socio-legal, American, and cultural studies, with an emphasis on the roles of embodiment, memory, and pedagogy.

ELLEN BRAVO

At a recent event in the UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment's Annual Colloquium Series, which was cosponsored by the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, the author talked about activism, organizing, and her book, Taking on the Big Boys.

by Maeve Johnston



Feminism has long been under fire both from within and without—characterized either from the inside as a mainstream interest group plagued by blindness to race and class, or from the outside as a movement of, as Ellen Bravo puts it, “hairy, humorless, man-hating lesbians.” Bravo, a longtime activist and former director of 9to5, a national advocacy organization for women in the workplace, focuses her lens on the second set of critiques against feminism. In Bravo’s recent lecture, she told us gendered equity in the workplace has something to offer everyone. The current structure of work continues to rely on the idea that a man has a wife at home full time, a fantasy that harms both women and men. In her own words, she laid out “how little the workplace values families and how much men have to gain by the kinds of solutions we need.”

ACTIVISM IN PRACTICE

It is clear Bravo is a seasoned organizer. She is an engaging, energizing speaker and has years of stories to recount. It was her candid and varied storytelling stretching across decades of political struggle that brought her presentation to life and offered the most passionate and enjoyable aspects of her talk. She recounted struggles for fair pay and better benefits, and included tactical insight and advice from her campaigns.

While describing a campaign in Madison, Wisconsin, Bravo detailed a 9to5 press conference in which children served as panelists to convince the governor that the state needed a policy to provide better family-leave benefits. Bravo’s account of the press conference, complete with impersonations of the child panelists interrogating and chastis-

ing the governor's aide, was hilarious. It was refreshing to hear people's individual stories take a place alongside facts and statistics in her style of organizing. Bravo provided real examples from the ground and showed that in both an informal presentation and in political negotiations, a personal touch is humanizing and powerful.

TAKING ON THE BIG BOYS

Bravo's book, around which much of her talk was based, is entitled *Taking on the Big Boys: Or Why Feminism is Good for Families, Business, and the Nation* (Feminist Press, 2007). The book is an update in the conversation on gender equity. In it she provides numbers, studies, and figures to show us where we are now, how far we have come, and what work remains. She neatly lays out goals in working for equity, and isolates those responsible for injustice, using the term "Big Boys" as shorthand for the powers that be: patriarchy, exploitative business, and the ruling class. Essentially, Bravo argues, the Big Boys are the people and forces that create and perpetuate inequality and are the only individuals who directly benefit from this discrimination.

Born out by experience and dealing in practical knowledge, her book chronicles rarely documented victories and struggles, giving legitimacy and a place in history to important pieces of women's lives as activists and feminists. Parts read like a manual for community organizing, albeit a funny, engaging one with sound advice and case studies. She offers us an opportunity to brush up on our numbers and reinvigorate ourselves in the struggle for equity.

PAY, WORK, AND FAMILY

As the former director of 9to5, Bravo's activism naturally centers on the role of women in the working world. In her book, she looks at such issues as pay equity, sexual harassment, job discrimination, and working

motherhood. In her lecture, she focused on pay and the struggle many women face to strike a balance between work and family. Bravo's premise is that women's work is underpaid because it is undervalued. For example, women and men have historically performed different types of labor and differentiating these allows a hierarchy to develop. This in turn reinforces the gendered nature of jobs and perpetuates difference. A second reason for undervaluation is that jobs women hold are often the same work they do for free at home, such as cleaning and child care, and this work is culturally viewed as women's responsibility. Finally, women's work is undervalued because their jobs have historically been supplemental to a family's income. Men's jobs are still seen as the primary family income source, and this provides continued justification to pay women low wages. Men—as husbands, fathers, and coworkers—can benefit greatly from changing this situation. In her definition, feminism means "fully valuing women and work associated with women in order to free the potential of everyone."

The Big Boys cannot brush off the question of work and family, Bravo claimed. They use small gains such as the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 to assert that working families are taken care of and provided for. But, Bravo said, the FMLA covers less than half of the private sector work force and it uses a narrow and traditional definition of family. The medical leave the act allows is unpaid and doesn't cover routine illness. There is no guarantee that a company will keep your job for you while you are on leave. These are huge holes that greatly compromise the protection the act provides.

FEMINIST SOLUTIONS

The demands Bravo described are simple, and in laying them out she exposed the outrageous realities working women continue to face. White women make 77¢ to men's dollar (though she did not specify which men she was talking about). African American women make 68¢, Latinas 53¢.

Women, argued Bravo, should make the same amount of money men make for the same jobs. This is certainly not an extreme position, and hearing these figures makes the fact that this is not a reality all the more alarming.

Some solutions Bravo proposed are more ambitious. She advocates a universal, single-payer health plan that would include one-year paid parental leave for both parents. She cited examples of firms that provide onsite childcare and healthcare and offer unlimited sick days. She also revealed that implementing comprehensive insurance and more humane family workplace policy would come at a cost of 1.5% of the GDP, which she contrasted to the 7.5% spent annually on subsidies to corporations. According to studies, none of these improvements come at a cost to worker productivity—if anything they increase morale and production.

THE OTHER CRITIQUE: WHAT ABOUT EVERYONE ELSE?

While Bravo is primarily concerned with the plight of women, she was quick to point out that she advocates social justice feminism wherein the goal of smashing the glass ceiling is replaced by the goal of revising and reframing the ways in which work is valued and workplaces function. “Yes,” Bravo said, “the goal is more women in power, but it’s mainly to get more power in the hands of all women and all other groups who have been left out. Which means we can’t just think about gender, we must look at race, social class, and sexual orientation.”

Bravo lays the groundwork to engage with the criticism that feminism does not include all oppressed people; however, she falls short of truly interrogating the linkages between racism, sexism, and power. We are left wondering who, when women are freed of the burden of discrimination, will pick up the slack capitalism leaves behind. I believe she wants to include people of color, queer people, and people of lower

classes in these justice movements, and all of these underrepresented groups do include women. But continuing this line of logic inevitably leads us to examine the paradox of fighting for equality in an inherently unjust system that prioritizes profit over human welfare.

ENGAGE

We must continue to change conditions for working women, Bravo concluded. She pointed to companies that already provide substantial quality of life and work benefits for their employees. She asked us to look at ways we can broaden legislation to give greater benefits to families. She encouraged us to expand our networks, to speak up and act. Her presentation and her experience fighting for women’s rights over the last three decades tell us that this is far from impossible and that we have multiple reasons to take action that will lead to an improved personal, political, and economic reality for all people.

Maeve Johnston is a candidate for a Master's of Urban Planning in UCLA's School of Public Affairs. Her research interests include urban immigration and equity.

FARNAZ ARBABI makes it her business to defy expectations and to empower others to do the same. Born in Iran in 1977, she moved to Sweden with her parents at age 2. Now in her early 30s, she has become one of Sweden's most sought-after playwrights and directors, and she is also a frequent contributor to European debates on immigration, language and identity, sexuality, and the rights of women and children.

On November 18, Arbabi will visit UCLA and present her work in public lecture, "Staging Migration and Post-National Identities: The Performance of Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Swedish Theater," co-sponsored by the Center for the Study of Women. The lecture will take place from 4 to 5:30 pm in 314 Royce Hall on the UCLA campus, followed by a reception.

Arbabi's breakthrough play, *The Emigrants* (2006), produced by Sweden's national theater Riksteatern, as well as her direction of author Jonas Hassen Khemiri's debut play *Invasion!* (also in 2006), earned her the Swedish Theater Critics Prize as well as the daily newspaper Expressen's special theater prize, *A Piece of George's Hat*. Swedish Radio also named her Theater Personality of the Year for 2006. In 2007, she received the Vilhelm Moberg prize awarded by the Theater Guild.



Staging Migration and Post-National Identities

SWEDISH-IRANIAN FEMINIST PLAYWRIGHT AND DIRECTOR FARNAZ ARBABI VISITS UCLA

By Ursula Lindqvist

In *The Emigrants*, a departure from her previous work in which she stages new plays on contemporary issues, Arbabi rewrote a literary classic: an immigrant trilogy that Swedish-American author Vilhelm Moberg published in the 1950s. Moberg's original chronicles the perilous journey of a group of Swedes who emigrate from the southern Swedish province of Småland in the mid-nineteenth century to settle in Minnesota. The main protagonists are Kristina and Karl-Oskar Nilsson, a farming couple struggling to feed their children in a Sweden ravaged by famine. Joining the Nilssons are Karl-Oskar's brother Robert and Robert's friend Arvid, who are escaping indentured servitude under an oppressive landowner; Daniel, an evangelical priest fleeing from religious persecution by the state-supported church, and his wife; and Ulrika and Elin, a born-again prostitute and her teenage daughter, who want to escape social ostracism.

They travel by boat to "the promised land" of America, and when they land, they are unable to speak the language or understand local customs. They journey on across the country by train and by foot, eventually settling in Minnesota. This epic tale, which accounts for why so many people of Swedish descent still populate the Midwestern United States (nearly a fifth of Sweden's population emigrated during its painful nineteenth century), first appeared as a

series of novels based on immigration records: *The Emigrants*, *The Immigrants*, *The New Land*, and *Last Letter to Sweden*. Moberg's novels were previously adapted to a 1971 film starring Liv Ullmann and Max von Sydow and directed by Jan Troell. ABBA collaborators Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus also adapted these stories into a popular 1996 musical titled "Kristina from Duvemåla."

Arbabi's version rewrites Moberg's epic tale so that today's Kristina and Karl-Oskar are emigrants from Bosnia who seek a better life for their children in Sweden. Their companions on this perilous journey are still Robert and Arvid, but in Arbabi's version they are runaways from an abusive Russian orphanage. Daniel is a devout Muslim who seeks religious freedom in a new country, and Ulrika and Elin, are now an Iranian prostitute and her teenage daughter who flee the judgment of conservative imams. The play's dialogue is in Farsi, Bosnian, Russian, Swedish, and English (with projected supertitles). In Arbabi's version of *The Emigrants*, modern-day Sweden has become the promised land that emigrants from poorer countries are fleeing to, rather than fleeing from.

In her public lecture, Arbabi will show clips from her rewriting and staging of this play, as well as several other productions she has directed. "Moberg's emigrants are viewed as heroes



In *The Emigrants*, a departure from her previous work in which she stages new plays on contemporary issues, Arbabi rewrote a literary classic: an immigrant trilogy that Swedish-American author Vilhelm Moberg published in the 1950s.

and pioneers, while today's immigrants (to Sweden) are treated as criminals and parasites," reads the play's synopsis on Sweden's national theater's website. "The play wants to create an identification with, and a subsequent understanding toward, people who make the same life-threatening journey today. They have, just like the Swedish emigrants, left their homes and their families and risked their own lives to cross vast seas and stretches of land so that their children can have a better life."

The Emigrants received excellent reviews when it opened in the fall of 2006, but not everyone was enthusiastic. For example, Arbabi received a letter from a retired woman, a member of Sweden's Social Democratic Party, who admonished Arbabi that she should *veta hut*, an untranslatable Swedish phrase that means roughly to know how to behave properly, and that "one just doesn't do that with literary classics. Besides, refugees aren't important" (*Dagens Nyheter*, 10 February 2006). "The point of doing *The Emigrants* is to get people to react, and if a letter comes from someone who doesn't agree with me at all, that means I'm on the right track," Arbabi said in a February 2006 interview with *Dagens Nyheter*, Sweden's largest daily newspaper. "It would be pointless if everyone agreed."

Arbabi has never been one to avoid controversial topics that she considers important. In 2002,

in the aftermath of the notorious "honor killing" of a young Kurdish Muslim immigrant woman, Fadime Sahindal, by her father, she co-authored with Lotta Fristorp *Survival Handbook for Girls about Freedom and Honor* (Save the Children, 2002). "We were angry. All the discussions were about the perpetrators, why they did this, what could have caused that," she said in the 2006 newspaper interview. "We didn't want to have that discussion but rather focus on the girls and allow them to take up space [in this debate]."

In 2003, Arbabi contributed an essay to an edited volume, *Play the Man-Migrant: A [m] anthology*, dedicated to men's sexuality. In 2007 she directed *Normal*, a devised work about sexuality among teenagers, at the recently founded Camp X Theater in Copenhagen, and in July 2008 her Swedish adaptation and direction of the cult musical *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, at the Stockholm City Theater, kicked off the EuroPride Festival.

Currently she is directing Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* at Backa Theater that she and collaborator Elmira Arikan have reworked into a version for young people. In Spring 2009, she will make her debut directing an opera with Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Consul*, a political thriller from 1950, at Folkoperan in Stockholm. She also serves on the Board of Artistic Directors for Theater Scenario in Stockholm.

"I want to do everything," Arbabi said in the 2006 newspaper interview. "I feel an enormous hunger toward the entire world. I want to do opera, musicals, film, dance, live out of the country, work with provincial theaters. It isn't my thing to work on this as just a 9-to-5 job. If I were forced to choose between directing something that I didn't think meant something, and working at Konsum (a Swedish grocery coop), I'd choose Konsum. "For me this has been a dream to get to do this, this incredibly long. So I must protect my desire so that it doesn't disappear."

Ursula Lindqvist, Ph.D., is a Research Scholar at the UCLA Center for the Study of Women

State of the Union videocasts now available

Videocasts from the State of the Union conference on October 24, 2008, have been uploaded to the CSW website. Included are the introductions by CSW Director Kathleen McHugh, CSW Associate Director Juliet Williams, and talks by Paul Apostolidis, Whitman College; Rachel Moran, UC Berkeley/ UC Irvine; Tom Boellstorff, UC Irvine; Mignon Moore, UCLA; Nancy Polikoff, American University Washington College of Law ; Anna Marie Smith, Cornell University; and Judith Stacey, New York University.



SoCal Connected and Prop 8: Mignon R. Moore

Professor Mignon R. Moore, Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology, was interviewed by a KCET reporter at the State of the Union conference on October 24, 2008. Some of her remarks have been included in a web video about Prop 8 on the SoCal Connected website: <http://kcet.org/socal/2008/10/beyond-prop-8.html>

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the KCET website. The page title is "Beyond Prop 8" and it is categorized as a "Web Original". The video player shows a woman, Professor Mignon R. Moore, speaking. To the right of the video player, there is a "Subscribe" button and a "Categories" section. The "Categories" section lists various topics such as "Arts & Culture", "Audio", "Community", "Environment", "Health", "History", "Local & Regional", "Politics", "Science & Tech", "Sports", "Travel", "Video", and "Web 2.0".

A Question of Love: Evangeline Heiliger

Evangeline Heiliger, a doctoral student in Women's Studies and frequent contributor to this newsletter, was recently filmed for a video project about intolerance entitled "A Question of Love": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f8YE3YtAUU>

A Question of Love



A Question of Love



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