

Word Warrior Alix Olson Comes To Town

The nationally touring folk poet and progressive queer artist-activist will perform at the FAM symposium on April 9 at 8 p.m. at the Grille Stage. One part peace vigil, one part protest rally, and one part joyful raucous concert, Alix's performance ignites audiences everywhere. *Ms. Magazine* called Olson a "road-poet-on-a-mission," and she was voted 2004 OutMusician of the Year.

[eve's mouth]

©2001 Alix Olson.

Eve's mouth hurts from trying not to laugh
at some joke some scholar made
about her being someone's half.
It was a joke, a lie, exaggeration,
a fib.
And now you all believe I came
from his rib.

She screams at the top of her
lungs: "I'm whole! I'm body, I'm
heart, I'm mind, I'm soul."

Well, Queen Victoria gave her
daughter some advice
as she shook and trembled
on her wedding night.
Queen Victoria, she said to her
daughter: "Baby, lie still and think
of the Empire!"
And her husband, though kind and
mild, he never stopped to wonder
why she never smiled.

Little Red Riding Hood was walk-
ing down the trail,
she was carrying the goodies,
thought "They'll go stale".
So, she ate 'em all up
and that was that.
Then, she threw them all up,
fear of getting fat.
Cause even Red Riding Hood
reads magazines, the ones pre-
scribing diets for pre-teens.



Poet and activist Alix Olson.

Now, we've got Cinderella,
she's chilling at home quite content with
being alone.
She is playing with the mice and singing
with the birds and they're the only ones
who ever heard these words.
She said "I'll get in the damn pumpkin.
Do it all right, weep and lose my slipper,
freak out at midnight.
But there's one thing that the prince
might not like, it's the Fairygod I'm
after. I'm a dyke."

She screams at the top of her lungs,
"I'm whole, I'm body, I'm heart, I'm
mind, I'm soul."

So we've got Snow White, she's a
homemaker of sorts cause she cleans and
she cooks and she takes care of dwarves.
One day, I said "SnowWhite, go back

to school". She said "No,
I can't, I'd feel like a fool.
You know, it's hard for us
womyn to try to be our-
selves, we spend our whole
damn lives taking care of
little elves."

Now we've got Rapunzel,
she's chilling in the tower,
waiting for the handsome
prince, she's sapped of all
her power.
Finally, one day, the hand-
some prince in town
called up to Rapunzel,
"Yo girl, let it down!"
But our dear Rapunzel was
nowhere to be seen,
yes our dear Rapunzel had
learned something keen.
"All that time alone kinda
taught me how to cope,
so I shaved my head and I
made me a rope!"

Spring 2005 Edition

Karin Hanta, *Editor* khanta@middlebury.edu

Editor's Note

Dear faculty and staff members,
dear students,

2005 is a watershed year for the Women's and Gender Studies Program. In February, Professor Sujata Moorti took charge of the program. She is the first fully tenured faculty member to chair the program in a permanent capacity. Find out more about Professor Moorti's vibrant personality and her plans for the WAGS program by reading the interview on pages 6 and 7.

On February 19, the first-ever "Sister-to-Sister Gathering" took place at Kirk Alumni Center. Conceived by the American Association of University Women and further developed by four winter-term students, Caroline and Emily Theriault, Jessica Levin and Brigitte Frett, the event drew 27 middle school girls. After a day of breakdancing and in-depth discussions, the girls left with a heightened feeling of empowerment. A big thank you goes to Dean Spears for providing generous support to this pilot project!

Another first for 2005: This year, the student organization "Feminist Action at Middlebury" is holding a four-day symposium. From April 7 to 10, FAM has invited nationally renowned artists and activists to make their voices heard in a symposium entitled "Art as Activism: Exploring the Intersection of Rape, Pornography and Violence." This event will explore the systematic ways in which women experience oppression by investigating issues such as pornography and rape. Artists Alix Olson, Nancy Hulse, and Meredith LaVande have found ways to talk about these issues through creative and dynamic media such as film, song, poetry, and theater. Not only will they raise awareness about women's human rights issues, but they will also be using the medium of art to move and inspire the audience to be involved in change.

Like every year, the performance of Eve Ensler's "The Vagina Monologues" on V-Day was met with great enthusiasm by a large audience.



WOMEN'S
AND
GENDER
STUDIES

This year, directors Rebecca Kanengiser and Eliza Hulme decided to organize a silent art auction to support WomenSafe. In conjunction with ticket sales, this auction raised \$3000! A big thank you to all the students who donated their artwork and to Gloria Karch from Art on Main in Bristol, who asked several local artists to join in the effort. Professor Claudio Medeiros will be directing "Necessary Targets," another Eve Ensler play, from April 8 to 10. Secure your tickets early!

"Necessary Targets" describes two American women's journey to Bosnia, where they help female war victims confront their memories. In conjunction with the FAM symposium, this play ties in well with the exhibition "Weavings of War, Fabrics of Memory," which will be shown at the Vermont Folklife Center until May 28. (If you are unfamiliar with the Folklife Center, it is located at 3 Court Street, just in front of Shaw's supermarket.) The exhibit explores the phenomenon of contemporary war textiles, a previously unrecorded trend in international folk art. For the last 50 years, textile artists, mostly women, have used pictorial imagery to communicate their personal and collective experiences of modern warfare. Chellis House is organizing a film and event series in conjunction with the exhibition. Please check pages 10 and 11 for more details.

All the best for the rest of the semester!

Karin Hanta

CALENDAR OF EVENTS SPRING TERM

Wednesday, March 16, 4:30 p.m.
Mitchell Green Lounge

“Life After Middlebury: What Can I Do With A Major or Interest in WAGS?”

Panel discussion with Sujata Moorti, chair of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program; Ime Kerlee, Northeastern Consortium Fellow and Ph.D. candidate in Women’s Studies/Emory University and alumna Elizabeth Brookbank, campus organizer for feminist.org.

Monday, March 28, 7 p.m.
Gifford Annex Lounge

Joint reading by Dominican novelist Julia Alvarez (*In the Time of Butterflies*) and Chilean poet Marjorie Agosín (*Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love*).

Writer Julia Alvarez gives voice to the dual heritage of Hispanic-Americans. Raised in the Dominican Republic, she was uprooted from her homeland at the age of ten, when her parents and three sisters fled the Trujillo dictatorship and settled in New York City. Alvarez’s writings draw on her family’s displacements of language and geography, and her own struggle to find herself as a writer. Marjorie Agosín is a professor of Spanish literature at Wellesley College and her poetry is well known in English and Spanish. She has written two dozen books, including *Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love: The Arpillera Movement in Chile, 1974-1994* (University of New Mexico Press). Her Austrian-Jewish family escaped to Chile before World War II. Ms. Agosín lived in Santiago de Chile until age sixteen; she came to the United States to escape General Pinochet’s military dictatorship.

April 7, 2005 - April 10, 2005

Feminist Action at Middlebury Symposium:

“Art as Activism: Exploring the Intersection of Rape, Pornography and Violence.”

FAM’s symposium will explore the systematic ways in which women experience oppression. We will be investigating various issues concerning women today, from pornography to rape, with a focus on women who have found ways to talk about these issues through creative and dynamic media such as film, song, poetry, and theater.

Thursday, April 7, 4:15 p.m.
Sunderland 110

“Women, Pop Music and Pornography.”

Lecture by Meredith LeVande, a speaker and performer who focuses on pop music and pornography. Her interactive lecture/slide show looks at representations of women pop stars in the current deregulated media environment. The presentation reveals the large corporate ownership of pornography and its interests in portraying women in ways that promote pornography.

Thursday, April 7, 8:00 p.m.
Gamut Room

Meredith LeVande performs original music about women’s images.

Friday, April 8, 4:30 p.m.
Location TBA

Rape Aggressive Defensive (RAD) Workshop on women’s self-defense.

Watch out for the Clotheslines Project!

“Weavings of War” Film and Event Series

Thursday, March 10, 7 p.m., Sunderland 110
“Afghanistan Unveiled”

Created as the culmination of a unique training program for Afghan women journalists, “Afghanistan Unveiled” explores the effects of the repressive Taliban regime and the subsequent U.S. military campaign on the lives of Afghan women and their families.

Thursday, March 17, 7 p.m., Sunderland 110
“Living in Exile”

During the Vietnam War, the indigenous Montagnard Dega people were some of the most loyal allies of the United States, and 85 percent of their villages were destroyed. Today, the Montagnards are fighting for survival and human rights in their homeland.

Monday, March 28, 7 p.m., Gifford Annex Lounge

Joint reading by Dominican novelist **Julia Alvarez** (*In the Time of Butterflies*) and Chilean poet **Marjorie Agosín** (*Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love*).

Thursday, March 31, 7 p.m., Sunderland 110
“Threads of Hope”

This film tells the powerful story of a group of women who banded together and dared to defy the brutal dictatorship of Chile’s General Augusto Pinochet. Armed only with scraps of cloth, sewing needles, and the overwhelming desire to find their loved ones, they set to work to tell their stories by creating *arpilleras*, colorful handmade tapestries which chronicled the horror and injustice of Pinochet’s reign of terror.

Thursday, April 7, 7:00 p.m., Sunderland 110
“Threads of Survival”

This film explores the lives of Hmong people from Laos who live in the United States and are desperately trying to preserve their rich cultural and spiritual heritage through their stitchery (*Pan dau*) and woven garments.

Thursday, April 14, 7:00 p.m., Sunderland 110
“Voices of Ayacucho”

This film provides a rare glance into the intimate life of Edwin Sulca, the people of Ayacucho, and the stories “woven” in and amongst these characters. The documentary also highlights one of Peru’s most colorful festivals called Semana Santa or Holy Week, and incorporates stock footage showing the damage done in preceding years by the terrorist group “Shining Path.”

Thursday, April 21, 7:00 p.m., Sunderland 110
“Journey to Freedom”

Black South African embroiderers create giant patchwork wall-hangings about their memories of apartheid.

Tuesday, April 26, 4:30 p.m., Chellis House
“Stories of Loss and New Beginnings”

A panel discussion by Lao women who came to the U.S. in the 1980s as refugees and have made Vermont their home.

Saturday, April 30, 3 p.m., Twilight Auditorium
“I Think of This Everytime I Think of Mountains”

Poetry and songs on war and peace by Souphine Phathsoungneune and Phayvanh Luekhamhan. A bilingual collaboration between a 30-year old Lao American poet and a 78-year old master of the Lao folk song tradition who came to Brattleboro as refugees 25 years ago. In this event, they come together for the first time to perform their own and each other’s work.

“Weavings of War, Fabrics of Memories.”

Until May 28, the Vermont Folklife Center is showing an exhibition on war textiles, a previously unrecorded trend in international folk art.



From March 4 to May 28, 2005, the Vermont Folklife Center, Middlebury, VT, is the debut site for a national traveling exhibit that explores the phenomenon of contemporary war textiles, a previously unrecorded trend in international folk art. The Center has organized the show in collaboration with City Lore (New York, NY) and the Michigan State University Museum (East Lansing, MI).

For the last 50 years, textile artists, mostly women, have broken with their folk traditions of non-figurative work to use pictorial imagery to communicate their personal and collective experiences with modern warfare. As a form of indigenous documentary about the ravages of war and political conflict, these textiles provide a counterpoint to the media portrayals of destruction to which Westerners have become accustomed. The exhibit showcases more than fifty textiles created by refugee artists—some who have resettled in the United States, but most of whom still live in Third World countries – and include striking examples of wall hangings, rugs, garments, and other household objects. We encounter a small rug from Afghanistan depicting the destruction of the Twin Towers, which, according to the weaver, “was made on commission.” While the colorful threads on a huge embroidered black cloth shine brilliantly, viewers are shocked to find the simple, yet harrow-

ing depictions of 50 years of anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. A four-color exhibit catalogue that includes both essays by folklorists and other scholars, and profiles of several artists, accompanies the show.

Middlebury will welcome poet Marjorie Agosin on March 28 to give a joint reading with Julia Alvarez. In the 1990s, she directed a film documenting *arpilleras*, tapestries by Chilean mothers, who defied General Pinochet’s brutal dictatorship by deploring the fate of their loved ones in their artwork. Folk artists in Peru followed their example. They described the ravages wreaked in a civil war between the Peruvian army and the “Shining Path” guerilla movement.

“Our intent is to provoke both reflection and dialogue,” says project coordinator Meg Ostrum. “Perhaps more than any show that we have presented in the past, the objects in *Weavings of War* force us to examine notions of tradition and change, and to address the role of folk arts in cultures enduring armed conflict, social upheaval or physical displacement. For instance, what does it mean when women take on a new role as storytellers, particularly in cultures where men have traditionally played that role?”

Major funding for the exhibit was provided by the Rockefeller Foundation, the Coby Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. “Weavings of War” will tour for two years following its showing in Middlebury.

CALENDAR CONTINUED

Friday, April 8, 8:00 p.m.
Château Basement

“A Rose By Any Other Name.”

Multi-media presentation and performance by Nancy Hulse, a performance artist and educator who produces live, multi-media programs dealing with violence against women. Her dynamic multimedia experiments reshape the lecture format into a different experience. A rape victim who uses art as a medium for activism, Nancy Hulse epitomizes the symposium. Her multimedia performance uses the music and poetry of women to satirize and highlight the many uses and abuses of the female body.

Thursday, April 7, 8 p.m.

Friday, April 8, 8 p.m.

Saturday, April 9, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Seeler Theatre

“Necessary Targets.”

Performance of Eve Ensler’s play directed by Claudio Medeiros. “Necessary Targets” tells the story of two American women who go to Bosnia to help female war victims confront their memories. As a consequence, both of them emerge deeply changed themselves. “Necessary Targets” is a groundbreaking play about women and war – about the violence of dark memories and the enduring resilience of the human spirit.

Saturday, April 9, 8 p.m.

The Grille Stage

“Alix Olson – Slam Poetry”

Alix Olson is a nationally touring folk poet and progressive queer artist-activist. One part peace vigil, one part protest rally, and one part joyful raucous concert, her performance ignites audiences everywhere. Olson’s stage, broadcast, radio and print appearances include, most recently, twice headlining HBO’s “Def Poetry Jam.”

Monday, April 11, 7 p.m.

Robert A. Jones Conference Room

“Help Wanted: Human Rights Abuses against Women Migrant Workers in Southeast Asia.”

Lecture by Nisha Varia, Asia Researcher for the Women’s Rights Division at Human Rights Watch.

Sponsored by the Women’s and Gender Studies Program/Chellis House, the Rohatyn Center for International Affairs, the Sociology/Anthropology Department, the Political Science Department, and Wonnacott Commons.

Tuesday, April 12, 12:15 p.m.

Chellis House

“Mothers and Babies Gassed!”: Engendering U.S. National Community through Stories about the 1932 Bonus March.”

“Life of the Mind” brownbag lunch talk by Holly Allen (Am. Civ/Am Lit. Dept.). Desserts and coffee will be provided.

Tuesday, April 19, 7 p.m.

Chellis House

“AAUW Informational Meeting: Justice from An Intergenerational Point of View.”

Come and meet representatives of the American Association of University Women to discuss how issues of justice pertain to women of different ages. Find out about AAUW’s college student conference and graduate school scholarships!

Tuesday, April 26, 4:30 p.m.

Chellis House

“Stories of Loss and New Beginnings.”

A panel discussion by Lao women who came to the US in the 1980s as refugees and have made Vermont their home. Organized in conjunction with the exhibition “Weavings of War, Fabrics of Memory” at the Vermont Folklife Center.

CALENDAR CONTINUED

Saturday, April 30, 3 p.m.
Twilight Auditorium

“I Think of This Everytime I Think of Mountains.”

Poetry and songs on war and peace by Souphine Phathsoungneune and Phayvanh Luekhamhan. A bilingual collaboration between a 30-year old Lao American poet and a 78-year old master of the Lao folk song tradition who came to Brattleboro as refugees 25 years ago. Although neighbors, they have lived in two worlds separated by language, culture and age. In this event, they come together for the first time to perform.

Sunday, May 8, 2 to 5 p.m.
Chellis House

End of year celebration. Come enjoy good food and music! We will award the Feminist of the Year Prizes.

Wednesday, May 11, 9 to 11 p.m.
Chellis House

Chellis Coffee House

Come and take a study break and enjoy some good music and bubble tea.



Castleton winners Natalie Wolfram and Padma Govindan.
Photo by Ari Joseph.

FACULTY/STUDENT NEWS

Stacie Cassarino (English Dept.) just won the prestigious “Discovery Award” from *The Nation* Magazine. The prize is designed to attract large audiences to poets who have not yet published a volume of poetry. Ms. Cassarino will be reading at the 92nd Street Y Unterberg Poetry Center on Monday, May 16, 2005, and her work will be published in *The Nation*. Among the notable writers who were “Discovery” winners early in their careers are Mary Jo Bang, Nick Flynn, Debora Greger, Garrett Hongo, Katha Pollitt, Mary Jo Salter, Sherod Santos, Gary Soto, David St. John, Ellen Bryant Voigt and Rosanna Warren. “This is a national-level award,” says David Bain (English Dept.) “The prize’s importance spreads out farther than *the Nation*’s modest subscription base because so many of the people who read it are the kind of people who make a difference in writers’ lives.”

Padma Govindan (‘05) and Natalie Wolfram (‘05.5) shared the first prize at the 2005 Women’s Studies Conference at Castleton College entitled “Narrating Gender.” Padma was distinguished for her paper “From Villain to Traditional Housewife!’: Foucault, Gender, and the Politics of Desire in Indian Media.” In this paper, she was looking at how actresses in Indian media represent women’s sexuality – both in their private lives and as characters in films – and how these representations are bounded by their personal ambivalence regarding their own sexuality. Natalie was honored for her paper “The Garden and the Green World: Gender and Geography in Charlotte Brontë’s Novels.” The paper explores the relationship between gender and geography in three of Charlotte’s novels, *Shirley*, *Villette*, and *Jane Eyre*, by using the Renaissance idea of the green world to analyze the gender politics of space and landscape.



College student break-dancers show the Addison County middle school girls a few good moves.

During lunch, two Middlebury a-cappella groups, the “Bobolinks” and “Stuck in the Middle,” performed. American Flatbread donated a whopping amount of 28 pizzas to the event. After listening to self-defense experts, the girls had a choice between three workshops: “Indian cooking,” “Feel Better Fast,” and “Break Dancing.” The latter activity got some of the girls spinning on their heads for the rest of the afternoon! Then they gathered in three more chatrooms about body image, exercise and fitness, and future aspirations. In the latter discussion forum, the girls shared their dreams about becoming horse trainers and singers. One girl expressed hope that she would overcome her depression in a few years. Jessica Levin imparted some tips on how to apply for college, which might have seemed far away to some of the girls.



“It’s always good to have your eyes on the prize,” said Levin.

At 4 p.m. it was already time for the girls to say good-bye. They took home some great memories and a whole goodie bag filled with a CD, a journal, inspirational stickers, and bingo prizes. “‘Sister-to-Sister’ was a great project to work on because of the way in which it brought together people from the community, faculty/staff, and students,”

says Caroline Theriault, who interned in the program together with her own sister, Emily. “Some of the girls who came had a tendency to fly under the radar, but on the day of the gathering they had over 70 individuals working solely to inform and entertain them. It was amazing to see the effect that one day of positive attention had on these girls. In addition, everyone who volunteered on that day, particularly the Middlebury students, gained a new connection to the surrounding community and hopefully saw the continued importance of the college-community relationship.”

Faculty advisor Gail Smith sums up the experience. “The event is a powerful example of how a January internship can mo-

Middleschoolers discuss topics related to “Choice or Chance” in one of the chatrooms.

tivate and inform students to engage in a community social imperative.” All the participants are hoping that the gathering will become a yearly event. On their way out, some eighth-graders had only one regret: “Too bad we will be going to highschool in the fall. That makes us too old to participate in Sister-to-Sister next year!”

If you would like to get involved in the fall of 2005 or have your daughter participate, contact Karin Hanta at x5937 or email khanta@middlebury.edu.

Sisterhood Feels Good!

On February 19, college students Emily and Caroline Theriault, Jessica Levin, and Brigitte Frett organized “Sister-to-Sister,” a one-day gathering for middle school girls from Addison County. The girls learned how to break-dance, cook Indian food and discussed issues pertinent to their age group in chatrooms. Seventy volunteers from the college and the community were involved in the event.



27 girls from Addison County middle schools enjoyed a day of fun activities and thought-provoking discussions at Kirk Alumni Center.

Middlebury College students Caroline and Emily Theriault, Jessica Levin, and Brigitte Frett didn't choose to go to Washington, D.C. or New York for their winter-term internship. Instead, they opted to remain in Middlebury and design a day-long gathering to empower middle school girls from Addison County. The model for the “Sister-to-Sister” program had previously been developed by the American Association for University Women (AAUW). The college student interns were aided in their efforts by Gail Smith, associate director of athletics; Dot Rand, AAUW's Vermont president; Liane Barrera, LIS program analyst and AAUW member; Ene Piiarak, assistant director of the Center for Counseling and Human Relations; and Karin Hanta, director of Chellis House.

During all of January and early February, the team of women met at Chellis House to learn about the psychological de-

velopment of 13 to 14-year-old girls. After the college interns had met with focus groups at three middle schools in the area, they designed chatrooms where the girls could discuss issues, and invited other talented college students to hold workshops for the girls. “Research shows that young girls need lots of support,” explains Liane Barrera. Emily Theriault sums up all of the interns' motivation to participate in the program, “As a middle school girl, I had had my fair share of insecurities and complexes. I realized later that they were not only common, but quite unfounded, as well. Informing young girls that they are not alone, and educating them that there is a world beyond the junior high bubble, will hopefully save them from an unnecessary period of transition. Girls should not have to hate themselves first to learn to love themselves.” Jessica Levin concurs, “I remember how difficult middle school was for me and how helpful it would have been to have someone to talk to without any pressure. I wanted to be that person for at least one middle school girl.”

And then the big day for the

pilot program arrived. Since many of the girls didn't know each other, they played a game of bingo, in which they had to ask all the 40 people in the room questions. Addie Cleveland from Middlebury Union Middle School particularly welcomed this activity. “We got to know girls from other schools right away and didn't stay in our cliques so much.” Then, the girls chose between different workshops: Latin dancing, creative writing, and trust-building. They subsequently gathered in chatrooms (“Choice or Chance,” “Media and Stereotypes,” and “Mean Girls/Peer Pressure”) to discuss issues of concern to them. “It was great that we could have an open discussion in the chatrooms,” says Natalie Herb from Middlebury Union Middle School. “At school, we usually don't have time to speak so openly about topics and hear other people's opinions. It's all about assignments.”

The 2005 Alison G. Fraker Prize

Piya Kashyap won the award for her creative writing blog “A Journey Back.”

On March 8, International Women's Day, eleven Middlebury students gathered at Chellis House because they had been nominated by their professors for the Alison G. Fraker Prize for best paper in the field of women's and gender studies. They had written on diverse topics such as the erotic drawings of Auguste Rodin, population mobility and HIV/AIDS, and the burden of education in Tsitsi Dangarembga's book *Nervous Conditions*.

Sophomore Piya Kashyap garnered the prize for her creative writing project “The Journey Back.” Professor Barbara Ganley explained the project's outstanding merit in the following way, “Piya's weblog-based chronicle stands as an extraordinary achievement for an undergraduate student (...) Piya has written a series of exquisite short essays on a range of topics concerning women in India, using her readings as well as her experiences to extend her analysis; she has effectively used an online medium to bring her writing-on-the-road experience to the world, creating a richly woven story of a young woman's search for a part of herself within the essay sequence – all within the frame of a single month as she was on the road; in turn she pushed her thinking through online discussion as she journeyed. This project is a model of good writing, incisive commentary, and effective use of technology.”

Excerpt from Piya Kashyap's weblog “A Journey Back.”

(...) But looking around the streets

of India, I feel like these concepts of dharma and karma have taken their toll on the Indian people. The beggars limping along the road believe that this is their karma. They are not trying to find work; they succumb to their lowly position in society. Their faith tells them that they have what they deserve and that maybe in their next life they will fare better. This mentality keeps the poor poor and the rich rich. I am starting to think that Hinduism may have a lot to do with the fact that the caste system still exists today. Fatalism and pre-destiny are the very concepts that can keep people divided. Why try to rise up if it's not in your fate? (...) As the sharp winds of Delhi scathed my spirits I was ready to come home. My grandparents cramped, unheated apartment was closing in, the bucket baths which involved barely one bucket of hot water were leaving my body cold and dry, my stomach decided once and for all that it was done with Indian food and I missed my life. India is not an easy place to be, and coming from the United States where the quality of life is more than agreeable, bucket baths and no heat in forty-degree weather doesn't cut it. It is an adjustment that spans miles away from home. But it is amazing what the human soul can become accustomed to. Watching the people of India, it is blatant that



Professor Barbara Ganley and 2005 Fraker Prize winner Piya Kashyap. Photo by Ari Joseph.

life for them is tough. The battle is to make it through the day; to not fall off the motorcycle barrel-rolling around buses that just aren't looking your way; to not catch the latest disease swimming in the sewers, (...) to not just collapse and die. In the West our struggles are that much more complicated, and I suppose trivial in the grand scheme of things. Our days become a war against monotony, (...) an ascent towards a height of ultimate fulfillment that just doesn't exist. In India things might be backwards, but they are simple, they are cold and they are practical. And to people on our side of the fence, their stripped lives are mysterious, they are fascinating in their straight-forwardness. The masses, they wake up each morning, they make enough money to survive at a bare minimum, they eat, they sleep, and where they stumble upon a piece of happiness, they laugh in between (...)

If you would like to read more, go to <http://mt.middlebury.edu/middblogs/pkashyap/India>

Interview with Professor Sujata Moorti

In February, the WAGS and media studies expert took office as WAGS' first fully tenured permanent chair. If it were up to her, feminist theory would be included in many courses on campus.

Professor Moorti, you are originally from India. How did you come to the U.S.?

I came to the U.S. to earn my doctorate degree. In 1980s India, a common middle-class assumption was that one either traveled to the U.K. or the U.S. for higher education. Since the colonial aura of U.K. education had faded considerably, the U.S. was the other option. I had opportunities to study peace in Sweden and other European countries, but none of these possibilities contained the same luster and excitement that the U.S. produced. Since I was working as a newspaper reporter, opting for a Ph.D. in communications seemed like a "logical" step. The women's studies classes were folded in with media courses.

When did you first become interested in women's and gender issues?

Considering the disparities in girls' and boys' experiences in India I have always been aware of gender as a central determinant in one's opportunities and options. However, my class and caste privilege sheltered me from significant gender-based deprivations. When I started working as a journalist for a leading national newspaper, I encountered the clichéd set of double standards in the newsroom – choice of stories, relegation to soft stories, insistence that I edit rather than take part in messy daily reporting, etc. There were also a number of other disparities that were evident in the workplace. For the



Photo by Nirvana Bhatia

most part, while I observed these phenomena I did not consider them systemic or structural conditions. I was part of the first "women in a journalism" activist group in India, but at this stage I did not see myself as a subject of this topic, rather it was only a topic of interest. In my assignments, however, I encountered the systematic marginalization of women's voices, women's knowledges, and women's culture. It was then that I became aware of the subtle and overt ways in which women came to be the second sex.

What are your research interests?

Trained in the interdisciplinary fields of media and women's studies, my research is very broad. In the past I have focused on the role the media

play in engendering democratic public spheres. In particular, I have examined how issues of race and gender are represented in the media and how these representational practices shape citizenship practices. I have interrogated these issues through an analysis of media images of sexual violence.

More recently, I have focused on transnational visual culture, examining the global traffic of media products and the forms of affiliation and (national) identifications they enable. Perhaps stemming from my own experiences of migration I have also started to examine the aesthetics of "diasporic" representational practices. I am trying to systematically address how issues of mobility, dislocation and displacement are represented (by the diaspora and by others) and the effects of such practices.

How do you combine your activism with your academic interests?

This is one of the hardest elements during the school term – it is hard to find time to "do" activism outside the campus. I console myself that my teaching is activ-

ism. Most of my activism thus is isolated to the summer or is limited to internet activism. The advantage of internet activism is the ability to participate in international projects.

Which classes are you teaching now? Which classes will you be teaching in the fall?

WAGS 200 and WAGS 262, in the fall – WAGS 400.

You are focusing on globalism in some of your classes. What have some of your research findings revealed about the effects of globalism on women?

It has been a really mixed bag for women. From the third world woman's perspective, the social and economic changes propelled by neoliberal capitalism have made available a whole new set of opportunities. Economic freedom, mobility and a visible public presence are some of the most evident ways in which the global flows of capital (and work) have affected women. On the other hand, this reworking of traditional gender roles has been accompanied by a range of new problems. In many places even as third world women are "liberated" by participation in the paid labor force, cultural expectations and gender scripts have been reinforced rigidly. For first world women, globalism has been a mixed bag, as well. On the one hand, off-shore production has resulted in either the loss of jobs, transfer into low paying jobs, or shift in familial roles with women becoming the primary wage earners. On the

other hand, first world women have also reaped the benefits of "cheap" third world women's work. Every-day products are cheap and our consumption patterns continue unhindered. Simultaneously, the availability of a huge supply of cheap labor has allowed first world women to "extract" domestic resources from the third world – the realm of care-giving and domesticity has been out-sourced to third world women. Overall, the uneven effects of the flows of global capital seem to have made the concept of a "global sisterhood" untenable. Feminist movements around the world have to reconceptualize the category "woman" and issues of empowerment by taking into account the differentials between the first and third worlds. Contemporary conditions of globality also require us to reconfigure the categories of first and third worlds. They can no longer be conceived of as geographical referents. Rather, we must come to understand how the third world exists within the West, and "ghettoes of affluence" exist in the third world.

What are your visions for the Women's and Gender Studies Program?

I would like to see WAGS move beyond courses with that designation. Also, I would like to emphasize the contributions feminist scholarship has made across the disciplines and how this can enrich any field of study. WAGS should become an integral part of the "international" curriculum and

a home for critical thinking about issues pertaining to race, class and ethnicity. Issues of sexuality also should similarly be foregrounded. The service learning component should be highlighted and the theory/praxis connection emphasized.

WomenSafe Shouts Out To Fall 2005 Volunteers!

Last year, WomenSafe provided over 7,900 units of service to people in all of the twenty-three towns in Addison County and Rochester. To do this, WomenSafe greatly relied on its wonderful volunteers, many of whom come from the college community. Volunteering requires attendance at a pre-scheduled training opportunity. This year's training is scheduled for early-mid October. By REGISTERING NOW, you can avoid the rush upon return to school in September.

It's not too early! Inquire now and begin the process! Volunteer applications are available by calling the WomenSafe offices: 388-9180, or go online at www.womensafe.net to print an application and learn more about this amazing organization! Last year saw the successful training of over 25 new volunteers; we hope you join us this fall for another successful year!