Spaces of hope are often opened up by contradictions. The Ontario provincial government’s commitment to expansion of the number of spots available to graduate students is motivated in the first instance by a desire for economic competitiveness in a de-industrializing economy. The number of graduate degrees is seen as a measure of preparedness for new knowledge economies. This initiative has made it possible in recent years for us to start our MA and this year our PhD programs. The students in these programs are versed in thinking critically about policies which centre economic logics, and which ask questions about socially just and inclusive ways for imagining our futures. Profiles of some of their gripping projects follow in this newsletter.

But progressive politics too can have lacunae. A number of recent commentators have noted the gap in critical studies of race in Canada, between studies of white settler colonialism and indigeneity on the one hand and studies of whiteness and other forms of racialization—often problematically and erroneously collapsed into the figure of the immigrant—on the other. While a number of scholars in WGSI have incorporated studies of indigeneity into work inspired and informed by transnational feminist rubrics, we decided work in indigenous studies needed to be more fully centred in our discussions. This year we undertook a search in gender and indigenous studies which resulted in the hiring of Karyn Recollet, a Cree scholar who studies the way various forms of performance are acts of decolonization. We look forward to having her join us July 1, 2014. Other initiatives too—including co-sponsored events with No More Silence, which conducts activism on missing and murdered Aboriginal women—have worked to the same end.

On July 1, 2014, renowned cultural theorist and critical race scholar Rinaldo Walcott assumes the position as Director of WGSI. We welcome his vision, energy, passion, and resounding commitment to rigorous scholarship and trenchant public commentary. In my past five years in this role, I have, always, at every meeting, been proud and honoured to be able to say I was representing WGSI—our interventions into knowledge production, our tireless commitment to pedagogical excellence, our fierce and unflagging commitment to social justice and our truly extraordinary commitment to institutional transformation reflected in exhaustive engagements in key conversations are all widely recognized. Evidence of many of these initiatives is contained in these pages. We have a significant impact perhaps incommensurate with being a rather small unit.
Congratulations to Alissa Trotz on her 2013 President’s Teaching Award

Dr. Alissa Trotz is an Associate Professor who has taught in the Department of Sociology and Equity Studies (now Department of Social Justice) at OISE and is currently cross-appointed to Women & Gender Studies (WGS) and the Caribbean Studies Program at New College. Following a year of law school in the Caribbean, she completed her BA (Hons) at York University and her MPhil and PhD at Trinity College, University of Cambridge. A research fellow at the Centre of Latin American Studies at Cambridge and a Queen’s National Scholar in Women’s (now Gender) Studies at Queen’s University, she joined the University of Toronto in 2000.

Described by her students as an inspiring and dedicated teacher who excels at both the large lecture format and the small seminar, Alissa has received the Faculty of Arts and Science Outstanding Teaching Award (2010), the Award for distinguished contribution to graduate teaching at OISE (2007) and the SAC-APUS Undergraduate Teaching Award (2007). She has devoted much of her time to improving the classroom experience through curricular innovation. She played a key role in WGSJ conversations about how we might better equip our students with the critical capacities to comprehend the uneven transnational processes that shape and give meaning to our lives. These discussions have profoundly shaped first the MA (2007) and now the PhD programs (beginning Fall 2013), both of which distinguish WGSJ as offering “a particular focus on feminist colonial, post-colonial, diasporic and transnational studies.”

At an undergraduate level, Alissa was responsible for the transformation of the flagship introductory Women & Gender Studies course, securing a MacGraw Hill Instructional Grant to integrate technology into the course. With her co-instructor and the Writing Instruction for Teaching Assistants Program, she developed a detailed tutorial manual for the course that significantly enhances students’ small group experience. As Director of the Caribbean Studies Program (2006-2012), Alissa proposed new joint courses with a number of programs, and was a key organizer of “South South Encounters,” a year of innovative programming across Caribbean, South Asian and African Studies. She was also a founding member of the Black Faculty Group that organized a cross-faculty conference, Teaching for Our Times, out of which came the proposal to establish a Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies; Alissa was a member of the Working Group that submitted the successful Academic Initiatives Fund Proposal that led to the Centre’s establishment.

Beyond the classroom, Alissa created a working workshop with the support of the New College Writing Centre, the Ivey Library and faculty members, for students enrolled in African and Caribbean Studies. She led an initiative to create a graduate network for students working on Caribbean-related topics across the GTA, and proposed the creation of a Senior Doctoral Fellows Program to integrate graduate research into college life, now highly successful and in its second year at New College. As a teacher, Alissa is deeply interested in broadening access to higher education and deepening university-community engagement. She has taught sociology classes to high school students, appeared on panels at TDSB events, been invited to give the keynote address to graduating high school students, and helped to organize U of T educational outreach initiatives. A firm believer in the importance of public intellectual work, she participates regularly in community initiatives in Toronto and the Caribbean. For the last six years, she has edited a weekly newspaper column in Guyana, opening it up to graduate and undergraduate students. She has partnered with colleagues at other universities, bookstores, theatre and dance companies, Caribbean consular offices and community organizations, to host events that make the university a welcoming crossroads for all kinds of new encounters. In 2012, Alissa received the Guyana Cultural Association Prize (New York), as someone who has “taken an active leadership position in reaching out to groups who may not otherwise think of pursuing a university education and finding ways to create new opportunities for active intellectual engagement.”

By Bonnie McElhinny

Launching our PhD Program

The launch of our PhD program, an event which was also the culminating event of our 40th anniversary at the University of Toronto, was held on September 13, 2013.

AWARD WINNERS 2013-14

GRADUATE

Kay Armatage Graduate Women and Gender Studies Entrance Prize ($500)
Christina Young
PhD Collaborative Program in Women and Gender Studies.

Janka Seydegart Scholarship in Feminist Studies ($500)
Vivian Solaña
PhD Collaborative Program in Women and Gender Studies.

City of Toronto Graduate Women’s Studies Scholarship ($3000)
Kimber Lehner
PhD Collaborative Program in Women and Gender Studies.

Vida Heydarian Gender Justice Award (up to $3,000)
Not awarded in 2013-2014.

Hammed Shahidian Graduate Award in Women and Gender Studies (up to $5,000)
Not awarded in 2013-2014.

UNDERGRADUATE

Women and Gender Studies Grant ($500)
Yassaman Ayoubi
Major in Women and Gender Studies.

City of Toronto Undergraduate Women’s Studies Scholarship ($2000)
Abinaya Balasubramaniam
Major in Women and Gender Studies.

The Elsie Gregory MacGill Prize
Lucia Gambetti-Bracco
Specialist in Women and Gender Studies. Awarded to most outstanding student graduating with a Specialist or Major degree in Women and Gender Studies.

The Helen Gregory MacGill Prize
Aishah Celis Estranges
Minor in Women and Gender Studies. Awarded to the student who achieves the highest standing in WGS160Y: Introduction to Women and Gender Studies.

University of Toronto Excellence Award and Shahzad Mobaj Book Prize
Tyler Carson
Specialist in Women and Gender Studies.

Abinaya Balasubramaniam Receives ASSU Awards: Three members of the New College community have been honoured by the Arts and Science Student Union (ASSU) for their contributions to the university. Abinaya Balasubramaniam, a fourth-year Women and Gender Studies student, received the William R. Gardner Student Leadership Award for her extra-curricular involvement on and off campus. Among her many accomplishments, Abinaya is a member of the Equity Studies Student Union’s executive team. She has developed workshops on sexual health for young women in Kenya, Namibia and Toronto. She has also co-founded an after-school Young Women’s Leadership Program in the St. James Town neighbourhood of Toronto.
Remembering Not to Forget
By Shahrzad Mogab, Bethany Osborne & Shirin Haghgooy

The Remembering Not to Forget Digital Storytelling is a participatory action research project designed to tell the stories of former political prisoners—narrating state violence and telling tales of humanity, hope, and resistance. Using storytelling and digital techniques, participants have worked one-on-one with artists and facilitators to tell stories, focusing on a particular time, place, space, theme, and moments of imprisonment. These stories include digital images, texts, recorded audio narrations, video clips and/or music. Through the Community Knowledge Alliance opportunity, we bring together student artists and professional artists from the community to develop more digital stories with former political prisoners. Our goal is to build on the existing repertoire of four digital stories, each between 3-4 minutes long and create 6 more digital stories. An event in the fall of 2014 will launch the digital stories and bring together community partners and artists with U of T students, faculty and staff to discuss narrative and storytelling as a form of knowledge production and to provide an opportunity to theorize memory, the genre of prison literature, and the narration of memory as a form of collective learning and resisting oppression.

Cyberbullying Forum
By Joan Simitchik & Victoria Tahmassebi-Birgani

A Cyberbullying Forum will be held at UTm this fall. Cyberbullying has become one of the most prevailing forms of violence against women, girls, the LGBTQ community and racialized communities as a form of collective learning and resisting oppression. Through the WGS Practicum course (WGS435Y), the Women and Gender Studies Program at the University of Toronto Mississauga built a seven-year relationship with Audmax, a Peel women’s service agency. During this time, WGS students completed their year-long community service placements successfully working in Audmax’s programs that provide community support for female immigrants and for former inmates in Canadian institutions.

Through these experiences, a critical gap in the Peel region was identified: the provision of information and access to resources and services in the community. WGS and Audmax proposed the Experience the Experience workshops to build a community-knowledge alliance between WGS students and Audmax community members: the purpose was to address how best to overcome this information gap and to produce a vehicle that would express the participants’ experience. The latter was intended to be a mutual skills building, writing intensive partnership.

Building a community of learners, WGS fourth year students (including the Practicum class) and agency members held two workshops. One was held at the Audmax office and the other on the UTM campus. The first workshop’s objective was to provide a forum for skills building and knowledge exchange. The second workshop produced a draft newsletter (print and electronic version) addressing the identified need for information. It also became a vehicle that captured the narrative experience of participants through poetry, prose and interviews. The workshops consisted of 24-30 participants equally divided into two groups. A hoped for outcome includes building a sustainable foundation for a community of learners through exchange of expertise between campus and community. The newsletter is in its final stage of production.

WGS at UTm and Audmax are grateful for the support of WGSI’s Community Knowledge Alliance that allowed us to Experience the Experience and to build a foundation to continue our partnership.

Women’s and Gender Studies from High School to University/College: Expectations, Possibilities and Potentials
By Connie Guberman

Women’s and Gender Studies, UTSC (with approximately 175 student Majors/Minors) in partnership with students from the second year Women and Gender Studies Student Association (WGSSA) and Women’s Centre will organize and host an eclectic panel discussion on the broad issue of the expectations, possibilities and potential of Women’s and Gender Studies in high school, as a ‘teachable’ toward a degree in Education, and as preparation for future ‘careers’ or graduate studies. Panelists will include: one or two activists from the successful Miss G Project; a high school teacher who has adopted the course; a representative from the Ministry of Education and/or to Toronto District School Board. Students have expressed an interest in documenting the session as well as preparing a digital overview of the issues including student interviews.

Audmax Inc. NEWS Fall 2013
www.audmaxinc.com Tel: 905-615-1208 audmax@audmaxinc.com

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE EVENTS

Our Collective Strength Report
By Audrey Huntley & Carol-Lynne DiRiecoangés

On November 7, 2013 the Migrant Mothers Project hosted ‘Our Collective Strength,’ a community event to raise consciousness on the intersections of violence against women, precarious immigration status and human rights. This event was generously sponsored by the Women & Gender Studies Institute Community Knowledge Alliance initiative and took place in the William Doo Auditorium and Atrium at the University of Toronto. A total of 70 people attended the workshop with students and community groups during the community fair. They enjoyed food prepared by Conscious Kosher Catering, and bear witness to the digital stories, poetry, and dance performance created by women living with precarious status in Canada, along with their allies. Visit www.migrantmothersproject.com to find out more about the project.

Experience the Experience
By Joan Simitchik

To our surprise, we were presented with the Employer of the Year award by the Province of Ontario. Gordana Muratovic for this very prestigious award and acknowledgement of the contribution of Audmax to the success of our candidates who are eligible for our Cultural Program Service for Correctional Service Canada. Audmax, a Peel women’s service agency members held two workshops. One was held at the Audmax office and the other on the UTM campus. The first workshop’s objective was to provide a forum for skills building and knowledge exchange. The second workshop produced a draft newsletter (print and electronic version) addressing the identified need for information. It also became a vehicle that captured the narrative experience of participants through poetry, prose and interviews. The workshops consisted of 24-30 participants equally divided into two groups. A hoped for outcome includes building a sustainable foundation for a community of learners through exchange of expertise between campus and community. The newsletter is in its final stage of production.

WGS at UTm and Audmax are grateful for the support of WGSI’s Community Knowledge Alliance that allowed us to Experience the Experience and to build a foundation to continue our partnership.
International Women’s Day Lecture emBodyment in Motion: from Theory to Praxis: By Jill Andrew

Jill Andrew is an award-winning journalist who enjoys living things up as a public speaker, educator, and media consultant on female body image, equity and leadership. A graduate of the inaugural cohort of WSG’s Master’s program, Jill gave the International Women’s Day lecture in the introductory women and gender studies course on March 5, 2014. Her talk, “emBODYment in Motion: From Theory to Praxis” combined theories on the social construction of bodies with examples of body positivity activism. Jill argued that society’s obsession with thinness has led to a “thin epidemic” that is the basis of the rampant oppressive fat shaming in society today. She framed the fear of obesity as an oppressive fat shaming in society today. She framed the fear of obesity as an aspect of thinness at any cost driven by narrow views of health and beauty. Using examples from fashion magazines, Jill showed how the media disproportionately represents thin, white, able-bodied, straight, cis-gendered women as the ideal and, in doing so, constructs a standard of beauty unattainable for most women. Largely a product of Eurocentric ideals, Jill made links between this dominant beauty standard, colonialism and the exclusion of alternate forms of beauty embodied by women who are queer, disabled, fat, and/or racialized. Putting her analysis of fat oppression into practice, Jill made reference to her own body activism projects such as the ‘fatshion’ blog Toronto International Catwalk, Toronto’s first Fat Fashion Show fundraiser.

April we were delighted to hear from Meg Gibson, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Social Work, whose work on LGBTQ parents of children with disabilities prompted us to rethink—and historicize—the meaning of “intersectionality.” The full line-up of this year’s speakers, including institutional affiliations and titles, is listed below. For information on the 2014-2015 Research Seminar as it becomes available, please check the website: http://www.wgs.utoronto.ca/research/wgs-research-seminar.

On Tuesday April 1st, students of the Honours Research class presented papers they had written for the Women and Gender Studies Institute. The talks were a review of their research projects that they had tirelessly worked on throughout the academic year. Taught by Dr. Trimble, WGS460 was a year long course offered to specialists, majors, and minors of women and gender studies who wanted to explore in-depth the voices of community members; survivors of violence and their family/friends/supporters; organizers, activists, and anyone working towards ending gender-based colonial violence in various capacities. Featured presenters included Indigenous advocates Sarah Hunt, Marianne Pearce, Monica Forrester and Tanya Kappo, NMS, along with community partners Families of Sisters in Spirit (FSSI) and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN), provided updates on progress to date on a database initiative to document and name deaths of Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirited people. These presenters were also invited to participate in discussions about calls for a public inquiry into the issue, the development of a community safety plan and the support of sex workers. Earlier in the day, representatives from groups across Canada met in a workshop to continue strategizing on the community database project. Organizers would like to thank the sponsors who made this event possible: the Women & Gender Studies Institute, University of Toronto (Community Knowledge Alliance Fund, Initiative Fund (CKF) and Principal’s Initiative Fund (FPI), New College, University of Toronto; and the Groundswell Fund.

The final panel titled “Political and affective inhabitations.” included papers by Bryl Seol on women’s accent in South Korea focusing on the first female president, Guen-hye Park, Abinyaya Balasubramaniam exploring postcolonial Filipina identity and Tyler Carson writing about the connection between queer politics and affect at pride festivals. Coming to the course with unique and often disparate research projects there was the potential for the research process to be a quite lonely and individualistic pursuit. However, Dr. Trimble made it her mission to foster an environment that would demonstrate to the class how research is a collective, rather than individual endeavor. Besides giving us the tools and skills to be effective researchers, the course became a safe space in the challenged, the hostile and competitive disposition of the university. The classroom provided, for many of us, the kind of creative and supportive intellectual nourishment we had been so desperately craving. In this way, the course was a perfect capstone to an undergraduate degree and acted as an energizing and hopeful send off as we move on to new adventures next year.
Dr. Kay Armatage is next to join Renfrew Collegiate Institute (RCI)’s prestigious Wall of Achievement

Armatage was also the vice-chair for the Ontario Arts Council from 1991 to 1997 and served as the international programmer at the Toronto International Film Festival for 21 years between 1983 and 2004. Armatage has additionally published other works. She is the author of The Girl From God’s Country: Nell Shipman and The Better Story: Queer Affects From the Middle East. The Better Story offers fresh insights into political conflict. Dina Georgis argues that narrative is an emotional resource for learning and for generating better political futures.

Dr. Kay Armatage is next to join Renfrew Collegiate Institute (RCI)’s prestigious Wall of Achievement

By Bonnie McElhinny

South Koreans in the Debt Crisis by Jesook Song

WGGIS is proud of and congratulates Jesook Song on her publication South Koreans in the Debt Crisis which is a detailed examination of the logic underlying the neoliberal welfare state that South Korea created in response to the devastating Asian Debt Crisis (1997-2001). Jesook Song argues that while the government proclaimed that it would guarantee all South Koreans a minimum standard of living, it prioritized assisting those citizens perceived as embodying the neo-liberal ideals of employability, flexibility, and self-sufficiency. Song demonstrates that the government was not alone in drawing distinctions between the “deserving” and the “underserving” poor. Progressive intellectuals, activists, and organizations also participated in the neoliberal reform push. Song traces the circulation of neoliberal concepts throughout South Korean society, among government officials, the media, intellectuals, NGO members, and educated unemployed people working in public works programs. She analyzes the exchanges of perspectives between NGOs and the government, the frequent invocation of a perceived depression in family values, the resurrection of conservative gender norms and practices, and the promotion of entrepreneurship as the key to survival.

South Koreans in the Debt Crisis by Jesook Song

Jesook Song focuses specifically on employment reform and the debt as the key to survival. She explores the resurrection of conservative gender norms and practices, and the promotion of “entrepreneurship as the key to survival.” Drawing on her experience during the crisis as an employee in a public works program in Seoul, Song provides an ethnographic assessment of the efforts of the state and civilians to regulate social inequality through assistance programs. She focuses specifically on employment reform and the debt as the key to survival. She explores the resurrection of conservative gender norms and practices, and the promotion of “entrepreneurship as the key to survival.”

Jesook Song

By Dina Georgis

Emmanuel Levinas and the Politics of Non-Violence by Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani

WGGIS is proud of and congratulates Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani on her first publication. French philosopher and Talmudic commentator Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) has received considerable attention for his influence on philosophical, religious, and cultural thought. In this book, Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani provides the first examination of the applicability of Emmanuel Levinas’ work to social and political movements. Investigating his ethics of responsibility and his critique of the Western liberal imagination, Tahmasebi-Birgani advances the moral, political, and philosophical debates on the radical implications of Levinas’ work. Emmanuel Levinas and the Politics of Non-Violence is the first book to closely consider the affinity between Levinas’ ethical vision and Mohammad Gandhi’s radical yet non-violent political struggle.
Tribute to Professor Kathryn Morgan

Alissa Trotz Inducted

Kathryn Pauly Morgan began her life as the first-born, only daughter to a Catholic family; physical disabilities and the loss of dreams of university education were shat-tered by the Great Depression. Four unly smart brothers followed with and be-ing their house- hold a conspiciously androcentric one. Resisting this proved to be excellent training for the dominant cultures of the Academy. When it was clear that the adolescent Kathryn would never be chosen—partially be- cause of her “defect”—the Brontës down (the braveness of the world) in Wisconsin she dreamed of other futures (and little did she know that this lived experience would gesso-nate into a life-long interest in the politics of embodiment). When she was told, on Career Day, that “only men should aspire to become doctors” and by the Burpee Seed Company, that “no women can become plant geneticists”, she decided to give this ship her intense reluctance to speak in public.

Once safely situated in a progressive, social justice-oriented Catholic women’s college, Alverno College, she labored as a math specialist until she encountered a course in Meta-physics. Suckled by the chal-lenge of the text and the reading of which this proved to be intellectual freefall—and has never landed. Much to her po-nents’ dismay, she abandoned mathematics and chose to pursue philosophy. Kathryn earned her MA and PhD (“with Distinction”) from Johns Hopkins University, and a MEd in Educational Foundations from the University of Alberta. While in graduate school in the States, she was active in anti-war Vietnam War politics and radicalized by the politics of em-bed-erative in her personal life. She also met other graduate students such as Iris Marion Young, Sandra Harding, and Wendy Sarvis and young feminist philosophers such as Allison Jaggar and Marilyn Frey. With them, she collabo-rated in the collective feminist critique of Capitalism, of Hegel, of bio-ethics, of the androcentric pol-itics of the American Philosophical Association, and the enagic pol-itics of finding a legitimate voice in the field through the founding of the Society for Women in Philosophy and the establishment of the now-re-pected journal, Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy. Then Kathryn Morgan was appointed as Chair of the Women’s Studies Program at Toronto, and after three years, she was asked, that chairing a meeting of the Gender Issues Committee at the School of Graduate Studies. The committee’s mandate was to advance the feminist issues leading to gender equity in graduate education at the University of Toronto. The University advised Women’s Studies faculty, in the interest of personal safety, to be careful about how they publicize any media about the Mas- thee or to allow their photos to be visible in other ways. Kathryn was the single mother of a 3 year-old toddler at the time. Thinking about the safety and future of the little one that she is intertwined with, she felt in the position to fight for the right to esse-ntial, and even joyous struggle to create what he described as “a free society of valid persons.” As I have recently learned from my colleague and friend in the English department, Christian Campbell, Carter’s per- spective is the subjective. This business, then, of creating a free community of valid persons is an un-enlightened project—and a guide to know why and how we educate. It is a project for all students. It is an invitation to be a such as “humble.” As I have recently learned from my colleague and friend in the English department, Christian Campbell, Carter’s per- spective is the subjective. This business, then, of creating a free community of valid persons is an un-enlightened project—and a guide to know why and how we educate. It is a project for all students. 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Having escaped post-revolutionary war torn Iran in the mid-1980s, when the new regime was cracking down on opposition groups, Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani lived as a United Nations refugee in Karachi, Pakistan for two years before being sent to Toronto in 1988 as an emigrant where she has resided ever since. “I haven’t seen very much of Canada, though I have seen the rest of the world,” she says with a laugh. “But I am always intensely cognizant, both emotionally and intellectually, of my debt of gratitude to my new home, Canada. This is my home,” asserts Tahmasebi-Birgani.

Unsurprisingly her past life in Iran forms the foundation for the “constellation of questions” she currently explores as part of her gender and feminist theory research in the Department of Historical Studies at U of T Mississauga.

“Tahmasebi-Birgani’s natural research progression has led to gender roles because feminist practices often adopt a nonviolent strategy when working towards social change, and, by way of example, of one of her recently published articles explores how the feminine body informs a non-violent intersubjective identity. Her research is very theoretical, covering an impressive span of interdisciplinary topics, and incorporating critical theories of women’s movements in the Middle East and feminist theories as they relate to continental and transnational contexts, which increasingly factors in with access to online information raising awareness about worldwide issues.

Part of Tahmasebi-Birgani’s work focuses on online activism, which also organically evolved within her research with its apparent nonviolent approach. Tahmasebi-Birgani has since discovered however that there are several types of violence, such as visual or textual, associated with digital activism. “One image can be circulated, which will cause violence and in jury to so many people,” she says. “You don’t have to physically hurt someone; violence can be enacted in other ways.”

Zohar Weiman-Kelman

Zohar Weiman-Kelman holds the Anne Tanenbaum postdoctoral fellowship at the Centre for Jewish Studies. She was born and raised in West Jerusalem, where she received her B.A. in Hebrew and Yiddish literature. She completed her PhD in comparative literature with a designated emphasis in women and gender studies at UC Berkeley in 2012. Her dissertation, “Inherited Futures of Jewish Women Writers,” offers a rethinking of literary lineage through Jewish women’s writing by bringing Jewish historiography into conversation with queer theory. Her research has led her to learn Yiddish, German and Polish, and she is deeply engaged in queer and feminist communities in Berlin, Warsaw and Israel/Palestine. She is currently studying Palestinian Arabic and working within this political and cultural engagement.

Despite the difficulties of surviving her first and worst winter, her first semester at UofT was a great success; journeying across realms of “passing,” she examined constructions of race and gender through the lens of Jewish literature with a wonderful group of fourth year students. Zohar is excited to offer a course on women, poetry and queer! This course next semester, and a course on feminist multilingualism next spring.

Besides teaching, Zohar is preparing the proposal for her first book, tentatively titled “What to Expect When You’re Not Expecting: Jewish Women’s Poetry 1880-1990.” This in-progress manuscript brings together queer theory’s questioning of futurity with the challenge posed by Yiddish to reproductive heteronormative cultural transmission, to tell a new story of the Jewish past. This story is told primarily through Jewish women’s poetry, starting with American poet Emma Lazarus in the 1880s and ending with lesbian bilingual Yiddish-English poet Irena Klepfisz in the 1990s, using Yiddish women’s writing in the interwar period as its core. It draws on archival materials, Jewish historiography, literary analysis and lived experience.

In search of alternative histories and alternative models of history, this book creates multiple genealogies which resist dominant narratives of Jewish cultural progress; instead of moving from Yiddish to English it begins with 19th century American writing and finds a post war Yiddish writer looking back to this English speaking past; instead of movement from Yiddish to Hebrew, as Zionist narratives would have it, it offers parallel narratives of linguistic possibility and mutability; instead of identifying radical lesbian politics as a break with the past, it finds lines of continuity from the 1970s back to the 1920s; instead of rejecting that lesbian moment, it queerly embraces it, reaching back to it by way of the 1920s. Turning backwards across history, to and through Jewish women’s writing, the book aims to broaden the discourse of political possibilities presently available.

Zohar’s next project, already underway, aims to generate a Yiddish archive of sexuality, situated at the confluence between sexual expression and the development of the Yiddish language. It focuses on the projects of the two major Yiddish linguists, Max Weinreich and NomiShe Schacter, who both dedicated special attention to the question of Jewish sexuality in Yiddish. Framed between Weinreich’s East European based inauguration of the language of Yiddish sexuality and the American archive of Schacter’s unpublished Yiddish lexicon of love, Zohar’s research will consider a transnational and cross temporal Yiddish archive of sexuality, one that could supply contemporary Yiddish speakers with a new vocabulary for the Yiddish past. 
Nikoli Adrian Attai
Nikoli Adrian Attai is an international PhD student in Women and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto. Born in Trinidad and Tobago, he read for a Master of Philosophy in Cultural Studies at the University of the West Indies (UWI). St. Augustine campus, and completed a research project that investigated the ways that local and international inequalities shaped individuals’ sense of community within their circles. Nikoli has been involved in numerous development projects around the Caribbean region including The Mona High School Computer Literacy Initiative, which he implemented in 2007, in partial fulfillment of a Bachelor of Arts in Media and Communication, at the Caribbean Institute for Media and Communication (CIMAC) at the University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica. In 2008, as an intern with the Caribbean Child Support Initiative (CCSI) in Barbados, he also worked closely with childcare support administrators from such sites as St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, and Dominica. Between 2009 and 2010, Nikoli was also part of a team conducting ethnographic research with the Institute of Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) St. Augustine Trinidad, on a project titled “Building Responsive Policy: Gender, Sexual Culture and Implications for HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean”. For this project he interacted with a wide cross-section of persons, as part of an effort to begin to build sexual cultures of nationals in Trinidad’s capital city, Port-of-Spain. Nikoli has been involved in gender and sexuality research since 2009, and has been inspired by his role as ethnographer for the ‘sexual cultures project’. He has since focused on the ways that local transgender groups generate a sense of community against a backdrop of regional homophobic and transphobic legislation and moral panic.

While working closely with the IGDS, and under the supervision of Dr. Gabrielle Hearin and Professor Rhoda Reddock, Nikoli was the recipient of awards from the UWI Research and Publication Fund and the Canada-CARICOM Emerging Leaders Scholarship. He participated two student exchanges at York University and the University of Toronto, and was supervised by Professors Linda Peake and Rinaldo Walcott, as he continued to think about issues of transgender identity and community in Trinidad and Tobago.

Currently, Nikoli is pursuing a PhD dissertation with a similar aim of interrogating the formation of transgender identity and community in Trinidad and Tobago, with an emphasis on how transgender bodies and communities transgress normative constructions of gender and sexuality, while also engaging with the politics and lived realities of sexual cultures of nationals in Trinidad’s capital city, Port-of-Spain. For this project he is supervised by Professors Jacqui Alexander and Rinaldo Walcott, and is a Teaching Assistant for Dr. Trimbble.

Nicole Charles
Nicole is a PhD candidate in the Women & Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto. She holds an MA in Women’s Studies and Feminist Research from the University of Western Ontario, and obtained an undergraduate degree with Distinction from McGill University in International Development Studies and Social Work. Her interdisciplinary interests include transnational feminism, medical anthropology, health and biotechnology, and claims to citizenship. Nicole was awarded the 2015 National Graduate Essay Prize for the Women’s and Gender Studies Institute (FGS) PhD Fellowship. Her thesis research on “Gender, Ethnicity, and Access to Power: Negotiating Transnational Feminist Resistance” is being supervised by Dr. Marieme Lo and Dr. M. Jacqui Alexander and is a Teaching Assistant for Dr. Trimbble.

Zoë Gross
Zoë Gross, originally from Breslau, Manitoba, is a first-year PhD student in Women & Gender Studies at the University of Toronto. She holds a SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGG Doctoral Scholarship, which is worth approximately $100,000 over three years. Zoë’s research area of interest involves transnational constructions of race, whiteness, and sexuality within international development work, particularly between Canada and East Africa. Zoë’s proposed dissertation research, “Performing Canadian ‘Goodness’ in East Africa: Racial and Sexual Morality in International Development,” will seek to interrogate the construction of this hegemonic Canadian national narrative, particularly under conditions of racial and sexual disjuncture in the Canadian and its performance through acts of doing ‘good’ in the form of development and foreign aid. Zoë has lived and worked in Kenya and Tanzania on three separate occasions as a volunteer with local community organizations and as a student researcher.

Zoë completed her MA in Women’s & Gender Studies at Carleton University in June 2013 and her thesis, titled “Constructing Whiteness and Locating Power in East African Development Work”, was considered to be work of distinction and received the University Medal for Outstanding Graduate Work. Zoë’s thesis examined the ways in which white women working in international development in Kenya and Tanzania are understood to be desirable to black East African men because of their perceived access to financial, social status, and an idealized Western lifestyle. The thesis, in conceptualizing white women in international development as privileged ‘Others’ with access – those who, through difference and yet invested in power – invert traditional academic understandings of racialization and examines ‘difference’ in this context as not essentially based in marginalization and subordination. With financial assistance from SSHRC CGG Michael Smith Foreign Supplement, Zoë conducted four months of fieldwork in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, interviewing nonblack Kenyan and Tanzania men and white Western women. Zoë partnered with Twaawaa Communications in Nairobi and worked under the mentorship of Dr. Kimani Ngju. Dr. Rose Shoyo acted as Zoë’s supervisor and liaison to the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam.

At this time Zoë is turning her attention to a narrative that surfaced during her thesis research and the ways that she will frame her dissertation research. While working closely with Zoë, the understanding emerged that, compared to people of other Western countries, Canadians are considered to be more ‘western’ and the narratives of this identity are, in turn, more important to Zoes’s narrative of Canada as a nation of do-gooders seemingly displaced a continuing legacy of colonial relations both within and outside its national borders. A public meeting in 1974 showed that 70% of Canadians believed that Canada’s actions as a global leader in foreign aid and development should be based on values of altruism (Shavers 2012). Nearly forty years later, studies conducted by Make Poverty History (2010) and the Donner Foundation (2012) indicate that two seemingly opposing national perspectives are taking shape: those who want Canada to expand its role as international leaders in development and humanitarian aid and those pushing for more militarized international interventions. Embedded in both of these paradigms is the problematic construction of Canada as a nation responsible for constructing its national borders. Despite a changing political and cultural landscape, the rhetoric of Canadian values and actions as inherently moral continue to be maintained by both perspectives.

This project aims to examine the ways in which, before they depart Canada, development workers’ understandings of Africa is constructed by perceptions of racial and sexual danger and risk. Produced within this narrative is a white (hetero)normative subject, considered to be representative of Canada’s values, positioned against a homogenized (hyper)sexualized black population. The white subject, individualized as a sacrificing agent of good, is displaced by others. Zoë is a PhD student in Women’s & Gender Studies at the University of Toronto. Her research interests include transnational constructions of race, whiteness, and sexuality with a focus on the performance of development and foreign aid. Zoë has lived and worked in Kenya and Tanzania on three separate occasions as a volunteer with local community organizations and as a student researcher.

Sonny Dhoot
Sonny was nominated and chosen for the Canadian Sociology Association Outstanding Graduating Sociology Student Award at the MA level. In the spring of 2013, the CSA-SCS launched an initiative to help fund the Congress of the Canadian Sociology Departments in recognizing their top graduating Honours, MA, and PhD students by considering the strength of the student’s research. For this year’s 2014 awards, departments selected one top student in each academic level who has graduated or will be graduating between January 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014. Students will be acknowledged on the CAS-SCS website beginning in September 2014.
The 2013–14 year has been an exceptionally strong one for the undergraduate program. Visit hills on our required courses have grown, and we have increased enrollment in those courses, and offered them in the summer term as well to accommodate this growing demand. WGS160, our introductory course, continues to be an exceptional draw for students, exposing them to the range of questions the field of Women and Gender Studies takes up, while emphasizing our approach to reading, writing and research that we hope students will find both challenging and rewarding. Our implicit question has been, if you care about these issues, what kind of rigor are you willing to engage with? Rather than leave students to sink or swim, we have been privileged to participate in the Writing Instruction for Teaching Assistants (WIT) program in Arts and Science, developing teaching tools and curricular interventions that recognize students’ diverse learning orientations and prior educational experiences before coming to The University of Toronto.

Our student union activities capably reflect this kind of shared commitment to our students’ diverse needs. While faculty host the fall event on “applying and going to graduate school” the WGSSU contacted alumni and hosted the spring “life after the WGS degree” event. This kind of shared facilitation ensures students produce the kind of programming they would like to see, while getting the information they need to achieve their post-graduate goals. WGSU programming, described in better detail here in this newsletter, speaks to their enthusiasm, professionalism, autonomy and work. Students have also offered to shape undergraduate course offerings by sharing the topics they would like to see better featured in our curriculum, and participation in the UCDF program has enabled much of this expansion. With faculty from the Factor-Interwashed School of Social Work and OISE, we have added to our curriculum courses on men and masculinity, gender and revolution in the Middle East, community organizing in North America, and gendered labour around the world. These learning opportunities connect students with professional school faculty and pedagogies they have found inspiring. The honors thesis course, WGS469, under the direction of Professor Trimble, also evidenced students’ growing intellectual autonomy. The projects this year were incredibly strong, contributing to our understanding of gender and popular culture, politics, inequality, and health.

Finally, coordination of the undergraduate program is being passed to Professor Dina Georgis for the 2014–15 academic year. The popularity of her undergraduate courses, the diverse range of subjects she takes up in her research and in the arts, and her substantive connection to community-based organizations ensure that she will breathe new life into undergraduate courses and programming in this new capacity.
Tribute to José Esteban Muñoz 1966–2013

By Sonny Ochoa

The loss of José Esteban Muñoz has been felt by each and every one of us. In him we had a comrade, an invaluable ally and critic of our social worlds. His death has been equally felt across disciplines, and while not only in Queer Studies, it stands true that queer studies is somewhat ‘empty’ with his passing. In José’s earliest monograph Disidentifications, José offered a strategy or perhaps more accurately a project of queerisms that sought to think queerly about resistance. He wrote, “Disidentification is a mode of performance whereby a toxic identity is remediated and infiltrated by subjects who have been hailed by such identity categories but have not been able to own such a label. He taught us to take hold of and reshape the categories, identities and identities that had been used against us so that we may rewrite the script of our lives for ourselves. Disidentification offered us a future to think beyond a suffocating power/antipower binary, to think beyond a paradigm of ‘good and bad’. Through disidentification, José considered how we might inhabit this world queerly, but ten years later, in Cruising Utopia, he reminded us “queerness is not yet here. Thus, we must always be future oriented in our desires and designs.” He left us to work out how we feel that pull of the not-yet here queerness, and while it feels difficult to carry on his articulations without him, there is a sense of hopefulness despite the sadness in knowing that we must continue towards the queer futurity José sketched even if he can no longer trek with us.

The University of Toronto has one of the most distinguished programs in Women and Gender Studies in Canada. It was launched in 1971, when Jill Ker Conway and Natalie Zemon Davis offered “The History of Women.” Today, the Institute’s robust programs encompass undergraduate, master and PhD levels, and enroll over 1,400 students. This tremendous growth reflects both the burgeoning student demand and the deep societal need for the quality of feminist analysis fostered here that is increasingly essential to understand and redress inequitable social differentiation defined in terms of gender, race, sexuality, ability, class, nationality and citizenship.

We are proud of the growth, caliber and reputation of our programs, and the contributions our faculty, students and alumni are making to build inclusive, equitable and just societies. We are asking the members of our extended community to make WGSIs a philanthropic priority this year.

Building Inclusive, Equitable and Just Societies: ADVANCING WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES

Thank you for your support!

For more information about giving to WGSIs, including creating a new named scholarship, please contact:
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February 2023-2
Graduate study at WGSI offers funded PhD and MA degrees, as well as a collaborative program with other disciplines.

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Our PhD and MA degrees in Women and Gender studies focus on the preoccupations of transnational and postcolonial feminist studies. We encourage study in interdisciplinary theories and methods that grapple with how gender, sexuality, and race are informed, lived and reinvented amidst entwined yet discrepant narratives, geographies, and histories. Our graduate faculty is over 40 strong, with research that engages with the tangled questions of citizenship, governance, nation and diaspora, embodiment, queer politics, technoscience, global capitalism, activism, violence, cultural production, aesthetics, environmental politics and sites in Canada, Africa, the Caribbean, East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, South East Asia, and the United States.

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**Due Date: December 9, 2014**

The Women & Gender Studies Institute is located in the heart of downtown Toronto.

For more information contact us: [grad.womensstudies@utoronto.ca](mailto:grad.womensstudies@utoronto.ca)