

Intersections

Fall 2005



Newsletter of the Macalester College Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department

WGST IS NOW WGSS OR Sign = Signifier -> Signified

After 2 years of departmental discussions, at our annual retreats and at other times in the year, the family, friends, and relatives of Women's and Gender Studies agreed to put forward our new name – Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. The department presented this decision to the Educational Policy and Governance Committee, which agreed to the change and presented it to the faculty at large. According to the faculty by-laws, such a decision is instituted if there is no objection. If there is one, however, the matter has to be presented before the entire faculty at the next available faculty meeting. While our departmental decision was made in April 2005, there was one objection made almost at the beginning of the summer; thus, the name-change discussion took place at the September 14 faculty meeting.

Being the first meeting of the semester and the year, the faculty meeting was well attended by current and new faculty alike. The objector, Prof. Michael Schneider of the Math and Computer Science department, re-read his original memorandum in which he had described the poll he had conducted at Dunn Bros. on the name-change. He recorded the shock and fear of the connotations of the word "sexuality" expressed by the average coffee-drinker who was a professional in her/his right in society at large. He himself feared that WGSS would place our department and the college on the fringes of departmental identification among our peer (comparison) colleges. His recommendation was that the name-change be referred to non-experts and non-academics before being voted in.

I had the unique privilege of giving a brief overview of women's studies, gender studies, and sexuality studies, a brief explanation of the meanings of such inter-disciplines to other, more established disciplines such as biological sciences, history, political science, religion, etc., and a defense of our

decision as well as a response to the objections described above. The points were as follows – that reasonably intelligent people come to find out more about matters unknown to them from experts who know the histories of intellectual pursuits; that our department's approach is not merely to study sexual orientation, sexual preference, sexual feelings or sexual activity but a) to understand them in the matrix of social, political, economic, and cultural relations and b) thus to see what impact intellectual enquiry into histories of sex, sexuality, and gender have on science, economy, politics, and culture; and that our objective was to lead the way into deep and serious studies of the imbrications of women's studies, gender studies, and sexuality studies, not to follow the pack.

The faculty debated the matter briefly. The continuing objections were based on the apprehension that Sexuality Studies was being presented as a new program during an era of lean resources (Prof. Guneratne of Anthropology) and that it was horrifying to see "women" and "sexuality" in the same phrase (Prof. Kaplan of Math and Computer Science). This, despite the explanation that sexuality studies had been part of WGSS since 1993, at least, and that women's studies (not "women") is intellectually related to sexuality studies (not "sexuality"). The support offered for the name change – that more courses based on a study of sexuality could be presented by even more departments (Prof. Burt of English), and that the objections were (homo)phobic (Prof. Cleary of Theater and Dance).

The faculty voted not to defer the discussion to the next monthly meeting and voted in favor of the change in name. What are the various ways that the signifier (WGSS) is attached to the signified (the phenomena analyzed in the department)? Is the debate (and the outcome) a sign of the times?

Sonita Sarker
Chair, WGSS

WGSS Visiting Instructor, Rachel Raimist, films the B-Girl Be Summit

Women's contributions to hip-hop are systematically ignored, marginalized, and discounted. All too often, featured women are spotlighted for their appearances or look, rather than for their skills and messages. While hip-hop conferences are flourishing nationwide at museums, community centers, high schools, and colleges, the norm has been the inclusion of one departmentalized panel on women. Emerging in the seventies, hip-hop culture - the music, dance and visual art - gave us an oral history and iconography of the political, economic, and social struggles of a generation of youth of color. Today the art form is embraced by political and social service groups, corporations, and arts organizations as a primary vehicle for reaching the large cross-section of youth with whom it resonates and influences. A group of Twin Cities artists, activists, and organizers decided that this was not enough. Thus, B-Girl Be: A Celebration of Women in Hip-Hop was born.



B-Girl Be was birthed by a team of artist/organizers hired by Intermedia Arts, consisting of Rachel Raimist (Filmmaker/Hip-Hop Feminist and Macalester Visiting Instructor in WGS), DeAnna Cummings (Juxtaposition Arts), Desdamona (Twin Cities Spoken Word Artist), Leah Nelson (Dancer/Choreographer, Nubia) Melisa Riviere (Graf Scholar/Anthropology PhD student), Theresa Sweetland (Program Manager, Intermedia Arts), and a collective of poets, rappers, singers, and visual artists from the Twin Cities.

B-Girl Be, a multimedia festival encompassing the four elements of hip-hop and more, reigned over a six-week period from April through June of 2005 at Intermedia Arts in Minneapolis. This event, celebrating women in hip-hop, was born of the desire to eradicate the idea of b-girl as novelty by working to build skills in the elements, to build community, promote the positive elements of hip-hop, and to broaden the visibility of local talent. The events are all ages and feature immigrant artists, local, homegrown artists, national, and international artists.

The B-Girl Be opened with a gallery of paintings, illustrations, sculpture, photography, video installations, clothing design, and graf blackbooks, named a City Pages A-List event. For a month there were workshops taught by local artists on poetry, dance, media, and stenciling. B-Girl Be culminated in a weekend long Summit event, June 3-5. The Summit featured graf legend Lady Pink (of *Wild Style* fame) and a team of all female graffiti artists painting Intermedia Arts, one of the only legal graf walls in Minnesota. This international team of ZORI4 (Puerto Rico), TOOFly (NYC), ASIA ONE (Los Angeles), PHEM9 (Kansas City), SILOETTE (Phoenix), LADYKFEVER (New York City), RUST (MSP), was the first all-female crew to

paint the entire Intermedia building (in its 30+-year history).

Dr. Gwendolyn Pough (author of *Check It While I Wreck It*) set off the weekend with a keynote address called "Shorty Who You Rollin' Wit: Of A Hip Hop Feminist Agenda." There was a fashion show featuring performances by Desdamona, Toki Wright, Cypha and Isis, and an amazing salsa hip-hop fusion performance, screenings of many hip hop films, panels on hip hop scholarship, women in media, and a performance by St. Paul Central High School's Central Touring Theater. Asia One and B-Girl Shorty, DJ Kuttin Kandi and Psalm One (Rhymesayers) headlined the Saturday night concert. Local artists performed throughout the weekend, including B-Girl Seoul, Sarah White, Maria Isa, Heat, Black Pearl, Sista Mimi, Pavielle, Indigo, Isis, Mystic Blue, Leah Nelson, Roxane Wallace, Sha Cage, DJ Jennifer, Dessa Darling, Akira Johnson and so many more.

The success of B-Girl Be was realized by accomplishing many of our goals: (1) Presenting the first all women Hip-hop Summit in the Midwest, (2) Producing a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, multi-media celebration of women and girls centered hip-hop films, spoken word, rap, visual art, dance, scholarship and activism created by, for and about women and girls; (3) Building a greater community network among artists, scholars, and activists in hip hop on the local, national, and international scene; (4) Revising hip-hop's narratives and popular images by writing women and girls into the history and raising the consciousness about women's critical contributions to the culture.

You can hear more about B-Girl Be and Hip-Hop Feminism when Rachel Raimist, Co-Founder of B-Girl Be, speaks in THDA 394 "Hip-Hop Performance" class taught by Dr. Leola Johnson and Harry Waters, Jr. on Tuesday Oct. 4, 2005 from 2:45-4:15pm. Email Raimist@macalester.edu for more information.



B-Girl Be wall, entrance to Intermedia Arts

Student Involvement – By Tsione Wolde-Michael '08

REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH CHALLENGE AND PROVOKE THE COMMUNITY THROUGH ART AND ACTIVISM

On a hot Saturday in early July 2005, in the packed theatre of Acadia Cafe, the Minnesota Spoken Word Association (MNSWA) launched its most daring endeavor to date. That afternoon was the launch party of MNSWA's youth entity, RYOT (Revolutionary Youth of Today), and the event challenged community members to link art and activism together as a tool for young people to move towards social action.

All of the WGS classes I have taken, particularly Rachel Raimist's course on "Women of Color and the Third Wave", have stressed the importance of voice and linking theory and practice. As a member of the Macalester and Twin Cities community, I saw a need for a space for young people to be able to merge their investments in academia, community activism, and the arts without compromise. After long conversation with MNSWA, RYOT was created in the fall of 2004 as its youth entity with programming specific to developing youth voice, leadership and activism through spoken word and the arts. Soon, Macalester students took the torch in developing RYOT and creating more youth oriented spaces for conscious art.

RYOT's first multi-media hip-hop and spoken word event titled MISSED AMERICA was a huge success. The group collaborated with other Macalester organizations to put on the event including Minnesota Nice and the Political Arts Project (PAP). Staying true to its mission, RYOT turned the event into a fundraiser, creating a link between politically conscious art and young activists, while simultaneously raising over \$1,500 for The Anti War Organizing League (AWOL) at the University of Minnesota.

As MNSWA's youth entity, RYOT is made up of some of the premiere youth artists and activists from the Twin Cities. RYOT core group member and second year, Legacy Russell explains that in RYOT's art programming, "youth members are linked with more established artists from the Twin Cities community in the art form of their choice. The artists act as mentors for the youth--helping them to develop their art and providing a resource as experts in their field. What is also great is that the membership is very relaxed. People can commit on a project to project basis, head a sub-committee, or even join the core leadership team. But what I like the best is that the youth walk away with real skills. With all of RYOT's projects, from MISSED AMERICA to G.O.T. mic, the sound techs, hosts, managers, and producers are all young people."

The activism component of the RYOT also incorporates mentorships along with teach-ins and organizational links for youth to learn more about those issues that concern them. It is this degree of agency for young people that separates RYOT from other youth oriented programming in the Twin Cities. Not only does it allow youth to take ownership of their events, but RYOT also allows youth decide which issues concern them the most. As a WGS major and RYOT core member, preserving these aspects of the group are particularly important. For me, RYOT is a place for praxis. I can bring my thoughts on theory surrounding issues discussed in my WGS classes like agency, accessibility, and voice into practice. Through constant interrogation of these issues, RYOT challenges itself in the feminist tradition to remain committed to its goals and create a sustainable project. Ultimately, this same political awareness will be infused into the art that is

produced by the youth. Second year Mac student and RYOT member Brittini Chicuata comments, "We already have a thirteen year old member addressing issues of patriarchy in his work for the first time. So, RYOT to me is a place where praxis is allowed to flourish in art too. It creates a space where Mac students and other community members can move outside of the classroom and truly engage the community in their field of study."

The July launch party also marked the opening of RYOT's "Griots of Tomorrow" mic (G.O.T. mic). Creating another space where theory could meet practice, RYOT also addressed the need for a more youth oriented open mic in the Twin Cities, by rushing to create G.O.T. mic. Artistic/Executive Director of MNSWA, e.g. Bailey explains the meaning behind the mic's name, "The G.O.T. stands for Griots of Tomorrow; the griot is the oral historian, the memory-keeper, the storyteller of the community, safekeeping the community's legacy to be passed on through history. Spoken word artists, hip hop artists, poets, writers, storytellers are today's griots. The growth, elevation and evolution, and sustainability of any art form is dependent on the ability to pass it on to the next generation. We believe strongly that the longevity of the spoken word and hip hop art forms, not only here in Minnesota, but around the world, will depend on how well we are able to teach and provide a safe space for the growth of these young artists. These are our future leaders and future artists. They need our attention, and all the support we can give them. I do what I do today because of the guidance and mentorship of the elders in the community. It is our responsibility to reciprocate."

Each week the mic features well-known Twin Cities musical acts, poets, and spoken word artists, combined with DJing, street performance, visual art, political discussions, and of course an open mic portion. RYOT's G.O.T. mic has already become a home for young artists in the Twin Cities to come and express their voice, their work, their talents, and to network with one another, to continue to build the artistic community. The youth managed and hosted mic is held every 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month from 1-3 PM at Acadia Café, on the corner of Franklin and Nicollet in Minneapolis.

RYOT core member and 13 year-old Marcy Open School student, Chantz Erolin comments, "We know the youth are out there needing to be connected. We want to keep this chain of artists who use conscious themes in their work linked." Together, through RYOT and its mission to link art and activism as a means for social change, youth and adults, activists and organizers, students and community members work to develop leadership skills, create opportunities, nurture youth voice, and elevate their own consciousness through partnerships and collaborations across communities. My personal commitment is that WGS themes such as agency, accessibility, voice, and praxis remain a part of this conversation in hopes of adding to the community consciousness and (re)developing sustainable means for creative change.

For more information on RYOT, MNSWA, and membership, contact Diana Dominguez at admin@mnsspokenword.org.

Mapping Masculinities

By Christine Rose

The appropriate addition of “Sexuality” to our department’s name invites us to recall and review the study of sexuality (QLGBT and otherwise) that was already occurring under the name Women’s and Gender Studies. It also encourages us to think about new possibilities for future courses and projects. The one I have in mind here is the field of Masculinity Studies, which is necessarily a field that engages gender, sex and sexuality together. Masculinities, in all of their polymorphous manifestations, are central to the project of understanding the way that gender and sexuality circulate in constellations of race, nation, class, health, empire, and neo/colonialisms. To state the obvious, masculinity studies is not necessarily the study of men. Nor is it necessarily the study of males. Rather, it is the study of how specific cultures configure power relationships between the behaviors, aesthetics, and sensibilities of maleness, manliness, masculinity, manhood, femaleness, femininity, womanhood, sex, gender, desire, and sexuality insofar as they are inflected by vectors of class, race, region, and nation. It is the study of hegemonic constructions of strong, heteronormative manhood alongside ostracized and stigmatized embodiments and behaviors. Masculinity Studies includes the study of Patrick Moynihan’s representation of black women as masculine and black men as feminized; it studies of how constructions of manhood were tied to U.S. expansion and overseas imperialism; it investigates the relationship between disability and sexuality. Masculinity Studies it probes medicinal investigations that diagnosed some men as “spermatorrhœac” and foreclosed the diagnosis of black women in 19th-century U.S. History as hysteric. It embraces bearded women and drag king shows performed around the world in queer bars, lounges, and performance venues; it considers the figure of the mannish lesbian. The serious study of masculinities lets androgynes, stone butches, sissies, queens, bulldykes, boichicks, genderqueers, tomboys, gay gym buffs, transmen, and some transvestites tell their stories in their own terms, and it acknowledges that those terms won’t always translate into different languages, histories, cultures, and geographies. It dissects relationships between prison, crime, race and sexuality. Masculinity Studies examines the messy, entangled histories of invert, perverts, pederasts, effeminates, masturbators, and homosexuals; notions of model minorities; it pursues the panic that spread over the United States when President Clinton couldn’t control his bodily fluids and left that stain on Monica’s dress; it analyzes colonial constructions of Bengali men as effeminate and it asks questions about the miscegenation panics and lynch mobs that rallied around the myth of the hypersexual black rapist. Masculinity Studies incorporates Victorian scientific understandings of lesbians, female criminals, spinsters, and prostitutes as closer to men than women. It takes account of the events of Abu Ghraib, some instances of hermaphroditism, some instances of transgender subjectivity and culture, and some instances of both F2M and MTF community. It includes International Olympic Committee tests to sex-sort athletes, civilizational theories of sex differentiation...and the list goes on. Whether in the realm of politics, entertainment, economics, commerce, literature, visual media, history, medicine, psychology, biology, activism, performance, psychiatry, criminal “justice,” ecology, the study of complex, ambiguous, excessive, deficient, successful, failed, incomplete, partial, exemplary, dangerous, and/or proper masculinity is a topic that, understood more fully, will contribute to critical understandings of the relationships between women, gender and sexuality.



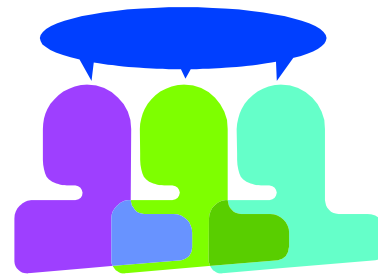
http://www.artbybrooks.com.au/brooks_figurative_paintings_7.htm

Students/Alumni Share Their Thoughts on the Department Name Change

The department name change was timely and necessary.

I think the addition of sexuality really reflects the conversations that we have in the department as well as the work that we do. Since we draw from particular historical discourses on sexuality created (or not created) by subjects that have always also been based in racial, gendered, and classed locations it makes sense that the ethos and message that the department presents be in-line with what we are actually talking and learning about. I'm excited about the new name, it is what distinguishes our department from other women's studies departments that might not include legacies of discourses on sexuality and gender, and departments that specialize in the study of gender and sexuality that might not draw from the histories of women and the theories and methodologies that have been created as a result of women's movements and the interrogation of gender as foundational. Yeah, to the department name change!

Freda Fair '06



I am so pleased to see that the many thoughtful and rigorous discussions regarding this name change have resulted in an official change to Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Not only does this new title better reflect the work that I and others do in our (inter)department, it also shows that Macalester is staying current, evolving with the dynamic contexts in which we find ourselves.

Danielle Nelson '05

Scots Pride Coordinator

I think the department name change is great! I'm glad to see that the debates we had over different possibilities (and their implications) have led to action. While I still agree with someone's suggestion (Sonita's?) that the department should eventually be called Power Studies, I think that WGSS does indeed reflect the department as it is and has been for at least a few years. Now I will just have to work even harder to explain what I majored in to those here in Mexico!

Delaney Keyes '04

WGSS Events Calendar

4th Floor Lounge, Old Main

12:00-1:00 pm

Tue., Sept. 13th

Open House

An opportunity to learn about the WGSS department, courses, and faculty. Christine Rose opened the event with a short presentation.

Wed., Oct. 19th

Susan Stryker

'The Compton's Cafeteria Riot of 1966: Recovering the Militant Roots of the Transgender Movement'

Tue., Nov. 29th

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

"The Contra War against Nicaragua as a Modern Indian War"

Visit us at:
www.macalester.edu/wgs



Women's, Gender, and Sexuality
Studies Department
Macalester College
1600 Grand Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105