

## THE GENDER STUDIES PROJECT

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May 2005

### Note From the Director

April/May 2005

Our programming and outreach efforts focused on a variety of themes these past two months...

Women and Leadership...We hosted our second annual Riegsecker Lecture on March 15, 2005. Catherine Kroeger, a board member of Christians for Biblical Equality, spoke on women, leadership, and biblical equality. A summary of her talk is included in this newsletter. See also information about the CBE annual conference which will be held at Eastern University this summer. If you are a student and are interested in attending this conference, please contact our office as we have scholarships available for you!

Women in the arts...We co-hosted a display and speaker on artist's books, a primarily feminine medium, during March. Krystyna Wasserman, the Curator of Book Arts at the National Museum of Women in the Arts was our guest speaker (See more info about the NMWA in this newsletter). Thanks for Cherie Fieser and Kathy Hettinga for making this happen!

Sexuality and sexual issues...an alternate chapel on Bosnia and rape was organized by Brian Hamilton; an alternate chapel on homosexuality, organized by Marten Beels; the South Complex week of programming focused on topics such as singlehood, relationships, and homosexuality; our display at the Human Rights Fair focused on issues of sexuality from an international perspective. All were designed to raise awareness and educate individuals about these issues.

Work, faith, and family...we dedicated a week in April to these issues. In collaboration with the Women in Ministry Initiative, we hosted two alternate chapels focusing on "*Holy Boldness*," a book by Susie Stanley.

Honoring women/reconciling racial injustice...women were honored across campus in several venues including "Value Women Week" and the Senior Women's dinner. Racial reconciliation was also addressed as we sponsored "Team Messiah" in the "Race Against Racism" along with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Athletics Office.

Teaching and research...if you are a member of the Community of Educators, you received an email asking you to respond to a survey about your research and teaching related to gender issues. Please complete the survey so we can document the good works being done here on campus as well as identify future needs!!

Peace...

Debra Berke

Associate Professor of Family Science and Women's Studies  
Director, Messiah College's Gender Studies Project

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*Krystyna Wasserman*

*Artist's books presenter*

By Cherie Fieser

Krystyna mentioned that some of the pieces displayed were also in the NMWA collection and thought the exhibit was well done. She also appreciated the student-designed poster; I had additional copies made for her which Kathy passed along. In all, she thought it a "wonderful idea" to sponsor an artists' books event to celebrate women's history month.

Among the many artists' books she showed (as slides during her talk): *The World after September 11: A Reinforced Book*; *The Legacy of Scheherazade*; *Dinner with Mr. Dewey*; *Swiss Army Book*; *Carrots Anyone?*. When is a book a work of art? Krystyna explained it may be a handmade sculptural object, or an illustrated manuscript, or even an installation (like *The Library at Wadi ben Dagh*). Many book artists are deeply immersed in the debates surrounding dramatic events which have shaped our modern era (like *The World after September 11*). Literature, music, the natural world also may generate ideas for bookworks that pay homage to the past, provoke thought, and "sometimes simply enchant."

About 35 people attended--not bad considering the other events taking place concurrently. Randy and Rebekah Basinger were among the first to arrive at the reception and we were delighted at this show of support by our new Provost!

The dinner also went well, and Kathy did a good job of facilitating conversation among the diners. Krystyna was

so engaged and attentive, she ate rather less than she might have, but insisted she was satisfied--to the point of bypassing dessert. I did put together a hospitality basket, so she had plenty of options for late-night snacking!

Krystyna brought an assortment of catalogs from past NMWA Artists' Books exhibits and I'm having them catalogued for our collection so that they will be accessible to all.

Kathy and I met Krystyna at the museum a few weeks after the event, via an art dept. day trip. Krystyna guided us and many of Kathy's students through a special exhibit that she told us about during her visit: *M. L. Van Nice: The Library at Wadi ben Dagh*. The installation opened 3 days before we arrived!

Krystyna described *The Library* as an entire world unto itself--a private book collection of *Woman Doe*, who has since departed *Wadi ben Dagh*, an imaginary place. According to *Van Nice*, "[Doe] is *Woman* because she is nurturer--has given birth . . . to the library; she is *Doe* because historically women have . . . remained anonymous." *Van Nice* visually translates popular titles, allowing viewers to see selected books and the ideas they contain in a new light.

I was able to talk with Krystyna about development of *Murray Library's* collection, as well as storage and display issues. During our visit, Kathy also had opportunity to show Krystyna her *Lamb* books, which she hopes will find their way into the *NWMA* collection, as I do too!

*Questions, comments, suggestions? Please contact Andrea Parker or Heather Breining at ext. 7214, e-mail [Gender.Studies@messiah.edu](mailto:Gender.Studies@messiah.edu), or just stop by our office: Hoffman 315!*

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### *Value Women Week*

By Justin Watkins

### **Value Women Week** April 4-8th NEXT WEEK!!

God has created all of us to be valuable, but often society teaches and encourages us men to regard women differently. During this week, we men gather together to focus our hearts and minds on God's value of women. You are invited to join the rest of the South Complex men to work on seeing and loving women the way God intends.

#### **ALTERNATE CHAPELS** Just for South Complex Men

**Tuesday April 5th**  
**Parmer Cinema 7-8pm**

Mike Blount, a counselor at Messiah, will guide us towards a deeper understanding of the harmful effects of the images we allow in, conversations we have, and the thoughts we entertain. Valuing women begins in our minds, attitudes and actions.

**Thursday April 7th**  
**Frey 110 7-8pm**

A group of women will share with us how the same images, words and thoughts that damage men's view, can also damage women. We will focus on understanding and being sensitive to what affects women so we can learn how to value them through our thoughts, words and actions.

Value Women Week was a God-inspired idea that came to me this past fall semester. I have a passion to help men and the sexual issues that they face, and a heart to see women valued for their true worth, as God has created them.

The goal of the week was to initiate a conversation and awareness of the effects of media, thoughts, and words towards women.

The first chapel was led by Mike Blount, a counselor at Messiah, who focused on the harmful effects of the media on the male mind.

The images men allow in, thoughts men entertain, and conversations we hold, severely effects the attitude and treatment of women. Mike discussed many of the consequences and triggers for a group of men, engaging them in an informal, yet effective manner.

Thursday of that week, a panel of women including Kris Hansen-Kieffer, Meg Jones, Catherine Coates, and Akirah Wyatt, led a powerful chapel to convey the struggles and

effect of the same images, thoughts and words on women. The women were very open and candid about the harmful consequences of the media on body image and self-worth, as well as sharing testimony of how words and actions from men in their lives had made an impact on them. They also were positive and practical by answering questions as to how men can better value women.

This week had an impact on the men who listened to the chapel speakers, many of whom discussed the topics later on in the dorms. It brought an awareness about the thoughts, words and images that men allow in their lives, and the influence of those areas have on their treatment of women. The hope is to make the week more effective and engaging next year because it is a message that is very important for men today.

#### **Summary of Professor Deb Berke's "Holy Boldness" chapel:**

"The study of women's autobiographies provides us with valuable insight into the female experience. With this information, practitioners and researchers alike can better understand the spiritual lives of women raised during that historical period. These autobiographies illustrate who the authors were, how they lived, and under what kinds of circumstances they came to write in addition to the gender relations of the eras in which they lived. By writing autobiographies, women such as Fletcher and Rogers provided precedents by successfully challenging restrictive gender roles. The women answered to God and not to the people who sought to silence them. In their writings, they illustrate how they constructed selves that challenged society rather than merely reflecting their culture. In fact, in the book Julia Shellhamer offered herself as an example of a woman who successfully combined motherhood and preaching. "I felt that while a woman's place must be filled as wife, mother and housekeeper, yet if she is called of God, these duties do not excuse her from the work so near her heart and that if the time given by most women to idle chit-chat, fancy work and unnecessary things were properly used, a woman could find some time to work for the salvation of souls." This book is a must read by anyone interested in gender, work, faith, and ministry!

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*Catherine Kroeger*  
*Riegsecker lecture '05*

In a remote part of the San Gennaro Catacomb on the outskirts of Naples, there is a fresco of a remarkable woman.

She stands with hands up lifted. Above her head there is a cross, and behind her are books clearly marked "Ioannes", "Marcus", "Mattheus" and "Lukas". Of course that is not the usual order in which to-day we think of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; The order in which to-day we arrange the gospels had not been formalized but we can understand the importance of reading the scriptures to an early congregation. Even the book-marks are shown dangling down from the open volumes. These were books that were used in worship and in proclamation. The woman's picture was painted between 475 and 500 A.D. Pictures of such women, with their hands upraised are not uncommon in ancient catacomb paintings, and some scholars have insisted that they depict mother church teaching her children. In this particular case, such an interpretation is not possible because underneath are the words "Vitalia [rest] in peace." This is a real woman who was remembered for

her influence on the church. Below her image is the tomb where her body rested. The grave slot as well as the area above it had been plastered over, and the picture painted on the wet plaster that endures until this day. The entire composition is framed architecturally by an arched device that we call an arcosolium. An archaeologist who first showed me the painting remarked. "Clearly she was important to the church." What are we to make of a woman who faces out to the Christian community as she stands in front of the four gospels. Is she praying or blessing the community, or is she proclaiming the gospel message, drawing her authority from sacred scripture?

What does she teach us about the activities of women in the early church? Here is where we may see the importance of interdisciplinary studies when we seek to uncover the hidden history of women. After all, history has ordinarily been written by, for and about men; and we must work hard to recover the clues that may guide us to a better understanding. In this case, we may turn to a papal decree that sheds a most interesting light upon the mission of Vitalia. Pope Gelasius I, one of three African popes in the early church, issued an indignant letter to the bishops of Sicily and southern Italy, the very location where Vitalia's memorial is found. Gelasius reigned from 492-496 AD), precisely the period to which the fresco is dated. Gelasius launched a furious attack against the bishops because he had discovered "to his great irritation" he remarked, "that they were admitting women to the altar and permitting them to exercise functions proper only for men." The pope was clearly putting a stop to women in the priesthood in southern Italy and Naples. But his letter makes clear that the practice existed. The old slogan is "A prohibition is proof of a practice." In other words, we do not put up a sign "do not walk on the grass" unless someone actually is walking on the grass. In the same way, the papal prohibition proves that women were serving as priests, and here is Vitalia in the very same area and the very same time period. Although she was buried fifteen hundred years ago, she is still lifting up her voice, calling us to the same devotion of Christ and to his Word. Throughout the centuries and throughout the world countless women have raised their voices, and now it is time to listen. To-day as then women seek an empowerment based upon scripture, a conviction based on faith, powerful role models and a sense of mission. The Authorized Version renders Psalm 68:11 "The Lord gives the Word: the women that publish the tidings are a great host." The gender of those who bring the tidings is feminine and reveals the role of proclamation on the part of women. Most translators neglect to indicate this to us. At times of deepest significance the voices of women were essential. In point of fact, women at several points in the Bible are encouraged to raise their voices to proclaim God's purposes and work. For instance, the feminine imperative in Isaiah 40:9 indicates that the instruction is directed to a woman. The female herald who brings good tidings to Zion is told to lift up her voice in witness to God. Katherine Bushnell argued that the proper translation of Isaiah 40:9 was "O woman that bringest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O woman, that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice, be not afraid: say unto the cities of Judah, 'Behold

your God'. "How tragic that we have often silenced and stifled the prophetic voices of women when they are so integral to the gospel story. Women were the principal witnesses of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, of his crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Both the angels and the risen Lord himself commanded the women to go and bring the message to the male disciples. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, Peter cited the promise

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of the Holy Spirit that the daughters of God would prophesy. Thus we read of the prophesying daughters of Philip the evangelist, and the early church fathers tell us how these women prophets welcomed missionary travelers into their home and shared with them the stories of Jesus. We need to understand that at every period of history, there have been women who raised their voices. In times of crisis women sometimes raise

their voices best. It was an ignorant peasant girl who rallied the demoralized French when they lacked even the resolve to crown a king. Who does not know of the courage and determination of Joan of Arc, the patron saint of France? In the fourteenth century, during a time of enormous corruption in the church, God raised up Catherine of Siena to be a voice of the counter-reformation. She is one of the three women doctors of the church, an instrument in a wonderful revival, an advisor to popes and a correspondent with the nobility of Europe. Hers was the most influential voice in healing the rift within the church and returning the papacy to Rome. Thereafter the pope complained that he wished even one of his bishops had the spiritual conviction and power of Catherine. When she first felt God's nudge to enter her daring mission of revival and reconciliation, she cried to God "I cannot go. I am a woman. How shall it be done with me as Thou hast said? For my sex is an obstacle as Thou knowest, Lord . . . because it is contemptible in men's eyes. But the Lord answered, I pour out the favor of My Spirit on whom I will.

There is neither male nor female, plebian or noble. All are equal before Me. Go and do valiantly. Therefore, My daughter, it is My will that thou appear before the public." The shy girl who had spent most of her time in contemplation, concealed within the house of her parents became the valiant defender of the faith, the patron saint of Italy, undaunted by either ecclesiastical or secular forces. Hers was not the only woman's voice raised when the church was deepest in moral depravity. There was also Teresa of Avila, another doctor of the church, and a mover and shaker within the church. How the clergy hated her! She traveled from monastery to monastery, exposing the dereliction and sumptuous worldliness that characterized parts of the mediaeval church and calling for deep repentance. Her writings, especially "The Interior Castle" are still widely read and available in an enormous number of languages throughout the world. Role models such as these can point the way to renewal when the church has again been found to be so full of dereliction, so lacking in moral integrity. God may still raise up women to raise their voices and to assume roles of leadership. It is said that the crisis in the Catholic church is the greatest in five hundred years. The faithful are bewildered, disenchanted, alienated and desperate. Now is the time for reassurance, for leadership both inside and outside of the church. But there is a need for women's voices in many other venues of life. In the arts, politics, the sciences, non-profit organizations.

Let us make sure that the voices we raise are our own. We do not need to cease to be women. Women tend to have greater skill in relationships, in expressing care and concern, in sensitivity, in nurturing. This is not to say that men do not possess these attributes, only that our society makes a greater effort to cultivate these properties in women, and that nature appears to lend a helping hand.

Whether through chemistry or conditioning, we bring a different perspective to the world in which we live.

Let us lead from our strengths. We tend to excel in the helping professions, and we bring a moderating voice to the work place, whether in corporate America, in government, in health care or diplomacy. We can bring an outlook that is sensitive to the feelings of others, a concern for social issues, a compassion that is surely not out of place even in a tough environment. We can also bring a sincere desire to help along other girls and women.

### Quote of the month:

Don't use words too big for the subject. Don't say "infinitely" when you mean "very"; otherwise you'll have no word left when you want to talk about something really infinite -C. S. Lewis

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By the *feminine mystique*  
I refuse to be defined  
I've got my rights too  
And my own mind

Put me in that mold  
I will break free  
'Cuz you can't reach that place  
Deep inside of me

Driven by suffrage  
A molded bitter heart  
Empowerment for women  
Once ripped apart

Justified objectification  
Apparent weaker sex  
Romance and violence  
Continuously perplex

Scarred by labels  
When spoken out of line  
Double standards pervading  
For you to do is fine

Birth and marriage  
Are all you say we need  
Perhaps just excuses  
So you can plant your seed

Lost innocence  
Robbed without regret  
Men you think you can hold us here  
Shall we make a bet?

Bring it on fellas  
We've finally found our voice  
Listen up guys  
You don't have a choice

Strong women of yesterday  
Have risen above your hand  
Together we prove ourselves  
And together we take a stand.

By Katherine Coates

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### Africa spurns female circumcision

A program in Senegal, which has led 1,527 villages to stop circumcising girls, is becoming a regional model.

By Mike Crawley / *Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor*

**KER SIMBARA, SENEGAL** – This tiny, sleepy village in Senegal's arid interior is part of a swelling movement against the long-held but controversial practice of female circumcision.

Back in 1997, 13 Senegalese villages publicly declared that they would no longer permit female circumcision, or female genital mutilation (FGM) as it's called by critics. In the eight years since, the number has grown to 1,527, representing 30 percent of Senegalese communities where FGM has been practiced. Dozens more villages are preparing to make similar declarations in the coming months. Campaigners have tried for decades to bring an end to FGM. But their tactics of providing alternative employment to the circumcisers, introducing alternative rites of passage for girls, or demanding legislation to outlaw the practice have all failed to make a dent: an estimated 2 million girls in about 26 African countries are circumcised every year. The sea-change in Senegal is being credited to a slow but steady program of human rights education that allows villagers to make up their own minds about whether to abandon female circumcision. Spearheaded by a local rights agency called Tostan, the program's success is proving so eye-catching that the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is endorsing it as a model. "The Tostan approach is working because it's a holistic approach, and it works with communities," says Lalla Toure, UNICEF's regional adviser for women's health. "The starting point is not female genital mutilation; it's about rights, it's about health, it's about development. We think that's the best approach." The program is being replicated with some success in Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Mali, and is currently being considered for one of the strongholds of FGM, Somalia, where nearly 100 percent of girls are circumcised. Excision of all or part of the female sexual organs before puberty has long been considered a prerequisite for marriage among many of the pastoral cultures immediately south of the Sahara and in the Horn of Africa. Despite growing awareness of the health risks, which can affect childbirth, parents continue carrying out the practice because they fear their daughters won't otherwise be able to find a husband. It's this same power of social conformity that is helping the campaign to end FGM in Senegal. As more villages publicly announce that they are abandoning the practice, Tostan says others begin realizing it may no longer be a marriage requirement, momentum builds, and the number of villages following suit snowballs. "People are realizing that the social convention is changing," says Molly Melching, the Texas-born director of Tostan who has lived in Senegal for more than two decades. According to Gerry Mackie, a professor at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind., the groundswell of opposition to FGM in Senegal is approaching a "tipping point." No one is willing to predict a date by which the practice will cease, but Mr. Mackie suggests that there are parallels with the practice of foot-binding in China, which went from widespread at the turn of the 20th century to nil within a generation. Once Tostan commences its program of health, human rights education, and economic development in a village, it typically takes two to three years before citizens decide that they want to abandon FGM, says Ms. Melching. The public declarations the villages make, amid vibrant celebrations with music, dancing, and speeches from elders and prominent citizens, generally contain other statements about respect for women's rights and children's education. The declarations are also coming from places where Tostan staff have never set foot. Enthusiastic villagers are taking it upon themselves to talk to neighboring villages, causing the movement to spread even more quickly. Melching says that Tostan didn't set out trying to end FGM when it began its programs, nor is the eradication of FGM its only goal. Yet in some ways Tostan is becoming a victim of its own success. As the number of declarations swells, some Senegalese have come to see Tostan as simply an anti-FGM agency. Particularly in northern Senegal where resistance to ending the practice remains strong, some villages have protested and rioted to dissuade the organization from doing any sort of work. Here in Ker Simbara there was similar - albeit less heated - initial refusal to listen to visiting women from nearby Malicounda Bambara, the village where the first anti-FGM declaration was made, says Imam Demba Diawara. But the public declarations soon made the issue of excision "the talk of the town," he says. The debate that ensued was a big shift from the previously secretive approach to the practice, says Ramata Sow, who staffs the local clinic and nursery. "No one talked about the health troubles before - it's a difficult subject," she says. Ker Simbara eventually declared in 1999 that its citizens would no longer practice

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female circumcision. Ms. Sow's family illustrates the transformation. She circumcised her eldest daughter, but her two youngest, Sadio, 13, and Nabou, 7, and her granddaughter Duma, 2, are not circumcised. "I will never do it again," she declares. "Things have changed."

### *Information*

In celebration of our 150th Anniversary, "Always Part of Me: Women Remember Millersville," physical and web exhibit opened March 15 at Millersville University. The 150th Anniversary Women's Oral History Project involved over 100 students in classes across 5 departments on campus over 2 ½ years. Students were involved in all aspects of the project, including exhibit panel and web exhibit design, exhibit program design, Indesign projects, Powerpoint presentations, a documentary, and a promotional video.

To view the web exhibit, go to:

<http://sc.millersville.edu/oralhist/index.html#>

<<http://sc.millersville.edu/oralhist/index.html>>

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The Women in Black Art Project archive at the Smithsonian contains the three costumes made by a collective of artists in West Palm Beach, FL in the winter of 2001-2002. The first performance with the costumes took place on the Mall in Washington, DC on March 8, 2002, International Women's Day. Subsequently the costumes were used in peace demonstrations at the UN in New York City, on Memorial Bridge in Washington, DC on the first anniversary of the 9-11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, in a procession honoring the murdered and abducted young women of Juarez and Chihuahua in Mexico (2002) in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Maine and twice in Florida. The costumes were withdrawn from circulation when a dispute emerged in the collective regarding whether or not to allow the costumes to be used in Israel to protest the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territories, and at the biennial conference of Women in Black in Italy in opposition to the Iraq war. To see the costumes, please go to [www.artwomen.org/archives](http://www.artwomen.org/archives). The archives also consists of original photographs of the vigils and performances in which the costumes were used, press clippings, initial design drawings, videotapes of the artists' process in deciding on the costumes' design and decoration, videotapes and CDs of events in which the costumes appeared and an email colloquy between artist members of the collective that made the art and Women in Black activists regarding the reluctance on the part of some of the artists to allow the costumes to be used in Israel and at the Women in Black conference in Italy in 2003.

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Harvard University Library

OPEN COLLECTIONS PROGRAM

*WOMEN WORKING: 1870-1930*

a digital collection of primary source materials

for teaching, learning, and research

<http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/ww>

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