A Note from 
Chellis House director 
Karin Hanta

This fall semester started off with a whirlwind of activities. Only ten days after classes started, the Women’s and Gender Studies Program and Chellis House organized “Bad As I Wanna Be: A Hip Hop Symposium,” a three-day series of events that focused on the role of gender in this urban cultural movement. In the following weeks, we organized and co-sponsored more than ten events such as Professor Kevin Moss’s lecture “Gender(ed) Tricks: Transvestisms and Gay Cruising in Belgrade” for National Coming Out Day on October 12 and Falguni Sheth’s examination of “The Hijab Seen Through the Prism of Western Liberalism.”

Reproductive rights stood in the foreground of a few events this semester. We invited Jane Roberts, an alumna of the Middlebury School in Paris and a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, to speak about her organization “34 Million Friends of United Nations Population Fund.” Roberts set up the NGO with Lois Abrahams to offset the current U.S. administration’s freezing of funds to the United Nations Family Planning Association.

Betsy Hartmann, Director of the Population and Development Program at Hampshire College, took a different approach to the topic of reproductive justice. In her lecture “Population Politics: Old Maps and New Terrain,” she called for the creation of new feminist maps of the world to dismantle population control and ensure a full range of reproductive health services, including the right to safe, legal abortion for all women on the globe. Find an excerpt of her talk as well as of some others in this newsletter.

As always, the faculty and students associated with the Women’s and Gender Studies Program and Chellis House have been an engine for intellectual discourse on campus and a catalyst for social change. We are happy to report that some of our faculty members will be traveling the world to conduct research on gender-related issues. Professors Ellen Oxfeld will be in China over the next year to study “Food and Cultural Transformation in Rural China.” Professor Tim Mayer will also be in the region to investigate how Muslim minorities in the country express their national identity in the landscape. Professor Barbara Hofer was awarded the Paul P. Fidler Research Grant to examine the role of technology in college transitions as well as a fellowship from the Associated Kyoto Program to teach cultural psychology at Doshisha University in Japan.

Our students have been actively acquiring new knowledge in various internships and at conferences. WAGS major Noor Puthawala (‘07) interned with the “Ahmedabad Women’s Action Group” in India to raise awareness about domestic violence. WAGS major Zohra Safi (‘09) worked with the “Initiative to Educate Afghan Women” in her native Kabul. Christine Bachman (‘09) participated in “Act Out,” a conference for queer families sponsored by Family Pride Coalition and COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere). At this conference, she participated in COLAGE’s Board Meeting as co-chair, and attended and facilitated some workshops in the Adult COLAGE Leadership Track for activism and advocacy within the LGBTQ community. She also attended the “Ideas into Action Conference” in Montpelier in November. Tracy Young (‘08) participated in the “Youth Leaders Summit on Global Health” in New York City. Kolbe Franklin (‘08) served as an intern at the Feminist Majority in Washington, D.C. last summer and is now interning with the public health office at the women’s rights sector of the Buenos Aires government. The intellectual pursuits and activism of WAGS faculty and students inspires us all.

Have a good rest of the semester!

Karin Hanta
Faculty News

Grants

Barbara Hofer (Psychology) received two awards, one for this year and one for the next. She has been awarded the 2006-2007 Paul P. Fidler Research Grant by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition for a project titled, “The Electronic Tether: Parental Regulation, Self-Regulation, and the Role of Technology in College Transitions.” This project builds on a faculty-student collaborative project with Elena Kennedy (‘06) and Katie Hurd (‘06.5) and will involve additional student researchers. Barbara has also received a fellowship from the Associated Kyoto Program (AKP) which will help support her academic leave in 2007-2008. She will teach a course titled “Cultural Psychology: Japan and the U.S.” for the AKP program at Doshisha University in Japan and will carry out research on culture, cognition and beliefs.

Ellen Oxfeld (Anthropology) turned down a fellowship from the U.S. Dept. of Education’s Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad program in order to accept funding from the Fulbright Scholar Program to support her research in China during her 2006-2007 leave. She will spend Spring 2007 in Mei Xian, Guangdong, China working on a project titled, “Food and Cultural Transformation in Rural China.” She will be affiliated with Jiaying University in Meizhou, Guangdong, and living in a nearby village in Chengbei Township.

Jeremy Ward (Biology) has been awarded a three-year grant from the National Institutes of Health through the AREA program (Academic Research Enhancement Award). The grant funds basic research related to human infertility and complications of reproductive processes and will support Jeremy’s 07-08 academic leave. At least 6 undergraduates will be involved in this project, which is titled: “The Identification and Characterization of the Mammalian Mutation mei4.”

Faculty News Continued

A New Face in WAGS

The WAGS Program and Chellis House are happy to welcome our new coordinator Stacy Hotte. Stacy worked as a travel agent at Middlebury Travel from 1987 to 1994, was a stay-at-home mom from 1994 to 1999, and was the administrative assistant to the principal of Shoreham Elementary School from 1999 to 2006. She is married and has two lovely daughters. Stacy was director of the Shoreham Book Bag Project and served on the boards of the Shoreham Preschool and the Shoreham Athletic Department. She is currently on the board of the Addison Central Educational Endowment Fund.

Faculty News Continued

Timi Mayer (Geography) has been awarded a grant to participate in a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Summer Institute titled, “The Silk Road: Globalization and Chinese Cultural Identity” which will be held at the East-West Center in Honolulu, HI. This institute builds on Timi’s inter-institutional Mellon grant on the Silk Road (2005/6) and expands her research on nationalism, memory, and human-made landscapes. Her current project focuses on the ways Muslim minorities in China express their national identity in the landscape.
**WAGS Winter 2007 Courses**

**WAGS/WRPR 0201 Writing Across Differences**
In this course we will explore the many choices we face when communicating across human differences such as race, gender, sexuality, religion and class. Organized by literary genres, and drawing on writers such as Julia Alvarez, bell hooks, W.E.B. Dubois, Martin Luther King, James Baldwin, Jamaica Kincaid, and Dorothy Allison, we will analyze and produce a range of works that employ diverse methods of argument and inquiry, including personal narrative, literary analysis, research presentations, and expression through multimedia. As writers we will create personal and public domains for our work, using everything from scratchpads to digital stories and weblogs.

LIT SOC NOR USA
Catharine Wright

**WAGS 1004 The Celluloid Closet: A Short History of Queer Cinema**
In this course we will explore the representation of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender persons in American and international film. The primary focus of this survey course will be on using cinema as a resource for understanding and interpreting contemporary LGBTQ history. We will pay particular attention to theoretical issues, including feminist, critical race and queer theory and its application to understanding the depiction of queer people in films and documentaries.

SOC NOR USA
Bernard Schlager

**WAGS/ENAM 1012 Life Writings: Autobiographical Narratives by American Women**
In this course we will explore American women’s autobiographical writing through narratives by immigrants, activists, literary figures, and ordinary women, as well as a fictional autobiography and literary criticism. What are the ways in which women have chosen to represent themselves and their lives? What have they hoped to achieve by writing their life stories? How do they infuse their own personal stories with social meaning? Through our readings and discussions, we will examine the constructed nature of autobiographical writing, its formal elements and political uses, and the narrative of women’s history as a history of progress.

LIT NOR USA
Wodan Teachout

**WAGS/PSYC 1013 Gender and Sex Differences and Similarities**
Although psychological research has uncovered numerous differences between women and men, there remains a debate about whether we as research consumers should focus on ways men and women differ rather than ways they are the same. In this course, we will focus on this issue by attempting to understand both the similarities and differences between men and women in various areas of life, including moral decision-making, communication style, mate selection, and intellectual ability. The course should provide a more thorough understanding of the research literature on both gender differences and gender similarities.

SOC
Jill Coleman

**WAGS/INTD 1043 Contemporary Issues in Reproductive Medicine**
In this course we will examine the fundamentals of human reproduction and its modern intervention strategies. As rapid discoveries in medical reproductive technologies have allowed us to push the limits of the human body, questions remain as to whether we should pursue, permit, or regulate such advances. We will explore scientific and ethical issues surrounding the control of fertility and infertility, fetal life, birth, and the neonatal period. Through informed dialogues, students will acquire a greater understanding and appreciation of these issues. The class will culminate in a formal report written by each student on selected topics in reproductive medicine.

Catherine Combelles
WAGS Spring 2007 Courses

WAGS 0200
Foundations in Women’s and Gender Studies
This course provides an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of women’s and gender studies. Examining gender in conjunction with the categories of race and class, the course foregrounds how inequalities are perpetuated in different fields of human activity and the creative ways in which groups have resisted these processes. The course is organized in sections to illuminate the effects of particular social institutions and structures on our gendered lives. Each section will introduce a broad overview of feminist interventions in different fields of inquiry. Cumulatively, the course reveals the importance of gender as an analytical category to understand social reality and to comprehend important areas of culture.
3 hrs. lect/disc.  SOC CMP, Sujata Moorti

WAGS/ENAM 0254 American Women Poets
We will examine the rich tradition of lyric poetry by women in the U.S. Beginning with the Puritan Anne Bradstreet, we continue to the 19th century and Emily Dickinson, along with the formidable line of “poetesses” who dominated the popular poetry press in that era. We examine the female contribution to the Modernist aesthetic in figures like Millay, Moore, H.D. and Gertrude Stein; the transformation of modernist ideals by Bishop, Plath, Sexton, and Rich; and, among the postmodernists, Lyn Hejinian and Susan Howe.
3 hrs. lect./disc. LIT NOR USA, Brett Millier

WAGS/SOAN 0314
Sociology of Heterosexuality
Most people believe that heterosexuality is natural or rooted in biology and so never look very closely at it as a product of culture. In this course we will examine the artifacts, institutions, rituals, and ideologies that construct heterosexuality and the heterosexual person in American culture. We will also pay close attention to how heterosexuality works alongside other forms of social power, especially gender, race, and class. SOC NOR USA Laurie Essig

WAGS/ENAM 0372
Gender and the South Asian Diaspora
In this course we will trace social, political, and economic experiences as well as the aesthetic expressions of South Asians dispersed around the world. Beginning with a theoretical exploration of the concept of diaspora, we delineate the historical specificity of the subcontinental experience. The key topics we will consider are labor, the politics of gender and sexuality, cultural production of desi identity, and religion. The course will include literary texts, films, art, and multimedia production. Some of the authors we will consider are: Anita Rau Badami, Jhumpa Lahiri, Shyam Selvadurai, and M. G. Vassanji. The films will include “Bhaji on the Beach,” “My Beautiful Laundrette,” and “My Son the Fanatic.” LIT AAL OTH CMP Sujata Moorti, Yumna Siddiqi

WAGS/SOAN 0337 Resisting Women: Ethnographies of Women’s Activism in Global Context
In this course we will examine global feminisms and women’s resistance using ethnographies of transnational and national sites. From factory workers to activist sex workers we will look at the changing positions of women in global sites of work, family, and political activism. We will attempt to answer the following questions: How can we understand feminisms across cultural and national borders? Which feminist issues translate across borders and which do not? What are the differences between resistance and political activism? How has globalization changed local political struggles? Limited places available for students to meet the college writing requirement.
3 hrs. lect./disc. SOC OTH AAL, Linda White

WAGS/ECON 0427 Feminist Economics: Gender, Economics and Social Provisioning
The aim of this course is to gain a deeper understanding of gender issues and economic theory, with particular focus on definitions of what constitutes work from a global perspective, the impact of globalization, and the relationship between social provisioning and social justice. The course will explore these topics, challenging mainstream economic perspectives that treat women as invis-
ible, economic outcomes as purely a matter of choice, and economic theory as objective and unbiased. This course examines contemporary critiques of gender inequality in economic theory, life and policy-making, offering an alternative framework to explore arrangements surrounding economic provisioning.

ECON 250 or ECON 255 or by approval
Ann Mari May

**WAGS 0464 Rethinking the East West Divide: Connections Across Feminisms**

Feminism has often been construed as a western social movement, and therefore not particularly applicable to women’s situations in other parts of the world. This view of feminism assumes the existence of two relatively homogenous, discrete blocks - the “East” and the “West” - and often posits the relationship between the two as one of resistance, in which the former attempts to defend its “culture” against ever-increasing encroachment by the latter. A closer social and cultural analysis of two national feminisms representing each of these locations will serve to challenge this assumption. More specifically, a cross-cultural comparison of Japanese and French feminisms will highlight commonalities between specific segments of the two movements.

3 hrs. sem CMP, Linda White, W. Poulin-Deltour

**WAGS/GRMN 0228 Women’s Fictions in German-Speaking Countries**

This course provides an overview of women’s cultural productions from the Weimar period to Reunification and explores issues of gender, female authorship, personal and national identity, and the politicization of the private sphere within the German cultural context. Required texts include May Opitz, *Showing Our Colors*, Ingeborg Bachmann, *The Thirtieth Year*, Christa Wolf, *What Remains*, Lukens and Rosenberg, *Daughters of Eve*, Sue-Ellen Case, ed., *The Divided Homeland*. 3 hrs. lect./disc. LIT SOC EUR (in English)

Roger Russi

**NEW! NEW! NEW!**

**Women’s and Gender Studies Program**

**Gensler Travel Fund**

The Gensler Travel Fund is designed to promote student research and conference participation. The travel grant will be available to students who want to participate in a conference exploring issues pertaining to women, gender and/or sexuality up to an amount of $250.00 and who at the time of travel have completed or are enrolled in at least one course in Women’s and Gender Studies.

Students seeking funds to participate in conferences should apply by November 1 for fall travel and April 1 for spring travel. The application should include a conference schedule, the travel dates, a budget and a statement explaining how conference participation will further academic work.

**WAGS/SPAN 0364 Educating Women in the Spanish Golden Age**

In this course we will study literary works about the educational discourse developed for women in the Hispanic world of the 16th and 17th centuries. Through narrative, drama, poetry, and art, we will examine the pedagogy for the positioning of women in religious, political, philosophical, and literary life. We will also concentrate on the subversive strategies used by women to respond to these discourses. Authors will include: Juan Luis Vives, Fray Luis de León, Huarte de San Juan, Teresa of Avila, María de Zayas, Calderón de la Barca, Lope de Vega, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

LIT EUR
Patricia Saldarriaga

**Spring Courses with a Feminist Perspective**

**PHIL 0214 Science and Society**

**MUSC 0223 The History of Black Music**
We are here today, Class of 2006, for the cane. It’s true. Who here doesn’t remember the speech delivered to us during convocation freshman year? We all sat in Mead Chapel as a replica of Gamaliel Painter’s Cane was passed around, and those of us fortunate enough held it for one brief, ethereal moment. At that moment, we knew that we were holding a symbol of the patriarch – oh! I’m sorry! That was not supposed to be there. Excuse me. That was a typo. That was a typo, really! – we were holding our honor and our dream. (…)

Until this day, and possibly forever, Middlebury College will be our journey’s foremost stop. We will each be handed the cane, which we have transformed into our own unique individual symbol. We shaped and molded this seemingly inflexible ordinary and wooden object into one that now has the identity of its holder. The canes may all look the same, yet within each one lies your unique vitality, your aspirations and your future. Don’t ever forget the importance of the cane, and let it forever be a remainder to you of your ability to affect positive change in this world and, most importantly, in yourself.

Recently, there have been many articles in The Campus debating whether or not we’re an aesthetic group of individuals. Regardless of what people have written, myself included, I am certain that all of us have left an indelible mark on this campus and on the lives of those who have chosen to teach, mentor, and guide us over the last four years. With one another, we have shared the past, and I know that we share a bright future.

T.S. Eliot wrote, “In my end is my beginning.” And so here we are on the brink of yet another beginning. Which path will we choose?

We must not be pedestrian with our thoughts. We have a responsibility to think both locally and globally consciously. We are a privileged few, and we have an obligation to share our knowledge and our spirit with our global community. Our education has been empowering, to say the very least, and I stand here, confident with the words I believe, that you will each let the world change you. And you, in turn, will change the world. Whether it has taken four years or more, for those of you have chosen “professional student” as your major, you have had the opportunity to create and to mold to your specifications the unique individual that sits in this audience today.

Rilke once wrote in “Letters to a Young Poet,” “You are so young. So much before all beginning.” And I would like to beg of you as well as I can to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart, and to try and love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don’t search for the answers which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now and perhaps then, some day far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.

The journey towards self-discovery is in living life itself, embracing that which you do not completely understand. I urge you, Class of 2006, maintain your strength as you continue to change, and be prepared. You may wake up one day and find yourself as the giant bug described in Kafka’s “Metamorphosis.”

Embrace the journey. Stay true to your resolve. Search your inner being and cling to your corporal being. Persevere and do so irrespective of this world and your own ever-changing realities. Escape definitions. Escape labels. Escape societal pressures that encourage conformity. Do not relinquish your steadfastness, your power, your indomitable, impenetrable self. And, when in doubt, take your cane and lean on it for a moment, and remember that at one time in your life, your friends, here at Middlebury College, were and always will be your support system – your cane.
“Bad As I Wanna Be: A Hip Hop Symposium”

On September 13, 14 and 15, the Women’s and Gender Studies Program and Chellis House co-sponsored a conference that examined the role of gender in this urban cultural movement.

In the three-day symposium, a wide variety of voices were heard: Students weighed in on the derogatory language of many hip hop lyrics and subsequent stereotyping in a panel discussion; filmmaker Tanji Gilliam showed her movie “That Crack in the Concrete;” student groups such as Riddim and GT/VT Breakers performed in a show; Professor Larry Hamberlin taught the basics of hip hop in a music workshop; and NYU law student Asha Jennings inspired a large crowd with her account of how she combatted hip hop’s misogynist message at Spelman College.

Here’s an excerpt from Greg Tate’s keynote address:
Stanley Crouch once told me my real subject was not music but mythology and I readily concurred. The mystery school, oh yeah i could get down with that concept quick fast. All that’s not history is not necessarily hallucination either. Phenomonology matters and so does bluesology which Gil Scott Heron defined as the science of how things feel. Like of late I’ve really been feeling a poem by Ishmael Reed where he say ‘I AM OUTSIDE OF HISTORY/ IT LOOKS HUNGRY. I AM INSIDE HISTORY IT’S HUNGER THAN I THOUGHT’(…)

Post 911 post napster post gangsta, ain this a blip, the good ol’ the boombip, faintly heard as if sunk down deep in the belly of a conglomerated whale. Reluctantly but inevitably this world reveals its real hunger. Not for your mind your body or your soul but for that most desperate of personal corners, your dreamtime, your capacity for desire, not even what you’ll admit to craving but for desire, the thing itself, as if it were a removed organ an already devoured orange an achingly recalled orgasm double clicked commodified, your soul, your subconscious up to be sold back to you on ebay. (…)

What happened last century stays last century from Malcolm X to Marvin Gaye, from Che Guevara to Chaka Khan, from Charles Mingus to Assaata Shakur. Like hiphop none of that will ever happen again. Blink and you missed it. Born too late to grip it in your hands and you get little more than mythic residue. And all this is a good thing because hey the dead need to move on, too. (…)

I could tell you much about the 20th century Black men and their prophetic musics their ops and wops, their unks and hops and their black rocks. About how after the civil war in the great cities of the dreamland, America the hateful and uglyful, this cat named Epicanthropus Erectus stood up on two legs and thought the sound world just might be the the only world that could contain his multitudes and attitudes, his bid for whatever small measure of nirvana he was entitled to. How heaven was a place he understood to be, even if temporarily, only a few cryptic coptic verses away, a place fallen angels might ascend not on wings of song but hot flowing cascades of wickedly witty couplets. And these brothers thought, okay we’ll leave it for lesser men their bigger armies and longer range guns to find their manhood in stolen lands and native genocides. Our champions they decided need only give us a strong rhyme to step to, something for the people to relate to, the first star you better follow it because its the R.
Most Hip Hop feminists believe that the needs of the Hip Hop generation require new strategies and different voices. They have a strong relationship to the “self” and they connect their personal narratives with theoretical underpinnings and critique. They hold themselves and their peers responsible for effecting change in the present and future by encouraging people to recognize and combat their own complicity and complacency. In terms of rap music and Hip Hop culture they want to find ways to move beyond counting the amount of times a particular rapper says the word “bitch” or “hoe” to a focus on what they consider to be larger issues and concerns. For example, they also want to begin to complicate understandings of women’s complicity in the objectification of women especially as it pertains to video-hoes. And as Joan Morgan reminds us, “the focus of Black feminists has got to change. We can’t afford to keepexpending energy on banal discussion of sexism in rap when sexism is only part of a huge set of problems.” They are concerned with and spend a lot of time writing about Black women’s relationships with Black men. They want to encourage a dialogue between Black men and women, men rappers and women etc.

**Excerpt from Murray Foreman’s talk “Hood Work in Boston”**

A trend identified in the *New York Times* of March 20, 2006 suggests that a pool of poorly educated black men becoming ever more disconnected from the mainstream society coincides with the ubiquitous and growing presence of what I call **Hood Workers**. Those youth advocates and members of urban teen agencies. (...) Hood Workers are often in their twenties and thirties, usually with some post-secondary education in social work, education or liberal arts. Increasingly, however, they are from the hoods they serve (...). They also constitute a vanguard in the processes of political sensitization and activist education among urban youth. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence indicating that these youth agencies (...) are increasingly working in and through hip-hop to reach the urban teen cohort.

For urban youth, hip-hop provides the dominant discursive framework for an understanding of social ills and responses to them. (…)

The strategies and methods among Hood Workers vary, and at one level these groups are hoping only to get some of the youth in the door, off the streets (...); that would be the minimum objective. To this end, there are teen-led performance events, art displays, poetry and spoken word jams, and dance-offs that involve teens from localized neighborhoods.

The secondary challenge is to get boyz -- and girlz -- from the hood thinking together about the possible roots of the social crises that most impact their lives and those around them and to help devise ways of responding effectively. (…) In my experience, some agencies express a vague (...) concept of empowerment, linking it to issues of esteem and optimism. This (...) can be overly reductive, placing the sole onus for change and improvement on the individual. It also assumes disempowerment of a kind and intensity that may not always be accurate, even among young kids from the hood who, it is commonly asserted, have no material resources or future prospects to speak of.

Other Hood Work agencies, such as Teen Empowerment and the Urban Youth Program, have a more programmatic approach to teaching activist principles and leadership skills to young people. Teen Empowerment’s mission, for example, has gradually shifted from helping mediate and maintain a gang truce in Boston’s South End and Lower Roxbury neighborhoods to teaching youths how to advocate for better schools while fostering relationships (with police, employers, or other influential entities) that will help to heal and strengthen their neighborhoods. Though its approach can seem confrontational or antagonistic to those on the receiving end of the critiques, Teen Empowerment is generally respected among civic leadership and within the Boston Public School Board for the level of commitment the agency has demonstrated in its efforts to provide youth with the skills for self-advocacy.
“Black women’s self-representation in rap results in complex, often contradictory and multifaceted depictions of Black womanhood.” (Hill Collins)

“All the myths and stereotypes used to characterize black womanhood have their roots in negative anti-woman mythology. Yet they form the basis of most critical inquiry into the nature of black female experience.” (bell hooks)

As hooks and Hill Collins demonstrate contradictory, multifaceted myths, stereotypes, and self-depictions of Black womanhood are rooted in negative anti-woman social constructions. The fact that they are social constructions does not lessen the reality of their impact on the treatment of Black women and how we experience the world, hence their use in so much inquiry into Black female experience and knowledge making. In today’s world, Joan Morgan (…) has argued that we need a feminism with a hip-hop sensibility “brave enough to fuck with the grays”, that does the following:
- Acknowledges the benefits of objectified female sexuality, male chauvinism, and patriarchy, (e.g. complicity of video hos/or the right to be a video ho)
- Explores the “powerful richness and delicious complexities” inherent in being black girls in “the post-Civil Rights, post-feminist, post soul, hip-hop generation”
- Having a sense of entitlement (birth control, legalized abortion, voting, educational and workforce access on the level with men)
- Having no faith in long-term commitments or idealistic notions
- Having an identity that is influenced by the various Black styled psyches of our past and present
- Admits our fear of not being attractive to men when we have escaped being identified as chickenhead/powerless/dependent females
- Admits the damage that we do to each other as Black women/take responsibility for ourselves and our actions (…)

With an aura so critical to the personhood of the Black female, her literacies have, by necessity, developed to make a better world for herself and her loved ones. Black women have special knowledge and develop special ways of (inter)acting, representing, and being. African American female literacies refer to the concept that African American cultural identities, social locations, and social practices influence the ways that members of this discourse group make meaning and assert themselves sociopolitically in subordinate and as well as official contexts. This definition includes but goes beyond making meaning out of and producing print and language in their strict and broadly defined senses, to include the contemporary context rooted in technological dominance which promotes multimodal meaning making. African American literacies include vernacular resistance arts and cultural productions that are created to carve out free spaces in oppressive locations such as the streets, the workplace, or the airwaves to name a few. (…) By referring to African American females as a discourse group, I am referring to the social histories, practices, and ideas that influence ways of “behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of [Black womanhood]…by [Black females]... [Black women’s] Discourses are ways of being ‘people like us.’
The Drue Gensler Prize, 2006, was awarded to **Moreen O’Brien**, a Japanese Studies and Theatre Department double major. Her thesis, “Women Playing Women: The Secret Power of the Musumeyaku in the All-Female Takarazuka Revue Company,” offers a rich and fascinating account of a contemporary Japanese theater group. O’Brien chose to study the seemingly contradictory phenomenon of women playing female roles in an all-woman theater company and elucidated the complex and fascinating ways in which femininity is performed. This role-playing is dependent on the nature of the male lead in any given play, the thesis argues. O’Brien offered a very sophisticated and persuasive reading of how the femininity displayed by the women shifts depending on the “cultural context” of the play, say 18th-century Korea or the Austria evoked in the “Sound of Music.” “Women Playing Women” took on a very dense topic and offered a range of provocative insights about the nature of femininity in cross-cultural settings as it is mediated through Japanese popular culture. O’Brien collected a vast amount of the data during her study abroad. She not only performed a textual analysis of the plays but also offered a vibrant account of the primarily female audience’s response to these depictions. The committee members were very impressed by the range of Japanese sources O’Brien used. They concurred that her thesis not only enriched our understanding of women’s lives in other cultures, but also revealed very evocatively how the practice of “becoming a woman” was differently conjugated around the world. Professor Carol Cavanough directed the thesis.

Over ten theses were nominated for the Gensler Prize this year, with two written in French. The committee members felt that O’Brien’s thesis fit the demands of the Gensler award because it addressed a key concern of women’s lives on a global level. One committee member found that it “is explicitly about the ways in which women’s female identity is produced in relation to men/masculinity”. Another member found that the thesis offered a fascinating account of the manner in which popular culture helps produce and re-define gender roles. Others remarked on the wealth of research and theoretical sophistication O’Brien brought to the project. All of the committee members were not only impressed by her skillful presentation but also her ability to tease out the diversity of Japanese understandings of womanhood. In addition, the committee members were uniformly pleased with the range of submissions they received, which explored women’s lives in countries as diverse as Senegal, Shanghai, Singapore as well as women’s contributions to the creative arena around the world.

The WAGS 2006 theses were **Lauren Curatolo**’s “Breaking through the CUNT Matrix; Entering the Hymen: Algerian Women and the Virginity Value” and **Katharine Perekslis** “In Her Eyes: The Female Gaze in French Cinema.”

The following theses also related to women’s and gender studies issues in the 2005/2006 academic year:

- Kimberly Bowker, “Reading Her Cursive: One Woman’s Life in a Utah Mining Town.”
- Pauley Tedoff, “Marriage by Correspondence: A Sociocultural Exploration of Matrimony between Swiss Men and Mauritian Women.”
- Niyama Rai, “Prostitution in Nepal.”
- Julie Gross, “Exposures.”
2006 Feminist of the Year Awards

At the traditional Chellis House Celebration on Mother’s Day last May, Linda White, Jennifer Herrera, Assia Elgouacem (‘06) and Zohra Safi (‘09) garnered the “Feminist of the Year” Award.

Last academic year, four remarkable women were distinguished with the “Feminist of the Year” Award. **Linda White**, a visiting professor in the Sociology/Anthropology Department, garnered the “Faculty Feminist of the Year Award.” “Her sensibility as a feminist is deeply rooted and absolutely influences the way she frames and teaches anthropology,” noted Jaye Williams, visiting professor in the Theater Department. “Her dedication to women’s issues has been many years long, and despite her being new to the Middlebury community, that deeply rooted sensibility has no choice but to serve the students here in the years to come,” she continued.

**Jennifer Herrera**, assistant in Academic Administration and at the Office of Institutional Diversity, was given the “Staff Feminist of the Year Award.” “Jennifer Herrera is such an asset to so many students,” noted student Liz Lyon (‘07), “She was very helpful with organizing the symposium for Feminist Action in Middlebury, and, in general, she is extremely supportive of students and feminism.”

Contrary to tradition, two students were distinguished with the “Student Feminist of the Year Award.” Philosophy and mathematics major **Assia Elgouacem** (‘06) was honored for her work as co-president of Feminist Action at Middlebury for two years. Together, with WAGS major Lauren Curatolo (‘06), she produced a video “Algeria, the Free” on women’s shelters in her native country. **Zohra Safi** (‘09) was the second student award recipient. Zohra is the first female student from Afghanistan to study at Middlebury. In her second semester on campus, she started a student group “Women and Global Peace.” “Zohra is a wonderful advocate for educational opportunities for women,” said Barbara Marlow, Associate Director for International Admissions. “As she is from a country where there is little support for what she is doing, it has taken a particularly hard-working, dedicated, determined person to face so many challenges. She has brought here a wonderful attitude and willingness to jump in and lead. The work she did to make the ‘Remembering Afghanistan Symposium’ possible is just one case in point.”
Summer Projects

Last summer, students Noor Puthawala, Zohra Safi, and Liz Lyon took on Texas, India, and Afghanistan to effect positive change in the world.

Noor Puthawala (ʻ07), WAGS major:
I spent my summer as an intern for a small nonprofit organization in Ahmedabad, India called “Ahmedabad Women’s Action Group.” AWAG is dedicated to raising awareness about domestic violence. The organization not only educates women, but also informs the police force, government officials, and the population at large. All over India, thousands of women die each year of injuries sustained in domestic violence attacks, but since DV is not considered a crime, the perpetrators are rarely brought to justice. AWAG’s mission is therefore very important. While I was there, I participated in many forums on domestic violence. I also traveled to the rural areas of Northern India and helped train officials. I also helped create an annual report to be reviewed by Oxfam, AWAG’s parent company.

Zohra Safi (ʻ09), WAGS major:
I worked in my native Kabul with the “Initiative to Educate Afghan Women,” a non-profit organization that helps secure scholarships to American universities and colleges for Afghan women. I interviewed applicants and also helped current IEAW students with the travel logistics. 13 more women were chosen this year!

In July and August, I led “Test of English as a Foreign Language” (TOEFL) training sessions for prospective IEAW students. The training was held in the Women’s Garden of Kabul. The training was designed not merely to teach students skills for TOEFL, but to create a friendly study environment and acquaint students with academic life in the U.S. Most of the students held 9-to-5 jobs and came to the Women’s Garden after work. It was very empowering to see how the women were leading their own independent lives at a young age of 18 or 20 years. They shoulder huge responsibilities of providing for their families with their salaries. At the same time, they want to get an education for themselves and secure a better place in society.

I also worked on an independent project for which I interviewed women who had suffered a lot in their lives. Usually Afghan women are stereotyped as very passive and subservient, but I met many women who are real “stars” in their societies and families. Despite the hardships, they are very determined, strong and positive about their future. One of the women I interviewed was Masouda Wahab. She was 15 years old and a refugee in Pakistan when she first started to work to support her family of nine. She was earning the equivalent to $18 a month. Now she is 27 and has her own small business in Kabul. There are thousands of women like Masouda who inspire by their example.

Liz Lyon (ʻ07), economics major and Melissa Whitehead (ʻ08), geology major:
We went to the The Southern Girls Conference in Houston, Texas. This conference is open to anyone who is interested in issues associated with the Southeastern United States, social justice, activism, and the empowerment of young women. It is run by two high school girls from Houston. Their main mission is to begin making a difference by spreading knowledge on controversial topics and provides advice on and effective methods for activism.

Liz Lyon (ʻ07), economics major:
Last summer, I joined the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement (TDPAM) and learned what it really means to say that the death penalty is racist, anti-poor, and inhumane. I helped organize protests and rallies; sat silently in courtrooms; stood silently outside executions; wrote and read poetry about police brutality, whiteness, and the underlying prejudices that negate so-called impartial justice; and felt angry and inspired and desperate and hopeful.
Population Politics: Old Maps, New Terrain

On October 24, Dr. Betsy Hartman, the director of the Population and Development Program at Hampshire College, gave a talk on the dangers inherent in population control. Here is an abstract:

Population growth rates are falling around the world faster than anticipated: the UN estimates that in 2072, world population will reach around 9 billion, and fall to 8.3 in 2175. Currently, there is a demographic momentum of young people in reproductive years, but the trend is toward what some call a population “implosion.” [Let me stress a few points:]

First, population control has not gone away. Although the women’s movements won important gains at the 1994 Cairo population conference in terms of policy reform, population control programs remain all too alive and well, distorting the delivery of family planning services. Ironically, the strength of anti-abortion movement nationally and internationally, of abstinence-only and the global “gag rule” imposed by the Bush administration [i.e. that development organizations will be refused funding if they advocate birth control methods and abortion], mean that supporters of international family planning often resort to population alarmism to try to win conservative support. Many do this strategically and do not even believe their own arguments. The anti-abortion movement thus helps to keep population control alive.

Second, whether population policies aim to reduce birth rates or to increase them, their main instrument is control of women’s bodies. Race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (...) of course help to determine whose fertility is encouraged and whose discouraged – which women are targeted with risky contraceptives like Depo Provera and Norplant, which are denied access to birth control and abortion, which are wooed and which spurred by the marketers of the new reproductive technologies. Contraceptive development and use is still very much influenced by population control motives. There is a persistent emphasis on contraceptive efficacy rather than safety. Depo, IUD, Implanon are championed instead of barrier methods like the condom.

Third, population policies and ideologies are an intrinsic part of political economy. In the present neo-liberal system where corporations are weakening the role of the state, population control is integrally linked to the assault on public health and social welfare, privatization, immigration restriction, and the appropriation of common resources. Today, whole categories and communities of people are deemed surplus and expendable populations. Millions of deaths in Africa from HIV/AIDS, conflicts in the Congo and Sudan are missing from neoliberal spreadsheets and stock exchanges. Here at home, thousands of poor African-Americans and immigrants were left to drown on the streets of New Orleans during hurricane Katrina. In neoliberal calculations, it is rich consumers who count, rich consumers and young workers. I believe we need to look much more carefully at evolving demographic discourses around age. Increasingly, older people are being framed as a social and economic burden – are they becoming the next surplus population, underserving of pensions, housing and health care?

Fourth, fears of over-population still distort environmental thinking in the U.S. and are an obstacle to building a broad-based movement for environmental justice. Blaming environmental degradation on overpopulation lets the real culprits off the hook. In terms of resource consumption alone, the richest fifth of the world’s people consume 66 times as much as the poorest fifth. The U.S. is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases responsible for global warming – and the least willing to do anything about it. And just who is destroying the rain forest? While poor peasants sometimes play a role, corporate ranching, mining and logging operations are chiefly responsible for tropical deforestation. Worldwide militaries are major agents of environmental destruction, but militarism is ignored by the mainstream environmental movement. War ravages natural landscapes and military toxics pollute land, air and water. Nuclear weapons, reactors and waste pose the most deadly environmental threat to the planet. Imagine what a different world it would be if all the resources invested in producing deadly armaments went instead to environmental restoration and
the development of cleaner, greener energy sources and technologies.

Focusing on population also blinds us to the positive role many poor people play in protecting the environment. In many parts of the world, small farmers, especially women, are the main preservers of plant biodiversity. Yet women’s fertility is targeted in many conservation programs as a chief cause of environmental degradation.

We need to be vigilant in days ahead on how pressing environmental issues like global warming are framed. Those seeking to shift the blame for global warming from Northern consumption and production patterns to poor people in the South often make use of alarmist population arguments such as images of starving waves of global warming refugees washing up on our shores. For example, a 2003 Pentagon-commissioned abrupt climate change scenario argues that reductions of the carrying capacity in overpopulated areas could cause increasing wars, disease, starvation and ultimately migration to the North. This kind of threat narrative incorporates women into an overall menacing portrait of the Third World poor and reinforces the authority of national security agencies over civilian initiatives to tackle climate change.

**Fifth, population policies and ideologies are integrally tied to the politics of national security and national and religious identity.** Playing on fears of scarcity – ‘not enough resources to go around’ – and fears of being overwhelmed – ‘too few of us, too many of them,’ politicians, policymakers and media pundits strategically deploy alarms about population to justify increasing repression and militarism and to whip up hatred of the enemy ‘Other’. Examples abound:

In racist terms. Too many Palestinian babies, too few Israeli ones. Too many Muslims, too few Hindus. And here in the U.S. – too many Latinos.

In attacks on immigrants. Too few white people, too many immigrants who are taking away ‘our’ jobs, destroying ‘our’ pristine environments and polluting ‘our’ cultural purity.

In the so-called ‘war on terror’, where national security analysts tell us it is a ‘youth bulge’ of too many young men in a population who are biologically prone to violence that is a major cause of conflict in the Middle East.

This conveniently diverts attention from decades of disastrous U.S. and European foreign policies supporting authoritarian regimes. There is a parallel here with the super-predator theory of the 1990s which blamed rising crime rates on high urban populations of young men of color. In reality, however, crime was coming down in the period. There was no evidence for the theory, but it caught on, providing an ideological rationale for the massive build-up of the U.S. prison-industrial complex.

Population alarm is thus profoundly implicated in the production of violence, whether it is armed violence or the structural violence of poverty and discrimination.

As world population growth rates continue to decline and more countries experience negative population growth, I believe these kinds of arguments will be increasingly deployed. Alarm will no longer center as much on runaway world population growth as on the scarcity and social unrest caused by too many of the wrong sorts of people and too few of the right ones. New eugenic and strategic demographics will complement the expansion of biotechnology, the shrinking of the welfare state, and the rise of fundamentalist forces.

**What does this mean in terms of activism?**

I believe we need to be more vigilant than ever about the construction, circulation and deployment of ideas about population. Ideas matter. They are not innocent or neutral.

Let me give you [one] example. In 1972 the Club of Rome published its famous study Limits to Growth. Based on highly problematic and now thoroughly discredited computer models, this study painted a nightmarish vision of the future in which population growth would exhaust available resources. Anthropologist Susan Greehalgh has carefully documented how this study exerted a major influence on Chinese scientists and policymakers and was instrumental in the development of the coercive one child policy in China.

Ideas matter. Ideas are not innocent or neutral. We must challenge and dismantle not only population control programs but population control worldviews at the same time that we work to ensure women’s access to a full range of reproductive health services, including the right to safe, legal abortion, and create and follow our own feminist maps to a more just and peaceful world.
The Power of Connectivity
CSO Director Jaye Roseborough was interviewed by planet.out, the leading global media and entertainment company exclusively serving the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Read an excerpt of an article by Kirk Snyder:

(…) Jaye Roseborough has built her career on connectivity. As executive director of the career services office at Middlebury College in Vermont, she not only embraces connectivity as part of her approach to leadership with her staff, but she is also passionate about teaching Middlebury students about its immeasurable value as “career fuel.”

Out since falling in love with another woman in graduate school, Jaye told me that coming to terms with her sexual orientation put her whole life in perspective. “When the light bulb came on, everything else just fell into place,” she said.

While succeeding in a career path in higher education, following what appeared to be a well-planned road that would eventually lead to her becoming dean of students, Jaye began teaching classes on the power of networking at the Hartford, Conn., YWCA. There, she recognized the power of connectivity, including the importance of bringing together other successful lesbian professionals.

In addition to her full-time career in higher education, she suddenly found herself with a burgeoning career-consulting practice. Finding herself at a crossroads, she decided to follow a new path. Striking out on her own with her then-partner, she launched a career consulting practice, quickly signing clients ranging from large corporations to highly placed downsized executives who were looking for new careers. With a degree in counseling psychology coupled with her passion for connecting and networking, she quickly grew her career consulting practice into a five-office firm.

Jaye told me, “At the time, in the 1980’s, there weren’t many out-of-the-closet lesbians or gay men in corporate America. In fact, straight colleagues in the field told me that being out would be the death of my business.”

Instead, Jaye believed in the value of her own identity and what she could uniquely bring to her clients. She told me she never found her own authenticity detrimental to her business. “I believe my ability to successfully connect people superseded any corporate homophobia that might have worked against me. I also believe that my professional talents directly stem from who I am as a human being.”

What Jaye experienced in the 1980s and 1990s is a direct reflection of the tremendous impact that connectivity is making in today’s workplace. Consider that employees in G Quotient environments specifically note that having the freedom to connect with the information, resources and people they need to do a better job empowers them to be successful. It also increases opportunities for professional advancement because it adds to their individual level of expertise. In other words, connectivity is perceived by employees to enhance their abilities while also adding value to their resumes.

As corporate America faced tremendous downsizing in the 1990s, Jaye once again came to her own career crossroads. As her thriving company was becoming more focused on the harsh realities of downsizing, she again listened to her own authenticity and sold her business.

According to Jaye, “It was no longer a labor of love. Downsizing, which was once about compassion, became more about ‘get out.’ I detested that mentality.” After taking a year off, she accepted a consulting engagement with Wellesley College to build a first-class full-service career services program for Wellesley alumnae. While working with Wellesley on this ambitious project, Jaye said, “I remembered what that ‘labor of love’ felt like.” After achieving success on her own, she was now ready to come “home.”

Accepting a full-time position as associate director of the Center for Work and Service, and director of the alumnae career services program at Wellesley that she was hired to create, she was recruited three years later by Middlebury to repeat her success on that campus. At Middlebury for the last seven years, Jaye lives the principle of connectivity every day of her life.

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The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is an international campaign originating from the first Women’s Global Leadership Institute at Rutgers University in 1991. Participants chose the dates, November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and December 10, International Human Rights Day, in order to symbolically link violence against women and human rights and to emphasize that such violence is a violation of human rights. This 16-day period also highlights other significant dates including November 29, International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, December 1, World AIDS Day, and December 6, which marks the Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre. This year’s theme is: “Celebrate 16 Years of 16 Days: Advance Human Rights -- End Violence Against Women.”

Middlebury College had the special privilege to launch the “16 Days Campaign” as early as November 6. On this day, Minou Tavárez Mirabal and Dedé Mirabal spoke about “Domestic Violence and Political Participation” to a large audience in Mead Chapel. Minou Tavárez Mirabal is the daughter and Dedé Mirabal the sister of the three “butterflies,” Minerva, Patria, and Maria Teresa Mirabal, who were murdered by dictator Rafael Trujillo’s regime in 1960 and in whose honor the United Nations designated November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women. Our next newsletter will feature an in-depth account of their visit.

As participants in this campaign, we have organized a number of events:

**Global AIDS Awareness Panel:**
A panel discussion with Glen Elder (Professor & Chair of the Geography Department, UVM), Terje Anderson (founder of Vermont CARES), Bob Cluss (Professor of Chemistry & Biochemistry, Middlebury College), and Alicia Battle (Director of Health Education, Middlebury College) examining the local and international impact of AIDS

**Friday, December 1, 4:30 p.m.,**
**Robert A. Jones (‘59) Conference Room**

**“Disposable Women: Factory Workers on the U.S.-Mexican Border”**
Lecture by Gabriela Baeza Ventura, Assistant Professor of Hispanic Literature, University of Houston

Since 1993, over 370 women have been killed in Ciudad Juarez on the U.S.-Mexican border, many after suffering sexual abuse and torture; and murderers showing similar characteristics have spread to the city of Chihuahua. Approximately 100 cases are suspected to be the work of one or more serial murderers – the rest are most likely murders that flourish in a city where women can be killed with complete impunity. The Mexican and American authorities have done little to investigate or prosecute those responsible.

**Monday, December 4, 4:30 p.m.,**
**Robert A. Jones (‘59) Conference Room**

**Do you have questions about breastfeeding?**
Are you breastfeeding and returning to work?
Are you pregnant and thinking about breastfeeding?

**Breastfeeding Mom’s Group**
2nd Tuesday of the month
5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
College Street Children’s Center
228 College Street, Middlebury
For questions, call Lori (388-5741) or Stacey (989-1309)

**Fatema Chebchoub**
1953-2006

We are saddened to inform you that Fatema Chebchoub (53), a distinguished Moroccan actress and filmmaker who was working towards her doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania, drowned in rocky waves in Morroco last August. Fatema gave a presentation at Middlebury entitled “The Oral Transmission of Cultural Traditions” last spring. “Fatema was an Arab woman who was proud of being so, and not someone who chose the easier path out,” says senior Adriana Qubaia. “She believed in challenging our Arab culture, but not dismissing it.”