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# Message from the Director

By Bonnie McElhinny

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

By Bonnie McElhinny



**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 WGS 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 WGS 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 writing 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 Award (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."

# 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 Solana**  
PhD Collaborative Program in Women and Gender Studies.

**City of Toronto Graduate Women's Studies Scholarship (\$3000)**  
**Brianna Hersey**  
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 \$10,000)**  
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 (\$5000)**  
**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**  
**Alisha Celest Stranges**  
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 Shahrzad Mojab 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 and Equity 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.

# 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.





# COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE EVENTS

## Our Collective Strength Report

By Audrey Huntley & Carol-Lynne D'Arcangelis

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. Over 70 people attended the network with student 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](http://www.migrantmothersproject.com) to find out more about the project.



## Remembering Not to Forget

By Shahrzad Mojab, Bethany Osborne & Shirin Haghighi

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 creation 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 Simalchik & Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani

A Cyberbully Forum will be held at UTM this fall. Cyberbullying has become one of the most prevailing forms of violence against women, young girls and LGBTQ youth and students. Yet efforts to address this form of violence and media coverage of incidents have revealed conceptual problems. Typical framing of cyberbullying almost exclusively focuses on the victimization of individuals and has the potential to spread a culture of fear, especially among younger victims. Discussions within the victimization framework can re-victimize survivors. Further, representations of cyberbullying that are couched in legalistic discourse often hide its gendered nature. A forum will be held where the discussion around cyberbullying is situated within its larger context of intersectional relationships. The intention is to connect this form of violence to other forms of violence against women, girls, the LGBTQ community and racialized communities and expand the context for the future conversation. Working in collaboration with the Peel Committee against Woman Abuse, CampUS (a UTM campus-community coalition working to implement safe spaces for female students) and the Women & Gender Studies Student Society, a forum designed to illustrate the scope of the problem and devise recommendations and strategies to move forward will be presented. The workshop will open with a panel composed of community, the UTM Equity & Diversity office, student and academic presenters who will outline the issue and theorize cyberbullying. It will continue with small groups that will report back to a plenary session.

## Experience the Experience

By Joan Simalchik

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 WGS'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 campus Women's and Gender Studies Student Association (WGSSA) and Women's Centre will

organize and host an eclectic panel conversation 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 prep-

aration 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 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.

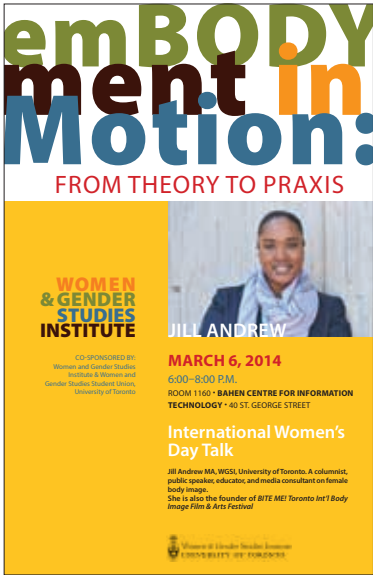


# International Women’s Day Lecture emBODYment in Motion: from Theory to Praxis: By Jill Andrew

By June Larkin

Jill Andrew is an award-winning journalist who enjoys livening things up as a public speaker, educator, and media consultant on female body image, equity and leadership. A graduate of the inaugural cohort of WGSI’s Master’s program, Jill gave the International Women’s Day lecture in the introductory course in women and gender studies 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 obsession with 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 activist projects such as *BITE ME!* Toronto International Body Image Film & Arts Festival, her *Fat in the City plus-fashion ‘fatshion’ blog*, and her work with *Curvy Catwalk*, Toronto’s first Fat Fashion Show fundraiser. Jill’s talk was an inspiring example of feminist theory in motion.



## WGS Research Seminar

By Sarah Trimble

The Women and Gender Studies Research Seminar is an annual speaker series in which invited guests and, at times, WGS faculty share some of their most recent work. These monthly events are an important part of the intellectual life of the Institute; they inspire, challenge, provoke, illuminate, and foster ongoing conversations across areas and disciplines. They also provide graduate students, in particular, with unique opportunities to think with, pose questions to, and informally chat with scholars whose work has been influential in their lives.

Co-organized by Profs. Rittich and Trimble, the 2013-2014 Research Seminar took us from the “Politics of Hope” to “Gaga Feminisms” and beyond. We began in September with a pair of talks from the late—and dearly missed—José Muñoz and Andrea Smith who, in honour of the launch of the Institute’s PhD program, shared their thoughts “On the Politics of Hope” with wit, insight, and generosity. In October, Jodi Byrd had us considering “The Cultural Politics of Colonial Agnosia” with a little help from Dr. Who. Then, in November, Aziza Ahmed talked us through the relationships between sexual identity, law, and epidemiology in the context of the global HIV epidemic. After the winter break—and in spite of the polar vortex—Alondra Nelson got us started again in January with a discussion of race and genealogy, an event co-sponsored with the Technoscience Salon (<http://technosalon.wordpress.com/>). Jack Halberstam then joined us in February to share his ideas about feminism, “gaga,” and the art of writing a manifesto. Finally, Sara Ahmed’s March visit included both a graduate seminar on the figure of the feminist killjoy and a public lecture on “Willfulness as a Feminist History,” the topic of her forthcoming book.

Appropriately, graduate students get the last word in the Research Seminar every year, as PhD students from the Collaborative Program in Women and Gender Studies share pieces of their works in progress. This

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.wgsi.utoronto.ca/research/wgs-research-seminar>.

### 2013-2014 WGS Research Seminar Line-up:

September 13, 2013: José Muñoz (Tisch School of the Arts, NYU) and Andrea Smith (University of California, Riverside), “On the Politics of Hope”

October 23, 2013: Jodi Byrd (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), “Silence Will Fall: On the Cultural Politics of Colonial Agnosia”

November 20, 2013: Aziza Ahmed (Northeastern University), “‘Rugged Vaginas’ and ‘Vulnerable Rectums’: The Sexual Identity, Epidemiology, and Law of the Global HIV Epidemic”

January 9, 2014: Alondra Nelson (Columbia University), “Genealogical Aspirations”

February 5, 2014: Jack Halberstam (University of Southern California), “Gaga Feminisms”

March 17, 2014: Sara Ahmed (Goldsmiths, University of London), “Breaking Things: Willfulness as a Feminist History”



# Violence No More: Ending the disappearances and murders of Indigenous women in Canada

By Audrey Huntley & Carol Lynne D’Arcangelis

Saturday, May 24, 2014 marked the fourth in a series of public gatherings and closed workshops to address the disturbing levels of violence directed against Indigenous women across Turtle Island. (An unexpected RCMP report of May 2014 puts the number of murdered or missing Indigenous women from the past 30 years at 1,186).

Since 2011, Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, activists and community members have come together to strategize as a community around ways to end violence against Indigenous women that centre decolonization and are critical of law and order approaches; to encourage the involvement of the university community in ending the violence; and to educate the broader public. Some of you may have attended last year’s Violence No More event with Cherokee scholar-activist Andrea Smith.

Organizers of this year’s event “No More Silence (NMS) and Sistering” invited the public to the Native Canadian Centre. The public event centred 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, Maryanne Pearce, Monica Forrester and Tanya Kappo.

NMS, along with community partners Families of Sisters in Spirit (FSIS) and the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN), provided updates on progress to date on a database initiative begun last year to document violent deaths of Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirited people. Those present 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 closed 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); the Initiative Fund (NCIF) and Principal’s Initiative Fund (PFI), New College, University of Toronto; and the Groundswell Fund.



## WGS460Y Honours Seminar

By Tyler Carson

On Tuesday April 1st, students of the Honours Research class presented papers to peers, faculty, and friends of the Women & Gender Studies Institute. The talks were a preview of their research projects that they had been tirelessly working 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 and specific research topic. The course went beyond the typical undergraduate research experience by guiding students step-by-step through the process of “doing” research: they were asked to consider different research methodologies, the possibility (or necessity) of an ethics review, encouraged to think about grant writing, and most importantly, taught how to craft an excellent research proposal. By the end of the year students were to produce a 20-25 page paper on their chosen topic.

In total nine students presented at the symposium. We organized the papers into three semi-coherent thematic clusters. The first panel titled “Consuming, desiring, self-fashioning...” included papers by Alexandra Pinosa on beauty gurus’ complicated sense of agency given their reliance on corporate sponsorship; Ida Soliemanpour-Zahir who examined how escorting lifestyles are being consumed in the era of neoliberalism and post-feminism; and Shanijitha Rajasingam who wrote on the connection between pressures of passing and black market cosmetic surgeries.

The second panel titled “The kids are(n’t) alright: On adolescent sexualities” featured papers from Ashley Merrell on Miley Cyrus’ use of racialized others in her performances; Lucia Gambetti-Bracco who focused on “humanness” adolescent sexuality in supernatural fiction; and Afra Michael Boissevain examined non-medicalized forms of self-starvation and female madness in the works of Francesca Lia Block.



The final panel titled “Political and affective inheritances” included papers by Byul Seol on women’s accent in South Korea focusing on the first female president, Geun-hye Park; Abinaya Balasubramaniam explored post-memory and trauma in Sri Lanka; and Tyler Carson wrote about the connection between queer politics and affect at pride festivals.

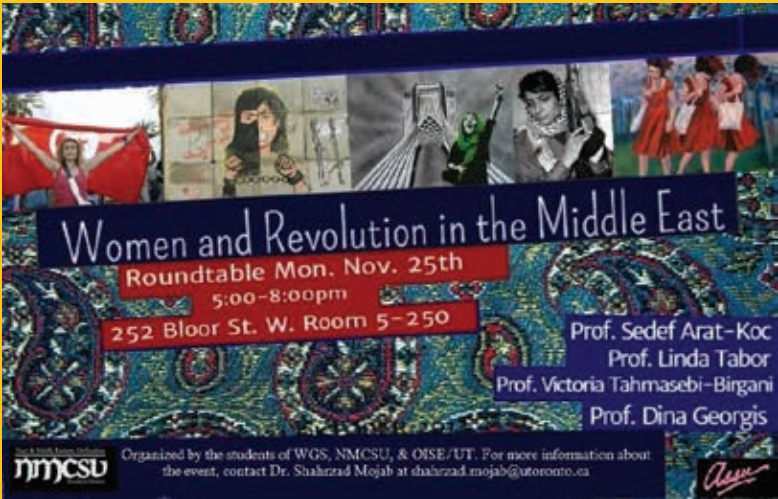
Coming to the course with unique and often disparate research projects there was the potential for the research process to be a quite lonely and individualistic pursuit. However, Dr. Trimble made it her mission to foster an environment that would demonstrate to the class how research is a collective, 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.



# Women and Revolution in the Middle East Roundtable

By Dina Georgis

The Women and Revolution in the Middle East Roundtable took place on November 25, 2013. This event was organized by students in Professor Mojab’s course, Women and Revolution in the Middle East. It was a successful event with more than 70 people and, most importantly, students in the course were thrilled about the presentations and discussions as well as the range of ideas presented by speakers from WGS, **Dina Georgis**, **Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani**, and **Linda Tabar** as well as **Professor Sedef Arat-Koc**, from Ryerson University.



## milestones: faculty accomplishments

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

By Bonnie McElhinny

The RCI Wall of Achievement honours former staff and students of our School who have gone on to earn distinction in various fields of endeavour. By awarding a place onto the Wall of Achievement, RCI proclaims that the achievements of these former Raiders will be an inspiration through the years to other students who will follow in their footsteps - guided by knowledge, and realizing excellence.

The wall, just outside of the Grant Gym, boasts a collection of photos of past Raiders that have achieved success in a variety of fields. Armatage’s credentials in both art and feminism evidently show why she was chosen as an inductee.

After graduating from U of T herself, she was a member of the group that taught the first course in Women’s Studies. This action, with the help of Armatage led to the eventual creation of the Women and Gender Studies program.

Being a professor of Women’s Studies at the University of Toronto is only half of what she does. Armatage also teaches Cinema Studies and has ample experience in the film side of her life.

She has been the producer or director of more than five films and shorts, including *Artist On Fire: The Work Of Joyce Wieland* (1987), a documentary that won Best Canadian Feature Film—Special Jury Citation at the Toronto International Film Festival.

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 Silent Cinema*, the editor of *Equity and How To Get It*, co-editor of *Gendering The Nation: Canadian Women’s Cinema*, along with numerous articles for many different journals.

Her dedication to her work has earned her numerous awards and grants. Armatage has received three SSHRCC research grants, a Canada Council Senior Artists Grant, two Toronto Women in Film and Television Award of Merit honours, and a Clyde Gilmour Award.

Armatage’s most recent distinction is the Wall of Achievement. In an email, Armatage said, I would be honoured to be included with the illustrious other inductees...[but] I’m worried that my accomplishments, such as they are, are largely academic—author of this & that, film programmer of this & that, a few awards, a few films made.”

Armatage is an inspiration to all Raiders past and present. Her immense number of achievements proves that hard work does lead to success both inside and outside of school.

### June Larkin

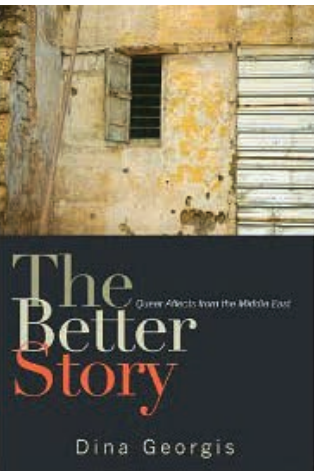
New College created a June Larkin award for course release for pedagogical development in recognition of many stellar years of pedagogical innovation and service, like this one.

### Mary Nyquist

Mary was the recipient of The Irene Samuels Award for best collection of essays on early modern literature for *Milton and Questions of History: Essays by Past and Present Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), which Mary co-edited with Feisal Mohamad. Her new project, *Barbarism, Animality, and Rights* was awarded a SSHRC Insight Grant in this year’s competition.

### Dina Georgis’ Book Launch

#### *The Better Story: Queer Affects From the Middle East*



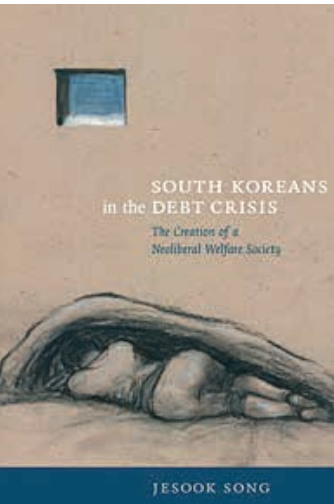
On Sunday, March 30, 2014, Another Story Bookshop proudly presented the book launch for *The Better Story: Queer Affects From the Middle East* By Dina Georgis featuring a panel discussion with **Dina Georgis**, **Trish Salah**, **Nayrouz Abu Hatoum** and **Gamal Abdel-Shehid**. With a focus on aesthetic texts that narrate stories about or 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.

This book suggests that narrative not only gives us insight into social constructs, but also leads us into understanding the enigmatic processes by which we become and give our “selves” over to collective memories, histories, and identities. Stories link us to queer “forgotten” spaces that official history has discarded. *The Better Story* argues that feminist, queer, and postcolonial studies have not helped us think about lives that do not neatly fit into the valorized logic of resistance and emancipation. The event was co-sponsored by SUNY

Press, Women & Gender Studies Institute, University of Toronto and The Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, University of Toronto.

Dina was the recipient of a SSHRC Connections Grant for developing the Canadian Network of Psychoanalysis and Culture and the launch of the first meeting of the Network the first year. She co-created “Gay Premises, Radical Voices in the Archives” and produced a video in “Queer Corners”.

### South Koreans in the Debt Crisis by Jesook Song

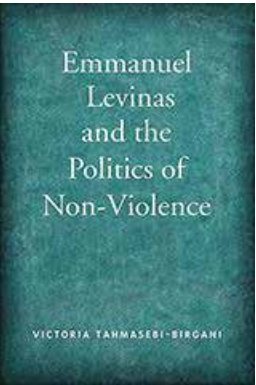


WGS is proud of and congratulates **Jesook Song** on her publication *South Koreans in the Debt Crisis* which is a detailed examination of the logic underlying the neoliberal welfare state that South Korea created in response to the devastating Asian Debt Crisis (1997–2001). **Jesook Song** argues that 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 neoliberal ideals of employability, flexibility, and self-sufficiency. Song demonstrates that the government was not alone in drawing distinctions between the “deserv-

ing” and the “undeserving” poor. Progressive intellectuals, activists, and organizations also participated in the neoliberal reform project. Song traces the circulation of neoliberal concepts throughout South Korean society, among government officials, the media, intellectuals, NGO members, and educated underemployed people working in public works programs. She analyzes the embrace of partnerships between NGOs and the government, the frequent invocation of a pervasive decline in family values, 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 insecurity, instability, and inequality through assistance programs. She focuses specifically on efforts to help two populations deemed worthy of state subsidies: the “IMF homeless,” people temporarily homeless but considered employable, and the “new intellectuals,” young adults who had become professionally redundant during the crisis but had the high-tech skills necessary to lead a transformed post-crisis South Korea.

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



WGS 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 and religious 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 Mohandas Gandhi’s radical yet non-violent political struggle.

Situating Levinas’ insights within a transnational, transcontinental, and global framework, Tahmasebi-Birgani highlights Levinas’ continued relevance in an age in which violence is so often resorted to in the name of “justice” and “freedom.”

Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani is an Assistant Professor of Women & Gender Studies at the University of Toronto and in the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Toronto Mississauga.



# Tribute to Professor Kathryn Morgan

By Mary Nyquist

**Kathryn Pauly Morgan** began her life as the first-born, only daughter to a Catholic family physician/surgeon and a feisty homemaker whose dreams of university education were shattered by the Great Depression. Four unruly smart brothers followed and with their bonding, the household was a conspicuously 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 because of her ‘thunder thighs’—“The Bratwurst Queen” in her home town (the ‘bratwurst capital of the world’) in Wisconsin she dreamed of other futures (and little did she know that this lived experience would germinate into a life-long interest in the politics and theorizing 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 try teaching (despite 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 Metaphysics. Seduced by the challenges of theory, she went into intellectual freefall—and has never landed. Much to her parents’ 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 sexist politics operative in her personal life. She also met other graduate students such as **Iris Marion Young**, **Sandra Harding**, and **Vicky Spelman**, and young feminist philosophers such as **Allison Jaggar** and **Marilyn Frye**. With them, she collaborated in the collective feminist critique of Philosophy as a discipline, the androcentric politics of the American Philosophical Association, and the exciting politics of finding a legitimate voice in the field through the founding of the Society for Women in Philosophy and the establishment of the now-respected journal, *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*. Then Kathryn moved to Canada, taking up a part-time spousal appointment at the University of Alberta, until 1973 (when she returned to the States, to teach at Boston University).

In 1974, Kathryn returned to Canada. She supported herself on unpredictable stipendiary teaching assignments in Philosophy until 1982, when she was appointed to a part-time Assistant Professorship in the new Women’s Studies Programme at the University of Toronto. Having been ridiculed, critiqued, and cautioned by philosophical colleagues for her research interests on sexuality, gender, cosmetic surgery, reproductive technologies, and romantic love, she hoped to find a more congenial intellectual and political home in Women Studies. It was a home worth fighting for as the Academy sought to render it small, silent, passive, and weak.

She spent the remainder of her long career in Women Studies fighting for the legitimacy of women’s studies as a discipline and field. In her classrooms, she combined sharp analytical skills with an uproarious sense of humour and received enthusiastic acclaim for many years. In 1980, her radical pedagogical practices and curriculum innovation led to Kathryn’s successful nomination by Women’s Studies students, faculty, and administrators for the prestigious Ontario Council of University Faculty Associations Award for Excellence in Teaching. She received this award while she was a part-time stipendiary instructor struggling with economic



and professional uncertainty. (This was the first of many high profile awards that have been won by Women’s Studies Faculty, who have drawn national attention to the quality of teaching excellence at the Institute.)

In 1983, with the support of her 3 colleagues, Kathryn wrote the first proposal for a doctoral program in Women’s Studies. She argued that without graduate students and a doctoral program, Women’s Studies would never have full legitimacy at the University of Toronto. She co-chaired the committee to establish the Collaborative Program in Women Studies, having been advised by a (then) sympathetic Graduate Dean, that demonstrating graduate interest was the first step towards a doctoral program. Alongside that effort, Kathryn and her colleagues fought for other institutional markers of ‘legitimacy’: the conversion of Senior Lectureships (for **Mary Nyquist** and **Kay Armatage**) into tenure-stream professorships, the

establishment of The Canadian Women’s Studies Association as a ‘Learned’ Society, the founding of The Canadian Women’s Studies Journal, the establishment of Women’s Studies as a legitimate area of scholarship for the main granting agencies such as The Social Science and Humanities Research Council, the demand for a Provostial Review of Women’s Studies resulting in the formation of the Institute and, under the powerful Institute leadership of **Margrit Eichler**, the power to hire and promote majority appointments.

During this process, administrative winds blew cold, and moves to establish a doctoral program were often locked in permafrost like rigidity. But Kathryn and her colleagues never lost sight of the vision of the Institute including a community of graduate students. The struggle, begun in 1983, came to an end in 2013, when the first class of doctoral students was admitted.

A moment of pause: the Montreal Massacre occurred on December 6, 1989. Kathryn who very publicly identified as a Women’s Studies feminist scholar was, that day, chairing a meeting of the Gender Issues Committee at the School of

Graduate Studies. The Committee’s mandate was to develop recommendations 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 become silent, to be invisible—to not speak to the media about the Massacre 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 that little boy, she was tempted to flee from the fight to legitimize Women’s Studies, to return to the relatively safety and anonymity of the Dept. of Philosophy. She chose to stay. Until now.

As one colleague remarked, “Everyone will miss Kathryn’s distinctive voice, her passionate commitment to Women’s Studies and feminist critique, and her ability to turn even the most boring discussion of bureaucratic niceties into a festive occasion. Kathryn’s often acerbic wit enlivened the frequently intense debates that occurred at committee meetings. Her calm presence and quiet authority steered us through many rocky crises. The Institute, the University, and the discipline are more equitable today owing to her generous personal, political, and theoretical contributions.”

Kathryn notes that her career in Women’s Studies and Philosophy has been an exciting and rewarding adventure, and although she was never crowned the “Bratwurst Queen”, the title “Professor” proved to be more than adequate compensation! (Now about those thighs...)

# Alissa Trotz Inducted into the Presidential Teaching Academy

By Bonnie McElhinny

We are delighted to share the news of Alissa’s formal induction into the Presidential Teaching Academy last December, a ceremony linked to the Presidential Teaching Award she won last year. Alissa’s comments showed the ways the history of the University of Toronto and the Caribbean are, were, and should be, deeply entwined—citing the words of the Caribbean/Guyanese poet **Martin Carter** on the subjunctive, and its meaning for thinking through the present and the future, the work of U of T’s chemistry professor **Dr. Stewart McClean** in supporting students from the Caribbean in the past, including Alissa’s father, and the benevolence of the late Jamaican teacher and linguist **Ms. Maud Fuller**, who donated her collection of Caribbean books to New College, some of which have made their way into the Thomas Fisher Rare Books Collection. Congratulations to Alissa—and for her words suggesting what the university would look like, if only all of these themes were more widely sounded....

## Notes from Professor Alissa Trotz

Those of you who know me well will have heard me say before that one of the most significant phrases I have come across that describes what I think we are in the business of doing as teachers comes from the Caribbean poet Martin Carter, who in his commemoration address to the University of Guyana’s graduating class of 1974, urged students to see their education, in fact education in general, as part of the difficult but necessary and even joyous struggle to create what he described as “a free community of valid persons.” As I have recently learned from my colleague and friend in the English department, **Christian Campbell**, Carter’s preferred tense is the subjunctive. This business, then, of creating a free community of valid persons is an unfinished project—and a possible guide to why and how we teach. It requires humility, perhaps the hardest lesson for any teacher to learn. And it is a contingent exercise that comes with no guarantees—making communities of learners of us all.

I want to thank my colleagues (Staff and Faculty) in WGSi, OISE, Caribbean Studies and New College for all that I have learned from you over the years. **Bonnie McElhinny’s** support as WGSi Director has been truly remarkable and instructive. **Pam Gravestock** has been phenomenal in the work that she does at the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, and is always unflappable in the face of so many demands. I would like to thank all those who wrote letters of nomination for this award. And most of all, I have been blessed to have shared classroom space with such incredible, talented, dedicated and wonderful students over my thirteen years here. They make it all so worthwhile.

I don’t usually speak of my family in public (you will notice they are not here today, I couldn’t bribe my daughters enough to get them here!), so let me thank and extend my understanding of relations in this way. It still amazes me that I spent some years teaching the introductory WGSi class in the Lash Miller Chemistry Building that close to 50 years earlier, my own father first entered as a nervous graduate student in Organic Chemistry, setting foot in a new country on scholarship from Guyana. I would like to believe that my own approach to teaching has been enriched by the ex-

ample set by his own supervisor back in the day, **Professor Stewart McLean**, a Scotsman, who trained several other students from the Caribbean, ended up working intensively with the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the University of Guyana, and collaborated on Caribbean chemistry materials with colleagues from the region at the University of the West Indies, all while still retaining a deep commitment to U of T (in fact you can still find him in his accustomed spot at the Faculty Club each week having his accustomed meal!). What we learn about actively seeking bridges to our connected selves from the quiet example of teachers like Stewart is, I think, I hope, clear.

And one of the very first persons my parents met when they arrived in Toronto in 1967 was a Jamaican woman, teacher herself, **Maud Fuller**, who was fiercely loyal to both the University of the West Indies and the University of Toronto. She contributed her extensive book collection to the New College library, and the lessons she has bequeathed are equally important, for she represents the wider communities that make possible what we do, and from whom we continue to learn so much. Maud passed away on January 17th of this year (the words on her headstone in Jamaica say “the classroom was her stage”), just one hospital floor above where and a few days after Roxana Ng, another amazing teacher and colleague here at OISE, also transitioned. I wanted to acknowledge that because there have been a number of losses these past days, that we have felt keenly, and that should and can only deepen and inspire our commitment to the unfinished work that continues. Today, December 9th, would have been Maud Fuller’s 80th birthday, and I dedicate this award to the memory of her unfailing example.

Alissa also gave four invited lectures; two of which were keynotes/plenaries at international conferences. At *‘Inescapable Entanglements: Notes on Caribbean Feminist Engagement,’* Alissa was invited to give the Feature Address for the conference, *‘Continuities, Challenges and Transformations in Caribbean Gender Relations,’* to mark the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies. The Conference was held at the St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago, in November 2013. The text was carried in the December issue of *UWI Today*, the bulletin of the University of the West Indies, and the full paper will be published in the Conference Proceedings Collection edited by Professor Patricia Mohammed.

As well, at *‘Far from Home but Close at Heart’: Preliminary Considerations on Regional Integration, Deterritorialization and the Caribbean Diaspora,’* Alissa was invited to give a Plenary Address, at *‘Rethinking Regionalism: Beyond the CARICOM Integration Project,’* a conference on regional integration organized by the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies, University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica, in October 2013. The talk comes out of work Alissa has been doing with economic geographer **Beverley Mullings** (Queen’s University) on diasporic governmentality and the Caribbean, and will be published in a collection edited by Professor Patsy Lewis.



# Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani

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.

“I always wanted to address the questions that I had, based on my own experiences being in the revolution,” says Tahmasebi-Birgani. “I witnessed, firsthand, how others were defaced of their humanity in order to be then easily and efficiently annihilated or murdered. In response, I have been fascinated, intellectually, with what happens before violence occurs. There are ways of thinking about, envisioning or even hearing the ‘other’ that lends itself to violence, exclusion and discrimination. Thinking about these processes has informed my intellectual journey and has driven much of my academic work.”

Tahmasebi-Birgani earned an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Women’s Studies from U of T before pursuing graduate degrees in Social and Political Thought from York University. While working on her PhD thesis, which explored “the intersection of ethics and politics,” she

focused primarily on the work of French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, known as the ‘philosopher of the Other.’

She has also been strongly influenced by continental philosopher Luce Irigaray, who combines psychoanalysis, philosophy and feminist critical theory to assess the Western male, logocentric discourse and explore how political identity is formed. 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, 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 injury to so many people,” she says. “You don’t have to physically hurt someone; violence can be enacted in other ways.”



# Linda Tabar

Linda Tabar holds a PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London. She completed her doctorate with the support of a Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship. She joins the Women & Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto for two year appointment as a SSHRC Post-Doctoral Fellow. Linda Tabar’s research interests are part of an anti-colonial feminist tradition. She is an interdisciplinary scholar whose work focuses on the Middle East.

Dr. Tabar is currently working on a book manuscript entitled “Palestine, Memory and Dispossession: Native Encounters with Modernity and Imaginaries of Liberation.” The manuscript is situated at the intersections of studies on settler colonialism, memory and national liberation struggles. The study explores the varied and distinctly

transgressive nature of the anti-colonial national imagination. Using an interdisciplinary approach, it combines extensive oral history interviews and ethnographic observations of everyday realms where memories of loss circulate, with a survey of nationalist representations, poetics and vernaculars formed around memories of dispossession. The study reconceptualises memories of the indescribable violence of colonial conquest as an interruptive excess that reveals broken fragments of time, home/land, and spaces of absence, which prevent a sense of closure and force us to begin to look outside of the linear teleology of modernity. It traces some of the trajectories that have tried to rework dominant European political categories, reimagining political life and liberal notions of humanism out of the ruins of the colonial past.



# 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, “So the Kids Won’t Understand: 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 as part of 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) history 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 Mordkhe Schaechter, 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 Schaechter’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.



# Karyn Recollet

## Gender and Indigeneity

The Women & Gender Studies Institute (WGSJ) welcomes Karyn Recollet who will be the Assistant Professor with a focus on Gender and Indigeneity commencing July 1, 2014.

She will work on Indigenous issues in a range of settings and geographical locations and will set this work within a comparative and relational framework, with an understanding of Aboriginal/Indigenous issues in Canada.





## Nikoli Adrian Attai

Nikoli Adrian Attai is an international PhD student in Women and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto. A national of 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 transgender persons established a 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 fulfilment of a Bachelor of Arts in Media and Communication, at the Caribbean Institute for Media and Communication (CARIMAC) at UWI Mona, 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 islands such as St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St Lucia, and Grenada.

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 better understand 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 persons establish a sense of community against a backdrop of regional homophobic and transphobic legislation and morals.

While working closely with the IGDS, and under the supervision of Dr. Gabrielle Hosein 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 pursued 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 positing new ways of being and existing in the present and future. For this project he is supervised by Professors Jacqui Alexander and Rinaldo Walcott, and is a Teaching Assistant for Dr. Trimble.



## 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 Studies of Medicine. Her interdisciplinary areas of interest include transnational feminism, medical anthropology, health and biotechnologies, and claims to citizenship. Nicole was awarded the 2013 National

Graduate Essay Prize from the Women’s and Gender Studies et Recherches Féministes, a 2013-2014 Ontario Graduate Scholarship, and is the recent recipient of a SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Doctoral Scholarship to support her PhD research which investigates issues of vaccination hesitancy, postcolonial biopolitics and citizenship in the British Caribbean through a transnational feminist lens. Aside from academia, Nicole is passionate about cooking, loves sunsets and a good Zumba workout.

## Brianna Hersey

Brianna has returned to WGSi for her PhD after completing her MA with us in 2010. She has presented her research and lectured extensively across Canada and the United States, and in the UK, and was recently awarded the City of Toronto Women’s Studies Award for her potential to benefit the Toronto community through her research in psychic survivability after periods of prolonged, chronic and critical illness. Through an engagement with psychoanalytic theorizations of mourning, her doctoral research challenges contemporary socio-political discourses in medical culture—specifically, transnational discursive constructions of ‘the suffering body’—that exceed the limits of what can be recognized and represented in public health imaginaries of the West. Drawing on her network of (and positionality in) Toronto’s chronically ill patient population, Brianna intends to engage this community in collaborative narrative research, and photographic exploration, around the assimilation of loss in illness, and the



desire for survival in the suffering subject. In addition to her studies, Brianna is an active contributor to U of T’s campus life. She serves as the President and Treasurer of the Women & Gender Studies Course Union, sits on the Graduate Student Union, and represents approximately 8,000 Divisions 1 & 2 graduate students on the UTGSU Elections Committee. Before her MA and PhD studies at WGSi, Brianna received a First Class Honours BA from McGill University in Women’s Studies and Political Science, where she was inducted into the Scarlet Key Society and received an award for Outstanding Young Alumni. Her work is generously supervised by Dr. Dina Georgis, Dr. Michelle Murphy, and Dr. Eric Cazdyn.

## Zoë Gross

Zoë Gross, originally from Beresford, Manitoba, is a first-year PhD student in Women & Gender Studies at the University of Toronto. She holds a SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Doctoral Scholarship, which is worth approximately \$100,000 over three years. Zoë’s research areas of interests include 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 within understanding of sexual and racial danger and morality, 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 Africa: Desirability and Status of ‘Others’ with Access,” was awarded the University Medal for Outstanding Graduate Work. Zoë’s thesis examined the ways in which white Western 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 finances, social status, and an idealized Western lifestyle. The thesis, in conceptualizing white Western women in international development as privileged ‘Others’ with access – those marked by difference and yet invested in power – inverts traditional academic understandings of racialization and examines ‘difference’ in this context as not essentially based in marginalization and subordination. With financial assistance from SSHRC CGS Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement, Zoë conducted four months of fieldwork in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, interviewing nineteen black Kenyan and Tanzanian men and white Western women. Zoë partnered with Twaweza Communications in Nairobi and worked under the mentorship of Dr. Kimani Njogu. Dr. Rose Shayo acted as 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 MA fieldwork, which she hopes will frame her dissertation research. While conducting interviews the understanding emerged that, compared to people of other Western countries, Canadians are considered to be moral, virtuous and “good wazungu” (white people in Swahili). The narrative of Canada as a nation of do-gooders seemingly displaces a continuing legacy of colonial relations both within and outside its national borders. A public opinion poll conducted 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 others pushing for more militarized international interventions. Embedded in both of these paradigms is the problematic construction of Canada as a nation responsible for enacting ‘good’ outside 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 institutions and individuals.

This project aims to examine the ways in which, before they depart Canada, development workers’ understanding 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, placed against a homogenized (hyper)sexualized black population. The white subject, individualized as a sacrificing agent of good, is constituted by the perception that Africans are in need of Western intervention. However, many development workers’ identities and sense of purpose are complicated and profoundly challenged when their imagined experiences as the white ‘do-gooder’ are not fulfilled in the lived reality of working overseas.

The key questions this work engages with include: (1) How is the metanarrative of Canada’s image as a leader of global goodness maintained through public rhetoric, particularly through institutions responsible for development and aid? (2) How does this understanding shape the personal narratives of identity, perception and consciousness of Canadians working in development in East Africa? (3) How does the construction of goodness begin to unravel at the micro level through a challenging of normative moral understandings of race and sexuality while overseas?

Zoë is under the supervisorial direction of Dr. Marieme Lo and Dr. M. Jacqui Alexander and is a Teaching Assistant for Dr. S. Trimble.

Zoë graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Women & Gender Studies (Honours) and Conflict Resolution Studies (four-year) from the University of Winnipeg in June 2011. Zoë was awarded a Gold Medal in WGS and a Silver Medal for Honours graduates. Zoë also holds a BA from Brandon University, completed in June 2007, with a three-year degree in English and a minor in Political Science.

Zoë has presented her research at the Women’s and Gender Studies et Recherches Féministes at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences (June 2013) and twice at the Joint Chair in Women’s & Gender Studies Student Conference on Gender-Culture-Society at Carleton University and the University of Ottawa (March 2012, April 2013).



## Sonny Dhoot



**Sonny was nominated and chosen for the Canadian Sociological Association Outstanding Graduating Sociology Student Award at the MA level.**

**In the spring of 2013, the CSA-SCS launched an initiative to assist Canadian University and College Sociology Departments in recognizing their top graduating Honours, MA, and PhD students by con-**

**sidering 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 15, 2014.**

**Students will be acknowledged on the CAS-SCS website beginning in September 2014.**



# GRADUATE REPORT

By Alissa Trotz

This has been a very eventful year for Graduate studies at WGS. We have had three Graduate Co-ordinators—**Jesook Song** for the Fall Term and **Bonnie McElhinny** and **Alissa Trotz** who shared the responsibilities for the Winter Term. Thanks to the Administrative Staff, **Marian Reed**, **Jo Saliba** and **Meghan Sbrocchi**, for incredible support, endless reserves of patience and providing much needed institutional memory! Respect as well to colleagues for incredible work and support in a variety of ways: **Kerry Rittich** and **S. Trimble** for a superb year of Research Seminars that culminated with a packed auditorium for the final talk by **Sara Ahmed**, “Breaking Things, Broken Relationships: On Willfulness as a Feminist History”; **Bonnie McElhinny**, **Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani** and **Alissa Trotz** for Graduate Admissions and Awards. We are also thrilled to welcome **Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani** into the WGS Graduate faculty fold. Cross-appointed with the Department of Historical Studies on the Mississauga Campus, Victoria added an exciting new course to our graduate syllabus this year, Digital Networks and Transnational Activism. Special thanks go to M. **Jacqui Alexander**, **Jesook Song** and **Lisa Yoneyama** for crucial work on the Graduate Policy Committee, and for providing leadership and structure to faculty discussions as we developed and revised guidelines for our MA, PhD and Graduate Collaborative programs.

This year WGS was absolutely thrilled to begin our doctoral program, which focuses on transnational feminist studies, promising a generative intellectual space for engaging such questions as capitalist patriarchy, race, sexuality, ability, class and indigeneity, as well as other urgent matters of our time, including rights, citizenship, diaspora and activism. We welcomed an incredible inaugural group of doctoral students: **Nikoli Attai**, **Nicole Charles**, **Sonny Dhoot**, **Zoë Gross** and **Brianna Hersey**. Both Nicole and Zoë hold a SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Doctoral Scholarship. Sonny was nominated and chosen for the Canadian Sociological Association Outstanding Graduating Sociology Student Award at the MA level for his work at Queen’s University. Thanks to the students for being patient with us (especially as you worked with no less than three Graduate Co-ordinators this term!), for participating in important discussions to revise the Comprehensive and Proposal requirements for doctoral candidacy and for modelling participatory and respectful engagement in the process, and for being so incredibly generous and

supportive of the MA students (especially with the MRP Workshop in the Winter term). You have already made a world of difference!!

The PhD program was formally launched in September 2013 at New College with a public lecture, reception and rocking dance party hosted by CUE POC at the Gladstone Hotel. We were humbled and delighted to have **José Esteban Muñoz** and **Andrea Smith** join us as guest speakers for our opening, helping us to think critically and compassionately about what a politics of hope that recognizes injustice might look like, and what work hope might do in our own times. It was with shock, a profound sense of loss and deep gratitude that he shared some precious time with us, to learn of José’s passing less than two months later. We remember his enthusiasm for what we are building here, and his carefully optimistic challenge to us to think about the institutionalization of social movements and not shrug at what that means.

Our MA program has just completed its seventh year. In Fall 2013, we welcomed seven students, and also welcomed back our MA graduating class for the September Research Symposium which has now become an annual event showcasing the wonderful MA research projects of the previous academic year. We currently have 75 students enrolled in the Collaborative Program in Women and Gender Studies. In April completing doctoral candidate **Meg Gibson** presented her work on “LGBTQ parents of children with disabilities: An ongoing project.”

Overall, it has been a very busy year indeed. Over the summer our MA students are completing their Major Research Papers and the doctoral candidates are completing their Comprehensive lists and preparing for their exams in the coming academic year. Thanks for all of your energy, your participation, your suggestions on how we could do things better and your interest in creating supportive communities here. And we are very excited to welcome a new group of eight MA and six PhD students for 2014-2015. Two of our incoming MA students will be receiving major awards—**Tyler Carson** is a SSHRC awardee and **Colleen Young** is an OGS recipient. Incoming Doctoral student **Nora Tataryan** has been awarded the Connaught International Scholarship for Doctoral students. Our congratulations to them, and to all of our incoming graduate students; we look forward to another dynamic year with all of you, with **Kerry Rittich** at the helm as the Graduate Co-ordinator in the Fall of 2014!!

# UNDERGRADUATE REPORT

By Judith Taylor

The 2013–14 year has been an exceptionally strong one for the undergraduate program. Wait lists on our required courses have grown, and we have increased enrollment in those courses, and offered them in the summer terms 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 them 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-

graduation goals. WGSSU programming, described in better detail here in this newsletter, speaks to their enthusiasm, professionalism, autonomy and vision. Students have also helped 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-Interwash 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 honours thesis course, WGS460, 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.

# WGSSU REPORT

By Maryam Khalid

The Women & Gender Studies Student Union (WGSSU) is a proud part of the University of Toronto community. For many students their undergraduate career at this school means transitioning into a big campus and an even bigger city; a daunting task for the best of us. Throughout the year WGSSU holds various events to help students find a comfortable place and community on campus. Our now annual collaboration with the first year Women & Gender Studies

course in hosting the International Women’s Day celebration has allowed us to successfully reach out to new students and get them excited about school life and extracurricular activities. Our winter social, Expressions, which featured spoken word artists, and various arts and crafts was also successful in bringing out students and connecting them to the University of Toronto community. The new WGSSU team for the 2014-2015 school year hopes to

continue to grow and develop the list of events and services offered to students. They have set clear goals to communicate more effectively with the students they represent and the Women & Gender Studies Institute faculty and staff. This coming year, WGSSU will be holding office hours for students wishing to discuss any problems whether it be academic or of a more personal nature. Preparations are also underway for many exciting events next year!

Highlights include a conference to be held in the spring and a student symposium for undergraduate students. Each year the union strives to achieve bigger and better things and next year will be no exception. We at WGSSU are looking forward to an exciting new school year in September and look forward to seeing you out at one of our events!



# Tribute to José Esteban Muñoz 1966–2013

By Sonny Dhoot

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 queerness that sought to think queerly about resistance. He wrote, "Disidentification is a mode of performance whereby a toxic iden-

tity is remade 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, labels and identities that had been used against us so that we may rewrite the scripts 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 bound 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.



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

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 WGSi a philanthropic priority this year. Every gift at every level can make a difference, and helps us to continue to produce leading scholarship, provide in-depth training for our students and advance community-based feminist work.

### Thank you for your support!

For more information about giving to WGSi, including creating a new named scholarship, please contact:  
**Heather McLean, Senior Development Officer  
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# GRADUATE STUDY

## WOMEN & GENDER STUDIES INSTITUTE



UNIVERSITY  
of TORONTO

Graduate study at WGSi offers funded PhD and MA degrees, as well as a collaborative program with other disciplines.

### PhD and MA

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.

### Funding for Everyone

All international and domestic graduate students admitted to a WGSi graduate degree are guaranteed funding support.

### Collaborative Program

Our Collaborative Program provides advanced training in feminist studies alongside a degree in a home discipline.

Our collaborative degrees are currently available through over 30 departments across seven faculties (Arts & Science, Information, Law, Medicine, Nursing, Education, and Social Work).

### Application and Contact

Application information available at [www.wgsi.utoronto.ca/graduate](http://www.wgsi.utoronto.ca/graduate)  
**Due Date: December 9, 2014**

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

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