



winter 2015



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research that rethinks

New Directions in Black Feminist Studies

SPEAKER SERIES CURATED BY GRACE HONG BEGINS ON JAN 29

New Directions in Black Feminist Studies is a lecture series featuring three scholars who represent the best of contemporary Black feminist scholarship. This series will contribute to the renewed energy around African American studies at UCLA, with the recent departmentalization of African American Studies and Angela Davis's recent residency in the Department of Gender Studies. It is curated by Grace Kyungwon Hong, organized by the Center for the Study of Women and cosponsored by Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies, Labor Studies Program, Institute for American Cultures, Department of English, Department of Gender Studies, Department of African American Studies, and International Institute.

The speakers are Amber Jamilla Musser, an Assistant Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Washington University in St. Louis; Talitha LeFlouria, an Assistant Professor of History at Florida Atlantic University; and Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, an Assistant Professor of African American Studies at UC Irvine. All these scholars have new books that articulate significant scholarship.



Amber Jamilla Musser

Amber Jamilla Musser is an Assistant Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Washington University in St. Louis. Musser obtained her Ph.D. in the History of Science from Harvard University. Prior to that, she obtained a Master's degree in Women's Studies from Oxford University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biology and History and Science from Harvard University. Her work focuses on the intersection of race, sexuality, and affect. She teaches undergraduate- and graduate-level classes such as "Me, Myself, and I: Introduction to Identity Politics," "People, Populations, and Places: Sexuality and the State," and "Thinking Through the Body."

Masochism is important not for its essence but because it exists as a set of relations among individuals and between individuals and structures. This mobility makes it a useful analytic tool; an understanding of what someone means by masochism lays bare concepts of race, gender, power, and subjectivity. Importantly, these issues converge on the question of what it feels like to be enmeshed in various regimes of power.

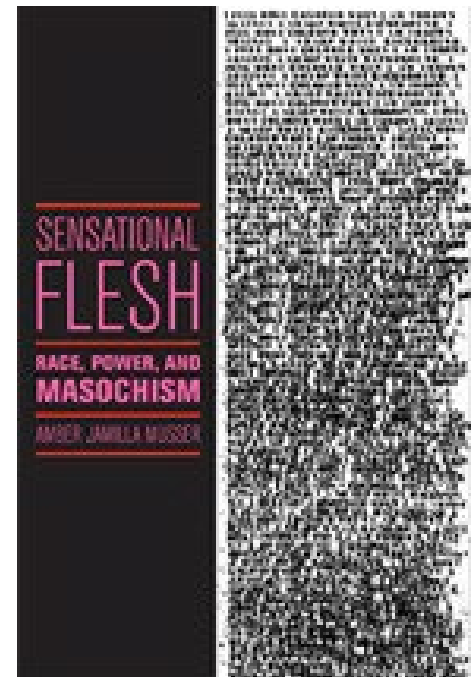
—Amber Jamilla Musser

One of her early articles, titled “Reading, Writing, and the Whip” (*Literature and Medicine*, Fall 2008, 204-222), she explores early psychological theories about masochism, and the relationship between some of these early theories and how masochism was written about in the literature at that time. Specifically, Musser looks at the work of Dr. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, an Austrian psychiatrist writing in the late nineteenth century and at how Krafft-Ebing drew upon the work of authors such as Sacher-Masoch and Rousseau.

In a recent article, titled “Objects of Desire: Toward an Ethics of Sameness” (*Theory & Event* 16:2 [2013]), Musser examines “objectum sexuality, an orientation in which people sexually orient themselves toward objects” and “reflects on what constitutes sexuality, the nature of intimacy, and the agency of objects.” In this highly cogent and thoughtful essay, she argues that “there is something more radical at stake in objectum sexuality. While recognizing objectum sexuality as a category of sexual orientation does provide us with the opportunity to think about intimacy as it has been refigured by neoliberalism, I argue that we view Erika’s relationship to objects as a mode of desubjectification, more precisely, as a mode of becoming-object. This notion of becoming-object exploits the discourse of sameness, but inverts it. Instead of asking how are objects like subjects, the question becomes how are subjects like objects. This shift opens a window into what desub-

jectification can mean for questions of relationality and ethics in queer theory.” This insight leads Musser to the assertion that “This embrace of objects, of alterity, threatens to obliterate the subject/object divide and with that reframes anti-relationality as desirable and provides a way to imagine what an ethics of sameness might look like. This valorization of sameness also opens a productive conversation between theorists who advocate anti-relationality, those who work on new materialisms and those who focus on affect.⁶⁰ The resonances between the dissolution of the self, an investment in animacy (and its attendant politics of non-hierarchy), and affective attachments provide the ground for this new ethics and illuminate objectum sexuality’s potentiality in a spectrum of life beyond the neoliberal.”

Her new book, *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism* (NYU Press, 2014), uses masochism as a lens to examine how power structures race, gender, and embodiment in different contexts. It has been called “A lively and enlightening contribution to queer studies, investigating affect and embodiment as avenues for the radical reinvigoration of how we experience and think about raced, gendered, and sexualized subjectivities” by Darieck Scott, Associate Professor of African American Studies and African Diaspora Studies at UC Berkeley and author of *Extravagant Abjection*. “In everyday language, masochism is usually understood as the desire to abdicate control in exchange for sensation—pleasure,



pain, or a combination thereof,” says Scott. “Yet at its core, masochism is a site where power, bodies, and society come together. *Sensational Flesh* uses masochism as a lens to examine power structures race, gender, and embodiment in different contexts.... Engaging with a range of debates about lesbian S&M, racialization, femininity, and disability, as well as key texts such as Sacher-Masoch’s *Venus in Furs*, Pauline Réage’s *The Story of O*, and Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, Musser renders legible the complex ways that masochism has been taken up by queer, feminist, and critical race theories.”

Jean Walton, Associate Professor of English, Women’s Studies, and Film Studies at the University of Rhode Island and author of *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams: Race Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference*, also lauds the book, noting that “*Sensational Flesh* explores the material aspects of power—how, in a Foucauldian sense, it is “felt” in the

This bold, brilliant, beautifully written book—a significant contribution to the fields of prison history, southern history, African American history, and gender studies—shows why charting the struggles in convict women’s lives matters for understanding the emergence of modernity in the New South. Talitha L. LeFlouria rejects a recent and popular thesis that convict labor was simply slavery that persisted, while also illuminating how beliefs about race and sex forged in slavery carried on to shape modernity and the prison system.

*—Mary Ellen Curtin,
American University,
| in her review of
Chained in Silence*

body—unpacking the bodily, sensational dimensions of subjectivity. Comprehensive and exhaustive in scope, Musser leaves no stone unturned in her consideration of “masochism” in all its different formulations, and in the often-contradictory ways it has been deployed.”

In her talk, “Riddles of the Sphinx: Kara Walker and the Possibility of Black Female Masochism,” she will consider how we can understand black female masochism—the willful and desired submission to another. Masochism is a difficult subject to broach, but black female masochism is even more so because it threatens to produce subjects who embrace myriad systems of historical and cultural forms of objectification. Further, black female masochism is difficult to theorize because masochism as a concept requires an understanding of agency, which has been elusive for black women to claim. Through a reading of some of Kara Walker’s work, this talk looks at how we have traditionally understood black female sexuality and female sexual passivity to think about the ways that discourses of race and sexuality converge and diverge.

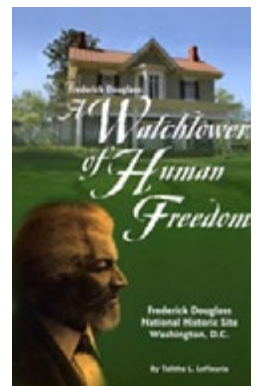
Uri McMillan, Assistant Professor in the Department of English at UCLA, who taught Sensational Flesh in his “Queer of Color Theory” graduate seminar in the fall of 2014, will be the respondent for the lecture, which takes place on January 29, 2015, from 4 to 6 pm in Royce 306.



Talitha LeFlouria

Talitha LeFlouria is Assistant Professor of History at Florida Atlantic University where she specializes in the study of Black women and convict labor in the post-Civil War South. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in African-American and African-American women’s history. She received her Ph.D. in History from Howard University. As a graduate student, she worked as a park ranger and a historian for the National Parks Service at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site. In 2009, she authored a booklet titled, *Frederick Douglass: A Watchtower of Human Freedom*, which “weaves together the most intricate and personal facets of Douglass’ life, especially those preserved here at Cedar Hill.”

Her research was featured in the 2012 Sundance-award-nominated documentary, *Slavery by Another Name*, based on Douglas Blackmon’s Pulitzer Prize-winning book on convict leasing in the southern states.

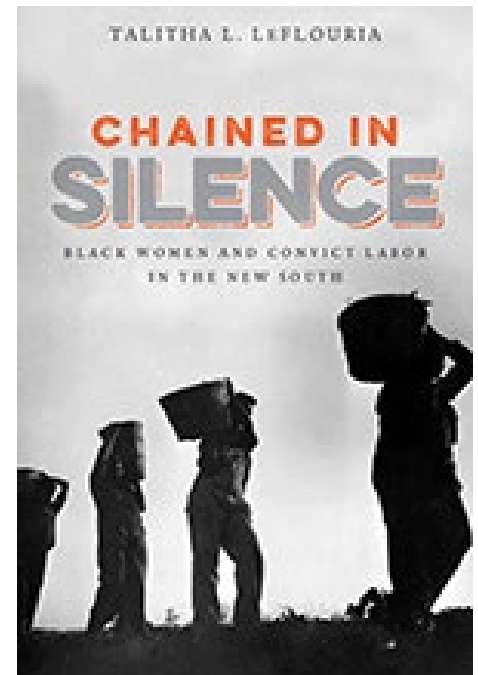


Also in 2012, her article, “The Hand that Rocks the Cradle Cuts Cordwood: Exploring Black Women’s Lives and Labor in Georgia’s Convict Camps, 1865-1917” (*Labor* 8:3 [2011], 47-63) was nominated for the A. Elizabeth Taylor Prize from the Southern Association of Women Historians. This essay examines the historical context and design of Georgia’s forced convict labor system, as well as the women’s responses to the abuses they experienced as prisoners within the system. In the article, she describes how, as Southern states began to rebuild after the Civil War, white politicians and plantation owners attempted to maintain their racial privileges and to obtain cheap or low-cost labor that would allow many Southern industries to continue on as they had before the war. The convict labor system was one way to do this, as African Americans were disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, and could be contracted out to work on major reconstruction projects, such as the Macon & Brunswick, Macon & Augusta, and Air-Line railroads. Black female prisoners, who made up approximately 3 to 5% of Georgia’s prison population, participated in these work projects, in addition to farming, brickmaking, and coal and iron production. The women experienced physical abuse, rape, and disease. In LeFlouria’s words, “The contest waged between black female convicts and their oppressors did not always result in victories. However, these women were willing to challenge encroachments

on their self-worth and fought hard to preserve their humanity within a dehumanizing system built on terror and control” (p. 63).

Her new book *Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South* has recently been published by University of North Carolina Press and already garnered many positive reviews. “Chained in Silence is a pathbreaking addition to the growing body of historical research on black women and the U.S. justice system,” asserts Kali Gross, Associate Professor and Associate Chair of the African and African Diaspora Studies at the University of Texas-Austin. “Through painstaking, exhaustive research, [LeFlouria] maps black women as sentient beings (humans who had lives, loves, triumphs, and sorrows) and as prison laborers brutalized by the vicissitudes of convict leasing. Moreover, by historicizing the evolution of convict leasing and black women’s plight therein, LeFlouria ultimately provides a much-needed raced and gendered context for the agro-industrial penal complex operating in parts of the South today.”

In a talk titled “Living and Laboring off the Grid: Black Women Prisoners and the Making of the “Modern” South, 1865-1920,” which will take place on February 12, 2015, from 4 to 6 pm in Royce 306, LeFlouria will provide an in-depth examination of the lived and laboring experiences of imprisoned African-American women in the post-Civil War South, and describe how black female convict



labor was used to help construct “New South” modernity. Using Georgia—the “industrial capital” of the region—as a case study, she will analyze how African-American women’s presence within the convict lease and chain gang systems of the “empire state” helped modernize the “New South,” by creating a new and dynamic set of occupational burdens and competencies for black women that were untested in the free labor market. In addition to discussing how the parameters of southern black women’s working lives were redrawn by the carceral state, she will also account for the hidden and explicit modes of resistance female prisoners used to counter work-related abuses, as well as physical and sexualized violence.



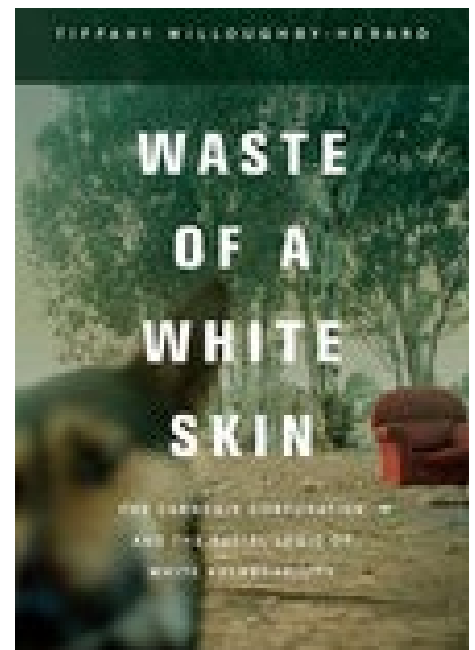
Tiffany Willoughby-Herard

Tiffany Willoughby-Herard is Assistant Professor of African American Studies at UC Irvine, and works on comparative racialization in the South African and North American contexts, Black political thought, and African feminisms. Her book, *Waste of a White Skin: Carnegie and the Racial Logic of White Vulnerability*, has just been published by UC Press. The publisher calls it “A pathbreaking history of the development of scientific racism, white nationalism, and segregationist philanthropy in the U.S. and South Africa in the early twentieth century, *Waste of a White Skin* focuses on the American Carnegie Corporation’s study of race in South Africa, the Poor White Study, and its influence on the creation of apartheid.” Using black feminism, black internationalism, and the

black radical tradition, Willoughby-Herard explores the effect of politics of white poverty on black people’s life, work, and political resistance. In particular, this groundbreaking book examines the philanthropic institution of the Carnegie Foundation, contributed to the constitution of apartheid as a process of knowledge production in South Africa. Her manuscript examines U.S. complicity in constructing notions of whiteness, arguing that the Carnegie Commission Study of Poor Whites helped create knowledge production process central to apartheid, in particular scientific racialism. In so doing, she examines the role of this supposedly benevolent U.S. philanthropic organization in the production of social science knowledge as a form of legitimation for the racial violence of apartheid. She thus makes the argument that whiteness is a global phenomenon, one that links white racial formations transnationally, by demonstrating the ways in which the United States not only produced whiteness within its own territorial boundaries, but is implicated in white Afrikaner racial formation as well. As Dr. Willoughby-Herard demonstrates, The Carnegie Commission Study legitimated a number of violent practices that attempted to discipline poor whites into bourgeois respectability. These practices were very much organized around gender and sexual normativity, and included genetic monitoring, sterilization, mental testing, and forced removals and detentions. In this way, this essay demonstrates that

eugenicist tactics were brought into being through deployment not only against non-whites, but on what she calls “contingent” whites as well. In so doing, Dr. Willoughby-Herard argues that whiteness is not a monolithic racial formation, but a complex and internally differentiated one. This project is thus an important contribution to whiteness studies, which tends to situate whiteness as simply privilege. By tracing the violent process by which poor whites were forced to become white, this project reveals the exact process of production and the precise effect of the scientific racialism that would underwrite the system of apartheid.

Willoughby-Herard’s talk, “I Write What I Like”: The Politics of Black Identity and Gendered Racial Consciousness in Meer’s *The Black Woman Worker*,” which takes place from 4 to 6 pm in Haines 135 on February 26, examines Fatima Meer’s *Black Woman Worker: A Study in Patriarchy and Woman Production Workers in South*



Africa (1990), which raised critical questions about how the concept of gendered black consciousness articulated with racial colonialism, segregation, and apartheid. Like other books published in its time, *Black Woman Worker* resulted from a robust confluence of political activity, autonomous research, and careful attention to the politics of publishing. While the radical black feminism of that era was becoming coherent as a set of consistent political philosophies across the Americas and on the African continent, according to Willoughby-Herard, it was anticipating, laying ground work for, and helping to establish the publishing audience that constitutes current interests in comparative black feminist studies, black feminist internationalism, African feminisms, and African gender studies. Our histories of the making of “the working class” and “left” have been shaped forever by the role played by research on black working women as servants, migrant laborers, domestics, and enslaved people. Following Pumla Gqola and Zine Magubane, she will examine and offer an account of how the contested and complex political identity of “blackness” was articulated in this moment, why this set of nested categories was necessary for Meer and her collaborators, and the cultural work that it did to bind together African, Indian, and so-called “Coloured” women in a context of extraordinary state and vigilante violence.


Faculty Curator for the series is Grace Kyungwon Hong, Associate Professor, Departments of Asian

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WINTER 2015

NEW DIRECTIONS in Black Feminist Studies


FEATURING



Jan 29 4 pm | Royce 306
Riddles of the Sphinx
KARA WALKER AND THE POSSIBILITY OF BLACK FEMALE MASOCHISM
Amber Jamilla Musser
Assistant Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Washington University in St. Louis



Feb 12 4 pm | Royce 306
Living and Laboring off the Grid
BLACK WOMEN PRISONERS AND THE MAKING OF THE “MODERN” SOUTH, 1865-1920
Talitha Leflouria
Assistant Professor of History, Florida Atlantic University




Feb 26 4 pm | Haines 138 (Bunche Library)
“I Write What I Like”
THE POLITICS OF BLACK IDENTITY AND GENDERED RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN MEER’S THE BLACK WOMAN WORKER
Tiffany Willoughby-Herard
Assistant Professor of African American Studies, UC Irvine

cosponsored by Department of English, Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies, Labor Studies Program, Institute for American Cultures, Department of Gender Studies, International Institute, and Department of African American Studies

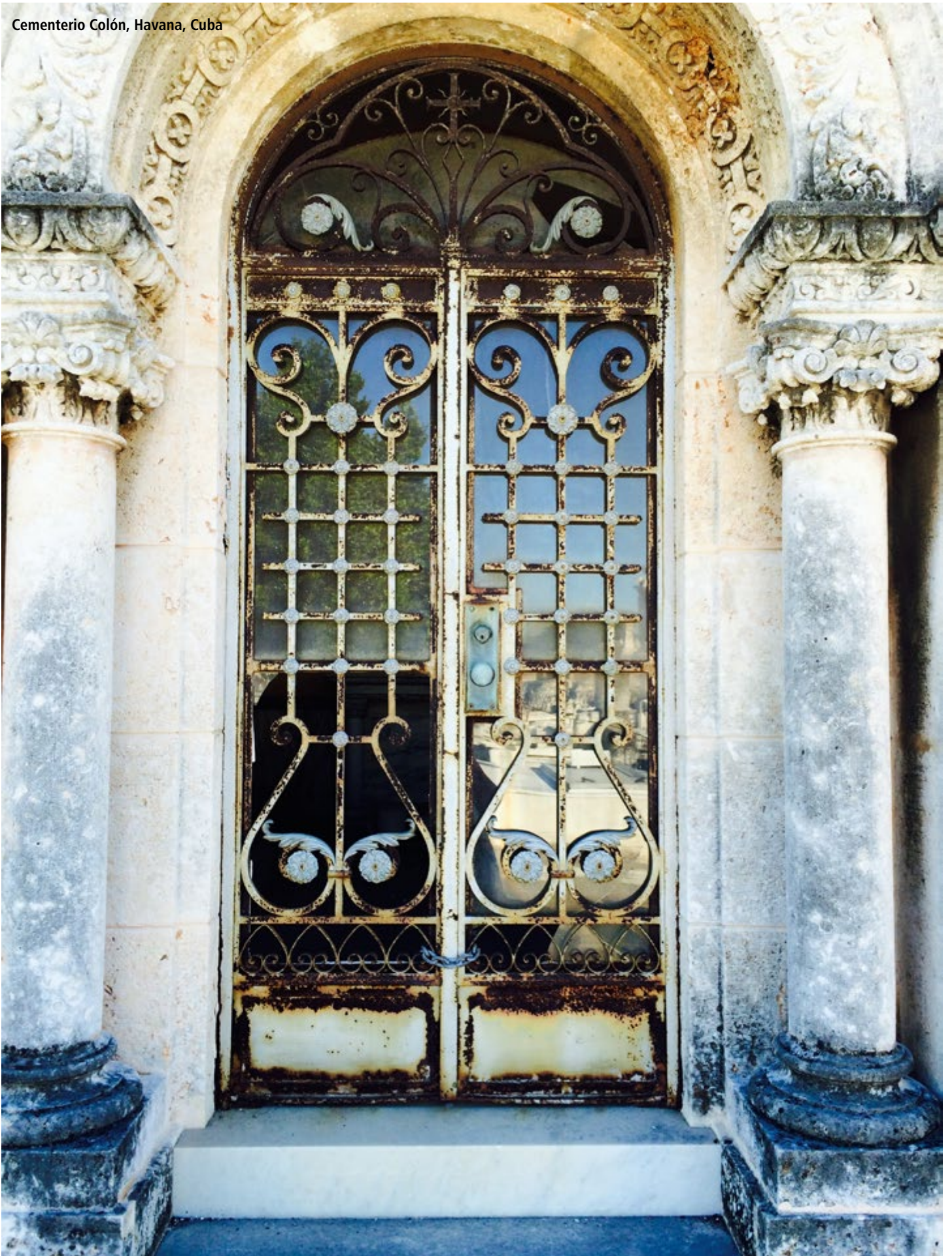
FACULTY CURATOR SERIES
 organized by Grace Kyungwon Hong, Associate Professor, Department of Gender Studies and Department of Asian American Studies

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American Studies and Gender Studies at UCLA. Her publications include *The Ruptures of American Capital: Women of Color Feminism and The Culture of Immigrant Labor* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006) and *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization* (Duke University Press, 2011), co-edited with Roderick A. Ferguson. Recent articles include “Neoliberalism,” (forthcoming in *Journal of Critical Ethnic Studies* 1.1), “Ghosts of Camptown,” (forthcoming in *MELUS*), “Existentially Surplus:

Women of Color Feminism and the New Crises of Capitalism” (*GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 18.1 (Fall 2011): 87-106). Her current book project is currently titled “Between Life and Death: Women of Color Feminism and the Impossible Politics of Difference.”



How Cuba Changed my Life

BY JENNIFER L. MONTI

STILL REMEMBER receiving the acceptance email for the paper I was to present in Cuba at a week-long conference that proposed to celebrate the bicentenary anniversary of Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's birth, one of the pillars of Cuban literature. I will never forget the happiness I felt when I was notified; not only was I going to Havana for a week but I was also going to present a paper on one of the best novels I had ever read.

The novel, titled *Sab*, is the story of a slave in 1840s Cuba. Despite having been abolished in a number of Latin American countries, Cuba still practiced slavery in the mid-1800s. Slavery played a crucial role in the production of sugar, cotton and tobacco, three of the island's most lucrative products. However, the detail that caught my attention from the first pages of the novel was that Sab (the main character) is not presented as a typical slave: he does not work in the plantations, he can read and write—and even knows some Shakespeare, he is very close to his masters, and, as the narrator explains, he is oftentimes mistaken for a white man. Slavery, and the description of its terrible practices,

is present throughout the novel, but it occupies a marginal space. The readers are aware that Sab is a slave, but not because of the life he leads; rather, they know because Sab himself tells them and speaks openly about it.

I found it challenging to agree with critics who proposed that *Sab* is clearly an abolitionist novel. Slavery is present, and criticized throughout the work; however, the narrator never proposes its full abolition, nor does (s)he argue that slaves should gain the freedom and rights that other members of society possess. Instead, what is blatantly present is the criticism towards the misogynistic aspects of the Cuban patriarchal society, where all women were seen as simple possessions that could be bought and sold by their male counterparts. As Sab himself explains, “slaves can at least change their master, they can hope that by accumulating gold they will be able to buy their freedom, one day. Women, instead, as they lift their frail hands and their outraged forehead to ask for freedom, hear the monster with its sepulchral voice yelling: “To the grave”¹ (translation mine).

¹ Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, *Sab*, 1841. Ed. José Servera. Cátedra: Madrid 1997, pp. 270-271.

Although it is still too early to speak of feminism at the time this novel was written, in my essay I argue that the main aim of Avellaneda's work is to defend women and denounce their position in society. Throughout my paper I pose five questions, and suggest five possible answers, to demonstrate that the novel is not, in fact, abolitionist, but rather pre-feminist, while also presenting some anti-slavery characteristics. Despite some opposing voices in the audience, I noticed that many of the people who were attending the conference agreed with me, and supported my feminist reading of the novel.

My week-long stay in Cuba did not only allow me to present a paper in front of a crowd of renowned scholars, to make important connections for my future academic career, and to receive feedback on my work; I was also exposed to a completely different reality than what I had been used to up to that moment. Aside from never having been to a Latin American country, I had also never traveled to a country where communism was the main political ideology. Although I believed I was prepared for what I would see in Cuba, once I reached the island I



realized that the reality was completely different than anything I had read in books, or heard on the news. This concerned both the positive aspects and the negative ones.

Let's start with my experience at the Aeropuerto Internacional José Martí. After arriving on time, and waiting in line for passport control for about thirty minutes, it was finally my turn. I was a little nervous because I did not personally hold my Cuban visa in my American passport; rather, it was waiting for me in the Havana airport. All I had to do, according to the travel agency, was call the travel agent upon arrival and wait for him to bring me the visa. Simple enough, I thought. I ended up waiting for three hours because no one seemed to be able to locate such person, and no one else in the entire airport was able to help me. Growing up in Italy taught me a great deal about patience, and given that I was prepared for some sort of delay, this small incident did not affect my mood. On the contrary, I was able to notice details that I simply would have missed, had I gone through passport control without any problems. What caught my attention was that music was playing and that a music television station was turned on. I couldn't help but smile seeing how everyone who worked in that airport appeared to be so full of life, despite the serious and formal location.

As I walked out of the airport to catch a taxi, I immediately noticed the amount of people, of all ages, who were waiting outside

of the airport doors. I decided to ask someone why there was such a numerous crowd, and the man kindly answered that all those families were either bringing a family member to the airport or picking someone up. As I thought about the international airports in the United States—jammed with cars stopped near the curbs of each terminal to drop people off, quickly hug them and kiss them goodbye, and drive off just as hurriedly—I realized what a different reality it was. Dropping someone off, or picking someone up, in Cuba, was a family affair: everyone wanted to be a part of it, by either saying goodbye to someone, or greeting them upon their return. Parents, siblings, children, grandparents, friends: everyone wanted to witness such an important event.

The two elements that literally penetrated my soul, during and after my trip, were the music and the people. I perceived Cuban music as a constant soundtrack. With its melody, rhythm, and melancholy, I felt that it accompanied everyone's life on the island. I suppose this happens because music has the power of uniting people from different backgrounds and different life situations, and of bringing everyone to the same level. Some of the songs I heard were tremendously nostalgic, yet they were truly beautiful. They gave me the shivers by just listening to them once, and as much as I can try, it is very complicated to put into words what I felt through their melody.

Aside from hearing music in the streets, at cafes, in restaurants,

and even in the hotel lobby, I was lucky enough to be invited to a concert, sponsored by the conference organizers, where traditional Cuban songs were played. The enthralling aspect of the concert was that these songs were not simply famous Cuban melodies; given that the aim of the conference was to celebrate an important woman writer, the repertoire was composed of songs that were either written and sung by women, or dedicated to them. I will forever remember that as one of the singers started warbling the lyrics to "Yolanda", perhaps one of the most famous and beautiful Cuban melodies, the whole crowd chimed in as well, transforming that moment into a heartfelt experience.

The Cuban people I met were the most heartwarming aspect of the trip. I am not only speaking about the conference participants, who belonged to numerous Cuban cultural organizations and associations, but also the people I met on the street, in restaurants, and in hotels. What struck me most was their incredible generosity, a generosity that I had never personally experienced. It reminded me of the stories my Italian grandmother used to tell me of the situation during, and right after World War Two, when most people were poverty-stricken, yet they were able to show their generosity towards those who needed it most. The reality that I saw in Cuba deeply reminded me of my grandmother's stories. Despite having close to nothing, many of the people I met were able to give me more than I

Catedral de la Virgen María de la Concepción
Inmaculada de La Habana



could have ever imagined, from a kind word, to an interesting piece of information regarding Havana, to a book on the history of the city. It was amazing for me to see how, despite living in a difficult political, social, and economic situation, the spirit of these people could not be broken. There was a kindness in their words, something that I had never really experienced neither in Italy nor in the United States. And, quite honestly, it was refreshing to establish relationships with people face to face, by speaking to them, and not through the ever-so-present technology on which we are all so dependent.

All in all, Cuba changed my life. As I was trying to explain my experience to my family I could find no other word but “soul-filling,” since that’s exactly how I felt as I was leaving the island. Despite my short stay, the days I spent there showed me a new reality and a new way of looking at life. As I was boarding the plane to Miami I decided that Cuba, with its positive and negative traits, would stay with me forever. In that moment I consciously took action to incorporate some aspects of Cuban literature in my doctoral dissertation, to help shed some light on the reality of a country that is oftentimes judged and misunderstood because of a lack of correct information. It was a cathartic experience that continued after I returned to the United States, as I felt that I had learned so much from the Cuban people, and from the country itself.



Given the recent events that are taking place between Cuba and the United States, I believe it to be even more crucial to not simply dismiss the importance and the beauty of this Caribbean country because of what people might think of it, or might have heard on the news, or might remember from old history lessons. The conference I attended, and my experience as a tourist in Havana, proved to me how important it is to study and know a country’s past, to better understand and appreciate its present.

Jennifer Monti is a first-year doctoral student in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at UCLA. Her interests include Catalan female literature of the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries, transatlantic studies with an emphasis on Cuba, and the representation of women through photography and pornography. She received a travel grant from CSW to present her conference paper, titled “Sab, la mujer y la esclavitud: cinco preguntas (y respuestas) para refutar el género abolicionista,” at the XXIV Congreso Anual de la Asociación Internacional de Literatura y Cultura Femenina Hispánica (AILCFH), which was held in Havana, Cuba.



BY PATRICIA MORENO

Health, Immunity, and the Pursuit of Happiness

The Relationship between Positive Emotions and Inflammation in Breast Cancer Survivors

A RECENT STUDY conducted by UCLA researchers examines the relationship of positive emotions and inflammation in women diagnosed with breast cancer, a disease that affects 1 in 8 women in the United States.

Although the field of psychology has traditionally focused on the study of negative psychological experiences (for example, depression, anxiety, and stress), more recent evidence supports the importance of positive emotions for both psychological and physical wellbeing. In cancer patients and survivors, the experience of positive emotions is associated with improved adjustment, including lower anxiety, depressive symptoms, pain, and fatigue as well as better quality of life (Baker, Denniston, Zabora, Poland, & Dudley, 2002; Guadagnoli

& Mor, 1989; Schroevers, Sanderman, Sonderer, & Ranchor, 2000). Not only are positive emotions important for psychological adjustment, they also predict important physical health outcomes. Positive emotions prospectively predict improved outcomes for a wide variety of diseases (Cohen & Pressman, 2006) as well as longer survival in both cohorts of initially healthy populations and patient populations (Chida & Steptoe, 2008). Moreover, limited preliminary evidence suggests that positive emotions may predict improved cancer survival (Levy, Lee, Bagley, & Lippman, 1988; Prinsloo et al., 2014).

Despite accumulating evidence supporting the association of positive emotions with improved psychological and physical health,

the mechanisms that underlie this relationship have not been determined. The overarching aim of our research was to better understand the relationship of positive emotions with intermediate biological processes that may underlie its association with improved health over time. More simply, we wanted to know: how do positive emotions “get under our skin” to influence health?

One plausible mechanism may be inflammation. The immune system is comprised of a variety of cells and organs that function to protect us from threats, including pathogens (for example, bacteria) and altered host cells (for example, cancer cells). One of the primary processes by which the immune system responds to threats is inflammation. Inflammation is the

process by which immune cells are brought to an affected area so that threats are prevented from spreading and subsequent tissue repair can take place. Macrophages, a class of immune cells, play a particularly important role in the inflammatory process by both destroying pathogens and releasing signaling proteins called cytokines that coordinate immune responses. Cytokines that promote inflammation are classified as proinflammatory and are often assessed as markers of inflammation. Well studied proinflammatory cytokines include interleukin 1 (IL-1), C-reactive protein (CRP), and tumor necrosis factor (TNF- α).

Although inflammation is an adaptive and necessary response of the immune system, chronic low-grade inflammation in the absence of an activating agent is maladaptive. This form of unremitting inflammation is associated with all-cause mortality (Harris et al., 1999) and a variety of diseases (Papanicolaou, Wilder, Manolagas, & Chrousos, 1998; Pradhan, Manson, Rifai, Buring, & Ridker, 2001), including the development and progression of tumors (Mantovani, Allavena, Sica, & Balkwill, 2008). Importantly, inflammation is regulated by other physiological systems, including the sympathetic nervous system and HPA axis, which are sensitive to psychological experiences—providing a plausible pathway by which psychological processes may influence inflammation.

Examining predictors of inflammation in breast cancer survivors

is of particular interest given that inflammation in the cancer context is associated with behavioral symptoms, including fatigue and depression (for example, Bower et al., 2011; Seruga, Zhang, Bernstein, & Tannock, 2008; Soygur et al., 2007), and also predicts cancer progression and mortality. Thus, we wanted to examine the association of positive emotions and markers of inflammation in women with early-stage breast cancer who were followed for a year after treatment with surgery, radiation, and/or chemotherapy.

Although some evidence suggests that positive emotions are associated with lower levels of inflammation (Steptoe, O'Donnell, Badrick, Kumari, & Marmot, 2008; Steptoe & Wardle, 2005), results have been mixed (Constanzo et al., 2004; Lutgendorf et al., 2001; Ryff, Singer, & Dienberg Love, 2004; Sepah & Bower, 2009). Therefore, our research group decided to more closely examine a less-studied dimension of positive emotions: level of arousal (Russell, 1980). High arousal positive emotions are more activated and involve more energy, such as excitement and enthusiasm, while lower arousal positive emotions are less activated and involve less energy, such as contentment and serenity. Importantly, affective arousal has consequences for physiological arousal (Dockray & Steptoe, 2010; Pressman & Cohen, 2005) and the sympathetic nervous system is differentially sensitive to high versus low arousal positive emotions. Indeed, evidence suggests that

high arousal positive emotions are associated with greater activation than low arousal positive emotions (Pressman & Cohen, 2005). Given that the sympathetic nervous system regulates the immune system (Irwin & Cole, 2011), these differences in turn could have implications for inflammatory processes.

Method

Women who participated in our study came for an in-person appointment at UCLA at three time points: within three months of completing their primary breast cancer treatment (that is, surgery, radiation therapy, and/or chemotherapy) for a baseline assessment and 6 and 12 months after baseline for follow-up assessments. Our sample of 181 women completed psychosocial questionnaires at baseline and provided blood samples at each time point to be analyzed for markers of inflammation. The experience of high arousal positive emotions during the past month was assessed using the positive affect subscale of the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) and the experience of low arousal positive emotions during the past week with the PANAS-X, an expansion of the original PANAS questionnaire (Watson & Clark, 1999). Given previous research establishing the relationship of both negative emotions and fatigue with inflammation, validated measures of negative emotions (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) and fatigue (Fatigue Symptom Inventory; Hann et al.,

1998) were also included in order to determine whether any associations between positive emotions and inflammatory markers were independent (that is, not simply driven by a lack of negative emotions or fatigue). Inflammation was assessed by downstream markers of proinflammatory cytokine activity, including the interleukin-1 receptor antagonist (IL-1ra), a marker of IL-1 β activity; the soluble tumor necrosis factor (TNF) receptor type II (sTNF-RII), a marker of TNF- α activity; and C-reactive protein (CRP), a correlate of IL-6 activity.

Results

We found that higher levels of high arousal positive emotions predicted lower levels of the soluble tumor necrosis factor receptor type II (sTNF-RII), one month after primary treatment completion and at 6 and 12-month follow-ups. Importantly, effects of high arousal positive emotions were observed in analyses controlling for negative emotions, indicating that the effects of high arousal positive emotions are independent of negative emotions and are not merely driven by the absence of negative emotions. However, the relationship of high arousal positive emotions with sTNF-RII did not hold over and above fatigue. Thus, women's endorsement of high arousal positive emotions (for example, "active," "alert," "excited") may highly overlap with energy and vigor, the absence of which is associated with elevated inflammatory activity in breast cancer survivors (Bower et al., 2011; Bower, Ganz, Aziz, & Fahey,

2002). Furthermore, we found that higher levels of low arousal positive emotions predicted lower levels of the C-reactive protein (CRP) one month after primary treatment completion and at 6 and 12-month follow-ups. The relationship of low arousal positive affect and CRP remained significant in analyses controlling for negative emotions and fatigue, indicating that low arousal positive emotions may have distinct associations with CRP.

Although positive emotions have been postulated to exert influences on health and physiology (Pressman & Cohen, 2005), our finding that fatigue accounted for the association of high arousal positive emotions with sTNF-RII in this sample of early-stage breast cancer survivors may suggest an important qualification. It is well documented that proinflammatory cytokines act on the brain and can induce a specific constellation of behavioral symptoms termed sickness behavior (Dantzer & Kelley, 2007; Dantzer, O'Connor, Freund, Johnson, & Kelley, 2008), including fatigue. Thus, it is possible that the inverse association of high arousal positive emotions with sTNF-RII in this and other studies may reflect higher levels of inflammation acting on the brain—leading to both greater fatigue and lower high arousal positive emotions. Indeed, the induction of inflammatory cytokines leads to reductions in high arousal positive emotions (Späth-Schwalbe et al., 1998).

On the other hand, given the association of lower arousal

positive emotions with dampened sympathetic activation as well as the influence of sympathetic activation on inflammation (Irwin & Cole, 2011), our finding that low arousal positive emotions were uniquely associated with lower levels of CRP independent of fatigue is noteworthy. It is plausible that lower arousal positive emotions exert an influence on CRP by reducing engagement of stress-response systems, like the sympathetic nervous system, given strong evidence that stress is associated with increased levels of CRP (Glaser & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2005; Hänsel, Hong, Cámara, & von Känel, 2010; Miller & Blackwell, 2006). In light of the current findings as well as mixed results produced by previous studies examining positive emotions and inflammatory markers, we strongly encourage researchers in the future to consider possible bidirectional associations between positive emotions and inflammation.

Conclusions

Our results indicate that the relationship of high arousal positive emotions (for example, "active," "alert") with sTNF-RII may be driven by the overlap of high arousal positive emotions with fatigue while the association of low arousal positive emotions and CRP may be unique. Future research should consider affective arousal when examining the association of positive emotions with inflammation as this facet of positive emotions may have important implications for interpretation of results. Specifically,

bidirectional associations between both high and low arousal positive emotions and inflammation should be considered and is an important topic for future research.

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BRASIL O. CA. CT4.0.492
1908

1505
do 905

Nº: 1505
do 905



Fls. _____

JULY

Prisão em 31 de 1908

Abandono

4.º Cartorio do Tribunal do

DO

DISTRITO FEDERAL

JUIZ

ESCRIVÃO

D.º Pedro Trancalino

J.º de Albuquerque

JUSTIÇA

A
R

Gloria Lourenço da Silva

Artigo 228º uniu. do Código Penal

AUTUAÇÃO *diante*

Murdering Mothers

Infanticide, Madness, and the Law, Rio de Janeiro, 1890-1940

BY CASSIA ROTH

In 1923, the Rio de Janeiro public prosecutor charged twenty-five-year-old Portuguese immigrant Maria de Jesus for the crimes of both abortion and infanticide.¹ Maria stated that she had miscarried a five-month-old fetus at the Eunice Hotel where she worked as a maid. She then disposed of the cadaver by cutting off its head, flushing the body down the toilet, and throwing the head into the backyard. The police investigation found that Maria had recently given birth and that the child was full term. The prosecutor pressed charges despite the legal discrepancies inherent in accusing Maria of both abortion, which implied the expulsion of a dead fetus, and infanticide, which required a live birth and then death.

The prosecutor condemned Maria by highlighting her lack of maternal instincts. “The accused, demonstrating not to possess any vestiges of maternal sentiment...killed the fruit of her womb...” In her statement Maria emphasized her confused mental state

1. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Brazilian Studies Association (BRASA) Conference in London, UK on August 20-23, 2014. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
(AN) CT, Cx.1978 N.1036 (1923).



after the delivery. Her defense lawyers also highlighted her altered mental capabilities. The presiding judge pronounced the prosecutor's argument without basis (*improcedente*) and absolved Maria de Jesus of all charges. The judge argued that the court could not charge Maria for both abortion and infanticide at the same time, and Maria de Jesus went free. I argue that Maria's fate demonstrates a larger legal trend in infanticide cases in the Rio de Janeiro courts: the persistent gap between the letter of the law codified in the crime of infanticide (Article 298 of the 1890 Penal Code, in effect until 1940) and its application in infanticide trials. Maria de Jesus is just one of the many women who allegedly practiced infanticide that was found not guilty or was absolved.

This legal breach, which existed on multiple levels, worked in favor of women who practiced infanticide. Most basically, the judicial system's inefficiencies prevented these cases from going to trial. Turn-of-the-twentieth-century Brazil hoped to erase its history of slavery and monarchy through the modernization of the legal system.² But these attempts were frustrated by an overworked and understaffed court system.³ More specifically, when the courts did prosecute women for infanticide, the jury acquitted the women.

In fact, juries either found women not guilty or acquitted them for acting in an altered mental state, an idea included in Article 27§4 of the 1890

Penal Code. While the medical and legal professions harshly condemned infanticide, and the 1890 Penal Code criminalized women for the practice, the application of the law proved more irregular in its understanding of responsibility. The law required that infanticide be punished, yet I suggest that its custodians were reluctant to do so. Punishment came from the gossip and denunciation that led to a police investigation and the social shame that followed the trial.

To understand the nature of this breach between law and practice, we must examine the legal definition of infanticide in the 1890 Penal Code. Article 298 declared "To kill a newborn, this is, an infant, in the first seven days of its life, by employing direct and active methods, or by denying the victim the care necessary for the maintenance of life and to prevent its death."⁴ Prison time ranged from 6 to 24 years. The law also referred to honor. A woman charged under the first paragraph of Article 298 faced reduced prison time: between 3 to 9 years. "If the crime was perpetrated by the mother to hide her own dishonor." The "defense of honor"—here the dishonor brought on by a child born out of wedlock—was an explicit part of infanticide law in the 1890 Penal Code.⁵ It reduced the prison time. But this clause was not as important as the idea of mental instability in the application of the law.

The Penal Code indirectly allowed for the complete decriminalization of infanticide through the positivist-in-

fluenced Article 27§4. The article said: "The following [persons] are not criminals: Those who are found to be in a state of complete deprivation of the senses and intellect (*privação de sentidos e inteligência*) in the act of committing the crime."⁶ People who were "mentally disturbed" when they committed the crime could be absolved. Now an act's "criminality" depended on the person and their mental state. This is how a woman found guilty of committing infanticide but found acting under a disturbance of the senses was subsequently absolved of the crime. The momentary "deprivation of the senses" argument, accepted by the jury, was the manner in which women often escaped punishment for infanticide. They were found guilty of killing their newborn child but were absolved on acting in this altered state. Women were most often not held responsible for killing their newborn child, and thus the honor clause—or the reduction in prison time—was unnecessary. The Penal Code through Article 27§4 created a space for infanticide to go unpunished, and the practice of the law took full advantage of this gap. The defense's utilization of this clause for acquittals was not specific to infanticide, however. Men accused of "crimes of passion," or the murder of their wives, were also absolved under this article.⁷ However, jurists

6. In 1922, this was modified to read "disturbance of the senses," (*perturbação de sentidos*) which proved a "useless modification," as it did not change the application of the law. This change was Decreto N.4780, 27 Dezembro 1923, Art. 38. Antonio José da Costa e Silva, *Código Penal dos Estados Unidos do Brasil comentado*, vol. 1 (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1930), 194.

7. Susan K. Besse, "Crimes of Passion: The Campaign Against Wife Killing in Brazil, 1910-1940," *Journal of Social History* 22, no. 4 (Summer 1989): 653-66; Magali Gouveia Engel, "Paixão, crime e relações de gênero (Rio de Janeiro, 1890-1930)," *Topoi*, no. 1 (2000): 153-77; Rachel Soihet, *Condição feminina e formas de violência: mulheres pobres e ordem urbana*,

2. Amy Chazkel, *Laws of Chance: Brazil's Clandestine Lottery and the Making of Urban Public Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 27.

3. This inefficiency is not particular to fertility control cases. See *Ibid.*, 5, 90, 254. Keith S. Rosenn argues that "bureaucratic red tape" dates back to the colonial period in Brazil. "Brazil's Legal Culture: The Jeito Revisited," *Florida International Law Journal* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1984): 10, 35-37.

4. João Vieira de Araujo, *O Código Penal interpretado*, vol. 2 (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1902), 2.

5. This phrase is taken from Sueann Caulfield, *In Defense of Honor: Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early-Twentieth Century Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

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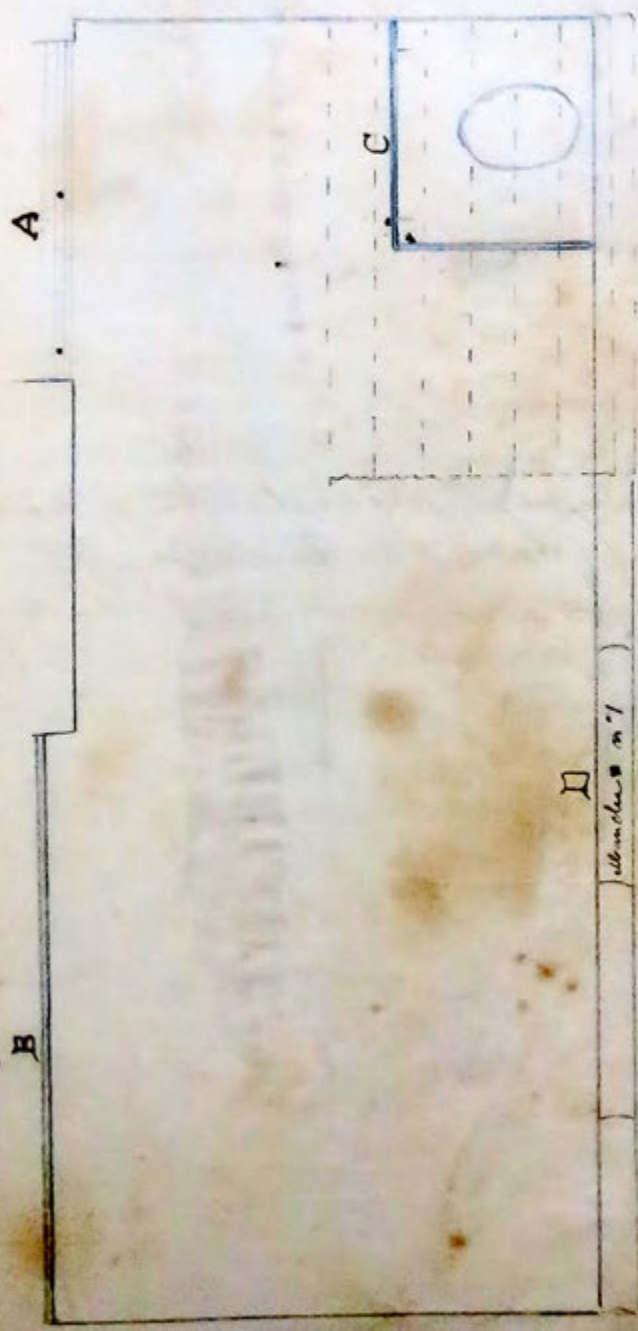
A map of where
Gloria Lourenço's
infant was found.
(AN) CA.CT4.0.492
(1908)

Serviço Medico-Legal da Policia do
Districto Federal

Deffuncto
C. Dr. Alfredo

Rio de Janeiro, 31 de Yulho de 1908

Crocquis do terraço-area da casa n.º 12 do Beco da Badalho



Legenda

- A - Porta dando para o terraço, em cuja soleira foram encontradas duas manchas de sangue.
- B - Grade com peitoral de madeira
- C - Porta da latrina em cuja parte superior e externa e inferior e interna foram encontradas manchas de sangue.
- D - Eluro coroado de telhas dando para o telhado da Bibliotheca da Faculdade de Medicina, em qual foi encontrado a mancha n.º 1.

alturas n.º 1

interlegro
N. *114*

190 *Q*

Fls. 1



JUIZO DA NONA PRETORIA
DO
DISTRICTO FEDERAL

Escrivão -- J. Macedo

St. Justica *St.*
Laura Sobral *Requerer*

Processo Crime
Art. 298 do Código Penal

As Justas e Leis Julhas de mil e...
Yscritos e cetera...
Capital Federal...
com a denuncia...
se segue...
procurador...
pena de...
flamantado...
circulante...
habeas...

criticized the use of Article 27§4 in crimes of passion cases but supported its utilization in infanticide trials.⁸

This research is based on 18 infanticide trials under the 1890 Penal Code. Only nine cases made it to a jury trial. Five of the cases never went to trial due to bureaucratic delays. Three were incomplete and one, the case of Maria de Jesus, was declared unfounded (*improcedente*). Of the nine that did go to trial, in four cases, the jury found the woman not guilty of committing infanticide.⁹ In three cases, the woman was found guilty of infanticide but absolved for acting in a mentally altered state.¹⁰ In only one case was the young girl found guilty of infanticide and *not* found acting in a mentally altered state.¹¹ Because the public prosecutor charged her under the honor clause of Article 298 and asked for the lightest sentence, Helena Teixeira spent the minimal time in prison, three years. In Rio de Janeiro infanticide cases, women were most likely to be found not guilty or absolved.

To convince the jury of a woman's criminal responsibility, the prosecution relied on two strategies: honor and motherhood. The prosecution either sympathetically emphasized with a woman's efforts to hide her dishonor or harshly condemned the infanticide as a rejection of the woman's maternal

1890-1920 (Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1989), 279, 287, 299–300.

8. For critiques see Besse, "Crimes of Passion," 658; Engel, "Paixão, crime e relações de gênero," 168–169. For support in infanticide cases see, da Costa e Silva, *Código Penal*, 1:198; Galdino Siqueira, *Direito Penal brasileiro*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Jacyntho, 1932), 350.

9. (MJ) RG.13243 Cx.1403 (1902); (MJ) RG.13244 Cx.1403 (1903); (AN) CA.CT4.0.376 (1907); (MJ) RG.4382 Cx.577 (1910).

10. (AN) CA.CT4.0492 (1908); (TJRJ) Cx.01.722.639-9 Pos.7.G6.S5.1438 (1911); (MJ) RG.13245 Cx.1403 (1904).

11. (TJRJ) Cx.01.803.478-01 Pos.G4.S8.2336 (1912).

instincts. For example, in the 1892 trial of Celina de Souza, the prosecutor declared that Celina was a "criminal woman (*parturiente*)...a barbaric, cruel and inhumane woman, that robbed the life of her own newborn child."¹² She was charged with Article 298 without the honor clause. While the judge issued an arrest warrant, Celina disappeared and the case never went to trial. The district police chief in Laura Sobral's 1902 infanticide trial argued that she threw her newborn child into a neighboring yard both to "conceal her shame," and "due to [her] lack of maternal affections."¹³ The public prosecutor agreed with the district police chief. Laura had acted "in the certain intention of hiding her dishonor." She was charged under the honor clause of Article 298. But the jury found her not guilty of killing her child.

In the scandalous 1908 trial of Gloria Lourenço da Silva, in which Gloria confessed to decapitating and dismembering her newborn child, although one she declared a stillbirth, the public prosecutor condemned Gloria for her lack of maternal instincts.¹⁴ He argued that Gloria "practiced the infanticide, revealing an unedited ferocity. The evidence of the crime practiced by the accused is complete and reveals the cynicism with which she proceeded..." But the prosecution still charged her under the honor clause. The jury found Gloria guilty of infanticide to hide her dishonor, but that she had acted in a momentary lapse of

12. (AN) OI.0.PCR.3075 (1892).

13. (MJ), RG.13243 Cx.1403 (1904).

14. (AN) CA.CT4.0492 (1908).

reason. She was absolved.

Similar to the prosecution, the defense utilized notions of honor in an effort to reduce possible prison time, but they also relied heavily on the idea of a disturbance of the senses, employing Article 27§4. Laura Sobral's defense lawyer declared that she was unaware that she had been pregnant and that she had lost consciousness during the birth. When she awoke, she found the dead infant next to her.¹⁵ Her lawyer argued that "The patient was in the complete impossibility to render assistance to the newborn because she was alone and without reason when the unhappy child was born..." Gloria Lourenço's defense lawyer had the difficult position of defending a woman who had allegedly decapitated and dismembered her newborn child. He argued that the child had only been mutilated after its death, when Gloria had acted under "a complete perturbation, or even, a privation of the senses and of reason."

The defense's use of the loss of reason, encapsulated in Article 27§4 of the 1890 Penal Code, and, more importantly, the jury's acceptance of this argument, had serious implications for the re-definition of infanticide in the 1940 Penal Code, still in effect today. The crime of infanticide changed to include the concept of post-partum madness or what was earlier defined as a momentary loss of reason as the only circumstance under which the crime could be committed. Article 123 of the 1940 Code stated

15. (MJ) RG.13243 Cx.1403 (1902).

“To kill, under the *influence of the post-partum state*, one’s own child, during or immediately after the birth.” The prison time ranged from one to six years. In other words, after 1940, only a mother acting in a “post-partum state,” implying irrationality, could commit infanticide. Otherwise it would be considered homicide. While scholars have successfully argued that the 1940 redefinition of the crime of infanticide reduced it to a *mother* acting in a state of post-partum irrationality, they have not demonstrated the legal practice behind that change.¹⁶ Jurists in their re-writing of the Penal Code eliminated the main caveat that defense lawyers used to absolve their clients. By redefining the crime of infanticide as occurring *only* in a state of post-partum irrationality, the 1940 Penal Code erased the one avenue women had for being acquitted. After 1940, it was possible for more women to be condemned. Post-partum madness was explicitly part of the crime and thus could not be used as an exception.

The 1940 Code also erased the honor clause for infanticide. But this had less of an impact on the actual sentencing of women in the 1890 Code than the idea of post-partum irrationality. In only one case was the woman, Helena, found guilty of committing infanticide and not found as acting in a state of deprivation.¹⁷ Thus, in only this case did the honor clause reduce the amount of time the wom-

16. Fabíola Rohden, *A arte de enganar a natureza: contracepção, aborto e infanticídio no início do século XX* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Fiocruz, 2003), 140.

17. (TJRJ) Cx.01.803.478-01 Pos.G4.S8.2336 (1912).

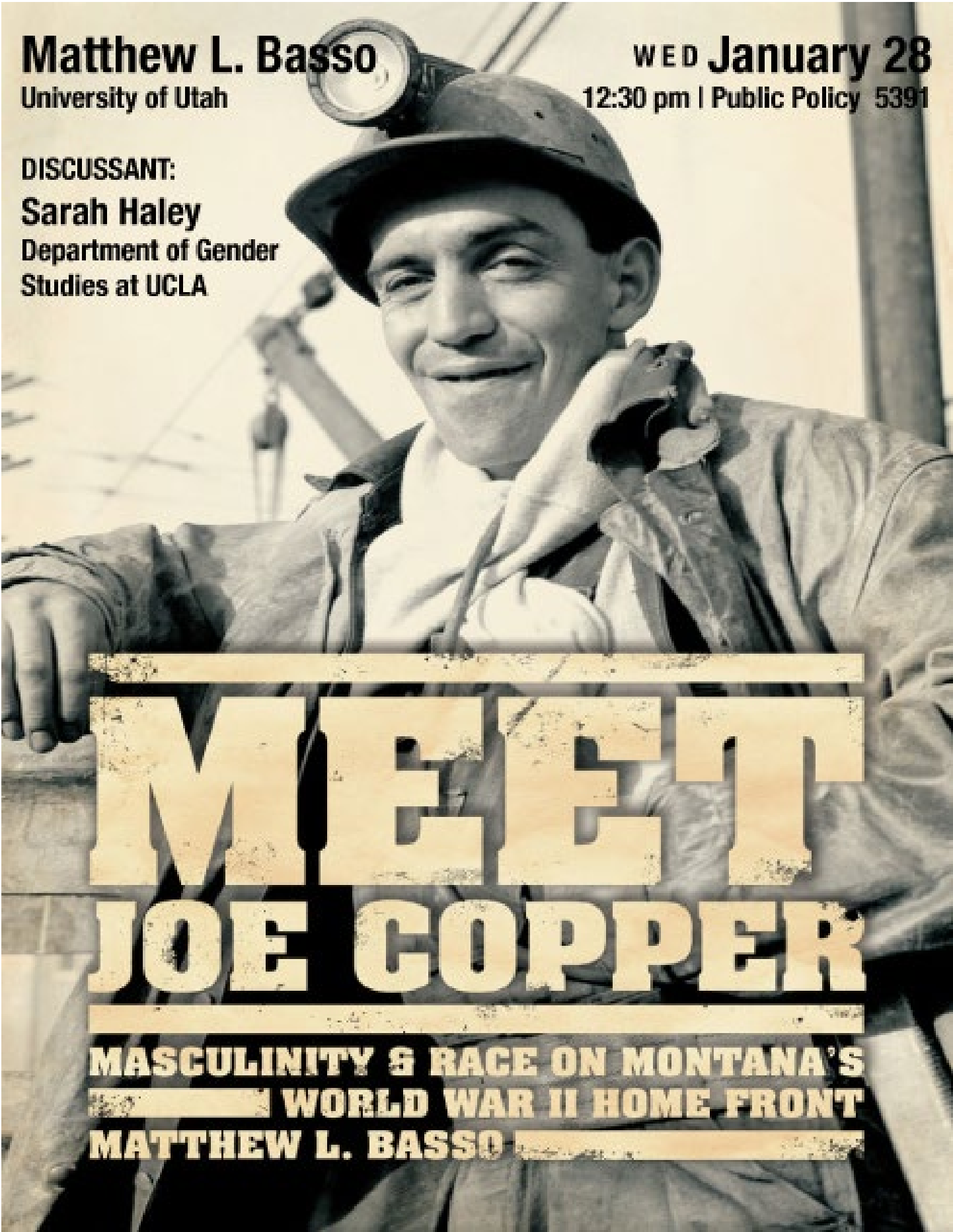
an spent in prison. While the honor clause hypothetically allowed for a reduction in the sentence, infanticide cases rarely arrived at guilty verdicts. While the honor clause played a role in forming the views of the court and the public, in terms of judicial decisions, the woman’s mental state was more important. The removal of the honor clause in the 1940 Code reflects the less important position it played in judicial decisions under the earlier 1890 Code.

So what does this tell us about legal practice and gender roles during Brazil’s modernization process? Scholars have demonstrated the importance of women’s honor in forming the family, the basis of the “new” Brazilian nation.¹⁸ The medical and legal professions viewed women’s honor—based on their sexuality (or their fidelity within marriage and their virginity outside of it)—as so important it must be written into law. However, in infanticide trials honor played a less important role than medical discourses on women’s behavior, such as the idea of post-partum madness. If we expand out discussion beyond infanticide to include abortion, we find that honor also did not play a major role in legal decisions under the 1890 Penal Code. Although the conservative ruling elite dominated public discussions of honor, an important gap existed between perceptions of Brazil’s social norms and their reality.

18. Susan K. Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Caulfield, *In Defense of Honor*; Martha de Abreu Esteves, *Meninas perdidas: os populares e o cotidiano do amor no Rio de Janeiro da Belle Époque* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1989); Soihet, *Condição feminina e formas de violência*.



Cassia Paigen Roth is a Ph.D. Candidate in History with a Concentration in Gender Studies at UCLA. Her dissertation highlights how the intersection of medicine, state formation, and women’s reproductive experiences was central to Brazilian modernization. Cassia argues that turn-of-the-century Rio de Janeiro saw the creation of a criminal culture surrounding pregnancy and childbirth, which situated poor women on the margins of the one role the Brazilian state considered appropriate for women: motherhood. The discourse on what constituted normative motherhood—based on class and race—influenced how the state criminalized fertility control and treated pregnancy in general. She received the Penny Kanner Dissertation Research Award in 2014.



Matthew L. Basso

University of Utah

WED **January 28**

12:30 pm | Public Policy 5391

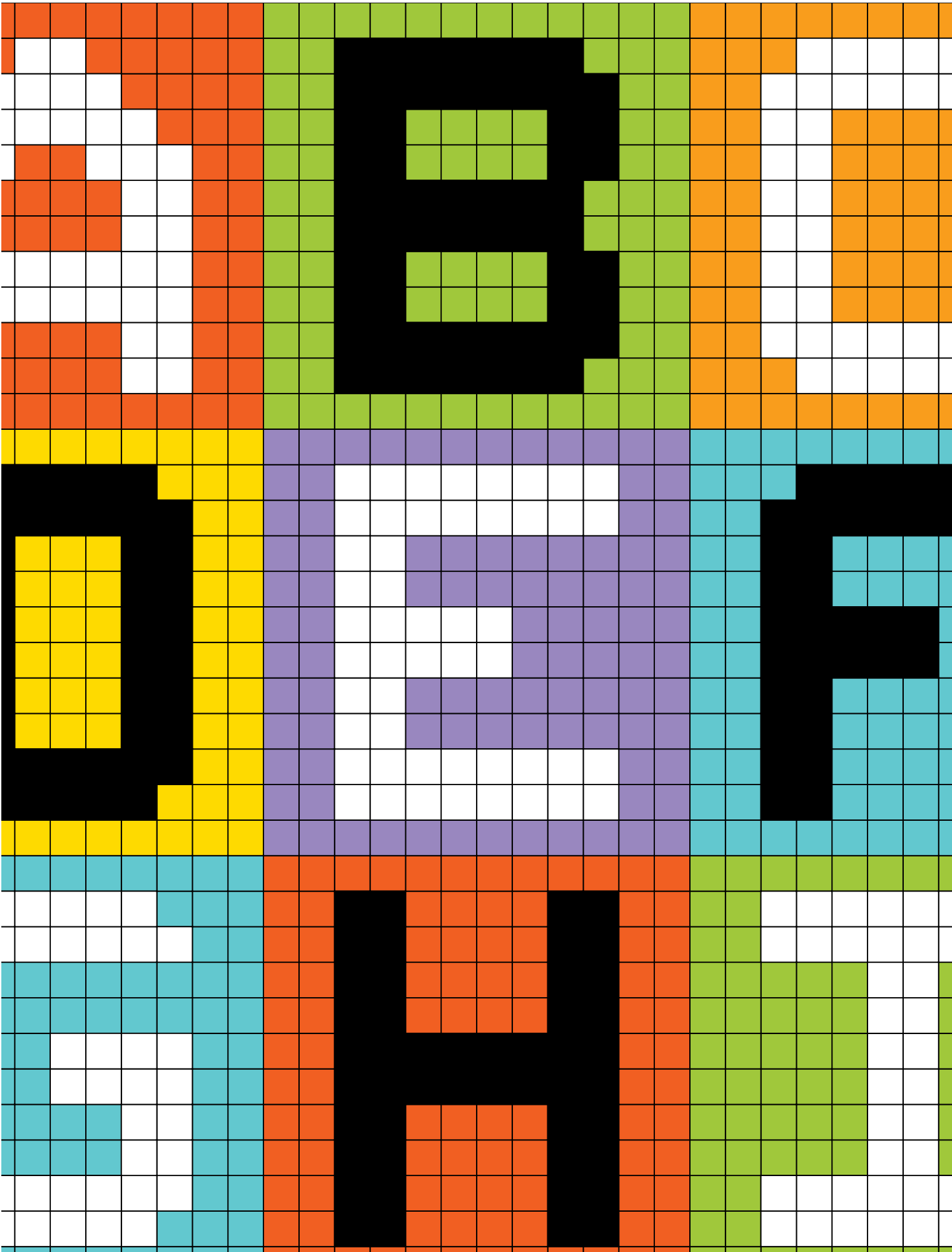
DISCUSSANT:

Sarah Haley

Department of Gender
Studies at UCLA

**MEET
JOE COPPER**

**MASCULINITY & RACE ON MONTANA'S
WORLD WAR II HOME FRONT
MATTHEW L. BASSO**



Lessons from Disability and Gender Studies for the K-12 Classroom

BY ANGELICA MUÑOZ

THIS PAST SUMMER I WAS fortunate to attend the Institute for the Recruitment of Teachers' (IRT) summer workshop in Andover, Massachusetts. My summer was filled with challenges and motivation from the IRT as I participated in a rigorous graduate preparatory program with a group of talented and passionate individuals dedicated to dismantling educational disparities and creating an equitable society. My days consisted of graduate-like seminars and facilitation on dense theory, which challenged me academically and personally. Furthermore, I received feedback from the IRT faculty, which allowed me to reflect on my teaching methodology and practices as a future educator. Engaging with challenging text not only helped prepare my peers and me for the rigors of graduate study but served as a reminder to our motivations for pursuing higher education.

My summer days in Andover also consisted of inspirational presentations and discussions from IRT faculty and special guests. I was

given support and mentorship in advocating for the injustices I am most passionate about from the IRT faculty and my colleagues. I often found myself discussing in seminar on the inequities that students with disabilities endure in the educational system. Moreover, my IRT experience stimulated me to deeply reflect on my entire undergraduate experience in particular, my community work, research involvements, and those who have helped me along my educational journey at UCLA. Most significantly, the IRT provided me with an opportunity to critically contemplate on my future profession as a public school teacher and why to implement theory into my practice. My engagement with my peers and faculty encouraged me to me reflect on readings I encountered in my gender studies classes. Specific text that I read in my courses influenced my thought process about K-12 education, particularly in regard to students with disabilities.

I became interested in the field of disability studies after my family and I witnessed the challenges my

nephew endured. Observing his difficulties and my family's struggles in alleviating them, motivated me to learn about scholarship in the field. "A lecture in the "Bodies" seminar by Michelle Erai, Associate Professor in the Department of Gender Studies at UCLA provided me with a critical understanding of "violence" and how it pertains to societal views on disability. In the class, I began to understand how disability is often understood from a medical diagnosis and thus, a limited understanding of disability prevails (Kluth 1). Moreover, I learned people with disabilities are using a social rights model for understanding disability. This model critiques the social and physical barriers that produce inequality for individuals with disabilities. The social rights model also construes disability is a social construction (2).

Through Erai's mentorship I was fortunate to meet scholars in the fields of special education and disability studies. She introduced me to Juliann Anesi, who is a doctoral student in Special Education



Juliann Anesi (left) with Angelica Muñoz

at Syracuse University. Juliann has provided invaluable mentorship in support of my work and path to graduate school. Through Juliann's mentorship I have been able to further reflect on how the social model of disability can help to elucidate the educational inequality that students in special education endure (Gallagher et al 1).

Through the resources that Juliann provided, I learned about special education history. In 1975 the Education of All Handicapped Children Act was passed to allow children with disabilities to receive a free education (Connor and Ferri 63). Before 1975, more than 3 million children with disabilities received poor educational services (63). Additionally, 1 million did not receive any educational services (63). Despite advocacy efforts to ensure an equitable education, students with disabilities are taught in separate classrooms (Erevelles 25). It is estimated that there are over five million students with disabilities who are being taught in self-contained classrooms and kept in isolation from their peers (25).

Often unchallenged, it is understood as “standard” for educating students with disabilities. To understand and learn more about the history of segregating students with disabilities from general education classrooms, I pursued historical research on California’s juvenile justice system from young women.

During my senior year, I conducted a research project for my senior thesis under the faculty mentorship of Erai and Grace Hong, Associate Professor in the departments of Gender Studies and Asian American Studies. My research focused on California’s first female reformatory school, the Ventura School for Girls (VSG) and its establishment during the Progressive Era in Los Angeles (1910-1920). Founded during at time in the early twentieth-century when the eugenics movement was influential, the school was established for the “reformation” of young women.

My methodology for this project was archival analysis, which I learned about in “African American Women’s History,” a class taught by Sarah Haley, an Assistant Professor in the departments of Gender Studies and African American Studies. The class provided me with a unique opportunity of understanding the limitations and significance of utilizing historical documents for understanding American society. Furthermore, I was first exposed to conducting archival research in Erai’s seminar, “Queer Things.” In the seminar, my colleagues and I analyzed artifacts through various theoretical lenses. The class provided me with the supplementary support I needed to conduct historical archival research on the VSG. As I continued my research, I

learned that the school’s historical information was poorly documented. Because of sexist ideologies about gender, school officials believed that young women were permanently “morally corrupted” and could not be “reformed” (Chávez-García 10). As a result, the presence and history of the young women was inadequately documented in school records (10).

In my research, I analyzed the form of “care” that was provided in the school. Hong fostered and encouraged my curiosity for critically examining the notion of “care” in the reformatory. Throughout my research, I noticed that specific forms of “care,” punishment, and curriculum were used to “help rehabilitate” young women. The majority of these practices were dehumanizing. The young women endured various forms of institutional and gender-based violence from reformatory officials. Conducting research on the VSG allowed me to understand that studying and addressing educational disparities requires a multidisciplinary lens. Throughout my research I realized I gained a critical understanding of special education by analyzing the field through various theoretical concepts coming from disability, feminist, and postcolonial studies.

Furthermore, this project would have not been complete if it were not for the helpful mentorship and resources I received from Miroslava Chávez-García, who is a Professor and Vice-Chair in the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies at UC Santa Barbara. Chávez-García shared with me valuable information on the school, which provided me with a historical and social understanding of the reformatory.

I was fortunate to present my research on the VSG with the support of Erai, Hong, and the Department of Gender Studies at the Society for Disabilities Studies (SDS) Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in June of 2014. I first learned about the SDS conference from Anesi. Attending the SDS conference allowed me to network and meet scholars in disability and special education studies. Attending the conference was a delightful experience. I was able to learn about emerging issues and research in both disciplines and about disability history and the disability rights movement.

Throughout my undergraduate experience, I have also been privileged to engage with the Los Angeles community. I was a part of the Mentors Empowering and Nurturing through Education (M.E.N.T.E.) at UCLA program and the Community Programs Office Student Association (CPOSA). The CPOSA supports the development of 30 “student-initiated and student run” organizations within the Community Service Learning Center (CSLC). The CSLC is housed in the Community Programs Office, a campus entity. These organizations are located within the fields of health, education, and social justice. M.E.N.T.E. is a mentoring and tutoring program for high-school students in South Los Angeles and is part of the education group in the CPOSA. Through my involvement, I received mentorship and support from Vusi Azania and Ashley Long in leadership skills and community work in Los Angeles. These two inspired, challenged, and encouraged me to think creatively and critically

about working in the community and with my colleagues.

Throughout my participation in the M.E.N.T.E. program, I was fortunate to work with youth as they prepared for higher education. My mentoring sessions consisted of discussing college life and how to navigate institutions of higher education with young women and men. Furthermore, my colleagues and I received instrumental mentorship from Antonio Martínez, a former graduate student. Martínez provided workshops on the significance of critically reflecting on our role as mentors and our engagement with the high-school students.

My undergraduate experiences have substantially influenced my goals. I am working in an elementary school. With assistance from the IRT program, I am applying to graduate school programs in education. I am so grateful for the experiences and opportunities that I have been fortunate to receive and to those who I have met along my educational journey. I am especially thankful to the UCLA Center for the Study of Women for providing me with an opportunity to share my work with the UCLA community. All these experiences—in academia and in the community—have positively influenced my practices as a future educator. Reflecting on these experiences has made me realize the importance of inclusive education and ensuring all students have access to the general curriculum. I hope to continue carrying Constance Coiner’s vision of social change and use the classroom as a space to promote and inspire students with a critical understanding about the world in which they live.



Recipient of the CSW Constance Coiner Award in 2014, Angelica Muñoz (shown above with her mother) graduated with a degree in Gender Studies and a minor in Labor and Workplace Studies in June of 2014. Her honors project analyzed the educational curriculum at the California School for Girls during the early twentieth century in Los Angeles. While at UCLA, she was also involved in the M.E.N.T.E. program and Community Programs Office Student Association. With the motivation from her family she plans to pursue graduate study in education with a focus on disability studies.

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ON THE COVER: Featured in this issue are
top row from left to right, Talitha LeFlouria,
Angelica Muñoz, middle row from left to right,
Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, Amber Jamilla
Musser, Cassia Paigen Roth, Grace Hong;
bottom row from left to right, Jennifer Monti,
Patricia Moreno

