

2010

# THINKING GENDER

# CSW

CELEBRATING  
25 YEARS!

SPECIAL ISSUE

# update

BY JAIMIE BARON

## ONCE AGAIN, CSW'S ANNUAL GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH CONFERENCE IS RESOUNDING SUCCESS!

*On February 5, 2010, CSW convened the 20th annual graduate student research conference, Thinking Gender. The program consisted of twenty-one panels whose presenters hailed from disciplines as diverse as comparative literature, art history, health services, anthropology, sociology, women and gender studies, american studies, Asian American studies, criminology, political science, education and many more.*

*Although UCLA graduate students from across campus presented their work, other presenters came from across the country and across the globe—from as far away as Brazil and Hungary—to attend the conference. Panels addressed issues as far ranging as plastic surgery, women filmmakers, domestic violence, women's health, and rap music, but all dealt with the questions of gender and identity that cut across every discipline and every aspect of society. This special issue provides a glimpse of the richness of this year's event. continued*





## *Intersection and Collaboration*

This year's Thinking Gender celebrated CSW's 25th Anniversary and the 40th Anniversary of the UCLA Ethnic Studies Centers who co-sponsored the plenary panel. We were particularly keen to present graduate student research on intersectionality -- that is, topics that featured gender and ethnicity or gender and class or sexuality. As years of feminist analysis have taught us, gender is a necessary but usually insufficient category of analysis. For example, the latest issue of the Atlantic Monthly features a sensationalized cover story titled "The End of Men." Building on the fact that this year the number of women employed in the U.S. economy surpassed that of men for the first time, the article suggests that women are making men obsolete. "Women are driving all the decisions, now" says one

man quoted in the article. Any of us looking at the composition of Fortune 500 lists, the U.S; Congress, Presidency, Judiciary, governorships, boards of major corporations and the like might raise an eyebrow, incredulous. And with good reason. The author of the argument draws from but ultimately ignores intersectionality, using the example of working class men, who have indeed been very hard hit in the recent economic downturn, to stand in for all men. Tellingly, the jobs cited that supposedly will provide women with the edge that signals the end of men: nursing, home health care assistance, child care, and food preparation--all service jobs, all jobs that women have always performed. Working class women have always worked, I thought, as I read the article. I also recalled information MS published in its most recent

issue indicating by a dramatic margin that women of color's share in wealth is the lowest in the country, far below white men and white women, and significantly below that of men of color. "The End of Men" sensationalizes and distorts issues that have to do with racism, the working poor, the dramatic differences between the middle and upper classes and the working class in the U.S. When you reduce an incredibly complicated intersectional situation to one that has to do with "women" and "men", women of color, the working poor, and the truly disadvantaged populations in the U.S. disappear. More like the end of ethical, sound, and reasoned reporting.

— Kathleen McHugh

## ***Another Great Grad Student Conference!***

Rainy skies are becoming a tradition at Thinking Gender. On February 5<sup>th</sup> 2010, as was the case the year before, it began pouring down before I had even entered UCLA's Faculty Center. Luckily, conference participants showed up in large numbers despite the weather, which seems to be another burgeoning TG tradition, and the rain didn't seem to affect attendance one iota. I'd even venture to say that the day-long downpour made this year's Thinking Gender 2010 cozier and fostered even greater connection among the participants sheltering together from the rain.

This year's Thinking Gender conference brought together hundreds of members of the Center for the Study of Women's

extended family under the umbrella of the study of women, gender and sexuality. In a celebration of not only the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conference, but also of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CSW, as well as the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the four Ethnic Study Centers at UCLA, the conference gathered many remarkable scholars in one of its most impressive meetings yet. And as coordinator of this year's conference, it was my privilege to have a front row seat for the day's events.

Attendees of this year's conference could choose from an impressive array of topics, spread over twenty-one panels in concurrent sessions, as well as the special plenary panel on gender and race, ethnicity

and nation. Eighty-seven presenters traveled from all over the world to represent dozens of schools and disciplines through their presentations of original research. The variety and diversity of the scholarly work presented were evident not just from panel to panel, but within panels as well. For example, in the panel on "Sex, Subalternity and (Work)Spaces of Difference," presenters looked at the shared topic of labor through four very different lenses, in examinations ranging from gendered considerations of the American Recovery Act, to constructions of Chinese American masculinity through historical representations of Chinese laborers, to the zombie as metaphor in considerations of Haitian sex work. Indeed,

even though I had helped to arrange all of the conference panels and knew something about the presentations in each of them, I was struck throughout the day by the diverse perspectives on offer, and by the fruitful discussions that resulted when they were brought together.

The Thinking Gender notebooks that were provided as souvenirs to registering participants were put to good use in every panel for which I was present, as dozens of interested audience-members listened, absorbed, and scribbled notes for themselves and questions for the Q and A sessions that followed each panel. As a frequent conference participant, I know that there's nothing more exciting than finishing a conference talk and seeing many raised hands...except perhaps for being one of the hand-raisers, with an important idea to contribute to the discussion. So it was incredibly gratifying, watching these panels and realizing that I

had played a part in creating that sort of positive experience on both sides of the panel table. However, most of the credit for these positive experiences goes to our presenters themselves and, of course, to our 22 wonderful moderators, who gave thoughtful and useful feedback to panelists in every session, and who seamlessly guided the question and answer period.

The Thinking Gender luncheon and plenary were the other high points of the day. Looking from table to table during the luncheon and seeing participants deep in discussion of their work, connecting with one another through their shared passion and drive, I was again struck by the way that Thinking Gender creates not only dialogue but also community between scholars who might not otherwise meet. CSW Director Kathleen McHugh expressed some of the same sentiments as she welcomed us all and recognized the many moderators and VIP's who

were in attendance, before leading us off the plenary session. This session, entitled "Intersectionality Acts at the Margins," commemorated the anniversaries of the CSW, and those of its plenary co-sponsors, the American Indian Studies Center, Asian American Studies Center, Chicano Studies Research Center, and Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies. The plenary, moderated by Evelyn Hu DeHart of Brown University, inspired some great discussion in a room that, despite its increased capacity over last year's location, was still filled to overflowing.

The day culminated in a reception once again honoring the shared anniversaries. The reception was probably my favorite part of the day. I have enjoyed the preparation for the conference, especially working under the extremely capable guidance of Kathleen McHugh and the CSW staff and work-study students. However, it was at the reception that I was able to put faces

to all of the names I had learned over the course of many emails exchanged starting in September and continuing through the day of the conference. In all of the scheduling, planning and collecting of paperwork that goes into a conference, it is easy for a coordinator to lose sight of what really makes that conference a success, namely, the people who attend it and share their work with each other for the day. It was wonderful to speak with many of them and to hear about their experiences at TG 2010. Happily, the most common exclamation I heard in these conversations with scholars who had traveled from as far as China and Eastern Europe, was “I am so glad I came to this conference. This has been such a great experience!”—my sentiments exactly.

I am pleased to announce that many of the presentations from this and previous year's conferences are available at CSW's site on the California Digital Library: <http://www.escholarship.org/csw>. Videos for some of the

sessions for this year's conference are ready for viewing on the UCLA YouTube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/UCLA>. Videos from previous conferences are also available for viewing from the CSW website.

I have but a few duties left to perform as my tenure as Thinking Gender coordinator draws to a close. One of them is to thank CSW director Kathleen McHugh, staff members April de Stefano, Brenda Johnson-Grau, Jessie Babiarz, Patricija Petrač, and all the volunteers and work-study students and at CSW for their help and guidance this year, not to mention the donors and friends of CSW for their support of the conference. Another duty is to mark my calendar for the next edition on February 11, 2011, since, though my time as a Thinking Gender coordinator is ending, my connection with Thinking Gender as an attendee and participant has only just begun. Bring on the rain!

—Erin Miller





## Latinas Crafting Sustainability in East Los Angeles

ANA GUAJARDO

AT THE SELF HELP GRAPHICS AND ART Day of the Dead celebration, artist vendors arrive before noon to set up canopies that will house their temporary stores stocked with handmade t-shirts, wallets, body products, magnets, candles, jewelry, mirrors, and more. Five hours later, after a blessing performed by Aztec dancers follows a procession of at least fifty people dressed in *calavera* face, holding candles and *cempazuchitl* (marigold) flowers, the event is officially underway. Once the dancers release the audience's gaze, the festivities begin, and traffic starts to flow in and out of the gallery, against the stage where bands play, up and down the stairs to a room of altars on display, and—for the vendors—a night of intense, fast-paced business transactions begin. For some,

their booths fill to rim for hours, and money and goods exchange hands frantically as people elbow into the 10x10-foot canopies to look at tables, display racks, and hanging grids filled with merchandise related to Day of the Dead, *indigenismo*, Frida Kahlo, Che Guevara, Zapatistas, hip-hop culture, and more. The event goes into the night as people linger to socialize, and some take the opportunity to continue to shop once the crowd disperses. Some vendors do not wrap up until past midnight. It is one of the most important events of the year for the livelihood of many artists here.

Jewelry designer, Lisa Rocha reflects on 2004 as the heyday of Self Help Graphics. She recalls traveling to New York City for a weekend to sell at a major trade show and returning to East Los Angeles the following weekend to earn five times more income in the seven hours of business she conducted as a vendor. Apart from these successes, it is an event Rocha enjoys and looks forward to every year.<sup>1</sup> Although booth fees to participate have nearly doubled and business has

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1. The recollection of this event is derived from an interview I conducted with Lisa Rocha. I have participated in this event as an artisan for nearly a decade; it is this experience that informs my work and this description.

dramatically dropped since then, she says she will continue to participate because it is a community and cultural space she enjoys supporting and belonging to.

East Los Angeles has historically been recognized as a center for political and cultural activity with roots in the Chicana/o civil rights movement. Since 1970, Self Help Graphics and Art (SHG) opened its doors to many artists who later entered the art market and formed the canon of Chicana/o visual artists that today continue to exhibit at major museums.<sup>2</sup> While famous for its printmaking studio and gallery, this cultural space has long been home to events where generations of artists working in music, performance, muralism, metal work, and graffiti showcase their work, hone their craft and cultivate audiences. Annual events, Day of the Dead, their holiday sale, *Botanica de Amor*, *Mexica New Year*, and others involve the participation of local crafters who provide a *mercado* (market) backdrop where audiences can access cultural goods unique to this community. As a participant in these events since

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2. For more on Self Help Graphics, see Kristen Guzman's *Self Help Graphics & Art: Art in the Heart of East Los Angeles*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2005.

2001, I became interested in the cultural production of these artists. Since then, I have seen my peers cultivate their businesses into established design lines while growing artistically and creatively within a socially and politically conscious community of patrons. Usually regarded as “vendors” rather than “artists,” they are another significant and influential artistic flourishing that can be traced to Los Angeles Eastside culture and identity. Little to no art historical attention has been given to these artists, yet they are widely known and patronized by a similar audience that attends museum exhibitions of the artists that Self Help Graphics catapulted into artistic “legitimacy.”

As an artist in residence at 18<sup>th</sup> Street Art Center in Santa Monica, CA, I am producing a project with this group as part of a series entitled, “Status Report: The Creative Economy,” which includes projects focusing on how artists are negotiating the current economic crisis.<sup>3</sup> My project is a process-based work using the tone and method of feminist artist

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3. More information on the projects funded by this grant can be found at [http://www.18thstreet.org/StatusReport/StatusReport\\_index.html](http://www.18thstreet.org/StatusReport/StatusReport_index.html)



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Suzanne Lacy's performance works with women. My discussions with artists about the role institutions play in their growth and sustainability will help document their history and foster a vision for continued work with this and other institutions. The program includes an exhibition to highlight artists' works, and a *mercado* will also take place to emphasize that these works may exist simultaneously as art and commodity.

The majority of these artists are women and many are mothers whose children have grown up attending community events and markets. This paper marks the initial stages of my research and focuses on the work and contributions of three artists: Araceli Silva, Felicia Montes, and Lisa Rocha. However,

there exists a much broader core group of vendor artists that have developed and innovated their products and works over time, have provided support for each other and influenced one another, and have come to define a vibrant part of the urban landscape.<sup>4</sup> I locate this community in the same socio-historical context discussed in Victor Hugo Viesca's article, "The Battle of Los Angeles: the Cultural Politics of Chicana/o Music in the Greater Eastside."<sup>5</sup> Viesca describes

4. Other artists include Virginia Ayala (De la Luna Designs), Emilia Garcia- Daisy Marquez, Elena Esparza, and Botan. The (mostly women) store owners of Teocintli, Liliflor Studios, Casita del Pueblo, Olveritas Village, and Imix Books are also invited and imperative to the discussion of this sustainable arts community.

5. Viesca, Victor Hugo. "The Battle of Los Angeles: The Cultural Politics of Chicana/o Music in the Greater Eastside." *American*

the music groups tied to an East Los Angeles identity such as Ozomatli, Quetzal, Quinto Sol, and others followed by a predominantly Latino audience. These bands are not only connected spatially through the neighborhood from which they emerge and venues where they perform, but they are also bound by a politics of identity and resistance responding to emerging conditions affecting ethnic, working-class populations in Los Angeles. Viesca notes that the rise of this scene coincided with the shift to a post-industrial economy in L.A. that limited opportunities for youth in Eastside and Southside neighborhoods. This, along with oppressive immigration propositions on the ballots during the 1990s as well as the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, offered opportunities for intervention and response by bands, artists, activists, and audiences, thus cultivating a vibrant cultural scene that "serves as a floating scene for resistance, a mechanism for calling an oppositional community into being through performance" (Viesca, 720). Bands were not the only performers;

*Quarterly* 56.3 (2004): 719– 739.

audiences also staged their political and cultural identities (not necessarily always ethnic) by fashioning themselves with T-shirts, jewelry, purses, tattoos and other accessories designed by the vendors who served as the backdrop for events featuring these bands. In the context of Los Angeles' globalized landscape, this community of Latina/o artists outfitted a local community, crafting goods that circulated in dance clubs, street festivals, community farms, art openings, and people's homes. This network of artists and vendors generated a new economy, conscious of identity, community, sustainability, global and local politics.

In the same way that Eastside bands incorporate and hybridize such traditions and influences as *son jarocho*, *banda*, reggae, and hip-hop, artists work with materials, themes, and elements that connect to their indigenous lineages and urban environment. Lisa Rocha is a silversmith whose jewelry incorporates the Day of the Dead tradition through her use of *calaveras* (skulls), *papel picado* (cut paper flags used on altars), and the *cempazuchitl* flower (marigold) traditional

Even at SHG, an organization known for resisting many of the hierarchies found in the art world by writing Chicana/os and printmaking media into art history discourse, there is a community of artists that has yet to be recognized for their historical contribution that to the Eastside Los Angeles community and culture.

to the holiday. She uses elements from Catholic Church iconography such as the rosary, sacred hearts, and images of the Virgin of Guadalupe in her pieces, as well as Native American and Aztec imagery.

Vendor artists create products, design lines, and even store names in the Nahuatl language, reflecting the Chicano/a art tradition of *indigenismo* in which the Mesoamerican past is referenced through iconography. Jewelry, fashions, and imagery often connect with indigenous elements and spirituality. Araceli Silva's hammered silver objects—"Deer," "Diosa," "Orbitz," "Remix," "Womb," and "Luna Sol"—are works responding to dreams, spirituality, urban culture, and the cosmos. Stones, particularly those she

identifies as connected to her ancestral lineage, such as jade and turquoise are prominent materials in her pieces.

While these artists offer support to one another, they are mainly connected through the events where they vend. Self Help Graphics has been an important institution in all of their careers, offering a space where they can showcase their works and reach their audience. Rocha was one of the first Getty interns at SHG along with Felicia Montes, who continued to work there as an event organizer, and met this community of vendor artists there. She had the vision to create a website, *Urbanxix Mercado*, featuring design lines by vendor artists, which she promotes both locally and at out-of-state academic

conferences. Montes created her own line of apparel, “Fe,” that incorporates faux embroidery designs reminiscent of textiles from Chiapas, Mexico, and Guatemala. I asked Montes to reflect on the aesthetic used by the artists featured in Urbanxíc Mercado, and she used the words “reinvention,” “syncretism,” and “urban,” but, most importantly, she says their ties to a cultural and political identity is what unites them. Silva comments on the aesthetic as “honoring” tradition, history, and ancestry. These sensibilities continue to call people to the *mercados* where these artists participate.

While the economy has dramatically shifted, causing many stores and venues where vendors sold to close their doors, artists continue to create and subsist through the community into which they have long breathed life. Currently, these artists rely on Los Angeles stores such as Imix Books, Olveritas Village, Casita del Pueblo, and events like the Anti-Mall, and Caracol Marketplace at Proyecto Jardin to promote and sell their works. Self Help Graphics is a part of this changing landscape and has also undergone many

changes over the past five years, including the loss of over half of their building to rent restrictions imposed by a new property owner and the introduction of a new administration that has dramatically changed policies for vendors. In their interviews, Rocha, Silva, and Montes acknowledge that SHG has played a vital role in their artistic careers, whether by providing a venue for events in which they sell or by directly offering support to their works by selling them in the now defunct *Tienda Colores*, a shop that was next to gallery.<sup>6</sup> Yet, as Rocha notes, “We are the vendors with a lowercase ‘v,’ as opposed to the artist with a capital ‘A.’” Even at SHG, an organization known for resisting many of the hierarchies found in the art world by writing Chicana/os and printmaking media into art history discourse, there is a community of artists that has yet to be recognized for their historical contribution that to the Eastside Los Angeles community and culture. Such recognition can help organizations such as SHG to continue the legacy of support

6. I conducted three extensive interviews for this interview. To learn more about these artists and their work visit their websites: Lisa Rocha, [www.ilaments.com](http://www.ilaments.com); Araceli Silva, [www.aracelisilva.com](http://www.aracelisilva.com); Felicia Montes, [www.urbanxic.com](http://www.urbanxic.com).

they have offered to artists of all media. Moreover, this community should be viewed as a powerful resource in nurturing a political and cultural identity that keeps the community engaged in events, movements, and the arts culture in the Eastside.

Ana Guajardo is a graduate student in the Department of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA. She presented a version of this paper at the Thinking Gender 2010 Plenary Session, “Intersectionality Acts from the Margin.”

Photo credit: The photo of Self Help Graphics was taken by Memo Pisa El Lodo. More information is available on Flickr: [http://www.flickr.com/photos/memo\\_pisa\\_el\\_lodo/175177414/in/set-72057594131262894/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/memo_pisa_el_lodo/175177414/in/set-72057594131262894/)

# What She Remembers Remaking and Unmaking Japanese American Internment

by Wendi Yamashita

**JAPANESE AMERICAN HISTORY** as evidenced by the 2008 Japanese American National Museum's Conference "Whose America? Who's American? Diversity, Civil Liberties, and Social Justice" is deeply invested in the visibility of Japanese American experiences with the hopes of "inspir[ing] all to ensure that the lessons of the past are never forgotten"<sup>1</sup> However, much of the discourse around Japanese American internment during World War II, redress and the call to action of never forgetting has remained the same as it was twenty years ago. The conference continued to remem-

ber internment by utilizing the same narratives about patriotism, loyalty, and masculinity as perennial lessons of Americanism. In the face of these celebratory narratives that establish bonds of community and national legitimacy, ghostly memories of trauma and loss are, however, designated to the shadows, momentarily appearing but never quite articulated. Critically examining how knowledge about internment has been produced highlights an epistemological violence within historical rhetorics of certainty.

Cultural productions, like Rea Tajiri's *History and Memory* and Janice Tanaka's *Whose Going to Pay for These Donuts Anyway?*, are documentary films that offer a particular feminist analytical lens through

which to see loss, moments of violent erasure, and trauma that produce possibilities of remembering and forgetting outside the confines of liberalism and cultural nationalism. Using this same lens, I argue the impossibility of reconstructing or recuperating a faithful sense of the past but suggest that this feminist analytic and in particular women's narratives are helpful to rethink oral history.

Largely based on an ongoing oral history project that I am conducting with Nisei women in my family, this article focuses on my grandmother and her sister. I examine different moments when my two interviewees could not fit or had difficulty fitting themselves and their experiences

1. Japanese American National Museum, "Whose America? Who's American? Diversity, Civil Liberties, and Social Justice," Exhibition Program, 2008.

into the already existing narratives of Japanese American internment. The purpose of this investigation is to show how these difficulties emerged—when and what questions prompted confusion, discomfort, or forgetting. I also reflect upon the ways in which I influenced this process, in constructing questions and in reacting to their responses. This project is not about presenting a “truer” representation of the past but exploring “silences, inconsistencies, revelations, and omissions” and realizing that the ability to narrate is rife with erasures and what cannot be spoken.<sup>2</sup> My hope is that this critique and rearticulation of oral history remains respectful and faithful to the stories and intentions of my grandmother and her sister while making visible the ways in which conventional Japanese American historiography erases certain kinds of memories.

“What do you remember about December 7, 1941?” is frequently asked of Japanese Americans because it is an identifiable marker of time that situates experiences as either

2. Alice Yang Murray, “Oral History Research, Theory, and Asian American Studies,” *Amerasia Journal* 26: 1 (2000), 114.

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before or after Pearl Harbor. Focusing on this date establishes what cultural theorist Walter Benjamin calls “empty, homogenous time,” which assumes that something has happened in a distinctly linear fashion, meaning that there is a “causal connection between various moments in history.”<sup>3</sup> The use of the date itself is also one that establishes a sense of community amongst Japanese Americans who are constructed as experiencing this moment in a very particular way. Pearl Harbor is identified as a watershed event in Japanese American history, one that is a catalyst for wartime hysteria, culminating

3. Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy,” in *Illuminations*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 263.

in the mass removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans in the mainland United States. In this way Pearl Harbor and the accompanying internment are structured as an anomalous event, a moment of disruption that suddenly occurs but then eventually disappears. Furthermore, the construction of the “before” and “after” of Pearl Harbor produces simplified accounts that often presume the “before” to be a nostalgic and fond remembering of the past while the “after” is one of resolution. This history is commemorated by the Japanese American community, reinforcing these linkages that simultaneously celebrate the nation and a particular cultural nationalism.

This confusion and inability to remember stunned me.... But then, my grandmother says, "Well, see, my mom passed away already at that time."

This construction of time is problematic and limiting because it inherently privileges memory and, furthermore, a particular masculinist, patriarchal remembering. Internment literature focuses on how changing family dynamics are a direct result of Pearl Harbor, presuming a specific construction of family before Pearl Harbor as whole, nuclear, and happier. More specifically, pre-Pearl Harbor narratives of internment remember functioning, nuclear family lives that are disrupted by the events that follow Pearl Harbor.<sup>4</sup> For example, when the FBI conducted sweeps of Japanese American communities it is argued that this disappearance of men had a direct

4. Grace Hong, Lecture, UCLA, 21 Oct. 2008.

affect on households where women "were left to manage [them] if a grown Nisei was not present to take over."<sup>5</sup> Scholars also discuss how the gap between the first and second generations was enlarged during internment because of the disruption of family life that is attributed to the structure of internment (mess halls, no privacy, and the sharing of small spaces). Even the roles of Japanese American men and women are discussed as being switched because internment allowed women to work for pay resulting in men no longer being the family's main source of income.<sup>6</sup> In this way,

5. Mei Nakano, *Japanese American Women: Three Generations, 1890-1990* (San Francisco: Min Publishing Press, 1990), 61.

6. Valerie Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women During World War II," in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, 1984, 3.

Pearl Harbor not only establishes a historical timeline with which to understand the Japanese American experience but it also serves to demonstrate the ways in which the nuclear, patriarchal family (and by extension community) move steadily down (or up) history.<sup>7</sup>

Applying this lens to the interview process allows me to see my grandmother's answer to this particular question differently and provides me with the possibility of seizing "hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" that has the ability to narrate the "wreckage upon wreckage" without erasing barbarism in favor of a history of civilization.<sup>8</sup> When I asked my grandmother, "What do you remember about December 7, 1941?," she became momentarily flustered and eventually I discovered that she had not understood my question at all. She had thought I was asking her about when she heard that Japan had lost the war and proceeded to remember how her father was

7. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 26.

8. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy" in *Illuminations*, 1st ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 255-257.

upset about this loss. When I asked her specifically about Pearl Harbor, she simply replied, “I don’t remember.”<sup>9</sup> This confusion and inability to remember stunned me. Pearl Harbor is thought to be an event that all Japanese Americans could at least recognize. Perhaps, I thought, it is because my grandmother was only ten years old at the time. But then, my grandmother says, “Well, see, my mom passed away already at that time.”<sup>10</sup> My grandmother’s lack of recognition of December 7, 1941, as a significant date and moment in her life excludes her from the dominant internment or community histories. Instead she chooses to narrate herself around a different moment of loss, the untimely death of her mother in 1940. This moment is her strongest memory from childhood and it is one that she can recall with clarity. When my grandmother was playing at her friend’s house after school, her friend’s father, who had just come home from shopping, told her that there was a fire engine in front of her house and that she should

9. Mae Kanamori, Interview, 1 Nov. 2009.

10. Mae Kanamori, Interview, 1 Nov. 2009.

The concept of home is itself troubling for my grandmother and her family, and it is this statement and accompanying image of a traumatic moment of loss that unpacks a family history of dislocation and dispossession.

go home because something was happening. And so she ran through the ditch that connected the small farms to find out that her mother had passed away. She tells me, “And in that field, that’s what I remember the most, I went running home.”<sup>11</sup>

The concept of home is itself troubling for my grandmother and her family, and it is this statement and accompanying image of a traumatic moment of loss that unpacks a family history of dislocation and dispossession. The family constantly moved from place to place, so that it is difficult for my grandmother to remember exactly where she was, for how long, and

11. Mae Kanamori, Interview, 1 Nov. 2009.

why. In the beginning of the interview I try to trace the family’s movements in Los Angeles, following the death of my grandmother’s mother, and discover that the family moved three times before being forcibly moved to the Santa Anita Assembly Center. My grandmother tells me, “See I might be wrong because we went to Hawthorne too. But I don’t remember if it was Hawthorne, [that was] the first place we went, or Inglewood to farm, both places we farmed.”<sup>12</sup> I attempt to similarly understand the family’s movements in Colorado, but when I ask for clarification

12. Mae Kanamori, Interview, 1 Nov. 2009.

These continuous movements demonstrate that the family was never quite safe from dislocation and dispossession before or after, so that internment was part of a continuous series of ruptures.

my grandmother becomes unsure and says, “We lived in three different places. It could even be four, I don’t remember, but we moved so much over there.”<sup>13</sup> And even though her sister can recall these multiple moments more clearly, it is still difficult to map out their movements in a particularly linear way. My grandmother constructs her own memories around the death of her mother and then moves to a discussion of her life in Colorado, without focusing on internment. Despite the questions themselves moving in a linear fashion from pre-war, internment, Colorado, and

post-war, my grandmother is unable to stay within this structure. Even in the moment when she is unable to recognize December 7, 1941, she immediately identifies her mother’s death as more important, which flows into a recognition of how that loss determined her place in the family as caretaker. It is only when I specifically start to ask her questions about Santa Anita Assembly Center does she delve into her own memories of internment.

My grandmother’s sister, Lily can place the movements of the family more clearly because these moves often revolved around farming, a labor she performed

from childhood to adulthood. When I ask her, “What was your relationship like with your dad?,” she responds that because she was willing to work beside her brothers and older sisters in the field rather than stay at home, he praised her.<sup>14</sup> This validation of her labor seems to establish her sense of place and importance within the family that intimately connects farming with family. Unlike my grandmother who was unable to remember whether she moved from Inglewood to Hawthorne or vice versa, Lily can remember because in Inglewood the family grew celery and cauliflower but in Hawthorne the family expanded their crops to include spinach and green onions.<sup>15</sup> Her position within the family is defined by her labor in the fields, which not only structures the dislocation of her family but also her day, forcing her to work from sunrise to sundown. But in Colorado, even the winter and darkness could not provide her with a break because her father had a greenhouse where he grew celery plants and

<sup>13</sup> Mae Kanamori, Interview, 1 Nov. 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Lily Sawai, Interview, 22 Nov. 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Lily Sawai, Interview, 22 Nov. 2009.



she describes how she would have to come home from school and continue to work until nine in the evening.<sup>16</sup> In this way, farming is oppressive for my grandmother's sister, so much so that she even remembers not wanting to leave the Santa Anita Assembly Center for Colorado. This statement shocks me and is even upsetting, and then she says: "When they said work, I knew it was going to be hard."<sup>17</sup> Her memories depict a different narrative of farming and family that is not always a nostalgic remembering of the past. Instead it is one that is rife with complicated family roles and dynamics in which the family members were denied the ability to locate a physical representation of home. Even in the postwar period where family and notions of home are documented as being reestablished for Japanese Americans, my grandmother and her family continued to move. These continuous movements demonstrate that the family was never quite safe from dislocation and dispossession before or after,

<sup>16</sup> Lily Sawai, Interview, 22 Nov. 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Lily Sawai, Interview, 22 Nov. 2009.

so that internment was part of a continuous series of ruptures.

Two years ago, I planned and conducted interviews with a few of the Nisei women in my family as a part of an undergraduate thesis project. I remember feeling nervous but also somewhat excited to learn about my family's own history and experiences with internment—something that had been so strategically hidden. But as I sat opposite my grandfather's older sister, I felt discouraged because she could only answer my questions with an uncomfortable, "I cannot remember." In the end, my advisor and I did not use any of the interviews because there was not enough information to analyze. But I was troubled by this conclusion. Why could she not remember? Why did I so desperately want her to remember? What had I wanted to hear? This project is very much a reexamination of my expectations of oral history as a particular rendering of truth, my own desire for memory, and the ways in which the discipline of history could not provide me with the language to discuss my family's experiences. My project is

deeply invested in the ways in which the inability to locate and articulate one's experiences within the existing narratives is a type of violence itself, and it is my hope that we will continue to pursue these types of discussions and reexaminations of our own work.

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# “If I Wanna Act Freaky then that’s My Business”

by Jocelyn Thomas

## LIL' KIM AND THE POLITICS OF PERFORMING PUBLIC SEXUALITY FOR A BLACK WOMAN RAPPER

*Lil' Kim* is everything that is wrong with rap music culture. At least that seems to be the dominant critical opinion. For example, in *The Hip Hop Wars*, Tricia Rose says that “too much of the rhetoric against sexism in hip hop ends up being very compatible with an anti-sexual expression agenda”(122). But she then describes “highly visible rappers like Lil’ Kim, Trina, and Foxy Brown” as “us[ing] the *Black female-required sex card* in hip hop”(123, emphasis added). Rose notes that “Kim herself admitted that she uses her identity as Lil’ Kim to get money”—

the implicit critique being that the marriage between sex and commodification is a negative one. In another instance Kathryn T. Gines argues that “to avoid being labeled a whore, Black women must go to the opposite extreme of becoming ‘pure’ virgins.” The image of the “*hypersexual whore* [becomes] the excuse for the label of “bitch” and “ho”...one way of responding to the virgin-whore paradigm has been to embrace one extreme and redefine it in a more positive or empowering way” (99). According to Gines, Lil’ Kim does this by “taking up and popularizing the image of the *ho*

and the *bitch* unapologetically” (99). Lil’ Kim is “seeking to move men from the subject to the object position where she can manipulate them as sexual objects” (100). However, to Gines, Lil’ Kim’s presentation is still dangerous because “in the end, black women are still hos and bitches while Black men are players and pimps” (100).

Lil’ Kim’s highly sexualized image and lyrics are often seen as manifestations of the sexist, misogynistic ideologies embedded in rap culture. The glorification of fashion and opulence in her work stands in for the nihilistic reproduction of capitalist fantasy. Her depictions of criminal lifestyle and activities are seen as valorizing hyperviolent behavior and celebrating “gang-ster” culture. Lil’ Kim becomes not just a persona in rap music culture but a figure, a placeholder, for multiple contentious debates within and about rap music culture. I would argue for an alternative reading of the persona of Lil’ Kim. Not providing an apology for the pornographic nature of *some* of Lil’ Kim’s work or an attempt to reframe that nature as an absolute positive, I would rather like to examine discourses around Lil’ Kim and how they are reflective of larger discourses

within feminism and around sexual agency and exploitation that are most visible in the 1980s pornography debates.

I started with a simple question: How is Lil’ Kim—the public/artistic persona of Kimberly Jones—perceived in popular and critical imaginations? Lil’ Kim as a persona is connected to but not the same as the person who was born Kimberly Denise Jones. My understanding of Lil’ Kim began with theorizing about “the pornographic,” a term I use to describe an erotic excess, a performance of eroticism based on magnification or hyperbole. How then has the pornographic—as erotic excess—figured in rap music culture? How does this configuration map onto her performances and responses to them?

Lil’ Kim and her establishment function within what is known as “pussy power rapping” or, as I call it, “raunch rap.” Kimberly Denise Jones was born in Brooklyn, New York in July of 1974. She gets her stage name in part from her small stature, standing as she does at 4 feet 11 inches. Lil’ Kim is probably most well known as the only female member in the Notorious B.I.G.’s short-lived group Junior Mafia and for a solo career that began

with the success of her first album, *Hardcore* (1996.) Lil’ Kim’s lyrics and performance center on the body. It is this highlighting of the body and particularly a racialized Black, feminine body that I believe pushes her work (and that of other raunch rappers) into the realm of the erotic and the pornographic.

There is a historical linkage between the Black body and the concept of the “grotesque,” the notion of the bodily excessive. Perhaps the most famous personification of this linkage is in the figure of “The Hottentot Venus,” a Black African woman named Saartjie Baartman (or Sarah Baartman) who came to/was brought to Europe as an exhibition piece and her body remained so long after her death. Lil’ Kim is similar to the figure of the Venus Hottentot in that her body and image have come to stand for a complex network of social meanings including the otherness and ostensible physical/sexual availability of the Black feminine body. It is the belief in the “natural” availability of her body (and of Black and Brown feminine bodies throughout time and space) that shapes how Lil’ Kim’s work is read. When Lil’ Kim performs songs like “How Many Licks” that are explicitly about sexual

gratification, they are read (positively and negatively) as reaffirmations of that availability. In effect, her body of work and her performances become a kind of public sexuality that reaffirms the 'truth' of this fantasy of availability.

I, however, want to push back against this reading of Lil' Kim as a metaphorical reaffirmation of racist tropes of Black feminine sexual personhood by examining a particular moment in Lil' Kim's career after her perjury trial. During the last 14 days before she began serving her sentence, Lil' Kim filmed a television show called *Countdown to Lock Down*, which was aired on the Black Entertainment Television (B.E.T.) network. *Countdown to Lock Down* functions as a biographical text meant to showcase the life of Lil' Kim at a particular moment. However, it also functions as an attempt to reclaim the image of Lil' Kim from a static position as object and to reaffirm her subjectivity by depicting Kim (as Lil' Kim the artist and as Kimberly Jones the person) as having directorial control over her image. For example, the second episode opens with clips from the previous episode where Lil' Kim gets into a heated conversation with her manager, Hillary Weston, about her video for the song

"Lighters Up." Kim is dissatisfied with both the shots of herself and the representation of Brooklyn in the video. In the second episode, Kim successfully convinces her management and record company to greenlight a reshoot with a new director—reestablishing her agency as an artist.

There is also an attempt to display vulnerability. Both of her personal assistants describe their jobs as "taking care of Kim" and making sure she has everything that she needs. They reassert that she is a strong woman but that she also needs people. This is an attempt to humanize and gender Kim's image in a particular way. In the same episode, there is an attempt to define the difference between Lil' Kim the persona and Kimberly Jones the person. In voiceover, Kim says, "I think a lot of people think that I walk around in Chanel slippers and feathers all day with cocktails in my hand or whatever..." *Countdown to Lock Down* is a rebuttal of Kim as the "hypersexual whore" and a reaffirmation of her as a quiet, domestic person as well as a shrewd businesswoman.

I would now like to situate Lil' Kim within the context of the 1980s "Sex Wars" wherein

US-based feminisms played a role in shaping both social and policy-driven understandings of pornography. In an entry entitled "Feminist Sex Wars," *The Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality* notes:

According to Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, two leading figures in the feminist anti-porn battle, woman is defined by the objectives of men's desire, whereas pornography is the site of men's power over women. MacKinnon perceives sexuality as a realm of dominance and control, making it a central mechanism for producing gender inequality. In her account, the essence of sexuality is quintessentially revealed in pornography: hierarchy, power, violence. To be a woman in a world governed by porn means pain, degradation, and humiliation. In short, to be a woman means to be oppressed like one. Forming a circular argument, pornography is both cause and expression of the oppression of women.

The conversation catalyzed by MacKinnon and Dworkin in the 1980s was both shaped by and helped to shape a national moment of concern over the moral and ethical 'nature' of popular culture and its political responsibilities. There was explicit debate about the nature of "a world governed by porn" and about the responsibility of the state, the public, and individuals in responding to pornographic culture. For "anti-porn" feminism, the response to this question was censorship and the condemnation of porn as a tool of women's subordination.

In this historical moment, feminist discourses about pornography worked in tandem (intentionally and unintentionally) with larger policy discussions about the purpose and ethics of censorship and the ability to create and define normative standards of behavior particularly around sexual identity, expression, and desire. Feminisms in the US became tools of surveillance and norming. This practice of critiquing the pornographic remains present in Black feminists' and anti-sexism advocates' responses to pornographic rap. In much the same way, the conversation becomes both a criticism of raunch rap as an expression of larger racist and sexist stereotypes about Black women—manifestations it would seem of their continued subjugation—as well as a critique of how the genre shapes misogynist opinions in Black youth culture.

Critics of Lil' Kim are not entirely wrong. There is a history of racist fantasies about Black feminine sexual availability and a real lack of protection for Black feminine bodies historically (and arguably contemporarily) within social and legal frameworks. We have been and still are vulnerable to sexual assault and exploitation. However, the discourse around sexual

exploitation in rap music culture—where Lil' Kim is often represented as the misguided or malicious perpetrator of the phenomenon—still reflects certain moralistic judgments of sexual expression, especially the excessively erotic. These judgments reflect larger discourses around public sexuality as seen in the 1980s pornography debates. While hip-hop studies have brought nuance to this discussion—recognizing that sexual propriety has indeed policed Black women's expressions of sexual desire—it is clear that in this discourse there is such a thing as going *too far*. Sexual expression is necessary as Black women reclaim their sexual agency from the hands of the sexist, racist fantasies about our bodies—however those expressions must not be “too” pornographic. I would argue that Lil' Kim in the show *Countdown to Lockdown* rejects this idea by showing how the pornographic representation of her body and image can occur on her own terms and that this representation is indeed a persona and a carefully crafted business decision.

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# Face to Face and Street to Street

an exploration of the benefits and perils of transnational feminist practices for Iran's One Million Signatures Campaign



by Susan McKibben

*“Transnational feminism” is no longer a new term, but the precise perils and benefits of this amorphous concept must be examined anew in each context. In this paper I present preliminary thoughts on just what these perils and benefits might be for the Iranian One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality. I argue that this movement is a transnational phenomenon and then discuss what it seems to be gaining through transnational feminist practices, and what it stands to lose.*



**T**HE ONE MILLION SIGNATURES CAMPAIGN was founded in 2006, but formal strategizing began three years earlier when Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi met with women activists from various organizations in Iran and urged them to unite and organize for women's rights. These women assessed their political needs and opportunities and determined that a targeted, demand-centered effort addressing specific unfair laws would be the best way to attract broad public support across often-divisive ideological, religious, and class lines. By calling the movement a campaign (the word is transliterated into the Persian name and distinguished from a formal organization) the more than fifty founding members were careful to signal a grassroots movement independent from political parties, government institutions and (foreign and domestic) non-governmental organizations (Tahmasebi, 2008; Khorasani, 2009).

The campaign is an effort to collect one million signatures of Iranian nationals urging the Majles (parliament) to change gender-discriminatory laws, including those regulating marriage and divorce, inheritance, blood money, age of criminal responsibility, and

citizenship. (Tahmasebi, 2008; <http://www.we-change.org/english>). Central to this process is a public education effort using signature-gathering to inform fellow Iranians

#### CHANGE FOR EQUALITY (ENGLISH) WEBSITE

about women's rights under the country's constitution. Campaign members—anyone who wants to gather signatures is a member—work “face to face and street by street,”

bringing the petition to women and men in parks, on buses, or anywhere else they can reach the public (<http://www.we-change.org/english>). Members argue that the use of direct-action tactics and the campaign's feminist character—attending to women's strategic gender interests rather than being social service-oriented—make it unique in the country (Tahmasebi, 2008; Khorasani, 2009).

## The One Million Signatures Campaign as Transnational Phenomenon

The goals of the One Million Signatures Campaign are certainly nationally-focused. I argue, however, that in using practices that bolster and extend the framework, support, and tactics of the movement across national borders, the campaign is transnational. I find Kaplan and Grewal's theorizing of "transnational" useful here as a term that allows the tracing of "circuits that are produced by problematic political, economic, and social phenomena" (2002:73). This definition enables us to examine movements on any geographic scale while taking account of the historical circumstances, unequal power relations, and capital and cultural flows

through and against which they must operate. I also borrow from Kaplan and Grewal the term "transnational feminist practices" as an alternative to reifying a monolithic concept of "transnational feminism" that erases differences of location and power among women. Thinking in terms of practices enables a discussion of "forms of alliance, subversion, and complicity within which asymmetries and inequalities can be critiqued" (ibid).

The One Million Signatures Campaign uses a number of transnational practices to publicize women's demands, educate global publics, leverage support, and protect local activists from government repression in a manner that facilitates collaboration while maintaining independence and local authenticity. These practices include the use of global communications media, travel to international conferences, and relationships with Diaspora and other populations around the world doing their own work to support the campaign.

The campaign's extensive website is a central component of its transnational communications practice. The site, which is translated from Persian into six languages,

contains an explanation of the campaign goals, a brief history, and an opportunity to sign the petition online or print a pdf file to gather more signatures. There are announcements of recent developments for the movement, including reports of arrests of campaign members and calls for their release. The section called "Face-to-Face" mirrors the campaign's on-the-ground public education technique by providing a forum for members to write about their experiences as activists, express what their experience means to them, or present a critique (<http://www.we-change.org/english>; Ardalan, 2009).

Relationships with the Iranian Diaspora have also been important. People around the world have signed the petition online in solidarity, and activists in France, Germany, Italy, and California have begun their own groups to support the campaign. In addition to this online support, activists, academics and others in Diaspora have supported the campaign in large numbers by donating money, inviting campaign members to give public talks, and by using their influence with their own governments to pressure the Iranian government to release political prisoners.



Finally, the campaign's discursive practices can also be viewed as transnational in the sense articulated by Sonia Alvarez, referring to "local movement actors' deployment of discursive frames and organizational and political practices that are inspired, (re) affirmed or reinforced—though not necessarily caused—by their engagement with other actors beyond national borders through a wide range of transnational contacts, discussions, transactions, and networks, both virtual and 'real'" (2000:2-3). Campaign members' use of a "language of rights" (Tohidi 1994) is a good example of a practice that is influenced by international discourses of human- and women's rights, but which is also very much of the local context.

The articulation of rights for women is not new in Iranian history, but it became a particularly fraught framework immediately after the 1979 revolution, when women who protested Ayatollah Khomeini's gender policies as impinging upon women's rights were painted as "westoxicated." During the 1990s the public discussion of women's rights within various feminist frameworks was recovered and elaborated by the women's

press, particularly by publishers such as Shahla Sherkat and Azam Taleqani, who published writings on the rights of women in politics and religion (Kar, 2001; Tohidi, 2002b). These struggles have helped shape a public debate in which the One Million Signatures Campaign can function as a women's rights campaign.

### **What is there to gain (or lose) by working transnationally?**

Transnational practices may be necessary today—even inevitable—in the face of global flows of power and capital, but such practices are not without peril for local groups. An expanded audience for the campaign's message is perhaps the most obvious benefit of transnational practices. Interviews with foreign media and the use of websites and social networks (such as Facebook) have made it possible for Iranian women—even those who can't travel abroad—to share their work, if not in an unmediated way, then at least in their own words. Moral and material support (in the form of private donations) may result, and heightened visibility may have a protective effect against government repression and violence for some activists.

The risk of appeals to a global audience is charges of foreign influence or traitorous behavior, however, which can have disastrous consequences for the activist so accused.

Another risk is that the message will be misappropriated by foreign governments or Diaspora groups (such as the Iranian Monarchist Movement) who have their own agendas vis-à-vis the Iranian government. Even well-intentioned feminists of the "Global North" may fail to see that the words of the activists who address them are mediated, and thus they may confuse Iranian activists' perspectives with their own (Khorasani, 2009:78). Any of these misapprehensions could reinforce existing geopolitical, ethnocentric or Islamophobic relations of power. The campaign thus "need[s] international channels to expand [its] protests, but must appraise each one critically" (Khorasani, 2009:77).

Finally, transnational practices may either mitigate or reinforce power relations within the local society. The successes of and grassroots support for local activists can influence global brokers to demand of an organization that it demonstrate on-the-

ground support, or participation from diverse segments of society, if it wants to receive funding. In so doing, global power brokers can enable marginalized populations of women to gain a foothold within locally or regionally hegemonic women's movements (Alvarez, 2000). Campaign co-founder Noushin Ahmadi-Khorasani claims that the campaign's robust grassroots presence has already altered the 'on-the-ground' reality of organizational funding in Iran, though I cannot verify this (2009:82). On the other hand, the expense of international travel and the use, in global conferences, of foreign languages (such as English) make transnational practice a privilege for some women, and may entrench local hierarchies and relations of power within a given society (Alvarez, 2000).

At this stage it is difficult to tell to what extent the One Million Signatures

Campaign may be caught in these traps. The campaign is certainly under the watchful eye of government officials, but it is also gaining global recognition and support (<http://www.we-change.org/english>). Many of the activists who are able to travel and speak about the campaign abroad are educated,

often English speaking women, yet according to co-founder Sussan Tahmasebi, the campaign has wide appeal among women of lower socioeconomic backgrounds and members of ethnic and religious minorities precisely because they are less able to mitigate the effects of legal discrimination with money or political connections (Tahmasebi, 2008). In either case I am sure the One Million Signatures Campaign will have much more to teach us about transnational feminist practices and solidarities in the future.

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# THE VIRTUAL AESTHETICS OF COSMETIC SURGERY THE PLEASURE IN IMAGINING THE BODY MORPHED

by Jonathan Cohn

COSMETIC SURGERY, photography, and image manipulation have been intertwined since the inception of the medical field. The before-and-after surgery photo is central to the way surgeons communicate their goals to patients, who are overwhelmingly women, and to the public at large as a marketing tool. With computers and digital image manipulation programs, a third type of image has emerged: the simulated post-op photo. In this simulation, a photo is taken before a plastic surgery. The patient discusses with the doctor how she or he would like to look after the surgery and what parts of the body they would like to change. The doctor then takes the their photo

and digitally manipulates it to the patient's specifications—either by changing the shape of the nose, enlarging the breasts, decreasing the size of the stomach or any of a number of other digital plastic surgery operations. In the process of creating these images, patients are able to test out their potential new bodies and learn more about how plastic surgeons discuss and evaluate the human form.

Along with do-it-yourself tutorials, there are several sites that ask the user to send in photos of themselves along with instructions on what they would like to change. For between \$19.99 and \$49.99, these site will send back a modified image of what you would look like if such changes were implemented. While

there are sites that only offer this service (like BeautySurge.com and MakeMeHeal.com), there are also many sites that specialize in image restoration and retouching. They tend to offer the ability to modify a person's image in old photographs and suggest that “the same skill-set can be used to make cosmetic surgery corrections” from correcting skin flaws to changing a body's shape.<sup>1</sup> These sites stress that any kind of manipulation is possible in a photo and they suggest that image manipulation is a viable alternative to actual cosmetic surgery, especially when the changes you want to make are somewhat minimal and would not necessarily be noticed

1. See [http://www.repair-photo.com/photo\\_retouch.htm](http://www.repair-photo.com/photo_retouch.htm)

by someone meeting you in real life for the first time. As such, these sites focus on ways to physically change bodies in minimal ways that will provide the largest improvements to the user's appearance. As in real plastic surgeries, the purpose of these digital manipulations is not to change a person's image so thoroughly that they cease to be recognizable, but rather to make these artificial cuts look as natural as possible.

Along with these programs, which are meant to be used by those thinking about plastic surgery from the comfort of their own home, there are a variety of programs made specifically for the plastic surgery office. At the low end of this range are \$1,000 programs like AlterImage, a slimmed down Photoshop-like program that is supposedly easier to use and has special photo editing tools for body manipulation. At the high end are \$40,000 and up programs that include servers for storing the pictures, on site technical support, and most importantly, special cameras and software that allow for full 3D models of patients. While these 3D programs allow for a more thorough range of manipulations and are good for getting a sense of how depth

and bodily curves will be affected by specific surgeries, their resolution is nowhere near as detailed as the 2D images and they are much more difficult to use.

In talking to three different plastic surgeons from the San Francisco Bay Area about how they use these technologies, they each pointed out that the regular software and 2D images are more than adequate for their uses and for their main purpose of communicating with the patient in a visual way what changes they would like to make and whether these changes are feasible. These three surgeons also made it clear that there is no real consensus on how best to use these programs. One said he used them all the time and that he found that they allowed him not just a better way to communicate his ideas to his patients, but it also helped him to better perform surgeries because it gave the patient a chance to point out aspects of his or her body that the doctor had not fully appreciated. In general, his use of the technology helped to make the patient a more active participant in the surgery and helped to make the surgery itself more customized to both the patient's body and wishes.

Another surgeon stressed that he felt the technology was only useful in certain

circumstances and with certain body parts. He used it all the time with rhinoplasties because he found patients tend not to know exactly what they want when they ask for one, and do not necessarily know how to communicate their desires in general—A patient saying that he or she would like a smaller nose could mean any of a number of things. With other surgeries, such as liposuction and facelifts, he pointed out it was often simpler to just use a mirror and manipulate the body parts by hand. This surgeon rarely used the technology to facilitate a back and forth discussion of possible alternatives to how the body might be modified. He viewed the technology as mainly being for the patient as he could already see the changes that he would make as soon as he looked and touched the patient's nose. His patients may come into the office with a particular idea of what kind of nose they would like, or perhaps a picture of



## THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE SURGERY IS VIEWED BY THE PATIENT AS A DOMINATING OR LIBERATING EXPERIENCE IS BOTH DEPENDENT ON AND VISUALIZED THROUGH THE WAY THESE IMAGE MANIPULATIONS ARE PERFORMED.

a celebrity's nose, but this surgeon used the imaging technologies to steer the patient away from these possibilities if he felt they would not look good, and toward alternatives that he thought would work better. He also used the software to show other areas that could be changed in tandem with the body part they were already thinking about modifying—his example was an Asian patient who asks for more of a bridge to her nose: “I show [her] an augmented bridge on her profile and usually talk about refining the tip at the same time. Bottom line is that I am able to define changes better than vague suggestions about making the nose larger, smaller, thinner, etc. An average patient might have two things on his shopping list—after our consultation, there might be 5 changes to consider.”

In feminist discussions over cosmetic

surgery, there tends to be two camps. The first describes plastic surgery as sexist and racist, in that it defines what is beautiful around a largely homogenous western white stereotype and demands that women conform to it through a rejection and destruction of their natural bodies.<sup>2</sup> The second sees plastic surgery as potentially liberating and as a way by which women can take personal control over their own lives by allowing them to better make their bodies fit their own sense of self.<sup>3</sup> This disagreement is apparent to some degree in my discussions with these two surgeons.

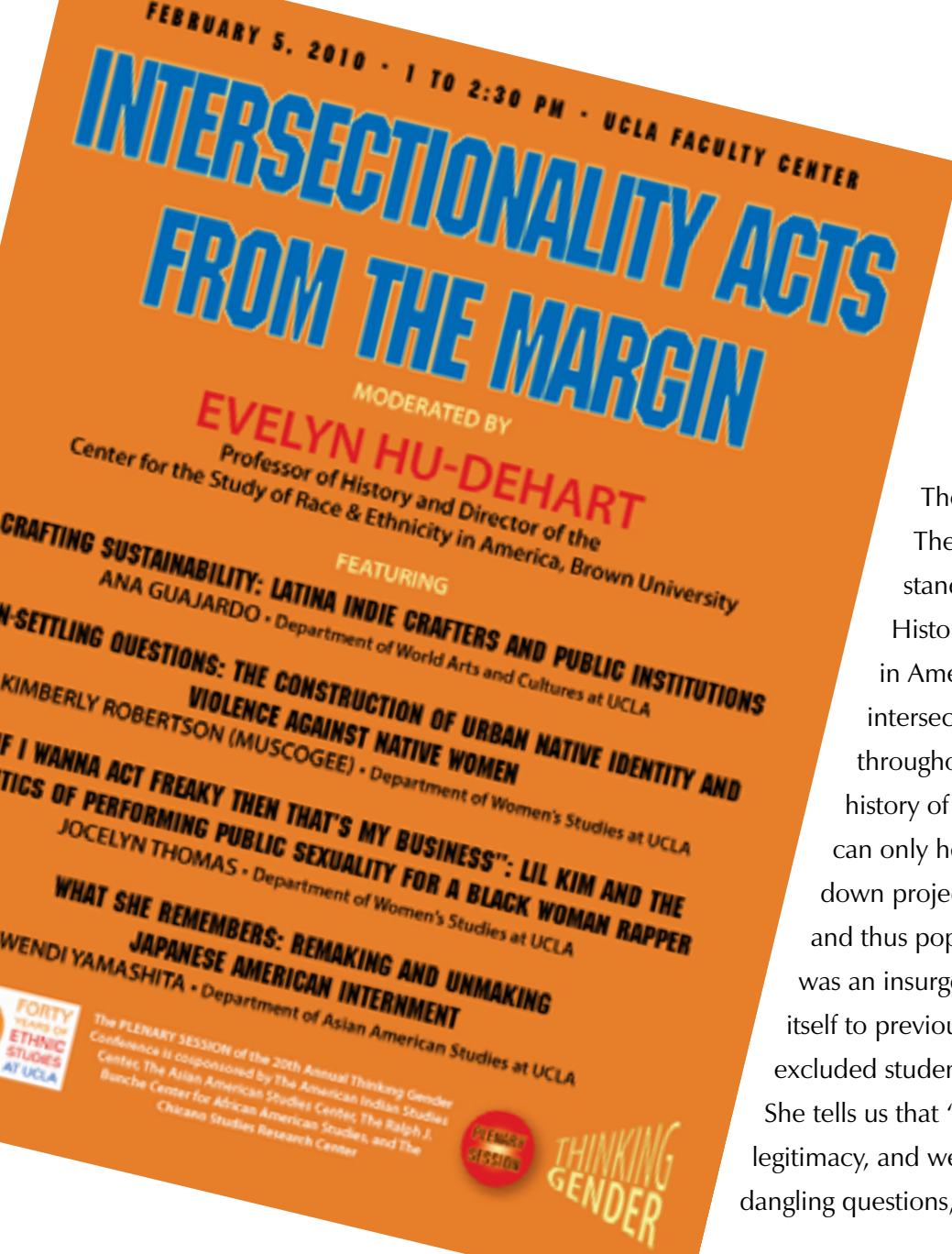
The question of whether the surgery is viewed by the patient as a dominating or liberating experience is both dependent on and visualized through the way these image manipulations are performed. This is not to say that cosmetic surgery is really one or the other (dominating or liberating)—it is a much more complicated issue than that—but rather I mean that the patient's experience of their own surgery can be greatly shaped

by these technologies. Indeed, on many of the websites for these digital plastic surgery programs, they advertise not just their ease of use and ability to make communication between patient and doctor easier, but also and perhaps more importantly the fact that there software is fun and patients enjoy it.

The last surgeon I talked to said he simply did not use these technologies at all because he thought they implied a warranty of the outcome. Most, if not all surgeons make sure to specify this issue, often in written legal documents and disclaimers, if they are going to offer such services. While these technologies can get plastic surgeons into legal trouble and can only serve as a sketch rather than a schematic during surgery, they are still very popular because, depending on how they are used, they provide the often important part of the plastic surgery experience of allowing oneself to experiment with one's own body and reshape and re- envision it in ways that one might not have had a chance to before.

Jonathan Cohn is a doctoral student in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA.

2. See Balsamo, Anne. *Technologies of the Gendered Bodies: Reading Cyborg Women*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).
3. See Davis, Kathy. *Reshaping The Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*. (New York: Routledge, 1995).



# TG2010's Plenary Session Features Evelyn Hu-Dehart

by Patti Donze

The day of the Thinking Gender conference it is pouring rain outside. The weather has made me late. Soon after I find my seat someone stands up to begin speaking. She is Evelyn Hu-Dehart, Professor of History and Director of the Center for the Study of Race & Ethnicity in America from Brown University. She begins by introducing the intersection of race, gender, ethnicity, and nation as a theme that now runs throughout much scholarship on gender, then breaks into a personalized history of the development of that trend – the kind of academic history you can only hear at talks. As a scholar, she is a product of “Area Studies,” a top-down project born in the cold war, funded by the US defense department, and thus populated by white, male scholars. She tells us that, at that time, there was an insurgent movement from below demanding that the university open itself to previously excluded people in three ways: first, opening to previously excluded students; *then*, diversify the faculty; and *then*, diversify the curriculum. She tells us that “once inside the door they demanded... we want respect, we want legitimacy, and we want institutionalization.” Her introduction ended with a series of dangling questions, “Once we get that, can we be still be an insurgent movement?...

What price do we pay?... What do we give up? What purpose does institutionalizing serve?" Once invited to ponder these questions, the presentations began.

Before moving on to the presentations themselves, I am going to take a moment to situate them amidst these questions, and confess that I believe the answer to the first question is yes. I don't know if this is the result of academic theorizing, or just something that I *want* to be true because of my own personal politics, and I am not sure that it has to matter. This is why I love Cultural Studies. Insurgency is bottom up, fueled by highly motivated active agents that oftentimes make many personal sacrifices in the name in institutional politics. They risk tenure. They challenge their advisors. They refuse to give up. If theory does not make way for them, they make new theory. Cohorts change, but somehow insurgency remains.

But to get the price we pay for institutionalization, her second and third questions, I start with a statement of institutional purpose. Institutionalizing makes things part of the everyday routine, where something new is incorporated into the old in such a way that it starts to become old itself. In academia, familiar tradition is a valued time-saver for busy academics who struggle to find time for research in between committee meetings. From the bottom, new elements often push their way past the heavy-footed or short-sighted failings of old ways. Perhaps this is simply a push against tradition, or maybe against a kind of familiarity that is coveted in a deeper, more committed way. Either way, old ways change as new elements make their mark and the two morph together into the next permutation. In our modern rationalized society, incorporation into long-standing patterns of change – or “progress”

as it is often known by futurists, teleologists, and other forward thinkers – is a marker of longevity and thus success. In other words, institutionalization is seen as the path to legitimacy.

We have done a little bit in all three of Hu-Dehart's areas – universities have diversified their students and faculty, and expanded their course offerings. But yet, we are still so far from the goals envisioned by our recent ancestors. And too often it seems that institutionalization has arrived without the necessary respect and legitimacy. As I contemplate whether we are better equipped to rationalize, I wonder if it might be a good idea to institutionalize a conversation about respect and legitimacy of new knowledge in the domain of power, identity, and control. But paradoxically, this kind of thing is seen as a problem – if not *the* problem. Institutionalizing respect and legitimacy is dangerous business. Speaking of the relationship between institutionalization and insurgency, as Hu-Dehart requests, requires us to lean into this territory. Thinking Gender is a refreshing experience because it takes this dynamic seriously, making room for challenges from below without the danger. Here, it is the little things that count. In this moment, I get to walk by all the people eating lunch at the faculty center, a place where graduate students dine at the bequest of privilege, with legitimate purpose and a sense of belonging. Once I pass by the lush red linen tablecloths to sit on polished wood, I listen as Hu-Dehart linked the work of promising graduate students to some of the most enduring characteristics of the field.

Pondering these questions, specifically whether silence is the price we pay for institutionalization, my thoughts are broken by

Kim Robinson, telling me a story I thought I already understood about what it means to be a native woman, but hadn't *heard* until this moment. The timing was beautiful. Hu-Dehart pointed out how all the presentations were pushing against hegemony in both theory and method, as examples of how women of color in academia are pushing against hegemony with *their* cultural capital, complete with their conceptualization of the field, their control over resources of the field, and their strategies and trajectories for success in that field (Bourdieu 1993). After capturing my attention, Kimberly Robinson asked that scholars take a moment to sit with the complexities of the struggle to define an "authentic" Indian persona, and consider the inadequacy of current approaches when it comes to assessing the impact of claims to identity on resources available to the community. Jocelyn Thomas pushed against existing academic wisdom that labels rapper Lil' Kim as "wrong" for playing the sex card, because the issue is really about the degree of control Lil' Kim about the cards she plays, not the sexual inappropriateness of her image. Wendi Yamashita pushed against historical conceptualizations of internment using a linear time, which misses the way real people unpack the events surrounding the bombing of Pearl Harbor and its aftermath. And Ana Guajardo summed it up well by noting that the "floating scene of resistance" that blossomed in response to ballot initiatives targeting the community her Latina indie crafters represent actually served to make that community stronger.

Community was also a central theme for all four presentations, which included suggestions of western individualism. When claimed for the individual or for the group, identity is personal, something one claims for oneself. Yamashita explains how something is taken away

from the larger community when individual narratives and dominant narratives don't resonate, it is "a type of violence itself." Internment narratives focusing on linear time construct disruption of the patriarchal nuclear family and corresponding gender roles as the cause of despair, rather the insecurity and constant upheaval surrounding internment itself. She gives voice to a different narrative. Within this context, each presenter's argument included the contextualized demand that they themselves be heard. This pushing against on the basis of individual and collective identity exposes the political slight of hand involved in assumptions about identity of 'others' while challenging us as scholars to contemplate the politics of identity in our fields, as we know them.

Is the price we pay too much? The take away point I got from this session was that, thanks to the forum provided by Thinking Gender, the graduate student presenters directed us toward where the answers to these grand questions might be. We need to move beyond the ties of capital to identity to a more radical analysis that focuses on the contradictory ways in which identity is marked, circumscribed, expanded, narrated, and used. Highlighting contradictions tells us that institutionalization and insurgency can only be balanced, ironically, by refusing to concede that balance has been achieved.

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# Where the **Body** meets **Policy**

*Panel review by Jackie Hunt*

MODERATED BY Professor Jackie Leavitt, Department of Urban Planning at UCLA, “Where the Body Meets Policy,” explored a variety of issues where policy, practice, and politics influenced the perception of personal rights, needs, and characterization. The panelists were Megan Carney, Department of Anthropology at UC Santa Barbara; Elena Frank, Department of Gender Studies at Arizona State University; Katie A. Hasson, Department of Sociology at UC Berkeley; and Bo Luengsurawat, Department of Asian American Studies at UCLA.

## *Human Right to Food?*

Carney began the session with her paper, “Women and the Human Right to Food: Examining Rights-Based Approaches to

the Gendered Cost of Food in the U.S.” Carney questioned whether a human rights-based approach addresses the gendered nature of food insecurity. Women are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, which is the lack of access to enough food to meet one’s basic needs.

According to Carney, hunger is the most flagrantly violated human right worldwide. Household food insecurity rates in California are among highest in country, and Santa Barbara County, the site of Carney’s research, has rates among the highest in state. Carney noted gender-specific repercussions of the economic downturn and found marked differences of perceived food insecurity: men had lower stress levels than women, a result perhaps indicative of

women’s food procurement, preparation, and allocation duties. Women also compromised their own nutrition in order to provide for children.

Needs-based programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly referred to as food stamps, and the food voucher program Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are criticized for mitigating the experience of food insecurity but not addressing its underlying causes. But a rights-based approach often does not align with U.S. attitudes of self-reliance. One alternative framework is the food sovereignty movement, which increases the involvement of women and their communities and addresses issues of control, not just access. Carney noted the positive attributes of the

movement but concluded that whether the food sovereignty movement sufficiently addresses women and human rights is debatable.

## *Color of Self-Love?*

In “The Color of Self-Love: Exposing Racism in Female Masturbation Research,” Frank argued that that because of intersectionalities, masturbation research about black women specifically oppresses black women as subjects.

Frank’s research showed that the black/white paradigm establishing white as the “norm” and contrasting black as the “other” was consistent in masturbation research since the 1980s and served to create studies in contrast: white women were normal and black women were deviant. Women of other races were ignored, as were working class white women. This marginalization showed that certain groups were not found worthy of study. The studies also showed a huge disparity in the sample sizes of white and black women. In one study, eight times as many white women were included, which suggests that

researchers assumed that black women were homogeneous in their experiences.

Masturbation research also emphasized the blackness of sexuality. The studies Frank evaluated reinforced stereotypes of black women as hypersexual beings or as having a dangerous sexuality. Studies tended to use biased samples of convenience by surveying lower class or at-risk black women. One study hypothesized a correlation between HIV risk and masturbation—but only for African-American women. The majority of the studies also reinforced the historical notion of blacks as objects of scientific inquiry, and most studies were led by white investigators.

In this research Frank found that sexual deviancy related to masturbation was more likely cast on black women than white women. One study attempted to explain white women’s frequency of masturbation by correlating it with “how neglecting their mother was perceived to be” while no explanation or excuse was given for black women’s reported behavior. In another study the authors were skeptical of the results they found showing that more white women than black women said they masturbate. They

questioned black respondents’ “honesty” in response to the research questions.

Frank concluded that the design, implementation, and analysis of these studies oppressed black women as a unique group. Black female identity exists at the intersection of gender, race, and sexuality, and at this intersection axes of oppression converge. Frank stressed the need for a feminist approach to masturbation research in order to better understand the dynamics that influence sexual attitudes and behaviors for all women.

## *Feminist Model of Healthcare?*

Hasson’s paper, “Negotiating the Feminist Model of Healthcare and the Use of Technology in a Women’s Health Clinic,” discussed the debate over two tools used in abortion procedures, the meanings and uses of these technologies, and whether feminist practice requires the exclusive use of feminist tools.

Hasson completed eighteen months of participant observation at a women’s health clinic founded in 1970 in the Bay area. Clinics played a key role in the women’s movement and changed mainstream health care. As a result, Hasson found the clinic did not have

very evident political goals, even while performing an explicitly political project like abortion. The debate she found centered around two tools used to stabilize the cervix during an abortion, the single-tooth tenaculum and the atraumatic cervical stabilizer. The single tooth tenaculum is used to grasp the cervix by puncturing it while the atraumatic stabilizer pinches the cervix but does not puncture it. The atraumatic stabilizer was judged by many staff members to be feminist. It was invented by feminist women's health activists as an alternative to the "damaging" and "brutal" effects of the single-tooth tenaculum.

Despite this history, one doctor at the clinic consistently chose the tenaculum, even after the clinic director asked her to stop. The doctor, a supporter of the clinic's feminist approach, defended her use of the tool because it gave her a better grip and allowed her to work more quickly. Staff at the clinic thought she just wasn't trying hard enough with the atraumatic cervical stabilizer. Hasson found the clinic's volunteers were divided on the topic, though not as their personal politics might have predicted. She found that

some of the most radical feminist volunteers supported the doctor's choice and the disagreement was ultimately about whether the use of stabilizer was *always* a feminist act—whether it was necessary for a feminist abortion.

Hasson argued that symbolic meanings complicate finding the right match between tools and jobs. Tools are not neutral objects; they become meaning-laden entities through their use. Hasson found that the disagreement depended on the perceived task at hand. What if a woman was provided a "better" abortion with the non-feminist tool? If the clinic intended to provide a safe, effective abortion, the two tools were essentially equal. Providing a feminist abortion, however, made the decision about which tool to use more complicated.

### *Kit Yan's "Badass"?*

Luengsuraswat showed a YouTube video of spoken word poet Kit Yan performing his poem, "Badass," and offered an analysis of the work. In the poem, Yan comes out as a transgender person, explores the meaning of masculinity, racialization, and gendering,

and contemplates his own identity. Yan keeps the audience laughing and calling out throughout the performance.

Luengsuraswat argued that the construction of masculinity is multiple and contradictory, that it is an idealized construction that is impossible to idealize. Yan's poem shows this impossibility by describing his dream for himself "in [his] next life." Yan wants to be "a badass," who has aggressive sex, takes drugs, and skips class; eats meat and drives a "pimped-out, rimmed-out black Hummer SUV;" is big and buff with piercings and tattoos; and who appears on TV with celebrities. Luengsuraswat contextualized this description within the experience of Asian American men in history. He noted that though conditions for Asian immigrant men improved after anti-miscegenation laws were repealed and men found work opportunities outside of the feminized realms of domestic work and laundry, Asian American men have remained alienated, despite their attempts to be a "model minority."

According to Luengsuraswat, the discussion of meat and Hummer SUVs shows meat and the meat market, both masculine. Yan

mimes eating, driving, and masturbating; he displays normalized masculinity but transforms it into something of ridicule. Luengsurawat suggests that by trying to embody all these characteristics, the mismatched masculinities poke fun at the ideal, even though each of the manifestations is culturally valid on its own. Yan's descriptions of material culture, popularity, and sexual desire are extreme. His voice is loud and powerful and his gestures confident and sexual. But his tone quickly changes as he begins to admit that he doesn't and can't do those things.

Yan's next verse confesses that he's not a badass, "just a dumbass." He reflects that it's easy to get lost in a dream and then assembles a description of his own masculinity. Yan balances his preference with buying organic food and believing in love with his tendency to scratch his ass when no one is looking. In the end, Yan even admits to drinking soy milk, an emasculating food, but he points out that he drinks it straight from the box. Luengsurawat concluded that even though Yan passes for a man, he is still aware that as an Asian man he is subject to questions about his masculinity.

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# 11 FEBRUARY 2011

*21st Annual  
Graduate Student  
Research Conference*



PRESENTED BY  
**THE UCLA CENTER FOR  
THE STUDY OF WOMEN**

*Thinking*  
**G E N D E R**

continued from page 1

In the panel entitled “Contested Cultural Productions,” Heather Collette-Vanderaa, Department of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA, gave a paper called “Cinema of Minors: The Politics of Genre and Gender in American Teen Films of the 1980s,” in which she discussed how a range of women directors who made “teen films” in the 80s position themselves vis-à-vis the male-dominated movie industry. Engaging Alison Butler’s notion of a “cinema of minors,” Collette-Vanderaa argued that feminist film history has overlooked teen films made by women including Susan Seidelman (*Desperately Seeking Susan*), Martha Coolidge (*Valley Girl*), Amy Heckerling (*Fast Times at Ridgemont High*), and Penelope Spheeris (*Suburbia*). Collette-Vanderaa suggested that the women’s teen films, in fact, offer narratives in which adolescent female characters negotiate their shifting identities and engage in a process of becoming subjects—not objects—that should be recognized as a form of social critique of the norms of gender.

When the movie industry is dominated by men, why are most casting directors women? Erin Hill, Department of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA, in a paper called, “The

Gendering of Film and Television Casting,” explored the female-dominated profession of casting, showing how skills coded as “female” throughout film history led to the dominance of women in this particular job. Hill demonstrated the way in which clerical jobs – including those of assistants, script readers, and “script girls” – during the Classical Hollywood period, gave women the skills to become casting directors once the studio era ended in 1948. As actors, no longer bound by seven-year exclusive studio contracts, became a resource to be classified, tracked and distributed, women maintained these records and ultimately began actively cultivating talent, making aspiring thespians into Hollywood actors.

In “MTV’s ‘Hills’ of Money: How MTV tapped the postfeminist Demographic in an Age of Extreme Media Convergence, Taylor Nygaard (Department of Critical Studies at USC) examined the ways in which MTV’s popular reality show *The Hills* constructs the bodies of its female stars as docile bodies that can be “improved” by virtue of the surveillance of the camera which “encouraged” stars such as Stephanie Pratt and Heidi Montag to work out, develop an

eating disorder, and to undergo extensive cosmetic surgery. Nygaard argued that surveillance is here (ironically) reconfigured as female “empowerment,” leading these women to physically alter their bodies for the cameras while stripping them of their individualities.

Professor John Caldwell, Department of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA, responded to the panel raising questions about how certain kinds of cinema are “ghettoized,” leading directors to disown their identities in order to avoid being restricted to a “ghetto cinema,” for instance Kathryn Bigelow’s rejection of her identity as a “women director”; about how “talent” is created and managed; and about whether MTV’s Foucaultian disciplining of the body is strictly limited to white, middle-class female bodies or whether women of other races and backgrounds and men in general are also disciplined through the MTV camera.

## **MATERIAL BODIES AND STATES OF FEMINISM**

In this panel moderated by Professor Judith Halberstam from the Department of English at USC, Zachary Blair and Nesilan Sen, both from the Department of Anthropology and Geography at the University of Illinois–

Chicago, each presented on the ways in which genitalia are displayed as a form of gender performance. Blair's paper, "Junk in the Trunk: Gender, Race, and the Political Economy of Truck Nutz" examined the ways in which "truck nutz," fake bull testicles that many people – predominantly men – hang from the rear undercarriage of their cars and trucks, making the car or truck look like it has "nutz," are used to assert the driver's white heterosexual masculinity, a reconfiguration of the "mud flap girl" whose busty silhouette has long appeared on trucks' mud flaps.

In her paper, "Labiaplasty and the Construction of the 'Normal,'" Sen explored the way in which the female body is transformed into a space for the inscription of social norms, focusing in particular on the way in which medical textbooks have constructed an image of a "perfect" vagina. Sen drew a connection between practices of Western colonialism in which the "deformed" body of the non-Western "other" was constructed as the signifier of degeneration and immorality and the contemporary practice of labiaplasty (cosmetic surgery for the labia), suggesting that in each case a "normal" body is used to discipline actual bodies, forcing them to

conform to an idealized image in the service of maintaining the ideological power of the status quo. According to Sen, Dr. David Matlock of the Laser Vaginal Institute of Los Angeles makes \$12 million a year doing elective, non-medically necessary labiaplasty. Ironically, the market for "normal" labia is great given the fact that only 20% of women have such "normal" labia.

Samuel Galloway, Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago, presented a paper titled "The Limits of Equivalence: Gay Male Subjectivity Outside Feminist Theory" in which he called for more historical and ethnographic research in to gay male cultures as opposed to psychoanalytic theories of gay male subjectivity.

Halberstam responded to the panel by noting the foregrounding of genitalia in the papers of Blair and Sen, suggesting that Blair think more about the undertones of vulnerability and homosexuality conveyed through the display of truck nutz (especially in the practice of "mudding" in which one man's truck pulls another man's truck out of the mud in exchange for his truck nutz) and that Sen further historicize the increasing popularity of labiaplasty, perhaps looking not only at

medical textbooks but also at pornography as a site in which labial "norms" are established. Halberstam pushed Galloway to look further into the historical and ethnographic work on gay male cultures that has already been done and then sharpen his argument to focus on the particular historical and cultural aspects that seem to be missing from this record, including the experiences of different gay male subjectivities as they are experienced in tandem with racial, national, and class identities and within the current context in which gay men, rather than cruising, can meet on websites like gay.com and manhunt.com.

## **REVISING THE 60S AND 70S**

How has the status of women artists and women in art changed since the 60s and 70s? In the panel "Revising the 60s and 70s," moderated by Professor Charlene Villaseñor Black, Department of Art History at UCLA, Leticia Alvarado, Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at NYU, presented her paper, "...Toward a Personal Will to Continue Being Other': Ana Mendieta and Woman of Color Feminism," in which she argues that artist Ana Mendieta portrays her own body as both abject and sublime, producing an identity

that can only be named in fragments. At the University of Iowa, Mendieta was the target of racism, which led her to photograph herself as a hyperracialized body, pushing her face and body up against Plexiglas and photographing herself. By insisting on inhabiting a racialized identity, Alvarado argued, Mendieta purposely produced herself as an “other” while simultaneously refusing a fixed identity.

Elizabeth Dastin (Art History, CUNY) gave a paper called “The World Above the Water Line: From the 1960s to New York City’s A.I.R. Gallery,” which charted the history of the feminist A.I.R. Gallery, the first all-female artists’ cooperative in the United States, which was founded in 1953 by artists Barbara Zucker and Susan Williams partly as a protest against the exclusion of most women’s work from major museum exhibitions including the Whitney Biennial. Contrasting the work shown in A.I.R with the representations of women as bodies for male consumption in *Playboy* and as stereotypical housewives in *Good Housekeeping*, Dastin showed that A.I.R. provided a space for an alternative discourse on gender and art that predated both Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and *Ms. Magazine* (founded in 1973).

In “Humor, Sex, and Politics: Anita Steckel’s *Mom Art*,” Rachel Middleman (Art History, USC) explored and historicized the work of Anita Steckel, who created “Mom Art” in opposition to Pop Art, a movement which was dominated by men. She used the disruptive aesthetic of collage to reveal ideological message already lurking in photographs, especially racist messages. Steckel also produced many anti-war statements by mixing sexual and political imagery.

My own paper, “ ‘How Could She?’: The ‘Inappropriate’ Woman in Contemporary Appropriation Films,” examined four contemporary experimental films made by women who have appropriated film and video footage in order to interrogate the ways in which these images produce particular ideas about femininity. I argued that, by placing appropriated images in “inappropriate” contexts, each of these films—*Intermittent Delight* (Akosua Adoma Owusu), *I Love (Hate) You: Gloria* (Kate Raney), *They have a name for girls like me*. (Julie Perini), and *About Town* (Marnie Parrell)—leads us to question the ways in which women, their bodies, and their embodied actions are constructed and disciplined by mainstream discourse.

## THE WAY WE SEE IT

The panel was moderated by CSW Director Kathleen McHugh and explored the ways in which bodies are transformed through images. Jonathan Cohn (Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA) presented a paper entitled, “The Virtual Aesthetics of Cosmetic Surgery: Gender, Race, and the Standardization of Beauty,” in which he examined the ways in which digital morphing technologies are being used to simulate the transformation of the body through plastic surgery. He suggested that as plastic surgeons and their potential patients increasingly use Photoshop and other technologies to envision changed bodies, what it means to be “beautiful,” “healthy,” “natural” and “artificial” is transformed. These technologies also allow patients to have more input into the surgery process. Cohn said there are two camps in regard to plastic surgery: those who see it as violence against the body and those who see it as a woman—since it is usually a woman—taking control of her body. Cohn suggests that, while neither camp is right or wrong, these computer programs allow plastic surgery to be construed as pleasurable and even “fun.”

No gender conference would be complete without a discussion of a talking vagina, and, thankfully, Emily Garrigou-Kempton, Department of French and Italian, at USC, gave a paper called “‘If Your Vagina Could Speak, What Would It Say?’: Dangerous Femininity, Anxious Masculinity and the Threat of Female Desire in the 1975 Pornographic Movie *The Sex That Speaks*.” Garrigou-Kempton suggested that this French film (known as *Pussytalk* in English) delivers a message about the danger of female promiscuity, infidelity, and insatiability, responding to male anxiety about being able to satisfy a woman. She argues that the film is particularly problematic because it operates under the assumption that the woman has no control over her vagina and, moreover, that the vagina speaks the truth while the woman herself lies. Indeed, the talking vagina “confesses” the woman’s crimes, thereby not only speaking for the woman but, in fact, replacing her.

How do digital technologies contribute to the establishment of legal facts? In “Visualizing Domestic Violence: A Digital Archive of Evidence Photography in Legal Observation and Popular Media,” Kelli D. Moore,

Department of Communication at UCSD, explored the Battered Women’s Movement. This movement began in the 1970s as a low-profile attempt to provide safe havens for battered women but has increasingly become allied with the legal system. In collaborating with the legal system, the movement has become more visible and has contributed to the archive of images of battered women—images that quadruple the likelihood of conviction—even when the victim is herself a hostile witness, supporting her abuser—in domestic violence cases. The production of such an archive, Moore notes, has led to fears about how these images might move into the public sphere, out of the control of the woman pictured. Moreover, Moore shows that digital data aggregation software called Intelius, which does background checks for customers who want to know more about the person they are considering dating. In this way, Moore argues, evidence of domestic violence has become data available for a variety of purposes.

Is being present at a performance different from looking at a photograph of that performance. Robert Summers, Department of Art History at UCLA, in his paper, “Notes

on the Touch and Reciprocity of Feminist Performance,” suggested that looking at a photograph of a performance can be just as moving as being present at the performance itself. While the audience generally disagreed with Summers that the two experiences can be “the same,” Summers brought into question what exactly we are measuring when we gauge “similarity” and “difference.”

As a whole, the 2010 Thinking Gender conference was a productive site for interdisciplinary interaction, helping graduate students in many different fields to understand the ways in which issues of gender are surfacing across disciplines. The fact that so many graduate students are dealing with gender in their work suggests that gender is no longer regarded as transparent but that it is, rather, a category that is being—and must continue to be—actively interrogated in every aspect of social life.

Jaimie Baron is a PhD candidate in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA.



## ***Videos and papers now available online!***

Videos of the presentations from these panels are now available on UCLA's YouTube channel: "Contested Cultural Productions," "Material Bodies and States of Feminism," "Incarceration," "Race-ing Resistance in Queer and Trans Politics: Historicizing Visibility," and "Intersectionality Acts from the Margin."

And many of the papers are available on CSW's site at the California Digital Library eScholarship Respository: [http://escholarship.org/uc/search?entity=csw\\_thinkinggender](http://escholarship.org/uc/search?entity=csw_thinkinggender)

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