

Visiting Rwanda to Discuss Gender Equity in Education

*Q &A with
Kathleen McHugh*

BY BEN RAPHAËL SHER



LASTYEAR, the Women's Leadership Program, funded by USAID and managed by Higher Education for Development, awarded the UCLA African Studies Center and the University of Rwanda, College of Education, a million-dollar partnership grant on "Promoting Gender Equity and Female Empowerment." The partnership is intended to increase Rwandan women's participation in the teaching profession and create curricula and pedagogical strategies sensitive to gender issues and the need to empower women students. CSW Director Kathleen McHugh is part of the partnership committee and recently traveled to Rwanda, along with CSW Research Scholar Kathie Sheldon and several faculty members associated with the African Studies Center (see photo opposite). They engaged with University of Rwanda students and faculty about various topics related to gender and education. *CSW Update* sat down with McHugh to learn more about her trip.

Why is this partnership important, both for UCLA and for University of Rwanda?

I think this project is very important for both UCLA and the University of Rwanda because issues concerning gender equity, gender-based violence, and equal opportunity in education and work are problems in both countries. The two countries have complementary strengths. While the US is certainly ahead of Rwanda in terms of cultural attitudes concerning gender equity, Rwanda leads the world in terms of gender equity

in legislative government. They are number 1 in the world and the U.S. is 80th. So, considering each national context, there's a dialogism represented by these two institutions, both of which are committed to attaining gender equity in education and employment opportunities, social and cultural opportunities, and overall climate for men and women. Advantages or accomplishments in one context can inform the other.

As part of the Millennium Development Goals, the U.N. included the goal of achieving gender equity in elementary and secondary schools throughout the world by 2016. Rwanda probably won't make that deadline, but the government and the educational institutions there are very committed to getting as close as possible to realizing it.

Gender non-equity in education is an issue in Africa, mostly because of poverty. If a family only has enough money to educate one of their children, they're going to educate a boy, not a girl. The lack of institutional amenities also interrupts girls' education. Many schools do not have sufficient facilities for adolescent girls' hygiene. There are key issues, particularly in the rural areas of Rwanda, that have to do with poverty. Those are big and significant issues, and ones that this project is certainly not equipped to address.

What emerged from the visit, however, was that at the same time that Rwanda is very progressive in terms of government policies to ensure gender equity in the public sphere, there's a real cultural emphasis on traditional ideas of

gender, male privilege, and what it is to be masculine in Rwanda, that really challenge the goal of gender equity. As Professor Jolly Rubagiza in the Center for Gender, Culture, and Development said to me, "In Rwanda, masculinity means to not be accountable. To not have to be accountable to anyone." Femininity, then, means to be accountable: To men, to family, to traditions that dictate, for example, that a woman needs to be home when her husband gets home. This culture is very patriarchal and very religious. These cultural frameworks aren't predicated on gender equity.

As a result, there are real disparities between attitudes: What women are learning, what girls are learning in their families, what boys are learning in their families versus what they learn in school and in the public sphere about gender equity. That's where this project really makes a difference vis-à-vis Rwanda. The project helps its participants to address problematic cultural attitudes and to start to change those attitudes in the classroom. The University of Rwanda's School of Education, our primary host, trains elementary and secondary school teachers, and so those were the people that we were talking to, these teachers.

What was your role during the event?

I participated in four formal events, including two workshops. I was part of the gender awareness team. The gender awareness team included myself; Dr. Kathleen Sheldon, a CSW research scholar who specializes

in African women's history; Françoise Lionnet, Director of the African Studies Center at UCLA and the Principal Investigator of the project; and Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Anthropology at UCLA. One workshop was on gender awareness in education and the other was on gender awareness in research. The workshops addressed: "How do you bring gender awareness into research and teaching?" For each, I gave a presentation, Kathie Sheldon gave a presentation, and then we did a Q & A together. We coordinated our lectures ahead of time. We had audiences of about 100 for the education workshop and 60 to 70 for the research workshop. I also participated in two smaller meetings with our corollary, the Center for Gender, Culture, and Development, in which we discussed the project, the goals, and how we could best work together.

Could you tell us more about your presentations?

The overall framework of the presentations emphasized that both universities are committed to global gender equity and that there are issues and problems that remain to establishing it. Those problems include the failure to raise the gender question and the failure to understand women's roles in history.

In discussing bringing gender awareness into research, my primary goal was to talk about the fact that if you don't ask the gender question in any research framework, in many instances you will produce research

that's distorted or flawed. I gave examples from cardiology, history, and media studies to make the point that when you don't ask about gender, you can produce incomplete or, in the case of medical research, dangerously misleading results. In history, the question, Where are the women?, has been tremendously generative. Asking that question has resulted in the historical record being completely transformed, both in content and in method.

Kathie Sheldon talked about the kinds of evidence used to document women in Rwandan history— from archaeology up to anthropology— and where that evidence is found.

The Q&A sessions were fascinating and productive, and immediately raised salient issues. One of the first questions came from an elementary school teacher who said, "Our students are believers. They are believers, they're very religious, and the Bible says that the man is the head of the household. How do you handle that in the classroom?" I talked about the fact that at UCLA we have evangelical Christians in our classrooms, we have people who have varying religious beliefs that necessitate that they not be in class on certain days. They raise issues in the classroom, if we're dealing with cultural representations of broad spectrums of human experience, some of which are disallowed in religious contexts. We talked about the need to be respectful of religious traditions while also insisting on the rigor that has to prevail in educational classrooms. It is important to emphasize that

objective, rational, knowledge-based, not belief-based, reality is the framework of the classroom, and that has to be maintained.

The other questions that arose had to do with how women just don't do well in science in Rwanda. It's the whole problem of women in STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics. CSW had a speaker's series on stereotype threat in STEM fields curated by Jenessa Shapiro and we discussed that research. Basically, if girls and boys internalize messages that boys are good at math and science, whereas girls are good at literature and social sciences, then a girl who might otherwise be excellent at math might not perform to her full ability. Research has found that if you remove that stereotype threat, performances balance out. We talked about what the ideas about gender performance and stem are in Rwanda, and if it's similar to that in the US. Turns out that it is! That was a very productive discussion.

The second presentation had to do with gender in education. I used two examples, one study from the Harvard Business School and one from the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology. At Harvard, entering women students—probably among the most talented, elite, privileged female students in the world, who often had run companies already and whose scores were equal to that of their male counterparts—got into the Harvard Business School and their performances plummeted. They made an institutional intervention—the elements of which we discussed—and things changed. The Kigali Institute of Science and Technology made a



Woman Strolls on Grounds of National University of Rwanda, Huye-Butare, Southern Rwanda. Courtesy of Adam Jones, Ph.D., Wikimedia Commons

Photos of the opening of the Women's Opportunity Center are available on the website of Women for Women International.

similar institutional intervention with women college students in the STEM fields, but whose performance was not up to par and their performance improved significantly. We discussed the classroom as not only an intellectual environment but also as a physical and social one, which needs to be characterized by safety—physical safety, social safety, and intellectual safety—without taking away intellectual challenge.

Kathie talked about the inclusion of gender and women in textbooks in Africa, which is substandard to say the least. We then had a very engaged and lengthy conversation about the threats to male privilege that come with the emphasis on gender equity. In other words, what is happening to males' traditions of privilege? We talked about same-sex education and the pros and cons of same-sex education in the Rwandan context. We considered male sense of safety vs. female sense of safety, and how they are different. That was also very productive, because it raised similar issues as our first Q&A session.

What is your continuing role, or the CSW's role, in this program at large?

It's a three-year grant, and we are currently sorting out plans for the future. Representatives from the University of Rwanda have come to UCLA, and we have gone to Rwanda. Now the real work begins! All the participants have written reports and recommendations.

Now we're going to convene and think about next steps. For me, those steps include asking: How to do

consciousness-raising in the Rwandan context and across different levels of education? What you do to raise consciousness in an elementary school context is very different from what you do at a university level. We want to consider how educators on the ground there can intervene in these kinds of issues, and also what is already being done that's promising. For example, there's a group of Rwandan men who are trying to intervene in traditional attitudes about male privilege. That's always helpful, when efforts towards progressive change come from the people holding the privilege.

Can UCLA students and faculty get involved?

I think that opportunities will arise, and they were certainly discussed in our smaller meetings with the Center for Gender, Culture, and Development. One of the things we discussed was exchange of students and possible ongoing relationships.

Are there any other highlights from the trip that you'd like to talk about?

An incredible highlight was going to the Women's Opportunity Center (see website: <http://www.womenforwomen.org/news-women-for-women/rwanda-womens-opportunity-center-opening.php>), which is located an hour outside of Kigali. Built with funds provided by Women for Women International, a group that supports women victims of war, the Center campus was designed pro bono by a US-based

architect for this beautiful plot of land in the countryside. It includes classrooms, dorm spaces, and high-end sleeping quarters for tourist/visitors. Each classroom is made of bricks, but porous, so that it's like lattice and the airflow goes in and out. The climate in Rwanda is very moderate. The buildings have these beautiful sweeping roofs that collect rainwater, and the rainwater goes into a cistern, where it's purified and can be used for drinking water. There is also a farm. Our host, the Center's dynamic director, Faith Tatou, together with local women affiliated with it, showed us all over the campus, which included a cheese-making room. It's set on a hill and it overlooks a farm run by one of the local women's cooperatives. The bricks—600,000!—were all made by the local women's brickmaking cooperative. During part of the presentation, we met with the women who are the heads of the Agricultural Collective and the Brickmaking Collective, and they showed how to make a brick. It is very much like making bread dough. You knead it, you salt it with sand, and you put it in a mold. That was really fascinating and a lot of work. With maybe eleven different buildings, the Center is very beautiful.

Ben Sher is a graduate student in the Cinema and Media Studies Program at UCLA and an editorial assistant and graduate student researcher at CSW.

Photo credits: page 4-5, Suburb of Kigali, 2009, Courtesy of RYTC, Wikimedia Commons; page 4, Members of partnership group, November 16, 2013, photo courtesy of *New Times*, Rwanda's daily newspaper.

THINKING GENDER

24TH ANNUAL
GRADUATE STUDENT
RESEARCH
CONFERENCE



THINKING GENDER 2014, CSW's 24th Annual Graduate Student Conference, promises to inspire lively conversations for the year to come. This year, scholars from near and far will present exciting and innovative work on gender, sexuality, and women's issues. Papers will cover a wide array of topics, including food cultures, criminality, popular controversies in mass media, female artists, pleasure and jouissance, femininity, revolutionary movements, domesticity, space and gender, embodiment in literature and queer fictions, media and digital cultures, and labor and biopolitics.

Representing 38 colleges and universities from around the world, international students travelling from as far away as India, the UK, Taiwan and Hong Kong will join student presenters from California and across the country. Interdisciplinary panels like "Controversial Indulgences at Work, Home, and Play," "Post-Human(ities): Media, Digital Culture, and Cyberfeminisms," and "Skin Unbounded: Destabilizing Notions of Gender/Sexuality in Science, Art, and Theory" will allow students from a diverse range of fields to engage in energizing conversations across the 35 disciplines represented at the conference.

We are especially excited about this year's plenary session, "Somatic Pleasures and Traumas: Seduction, Senses, and Sexuality," which will be moderated by CSW Director and professor of Cinema & Media Studies and English, Kathleen McHugh. The panel will feature: "The Site of Insult: Spinal Cord Injury, Push Girls and the Ground Zero of Female

UCLA CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN PRESENTS

THINKING GENDER

24TH ANNUAL GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH CONFERENCE

SOMATIC PLEASURES & TRAUMAS

Seduction, Senses, and Sexuality

PLENARY SESSION: 1 TO 2:30 PM, SEQUOIA ROOM, UCLA FACULTY CENTER

Moderated by

KATHLEEN MCHUGH

CSW Director and Professor, English and Cinema and Media Studies

The Site of Insult: Spinal Cord Injury, Push Girls, and the Ground Zero of Female Pleasure

KRISTA KANE • Division of Humanities, University of Louisville

Who is Josie Packard? Joan Chen, Lucy Liu, and the Uncommon Sense of Pleasure

MILA ZUO • Cinema and Media Studies, UCLA

"No Shameful Mastery": Sexuality, Race, and Authenticity in Colonial Kenya

ELIZABETH WILLIAMS • History, University of Minnesota

Cinephilia as Post-Traumatic Compulsion? Erotic Thriller Obsession in Odette Springer and Johanna Demetrakas' Some Nudity Required

BEN RAPHAEL SHER • Cinema and Media Studies, UCLA

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Pleasure" by Krista Kane; "Who is Josie Packard? Joan Chen, Lucy Liu and the Uncommon Sense of Pleasure" by Mila Zuo; "No Shameful Mastery": Sexuality, Race, and Authenticity in Colonial Kenya" by Elizabeth Williams; and "Cinephilia as Post-Traumatic Compulsion?: Erotic Thriller Obsession in Odette Springer and Johanna Demetrakas' Some Nudity Required" by Ben Raphael Sher.

This year's conference is surely not to be missed! Please join us for a day of provocative scholarship, spirited conversation, socializing and fun. The day begins with pre-registration at

7:30 AM and ends with a reception at 5:30 PM. Presented by the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, the conference is free and open to the public. All-day parking is available in structure 2 for \$12. For more information on the program, please visit our website at: <http://www.csw.ucla.edu/conferences-1/thinking-gender/thinking-gender-2014>



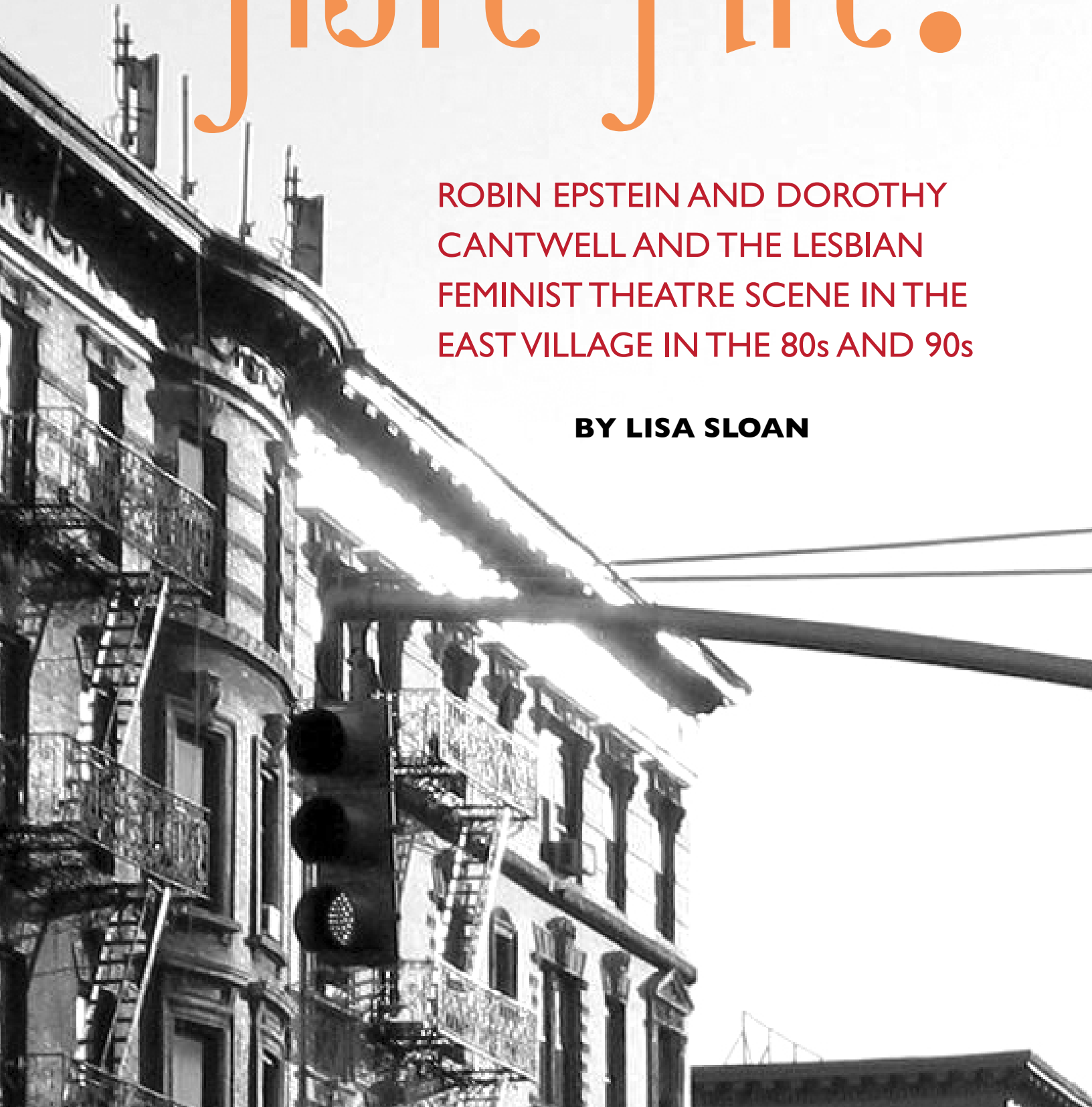
Mila Zuo is a PhD student in the Cinema and Media Studies program at UCLA. She is also the Thinking Gender Conference

Coordinator for 2014 and one of the presenters at the plenary session.

More fire!

ROBIN EPSTEIN AND DOROTHY
CANTWELL AND THE LESBIAN
FEMINIST THEATRE SCENE IN THE
EAST VILLAGE IN THE 80s AND 90s

BY LISA SLOAN



IN THE 1980s and 1990s, lesbian feminist theater and performance thrived in New York City's East Village. New York City's WOW Café, which began in 1980 as an international women's theater festival before becoming a collective in 1982, emerged as a hotbed of lesbian theater. Lesbian performance luminaries such as Split Britches, a troupe comprised of two of WOW's founders, Peggy Shaw and Lois Weaver, along with Deb Margolin; Carmelita Tropicana; Holly Hughes; and The Five Lesbian Brothers all counted themselves members of the WOW collective at one time. The WOW Café and its alumnae tend to dominate lesbian feminist theater criticism; comparatively little is known about other women's theater groups that were making lesbian work during this period in New York, such as More Fire! Productions. *New York Times* reporter Jennifer Dunning identifies More Fire! as one of "[New York City's] leading women's theater groups" alongside Split Britches and Women's Experimental Theater (C22). More Fire! Productions created pieces that challenged New York's changing artistic and economic landscapes from a lesbian perspective. More Fire! was co-founded in 1980 by visual artist Robin Epstein and actress Dorothy Cantwell. Friends since college, Epstein and Cantwell worked together waiting tables in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Their waitressing experiences provided fodder for their first play, *As the Burger Broils*. The piece premiered in October of 1980 at P.S. 122, and was the first full-length performance to be staged at the experimental East

Village venue. The group subsequently staged most of its works at University of the Streets, an organization that advocates and provides space for little-known artists, but also appeared at the 1981 Women's One World Festival, from which the WOW Café issued, and the Performing Garage, a lower Manhattan hub for experimental work. Cantwell co-wrote the collective's next two plays, *The Exorcism of Cheryl*, which considered women's feelings of self-defeat, and *Junk Love*, an exploration of hetero- and homosexual obsessions with romantic love, before leaving the group to pursue other performance opportunities. After Cantwell's departure, Epstein began to collaborate with lesbian activist, journalist, and novelist Sarah Schulman. Schulman and Epstein worked on plays together until the mid-1980s, when personal differences came between the collaborators. Epstein would create one last piece under the More Fire! name in 1987: a reflection on the trajectory of More Fire!, *Beyond Bedlam* staged the dissolution of a women's theater collective.

With Schulman working with Epstein on scripts, More Fire! Productions began making work that commented more overtly on social conditions. Two of the works that Schulman and Epstein co-wrote and performed in, *Art Failures* and *Epstein on the Beach*, problematize the gentrification of New York's East Village. In the satiric *Art Failures*, Epstein and Schulman play two lesbian stand-up comics—quotations of themselves named Robin and Sarah—struggling to make it New

York's trendy downtown art scene. Sarah lives in Tompkins Square Park because she has been displaced by gentrification. Gentrification similarly threatens Robin's waitressing job at an Eastern European restaurant: a real estate agent expresses interest in buying the restaurant and turning it into a gay men's sushi bar. She explains, "We love finding these rundown ethnic neighborhoods and bringing in some upward mobility. Already the community is proliferating with co-ops, croissant shops and shoe boutiques. Now take those projects over on Avenue D. They would make ideal luxury co-ops. People will pay anything for a river view" (Epstein and Schulman, *Art Failures* 16). The critique of East Village gentrification continues in *Epstein on the Beach*. Rising rents have pushed Robin out of the East Village to Brighton Beach. She says, "When the sushi bars came [to the East Village], I ignored them. When the straight people came, I turned the other cheek. When the galleries came, I shed a tear. And when they opened Steve's Ice Cream on Second Avenue, I moved to Brooklyn" (Epstein and Schulman, *Epstein* 13-14). Unlike the character Robin, the real Epstein and Schulman were not so passive: in addition to problematizing gentrification in their plays, they participated in marches and rallies against gentrification.

Even as Schulman and Epstein railed against the gentrification of the East Village, both onstage and off, that very issue would bring about the end of More Fire! Productions. By the late 1980s, with rents increasing for both housing and rehearsal/

More Fire! also commented on lesbian invisibility in the burgeoning arts scene.... In *Art Failures*, Robin and Sarah shop around their play, a lesbian take-off on Harvey Fierstein's Tony-award-winning play *Torch Song Trilogy*, to downtown theaters that foster new work, including *La MaMa* and *The Public*. The work is well-received, but the artistic associates are uninterested in producing a lesbian play. One artistic associate declares, "I love your work and I'd love to change it. Don't you have any European gay men in your group?"

performance space in the East Village, Epstein could no longer afford to make work independently, and More Fire! disbanded. Over the nine years that More Fire! staged plays, Epstein funded the group's projects on tips from her waitressing jobs. Epstein practiced a feminine economy, stretching a limited budget a long way. Epstein's economy is evident in the production designs of *Art Failures*

and *Epstein on the Beach*: the shows employ hand-painted backdrops and handmade props crafted by Epstein. Epstein rented rehearsal and performance space at University of the Streets for \$15 a night, and ticket prices for More Fire! shows ranged from \$5 to \$8. Notably, Epstein was even able to pay the actors, who were a mix of amateurs and professionals, from her waitress earnings. Epstein's

economy is remarkable in comparison to her male contemporaries: the cost of Brooklyn Academy of Music's 1984 revival of Robert Wilson's *Einstein on the Beach*, the abstract opera that Epstein on the Beach is titled after, totalled \$1 million, with tickets costing up to \$45 (Rockwell C13).

In addition to opposing gentrification, More Fire! also commented on lesbian invisibility in the burgeoning arts scene. As Epstein recalls, "The art world was not a woman's world, and my work with Sarah Schulman focused on that fact" (Epstein and Cantwell 12). In *Art Failures*, Robin and Sarah shop around their play, a lesbian take-off on Harvey Fierstein's Tony-award-winning play *Torch Song Trilogy*, to downtown theaters that foster new work, including *La MaMa* and *The Public*. The work is well-received, but the artistic associates are uninterested in producing a lesbian play. One artistic associate declares, "I love your work and I'd love to change it. Don't you have any European gay men in your group?" (Epstein and Schulman, *Art Failures* 26). The next says, "Listen girls, I love your work, but we just need to make a few changes. First, we'll turn the gay women into gay men." (Epstein and Schulman, *Art Failures* 28). Sure enough, work written and/or directed by men dominated these theaters' offerings in the early 1980s, and work by gay men, like Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy*, garnered critical acclaim.

Epstein and Schulman extended the opportunity for critique to their audiences: during the first run of the production in December of 1983, Robin appeals to the audience to ask

Erika Munk, critic and editor at the Village Voice, to review *Art Failures*. During the play's second run in April of 1984, Robin campaigns for an Obie award, a prize given by the Voice that honors Off-Broadway theater and performance. Sarah even distributed stamped postcards addressed to Munk to the spectators. Robin's appeals are an extension of the play's satire of the East Village art scene rather than a sincere plea for critical attention, for *Art Failures* characterizes trendy downtown performance as vacuous and apolitical. In the play, a successful performance artist friend advises Sarah and Robin that they "should have sixty people running in doing pedestrian movements. Use NYU students, they will do anything. And you've got to have music and video. Right now it's too cerebral, it's too idea-oriented.....The point is to...be entertaining, get an attractive package. Slides, video collabortions, special effects, glossy paper" (Epstein and Schulman, *Art Failures* 34). Here, Epstein and Schulman poke fun at fads in early '80s performance art, characterizing it as superficial.

The same performance artist refers to Robin and Sarah as "prisoners of the lesbo-ghetto" (Epstein and Schulman, *Art Failures* 33) a joke that recurs in *Epstein on the Beach*. If Epstein and Schulman were indeed prisoners of the lesbo ghetto, they were happy to be lifers. While the *Voice* was ambivalent about *Art Failures*, the play garnered glowing reviews in LGBT publications such as the *New York Native* and the *Gay Community News*, the feminist *Womanews*, and local magazine the *East Village Eye*. *Art Failures* spectators

were also enthusiastic: many used the *Art Failures* postcards to echo the play's insistence that more attention be paid to lesbian work. One woman, identifying herself as "a sister," wrote, "It's time lesbian artists got a break. Enough of Harvey Fierstein and those screaming queens—give some honest dykes a break!" (Postcards np). Another woman wrote, "Dear Erika, You really should come to see *Art Failures*!... Support work by [women] and lesbians" (Postcards np). One spectator urged, "Give them a chance! Girls should get something" (Postcards np). Another audience member wrote, "Liked it, silly, good—let's see more lesbians in shows not written, directed, etc. by men" (Postcards np). While *More Fire*'s work was not highly regarded in theater circles, the group was a vital part of the East Village's lesbian subculture in the 1980s, creating lesbian representation that East Village lesbians were clearly eager for.

Lisa Sloan received a CSW Irving and Jean Stone DIssertation Year Fellowship in 2013. She is a Ph.D. candidate in Theater and Performance Studies at UCLA. Before coming to UCLA, she worked at the off-Broadway theater Women's Project in the summer of 2008. In 2009, Lisa graduated from Williams College with a B.A. in Theater and English. Her research interests include lesbian performance, women's and gender studies, histories of feminism, and queer theory. Her dissertation is tentatively titled "Performing Lesbian Feminism in the '80s and '90s." The project examines this embattled period in feminism's history through lesbian performance and performativity, including political actions and academic debates as well as theatrical performances, films, and photography. In this period, lesbian performance boomed despite the conservative backlash of the culture wars. The dissertation constructs lesbian

performance as an alternative archive of the history of feminism in the United States. Last summer, Lisa traveled to New York to conduct archival research towards her dissertation at the Barnard Center for Research on Women as well as the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. Though Lisa's academic pursuits focus on historical lesbian performance, Lisa also appreciates contemporary lesbian performance. An avid theater-goer, she has been known to drive six hours to see a lesbian play.

Photo credit: page 12, East Village/Lower East Side Historic District, "East Village/Lower East Side Historic District Designation Report," Wikimedia Commons

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ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

AND THE

DAUGHTERS

OF CHARITY

BY KRISTINE ASHTON GUNNELL

Reconstructing a history of a religious community that quietly sought to improve the treatment of poor persons in Los Angeles

HISTORICAL RESEARCH is both a detective story and a treasure hunt, but when a scholar has exhausted all reasonable avenues for research, he or she must still assess the silence. When searching for a dissertation topic in 2006, I attended L.A. as Subject's Archives Bazaar at the Huntington Library. Knowing it was a wonderful opportunity to pick the brains of area archivists, I walked around the exhibit hall hoping something would catch my eye. On one of the end caps, I saw a display from St. Vincent Medical Center Historical Conservancy which showcased the history of the Daughters of Charity in Los Angeles. Intrigued, I later set up an appointment with Ken McGuire, the conservancy's archivist at the time, to learn more about these women and the resources available at the archive. Fascinated, I embarked on a journey to reconstruct a history of these women who quietly conducted their mission to improve the treatment of poor persons in Los Angeles. Grounded in religious convictions that emphasized respect for the individual and human dignity, they extended assistance to those in need regardless of race or creed, ameliorating (in part) some of the race and class discrimination that

plagued the city in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That dissertation is now a book, *Daughters of Charity: Women, Religious Mission, and Hospital Care in Los Angeles, 1856-1927*.

Published by the DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute, the book was released in December 2013.

Their story begins on January 6, 1856, when six Daughters of Charity

Incorporation 1869 of the Sisters of Charity
 "The Los Angeles Infirmary"

This is to Certify that we the undersigned have
 met in Conference and to form an incorporation
 a Society for the care protection and relief
 and improvement of the sick & disabled
 improprietors and needy persons. Have this day
 associated ourselves as a Corporation pursuant to the
 of the State of California Concerning Corporations
 for the purpose here in before specified. &
 the proper name of our Society is "The Los
 Angeles Infirmary" The Capital stock
 in Corporation is only Twenty Five Thousand Dollars
 The stock is not divided into any distinct
 number of shares, but owned and held by all
 members. That the nine undersigned
 Sister Mary Scholastica Loggson & Ann
 Maria Schowen & Genera Mc Donnell &
 Maria Garcia & Corcina Mc Kay & Eliza
 Ann Downey & Angela Moxley & Eliza
 Anna Smith are appointed as trustees
 to manage the concerns of said Society
 for a period of one year and that the City
 of Los Angeles in the State of California is where
 the principal place of business of the Society is
 to be conducted. In witness whereof we have hereunto
 set hands and seals at Los Angeles this 21st
 June in the year of our Lord Eighteen hundred
 and Sixty nine

Sister Mary Scholastica Loggson S Genera Mc Donnell
 " Ann Maria Schowen " Mary Ellen Downey
 " Ann S. Kay " Angela Moxley
 " Corcina Mc Kay " Eliza Ann Smith

arrived in the Plaza in Los Angeles. Invited by the newly appointed Bishop Thaddeus Amat, these Roman Catholic Sisters intended to start an orphanage and school. The group included three American women and three Spanish women. Neither spoke the other's language, but the sisters remained undaunted. They raised funds to purchase property, recruited students, and built benefactor networks that crossed cultural and religious boundaries. Spanish Mexican Catholics, French and German Jews, and American Protestants supported the sister's charitable endeavors.

Sister Ann Gillen, an experienced nurse, belonged to the group, and county officials saw an opportunity to improve the region's health services. They invited the Daughters to open a hospital, the first in the city. Later incorporated as the Los Angeles Infirmary, the sisters owned and operated the facility while the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors paid the expenses for qualifying charity patients. Partnering with the county made good sense for the Daughters of Charity, providing them with more funding than they would have otherwise had to further their religious mission to assist those in poverty.

These women negotiated the political and economic challenges associated with government-funded health care for two decades before shifting their emphasis to the private medical marketplace in the 1880s. Retaining their historic leadership position in the city's nascent hospital industry, the Daughters of Charity developed economic strategies to maintain the hospital's viability

Handwritten copy of the Articles of Incorporation from the hospital's first corporate minute book. The Los Angeles Infirmary was incorporated on June 21, 1869. The Daughters of Charity were the first women to incorporate a business in Los Angeles. Courtesy of St. Vincent Medical Center Historical Conservancy

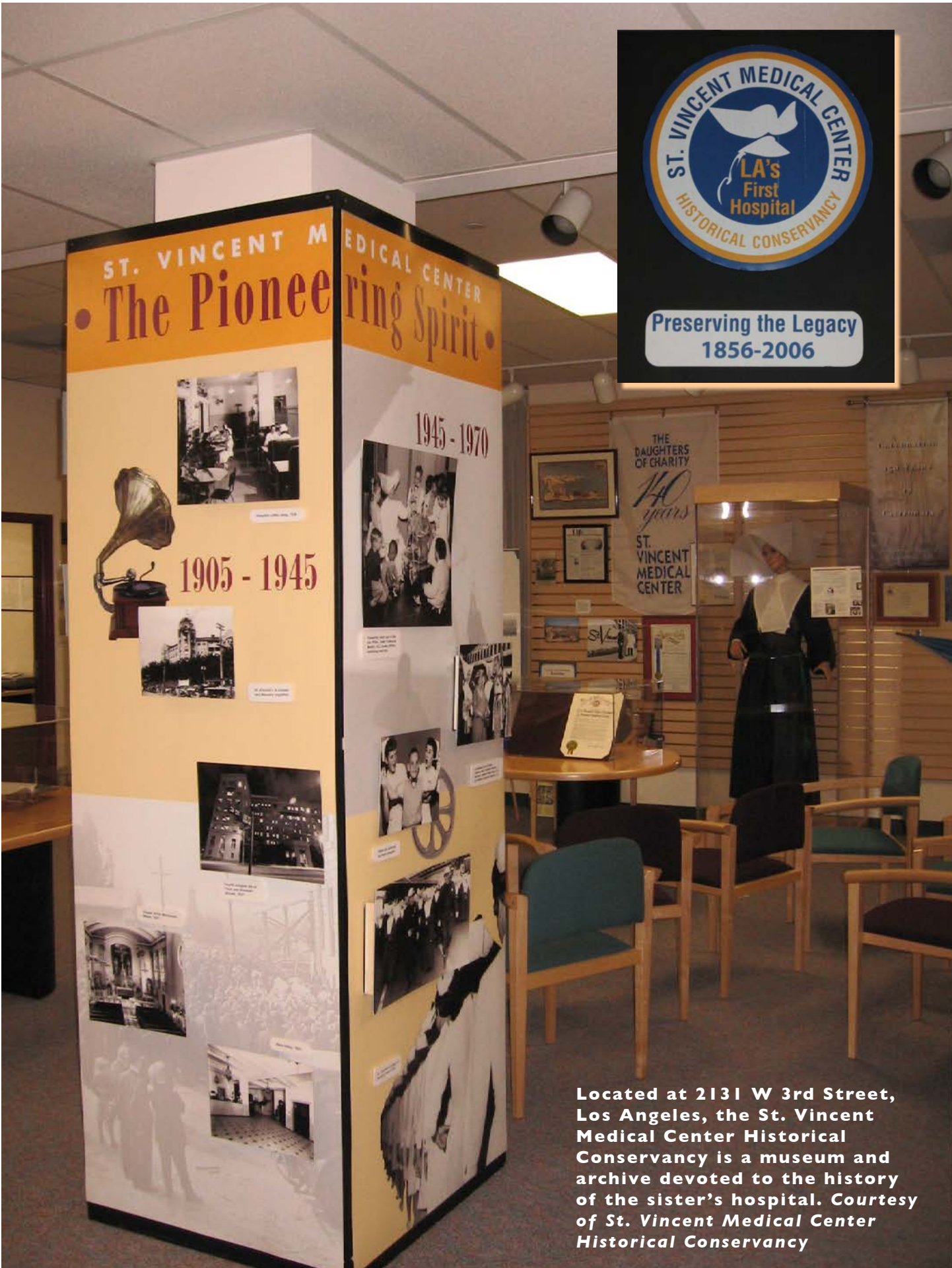
without relinquishing their religious commitment to care for the poor. They built state-of-the-art facilities, contracted with railroad insurance programs, and expanded the nursing staff by the early twentieth century, using a portion of private patients' fees to subsidize the needs of charity patients. The history of the Daughters of Charity in Los Angeles is a story of women overcoming obstacles and adapting to an urbanizing western environment. They managed the challenges posed by changing economic conditions and industry expectations, while continuing their advocacy efforts to improve the treatment of impoverished patients.

Researching the history of the Daughters of Charity posed its own challenges. Nineteenth-century domestic ideology and convent education discouraged sisters from bringing attention to themselves by making public statements, or even signing their writings. Often the only public record of a sister's presence in the city was a census listing, and even then the rolls rarely listed sisters' last names. The Daughters sought to achieve "uniformity" or unity within their religious community, placing their mission above individual recognition or achievement. Taught to blend into the background, the sisters could easily fade away into the historical abyss. Newspapers often related platitudes and generalities, and perpetuated inaccuracies. Without the sisters' records, the real women who spent their lives in service would remain obscured.

In my teaching and research, I emphasize women's pivotal role in community-building, acting as agents



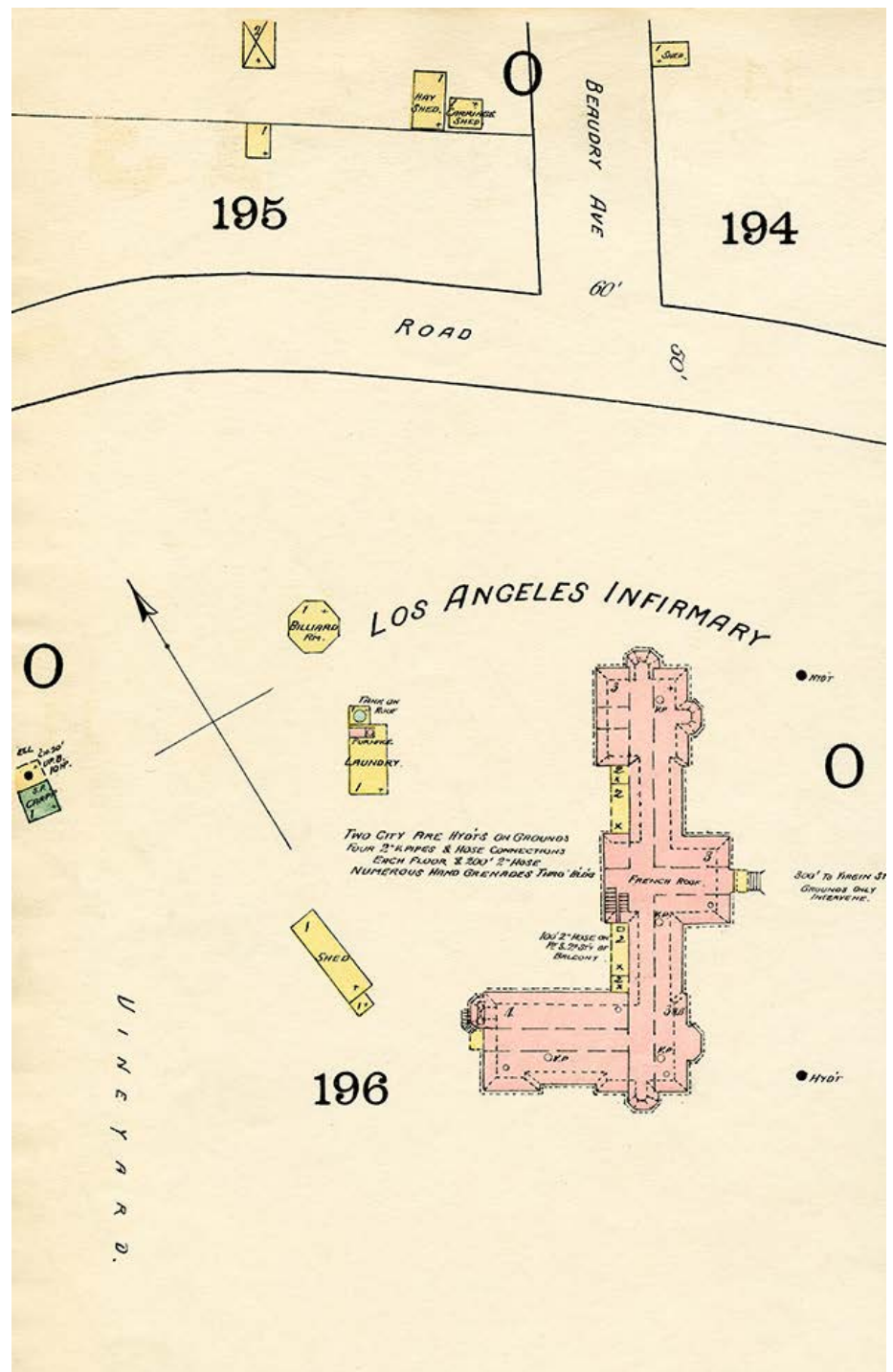
Section of a stained glass window, *The Flight to Egypt*, c. 1925. This window was created in Munich, Germany, before being installed in the hospital's Chapel of the Miraculous Medal. Courtesy of St. Vincent Medical Center Historical Conservancy



Located at 2131 W 3rd Street, Los Angeles, the St. Vincent Medical Center Historical Conservancy is a museum and archive devoted to the history of the sister's hospital. *Courtesy of St. Vincent Medical Center Historical Conservancy*

of change to construct a more compassionate and just society. Through the Florence Kelley Letters Project, which I worked on with Kathryn Kish Sklar and Beverly Wilson Palmer while in graduate school, I grew to appreciate women's letters as forms of self-expression and community construction. When I learned that the Daughters of Charity had preserved many of the sisters' nineteenth-century letters, I wanted to restore their voices, letting the women speak for themselves as much as possible.

The centralized administrative structure of the Daughters of Charity encouraged good archival practices. Local superiors (called sister servants) reported to a provincial director (and later a sister Visitatrix) who supervised all sisters serving in a given region or province. Provincial directors then reported their activities to the community's motherhouse in Paris. In the nineteenth century, these reports took the form of personal letters, and many of them were preserved in the provincial archive. In the 1850s, the Daughters of Charity only maintained one province in the United States, headquartered in Emmitsburg, Maryland. However, by 1969, the Daughters of Charity had five provinces in the United States, and Los Angeles belonged to the Province of the West whose administrative offices are located in Los Altos Hills, California. Each time the province divided, historical records for the affected institutions were moved to the new provincial archive. However, relevant contextual



information often remained at the previous location. Since each province is governed independently, gaining permission to access records can become complicated. Local institutions also maintained historical records, which varied according to their needs, activities, and the relative importance of recordkeeping over

Los Angeles Infirmary. Detail of Sanborn Insurance Map, Los Angeles 1888. Courtesy California State University Northridge Geography and Map Library.

Los Angeles Infirmary, Sisters Hospital



Los Angeles Infirmary; Sisters Hospital. This postcard depicts the Daughters' 1902 hospital located on Sunset Boulevard and Beaudry Avenue. Nicknamed "the Annex," this six-story, hotel-style hospital represented both the advances of modern medicine and the spiritual heritage of the sisters' hospital service. It included an operating room, X-ray machine, steam heat, and electric lights. *Vincentian Postcards Collection, Special Collections and Archives, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.*

time. St. Vincent Medical Center Historical Conservancy (SVMCHC) is somewhat unusual among the Daughters' ministries because it maintains a museum and archive.

In an academic repository, scholars generally enter the reading room, adjust their clothing to account for the temperature, sit down with laptop or pencil, and go to work. Small proprietary archives are somewhat different. While it's always a good idea for a scholar to get to know the archivist, building relationships proved essential for my project. Remember, they don't have to show you anything. A good portion of the archival material had not been processed, and with a small staff, cataloging tended to get pushed aside in order to attend to more pressing duties. I spent many an hour listening to Ken McGuire share the stories he had gathered from the

sisters over the years, figuring out what I wanted to see and where to find it.

McGuire understood the religious community's organizational structure, and he deftly made the connections and introductions that enabled me to gain support for the project. As the first scholar to conduct a book-length study of their community in Los Angeles, the sisters at the hospital wanted to get to know me—my background, my approach to history, and why I was interested in their story. As we grew to understand each other better, more doors opened, including suggestions for readings and resources, access to the provincial archives, and opportunities to share my work. When typing in your favorite cubbyhole for hours on end, it's easy to forget that scholarship is not a solitary enterprise—relationships matter.

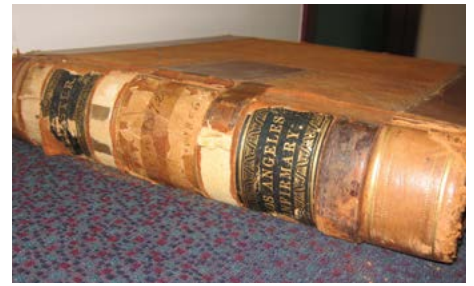
In addition to the sister's letters, I scoured corporate minute books, deed records, newspaper accounts, photos, and maps. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps proved useful, illuminating aspects of the hospital's designs that were not evident in other records. The Los Angeles Infirmary opened amidst the state's efforts to construct its social welfare policy, and thus the legal context took on considerable importance. Under Mexican rule, Angelenos tended to rely on *compadrazgo* (Catholic god-parentage) and other less formal means of social or religious obligation to care for sick and impoverished residents. The Daughters of Charity entered into a public-private partnership to care for the indigent sick, continuing the involvement of religious organizations in charitable endeavors, while also easing the town's transition to supporting governmental forms of welfare relief. As part of the research process, I sought to carefully trace state legislative actions which shaped the hospital's development.

SVMCHC preserved the hospital's admission records from 1872 through the 1930s. The admissions books allow historians to determine the number of people who used the hospital and whether or not they were charity patients. Gender, age, nationality, last place of residence, occupation, and a brief diagnosis may also have been recorded. From this data, historians can assess changes in the hospital's use over time. In particular, the sister's hospital treated sick and injured railroad workers

in the 1890s, and analyzing this data provides a better understanding of how these pioneer health insurance programs functioned. Similar records from other institutions are often unavailable, especially since most of the records from the Southern Pacific General Hospital in San Francisco burned in the 1906 earthquake and fire. Admissions books from the Daughter's hospital help to illuminate this aspect of California's medical history.

Despite the advantages of using hospital admissions records, today's privacy laws can make accessing them difficult. Because SVMCHC is part of an active hospital, some concern arose about whether or not the historical admissions books were covered by the Privacy Rule of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). After some additional research and discussion, the hospital and archive determined that records over one hundred years old did not fall within the parameters of the Privacy Rule, and I was allowed to use the admissions records between 1872 and 1908, as long as I minimized the risk of potential exposure of individually identifiable health information. As more time passes, more data may become available, furthering scholars' understanding of hospital use in the early twentieth century.

Buildings represent more than brick and mortar. They are reminders of thousands of hours of human effort—finding funding, overcoming obstacles, and, in the case of a hospital, nursing patients. Daughters of Charity also lived in the hospital; it was their home, one symbol of their



Admissions Book, Los Angeles Infirmary, 1872-1896. Courtesy of St. Vincent Medical Center Historical Conservancy.

lives and service. People tend to save the things that they're proud of, and it makes sense that much of the archival record about the sister's hospital refers to the construction and dedication of various hospital sites. But by reading in between the lines, one catches glimpses of a larger story. The Daughters of Charity represent one avenue for unmarried women to contribute to the betterment of the communities in which they lived. Daughters of Charity exhibited leadership in managing charitable enterprises and in furthering social advocacy work. They built new facilities, adopted new technology, and adapted to the changing demands for nursing education, while continuing to provide a significant amount of charitable care. That legacy continues, as the Daughters continue to operate St. Vincent Medical Center over one hundred and fifty years later.

Kristine Ashton Gunnell has been a CSW Research Scholar since 2012. She is working on her next book project, "Charity in the City of Angels," which evaluates the significance of women's social networks created through charitable activities in nineteenth-century Los Angeles.

Processing A/V Materials

16 mm, 8 mm, Super 8, VHS, DVD, Beta...

AUDIOVISUAL HOLDINGS make up a significant part of the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives. Kimberlee Granholm and Daniel Williford, Graduate Student Researchers who have been processing the A/V holdings, estimate that the collection contains 230 VHS recordings that are unavailable anywhere else, 60 to 70 VHS movies and other easily accessed materials, and 50 items in DVD, U-Matic, Betamax, VHS, 16mm, 8mm, and Super 8 formats. Granholm and Williford have reviewed and processed between 150 and 200 items, and it has proven quite an exciting adventure. I met with the two of them to discuss what they have found the holdings and why these findings are so important to scholars, UCLA, the LGBT community, and anyone interested in the complete history of 20th and 21st centuries.

Processing the Mazer's A/V holdings began when Granholm and Williford unearthed many boxes filled with VHS tapes, with varying degrees of labeling. Next, the graduate student researchers went through the Mazer's extensive list of recordings, and highlighted any materials that as far as they could tell, were unavailable elsewhere. Since then, they have spent

months reviewing video materials, checking for quality, and adding as much identifying information as possible to the labels. In doing this, they have processed a treasure trove of videotaped history, which includes community meetings and conferences from the 1970s to 1990s, self-produced lesbian history videos, memorial services, birthday parties, films and videos that appeared in festivals, musical performances, footage from a march on Washington from the late 1970s, a talent show from the Califia lesbian retreat, educational videos, and rare lesbian pornography.

Because the videos offer them

unique opportunities to watch activist histories that they've read about come, in a sense, to life, Granholm and Williford both admitted that they have loved viewing the Archive's A/V materials.

"I've been looking at footage produced by these regional lesbian activist organizations of their own meetings, events, and performances," says Williford. "That's been exciting to me, because I'm sort of used to reading critical theory from certain time periods, say the 1970s and 1980s. To see the footage of the grassroots community-based events—the other side of that feminist theory—



has added that human dimension. It is exciting to see all the work that people put into living out this political goal of feminist theory.”

Granholtm particularly appreciates footage of activist meetings because they clearly demonstrate the contradictions, complexities, and disagreements that make up lesbian history: “It comes up very often,” says Granholtm. “This idea that an open discussion is not just intended to facilitate everybody’s similar attitudes and ideas. In the good majority of these videos, discussions always seem to be prefaced with a statement that this discussion should be a zone for us to safely disagree with each other and to facilitate our own opinions rather than just create a major backing.”

Williford has been impressed by the extent to which the people documented in the Mazer Archive have used their various creative talents in political advocacy. The subjects of the videos often use the arts to circulate widely the tenets of academic queer theory and make them accessible to audiences that might not otherwise have become aware of them. “In a way I was surprised at how much art—and, in particular, theater—have been elements of this practice of political theory and community organizing,” says Williford. “There’s a lot of performance art, and there are many theatrical productions, shows, and things like that, which allow people to bring their creative abilities to community events. It really makes certain ideas and political notions a little more available to people through art. That’s inspiring.”

Granholtm and Williford both noted that the women who took the videos

in the collection clearly felt that they were in the process of documenting important history. “The other thing that has surprised me is just how carefully and consistently these organizations have documented and preserved their own activities, and their own people and figures who were influential and involved along the way,” says Williford. “I’ve been impressed at the extent to which these women working with these organizations were all so aware of documenting themselves along the way, preserving the history of activities even as they were doing them. Crucial to the project is their awareness at the time and that is coming through to me as we process all these materials, but especially the video material.”

The Mazer Archives are known for preserving evidence of the lives of women that might otherwise go lost. Granholtm was impressed by the histories revealed by the self-made documentaries in the collection. For example, Diane Germaine’s self-made documentary *Lesbian Decade, The San Diego ‘70s*, which includes excerpts from many lengthy interviews taken by the filmmaker, illuminates the otherwise undocumented stories of a multi-faceted community.

“It consisted of a couple of hour-long interviews with women talking about their own experiences, whether that was coming out, meeting other women, bar culture, and how that’s changed from then to now,” says Granholtm. “A lot of these things were mind blowing to me because I just didn’t know most of this stuff. It was really incredible.”

The collection contains generous documentation of the work that lesbians did with gay men in order to

fight AIDS. Popular accounts of the epidemic often overlook this angle of its history in their emphasis on the activism of gay males. It also includes meetings of OLOC (Old Lesbians Organizing for Change), providing a welcome visual corrective to the majority of LGBT visual media, which often focuses on the young.

“Hearing about OLOC, hearing the speeches, and hearing older women argue about why they needed different attention than young people is extremely important. Especially when you think about the fact that this is a lesbian feminist group,” says Granholtm. “Often times, older people are forgotten about in general. But when you have this sect in society in which young and old people have to look hard for small signs of themselves in pop culture already, it becomes even less likely that older lesbians will be considered. It is wonderful that there were so many attempts at making these videos, at actually recording this for history.”

In addition to preserving the materials of lesbian lives, the Mazer Archives (like many queer archives) has encouraged the expansion of definitions regarding what constitutes historically valuable archival materials. As a result, some of its holdings are startlingly intimate.

“The memorial services are so incredible,” says Granholtm. “During one of them I cried because it was so touching, the ways in which these women are remembered.”

Williford points out that the lo-fi quality of many of the recordings, many taken on home camcorders, gives them an unusually candid quality that makes the spectator feel as

though he is peering in at past events as they happened. "There's a certain aesthetic in the format and lo-fi quality of these video clips that I really like," says Williford. "You feel like you're just sort of peaking at some kind of documentation that is removed from the original, that maybe has a somewhat amateur quality, and the nature of the equipment just makes it feel a little more like the people are familiar. Through that technology, you feel that you can re-experience what they were documenting through real time."

The Mazer Archives provide an opportunity to put under-seen footage, like talent shows and conferences, in conversation with mainstream representations of queerness that took place concurrently. Williford and Granholm are in the middle of processing a series of videotapes, recorded off of television using home VCRs, which include footage of lesbians in popular culture and on news programs.

"There are lots of TV clips, things that a general audience would probably have missed," says Granholm. "They have a recording of Northern Exposure in which a character references the town being named after a lesbian. It's just a small passing moment that a lot of people probably wouldn't think twice about, but it was something that was referenced in popular culture, and the person recording wanted to note that 'it referenced us!'" "I think that the ephemeral television programming will be fun to sift through," says Williford. "Because things like that might be archived somewhere, but not in connection to a lesbian archive. I think that through those videotaped,

miscellaneous collections you end up getting this sort of timeline of the lived experience of going through the popular mainstream media discussion of some of these issues related to queer identity."

The tapes are almost like collages of found footage, re-presenting a version of mainstream popular culture of the 1980s and 1990s in which LGBT characters (who were often the exception, rather than the rule) become constantly and repetitively present, even leading to the erasure of more common, heteronormative representations that were ever-present on the airwaves at the time. The footage offers valuable evidence not only of the period's pop culture representations of queerness, but of certain manifestations of active lesbian spectatorship which became allowed by the invention of the VCR.

Viewing the Mazer's abundance of audiovisual materials has emphasized all that could have been lost. It further illuminates the profundity of what the Mazer's archivists have done over the years in order to keep such a huge loss from happening.

"I consider myself somebody who seems to be informed. I want to be accepting, and make sure that I'm viewing diverse things," says Granholm. "But going through and digitizing this has shown me how little is actually available. So I am glad to have this collection, which completes that history within a larger institution, and represents the walk or paths taken by West coast feminist lesbians going from the 1970s into the future. It would be inaccurate, at the very base of things, not to include [the A/V materials]. More than just the

political importance of these materials, it would be a lie not to have them as part of the historical archive. It's also inspiring, I think, for somebody who is trying to be a better feminist, to see how much these women had to fight. This collection is more than just a historical component, but a cultural one. It's heritage. To be able to share that with UCLA is really the most important thing. It can be inspiring to a larger group of women and men."

"I believe in the work of the lesbian archive," says Williford. "The motto of the Mazer is 'Where lesbians live forever,' and there's something really powerful about that. When you are part of a community, an identity, and a subculture that is always under the threat of erasure and invisibility, to say 'This is an archive in which lesbians live forever' kind of ties together life and the preservation of life, which is actually a real concern in a community that is always under the threat of not just symbolic erasure, but also bodily violence and death."

-Ben Raphael Sher

Ben Sher is a doctoral student in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA and a graduate student researcher at CSW.

Finding aids are available at the Online Archive of California (<http://www.oac.cdlib.org>). This research is part of an ongoing CSW research project, "Making Invisible Histories Visible: Preserving the Legacy of Lesbian Feminist Activism and Writing in Los Angeles." Funded in part by an NEH grant, the project is a three-year project to arrange, describe, digitize, and make physically and electronically accessible two major clusters of June Mazer Lesbian Archive collections related to West Coast lesbian/feminist activism and writing since the 1930s.

For more information on this project, visit <http://www.csw.ucla.edu/research/projects/making-invisible-histories-visible>. For more information on the activities of the Mazer, visit <http://www.mazerlesbianarchives.org>