



# Women's Studies Program Newsletter *Volume 8, Spring 2009*

Boston University  
Women's Studies Program

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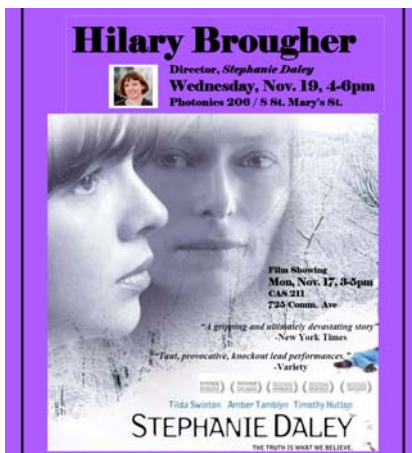
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## In our dreams?

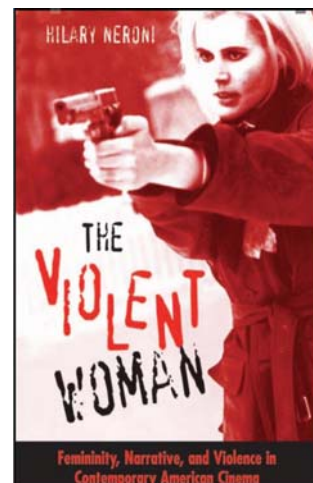
### Overcoming race and gender bias in U.S. politics

What would a U.S. presidential election look like if candidates were judged on the content of their characters and the wisdom of their policies rather than on gender and racial stereotypes? How far are we now from that goal, and what will it take to get there? One hundred people gathered on October 28, 2008 in the Howard Thurman Center to discuss race and gender bias in politics. The panelists from L to R: Professor Diane Balsler, Williette Nyanue, Melanie Harvey, Professor Linda Heywood and Heather Holcomb. The event was sponsored by the Women's Studies Program, the African American Studies Program and the Howard Thurman Center.



With funding from the Humanities Foundation we were able to bring to campus **Director Hilary Brougher** who discussed her movie **Stephanie Daley** with WS students, faculty and guests.

We were also able to bring **Hilary Neroni**, Program Director of Film and Television Studies at the University of Vermont, whose talk, "Terror, Torture, and Feminine Masquerade: The Case of *Alias* vs. *24*," raised many provocative questions from the audience. The talk was later broadcast on WBUR's "World of Ideas."





The recent presidential election mobilized new as well as seasoned activists and elicited tremendous energy, intelligence, and creativity. At our event we discussed how we could deploy such resources to tackle the many problems that still face our communities and our country. On January 27, 2009 a panel of students and faculty gathered for an intense discussion. Our panelists sitting from left to right: Professor Linda Heywood, Shelagh Mollohan, Professor Diane Balsler, Meaghan Falkner, Emily Calvin, Mark Jensen, and Williette Nyanue. Standing at podium Professor Deborah Belle. This event was sponsored by the WSP, African American Studies Program and the Howard Thurman Center.







**'Let Me Down Easy'**  
starring Anna Deavere Smith.



On September 23, WS students and faculty joined to witness Anna Deavere Smith's amazing one woman show. The students' reactions explain it all.

I honestly loved the Anna Deavere Smith performance. It was incredibly powerful and quite moving. I was wowed by the grace Anna demonstrated in moving from one character to another. I must say, one thing that stuck out for me was, during the talk after the show, when one of the panelists said that you don't find grace, but that grace finds you. I liked that :) Lolly Spindler

I found Smith's research and performance on the topic of grace to be both insightful and eloquent. I particularly enjoyed the way in which she brought the audience on, as she called it, "a journey about the meaning of grace," beginning first with what it meant to her personally and then expanding the definition to a global level. Grace certainly is a sentiment, or perhaps more precisely a sensation, that can be translated across cultures. This, for me, was the most powerful message I drew from Smith's inspiring performance. ~ Kristen Lawson



*Theatre Events*



The WSP surprised Professor Diane Balser with a birthday celebration on December 11. Afterward we hopped the bus and headed to the **Boston University School of Theatre's** rousing production of "**Lizzie Stranton,**" a modern version of the classic Greek comedy, Lysistrata. The directors and cast joined the audience in an interesting discussion before we headed back to BU.



*Women's Studies Brunch  
Beginning of the Semester*

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, the WS Minors, Faculty, Advisory Board, and friends welcomed Acting Director Deborah Belle and honored Professor Brenda McSweeney, (See page 7).



*End of the Semester Celebration*

On a warm April day the WS faculty and minors gathered together at Deborah Belle's home once again to celebrate a fabulous year, reminisce and plan for the future.







This year the WSP created the **Boston University Faculty Network for Women's Studies, Gender, and Sexuality**. This Network includes faculty whose teaching or research focuses on women's studies broadly construed, including work on gender and/or sexuality. It is aimed at promoting stronger relationships among interested faculty and identifying additional ways of supporting our colleagues' work. Over 150 Faculty members have joined the Faculty Network at this time. The first gathering of the Network was a meet and greet event held on Dec 2, 2008. Fifty faculty members from both the Charles River Campus and the Medical Campus attended. CAS Dean Virginia Sapiro welcomed the attendees and helped launch the new Network.



*Networking*

With the success of the first network, the **Graduate Student Network on Women's Studies, Gender, and Sexuality** was formed. This network was also developed to improve communication and collaborations among those who share research interests. The first gathering was held on April 27.





## Maria Mitchell, Astronomer, and the Sexing of Science



The astronomer Maria Mitchell was born in Nantucket in 1818, a time and place when girls were encouraged to pursue astronomy, botany, and other sciences. She achieved greatness in the 1840s, becoming the most famous woman scientist of her century. But soon afterwards the cultural meaning of science began to change, and Mitchell found herself growing old in a world hostile to scientific girls. As opportunities expand today for girls and women in science, it is helpful to recall that the cultural bias linking science to masculinity is not a timeless universal, but, in fact, a relatively recent creation. On March 17, 2009, **Renee Bergland**, Professor of English and Gender / Cultural Studies at Simmons College, elaborated on these points and more. This event was sponsored by the Women's Studies Program, Boston University Women in Science and Engineering (BU WISE), and Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics Women in Science.



## Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History



**Laurel Thatcher Ulrich**, Professor of History at Harvard University, Pulitzer Prize winning author, and MacArthur "Genius" Fellow, read from her recent book, **Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History**, in the Women's Resource Center on April 6, 2009. She signed copies of her book after a thoughtful question and answer session.





*Awards and Recognitions*



College of Arts and Sciences Dean Virginia Sapiro presented the **Sarah Joanne Davis Award** to the two women's studies minors most responsible for helping to create the new Women's Resource Center, **Mackie Welch** and **Carrie Chiusano**. Lana Forecast, Sarah Joanne Davis's sister, also spoke at the presentation. Dean of Students Kenneth Elmore, Dr. Beverly Brown, Professor Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, WS faculty, BU faculty, colleagues, students and friends were on hand to congratulate these extraordinary young women.



Photo credit: B. Murali

On July 31, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany awarded **Professor McSweeney** the **Order of Merit, 1<sup>st</sup> Class of the Federal Republic of Germany** in recognition of "outstanding services rendered to our country and to the international community." She was recognized for her work as the Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV), in particular for the successful relocation of the UNV headquarters from Geneva to Bonn in 1994. Lady Mayor of Bonn, Baerbel Dieckmann (L) and Professor Brenda McSweeney (R) are pictured at left. On May 6, Professor McSweeney was also recognized at the BU Faculty Awards Recognition Luncheon.

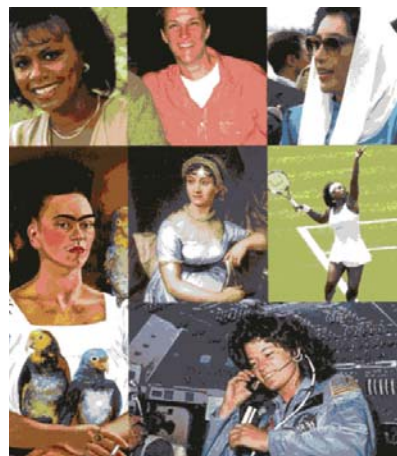


**Dr. Diane Balser** met with Members of **President-elect Obama's** Transition Team before the President took office in January. She was among invited leaders to participate in forums that advised the team on issues of importance to the incoming administration. Since then she has met with members of the Administration on issues pertaining to US foreign policy in the Middle East.



A new **Women's Studies Program brochure** was created this year. The beautiful brochure includes wonderful pictures of our students and faculty as well as pictures of some other remarkable women from history and the present day. The brochure addresses: What is Women's Studies? Is Women's Studies only for women? It discusses ways in which Women's Studies is valuable for career and valuable for life. Women's Studies courses and the requirements of the Women's Studies minor are listed as well.

Founded in 1990, and joined by Boston University in 2006, the **Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies** brings together faculty and students from eight Boston area universities for interdisciplinary, team-taught seminars and other intellectual and social events that integrate gender analysis and feminist theory. Our own WSP Acting Director Deborah Belle will teach "Gender and Poverty in the United States" with economist Randy Albelda (U. Mass. Boston) and sociologist Lisa Dodson (Boston College) in the spring of 2010.



Build your future,  
shape the world.

BU Women's Studies Program



### SAVE THE DATE

The first faculty panel created by the new **Boston University Faculty Network for Women's Studies, Gender, and Sexuality**, will be held on September 3, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. in the Howard Thurman Center in the George Sherman Union. **Technology and Childbirth in America: Perspectives from Three Disciplines** will bring together Boston University faculty members to offer a historical overview of the economic implications of technological interventions in childbirth, a discourse analysis of women's birth narratives and a public health perspective on birth practices and outcomes. (Graphic by Nikki McClure)

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Also due to this new network a one day conference is currently being planned for the spring of 2010. Date TBA.

Launched in 1991, the **UNITWIN** (University twinning) is a **UNESCO** sponsored international partnership intended to strengthen higher education in the developing countries through appropriate mechanisms for enhancing inter-university cooperation. BU Women's Studies was awarded a UNESCO Chair/UNITWIN Network in 2007 to continue its project on "Gender, Culture and People-Centered Development." The Women's Studies partners include: Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi; Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab; Visva-Bharati, Shantiniketan, West Bengal. The main objective of this UNITWIN Network is to boost the interface between academia and development initiatives with participating non-governmental organizations by sharing our work and research. UNESCO/UNITWIN website:

[http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.phpURL\\_ID=2207&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.htm=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.phpURL_ID=2207&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.htm=201.html)  
Professor Brenda McSweeney created a fantastic blog which she updates regularly. <http://unitwin.blogspot.com/>