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**WOMEN'S STUDIES
SUNY FREDONIA**

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E M P O W E R

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FROM THE DIRECTOR:

Greetings everyone,

This was quite an exciting semester for the Women's Studies program. The Women Take Aim film series, Take Back the Night, Women, Rock & Soul, and the numerous other events we co-sponsored contributed to campus life and culture. No need to say, a lot of joint labor and dedication goes into these events, so a heartfelt thanks to FSU professors Raymond Belliotti, Jan McVicker, Christina Jarvis, Ingrid Johnston-Robledo, Suthakaran, Women's Student Association, Sarah Clayton, filmmaker Liz Canner, and FSU graduate Benjamin Crossley-Marra (class of 2005) for making our events thought-provoking, educational, and enjoyable.

There can be no doubt that Women's Studies is committed to supporting, sharing, and disseminating women's films. That is one of the reasons why we co-sponsored the screening of *The Play* by Pelin Esmer, which was a tour de force, really. In addition, WSU screened *Real Women Have Curves* and the *Iron Jawed Angels* this Fall (you can read all about the *Iron Jawed Angels* in this issue). All these films have engaged us in important discussions on sexuality, biologism, essentialism, corporeality, and ideology and we will continue to bring women filmmakers and their work to campus in the future.

One of the most important events every Fall semester is Take Back the Night. Organizers and participants are to be applauded for their efforts to raise awareness about sexual violence and needless to say, for their unwavering protest against all kinds of violence and oppression in the world. Please take a moment to think about these facts: Every year, about 17.7 million women are subjects of sexual assault. UNIFEM statistics reveal that for women aged 15 to 44, violence is a major cause of death and disability. If you are interested in finding out more about this and other similar topics follow Empower's section on activist websites.

Finally, a reminder that Empower will be fully electronic next semester. This is partly due to our efforts to join the "Go Green" movement and partly due to our wish to expand in virtual space. Please give us your feedback at Sarah.Clayton@fredonia.edu and also make sure you send us an active email address for the upcoming electronic Empower issues.

Remember, Vagina Monologues, Women's History Month events, Gender Conference are just a few reasons to look forward to the next issues of Empower. We hope to see you in our Spring 2011 events and wish you a restful and peaceful semester break.

Until next year,
Iclal Vanwesenbeeck

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

WOMEN, ROCK AND SOUL 2-3

WOMEN TAKE AIM 4

TALK BY LAVANAM 5

LIBRARY RESOURCES 6

WOMEN IN POLITICS 7

WOMEN'S ACTIVISM WEB PAGES 8

15th Annual Women, Rock & Soul



Steven Bleu performing (Merik Goma & Sarah Clayton)
Photograph taken by Mellissa Mallaber

Women, Rock and Soul was a smash hit! We raised \$305 for the Jeanette McVicker Scholarship for Women's Studies. Thanks to all of the talented, wonderful performers who sang, played, and read poetry! The atmosphere was comfortable and relaxed as people lounged and chatted on couches and chairs, while listening to the great line-up of performers. Alumni, family, children, and friends came from near and far to attend the event. Performers included Steven Bleu (Merik Goma and Sarah Clayton), Julie Clayton, Chris Bell, Margaret Kenney, Morgan Townsend & Lauren Piche, Jared Lincourt, Morgan Townsend, & Ingo, Caitlin Lusk, Shawna Racino, Meredith Faulkner, & Andy White.

HERstory on the Jeanette McVicker Women’s Studies Scholarship

Dr. Jeanette McVicker began teaching in Fredonia in 1988. She, along with a group of Fredonia faculty, was pivotal in reinstating the defunct Women’s Studies Program in 1996 when students demanded courses in Women’s Studies. She served as director of the program from 1996 to 2000.

“When Women, Rock and Soul started out in 1996 (the year the minor went into effect and my first year as director) the fundraiser was to support Women's History Month and Women's Studies programming because there was no money at all and WSU was still just acknowledged, so they only had a couple hundred dollars,” she said.

“We got the idea for a scholarship together when Women’s Studies and WSU finally started to get their feet financially, so to speak-- and decided that Women, Rock and Soul would be the best avenue to raise funds for and awareness of our desire for a scholarship.”



Previous Scholarship Recipients Include:

- Jennie Jade Albert & Allison Murray (2010)
- Alyssa Brooke-Gay (2009)
- Rebecca Grady (2008)
- Sarah T. Schwab (2007)
- Katie Diebold (2006)



WSU members chillin’ at *Wishberry Underground*.

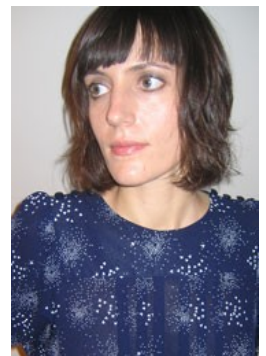
Check the next issue of the newsletter for information about scholarship applications.

Liz Canner dir. Of *Orgasm Inc.*

Women Take Aim

Laura Poitras dir. Of *The Oath*

This year's film series had a great turn-out! Thanks to everyone who attended the screenings and post-viewing discussions. Thanks especially to Dr. Jeanette McVicker, Dr. Raymond Belliotti, Dr. Ingrid Johnston-Robledo, Dr. Christina Jarvis, and Dr. Veerasamy Suthakaran for leading the discussions. *Examined Life* invited viewers to take a philosophical walk. *Orgasm Inc.* brought into focus the pharmaceutical industry's attempt to "cure" female sexual dysfunction, with risky treatments. *Manufactured Landscapes* captured the beauty and horror of human waste. *The Oath* exposed layers of one man's psyche based on his association with Osama Bin Laden. Dr. Iclal Vanwesenbeeck, director of Women's Studies, provided background on the directors of each of the films. Liz Canner, director of *Orgasm Inc.* was able to participate in a question and answer session via a Skype conference call. Not only did she provide insight on the making of the myth of female sexual dysfunction, but she also shared her experiences and challenges as a film maker.

Jennifer Baichwal dir. Of
Manufactured LandscapesAstra Taylor dir. Of *Unexamined Life*

***Historical Perspective of Gandhi's Vision of the future.
The role of Asia. Who can save the future?
A talk by Mr. Lavanam.***

By Sarah Clayton

Recently Fredonia was graced with a visit by Lavanam, a disciple of Mohandas Gandhi. His visit was co-sponsored by the Women's Studies Program. He was given the name Lavanam because it means salt, and he was born in 1930, the year of the great salt march for Indian liberation from British tax and rule. Through working with Gandhi at one of his Ashram's, Lavanam learned as a youth the importance of hard work, honesty, and the value of one's own labor.

His most memorable lesson came one day, when he was routinely picking and washing tomatoes and other vegetables. Gandhi would pass by on his way to shower every day. One day he stopped and asked Lavanam if he was eating the fruit. Lavanam replied that he was not, to which Gandhi responded, why not? Lavanam said that his duty was to prepare the vegetables to be ready for lunch, and if he ate them, they would not be available for everyone else. Gandhi posed the question that if he stopped receiving the fruits of his labor at lunch, would he then take some? Sheepishly Lavanam replied that he would. This lesson proved very significant to Lavanam, because it demonstrated that labor must be valued and rewarded, otherwise the workers will become desperate and dishonest. Through this point he postured the rest of his talk, concerning the issues of capitalism and free trade.

He talked about meeting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. twice during his lifetime, once in India and once in the United States. He considered the United States to have benefitted from the conjoined philosophies of Gandhi and King, and said that he also considered all Americans to be descendants of Dr. King. The irony here is that Dr. King spoke out against three evils: militarism, materialism, and racism, yet the United States is still embroiled in a corrupt capitalist system that feeds wars and creates poverty. Crime and prison populations are on the rise, most likely because people are not valued over profit.

As we march into the holiday season, it would be wise to realize the impact of materialism upon our planet. As Lavanam pointed out, deforestation is on the rise. The exploitation of humans and nature is taking a toll on our planet's ecosystems. Lavanam sits as the chairman on many boards dedicated to Gandhi's philosophy. He also serves as the director of the Atheist Center, boasting the motto "Let us become post-religious and post-national universal humans." This way we can work toward "rehumanization" through truth, equality, and non-violence with mutual respect and obligation for one another. Consider fair trade merchandise and local businesses when shopping. Get creative and consider increasing "Gross National Happiness, like the country of Bhutan has, over Gross National Product.



Women's Studies Resources At Reed Library



A quick search on Reed Library's website turns up 374 books on Women's Studies, 403 related to Gender Studies, 430 on Identity Studies, and on the subject of Women alone, nearly 8,987 books are at your fingertips. On the updated website, results are sorted by genre, from books to CDs to DVDs to VHS. Reed also gives you access to hundreds of databases, many related to Women's and Gender Studies. In addition, Interlibrary Loan gives you access to thousands more books and movies that are available at other libraries and are delivered within days.

The staff at Reed are exceptionally helpful as well. Talk to a librarian about what you are interesting in researching and they can direct you to relevant resources. Just visit the reference desk in the middle of the library across from the circulation desk!

Women in Politics

By Sarah Clayton

At a recent general body meeting held by WSU, we screened the film *Iron Jawed Angels* directed by Katja von Garnier. The movie chronicles the struggle suffragists endured to add the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, ensuring that “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex.” The 19th Amendment was ratified on August 18, 1920, nearly 72 years after the Seneca Falls Convention for Women’s Rights was held. At this convention the Declaration of Sentiments was read and signed, demanding the rights and liberties granted to men be extended to all citizens. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the primary author of the Declaration of Sentiments. She and Susan B. Anthony formed the backbone of the suffragist movement, however neither lived to see the day when the 19th Amendment was passed. Anthony had petitioned for a national amendment and voted once, illegally however and was arrested for the act. She was living in Rochester at the time, where her house still stands as a museum and educational center.

Another suffragist, Alice Paul along with dozens of other women, also served prison sentences in the name of suffrage. Paul (pictured top right) picked up the torch where NAWSAW (the National American Women Suffragist Association) was weary to tread: Washington. Along with Lucy Burns, Doris Stevens, Inez Milholland, and Ida B. Wells, Paul marched on the streets and picketed the White House at the beginning of World War I. The National Women’s Party (NWP) was formed to petition for the Amendment, and called out President Woodrow Wilson for his hypocritical stance on fighting for democracy abroad, while denying it to women at home. While picketing, the women were arrested and sent to Occoquan Workhouse where Paul and several others went on a hunger strike and ended up being force-fed. Doris Stevens wrote a book about the experience called *Jailed for Freedom*. Considering the “Mama grizzlies” campaign in the recent election, it is important to recognize the long history of feminism and grassroots activism in politics that has resulted in the rights that we have today. Feminism may still be on the fringe, but it is no longer just a liberal or even radical platform. However, women are still a minority in the House of Representatives.





Women's Studies

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Women's Activism Web Pages: (Random Picks)

<http://www.9to5.org> -"Change the Workplace, Change the World" The National Association of

Working Women has been championing working women's issues since 1973.

www.wageproject.org -Women Are Getting Even is a group dedicated to the elimination of the wage gap.

www.catwinternational.org -The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, an NGO dedicated to combating sexual exploitation and the first NGO to focus on human trafficking, especially of women and girls.

www.iknowpolitics.org - The International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, providing forums for exchanging knowledge and taking action.

www.sigi.org -Website for The Sisterhood is Global Institute, an international NGO and consultant for the United Nations.