Women's Studies 2000-2001 Awards

Annual Luncheon Honors Individuals

Rachel Robinson (left), an honors student and recipient of the Catherine C. Ward Scholarship, wrote in her application for the award: "The confidence women's studies produces gave me a taste for thwarting injustices." Says Chemistry Professor R. W. Holman, "I have two near-teenage daughters, and if I could choose any three women . . . to be role models for my girls, without a doubt Rachel would be one of them." Shana Restall (right), winner of the Graduate Scholarship, has been active in campus and community human rights organizations. Says English professor Deborah Logan: "Shana's humility and selflessness, her dedicated energy and activism, and her humor and compassion combine to create, in this woman, a feminist role model of whom Western can truly be proud." More photos, story on pages 4-5
From the
DIRECTOR'S DESK

Our yearly awards luncheon is a high point for me because I get to brag on our faculty and students. This year, thanks to the generosity of numerous contributors, our students didn't have to pay for the lunch; we were also able to present each with a rose. (See WS webpage.)

I enjoy occasionally disagreeing with famous people. This year, my target was Erma Bombeck. She usually gets it right, with such accurate lines as “if life is a bowl of cherries, what am I doing in the pits?” or “never give your keys to anyone with half your genes.” However, she obviously hadn't met our women’s studies students when she said this:

We've got a generation now who were born with semi-equality. They don't know how it was before, so they think, this isn't too bad. We're working. We have our attache cases and our three-piece suits. I get very disgusted with the younger generation of women. We had a torch to pass, and they are just sitting there. They don't realize it can be taken away. Things are going to have to get worse before they join in fighting the battle.

I think our women’s studies students show us every day that this just isn't so. They are seekers after knowledge and life. They seize life and bristle in the most inspiring ways if anyone tries to put them down or say they're second class citizens. They have nothing against the kitchen, but they aren't taking chances. Historian Kathi Kern said in her recent visit, when one of our students posed a thought-provoking question, “Will you come to UK?” I don’t think so.

--Jane Olnsted

The Vagina Monologues: Students' Perspectives

I never imagined I would be faking orgasms in front of a room full of people. I found that I was, though, moaning into a microphone, interpreting a Grace Slick moan, a doggy moan, and my favorite—-a diva moan. Although nausea had set in only moments before this part of the monologues, I became completely comfortable feigning ecstasy in front of friends, strangers, and teachers. Something inside me had unlocked itself. I was free. Speaking of the unspeakable. That is what "The Vagina Monologues" seemed at first. After reading only a few pages, though, I began to understand that vaginas are what's unspeakable. Well, my intellect knew this all along, but it was something else that had to be convinced. My spirit finally began to realize that every part of me is a woman. If the core of that lies in my vagina, so be it. I should scream at the top of my lungs that yes, I have a vagina. It aches, desires, bleeds, decides, and understands. It is me. The second realization was that other women feel this way, too. As Eve Ensler put it, "women secretly love to talk about their vaginas." I will never forget this performance. It has become a part of me. Standing in that room, I felt connected to all the women around me. The men who came to the performance will also be with me. They listened with compassionate ears, and understood. After standing in front of that microphone, I became free.

--Tabitha Griffith, WS Minor

WS Minor
Jennifer Engert,
Anna Dallillo
prepare to perform Eve Ensler's The Vagina Monologues.

I volunteered to read for the Vagina Monologues with hesitation. I have always been a feminist, but really, I hate public speaking. And it was all too convenient that my debut into the feminist public speaking was on the topic of vaginas. Yup, that is what I said. So I said it loud and clear. I said the things that women everywhere think and feel. And the more that I talked about it, I realized that the attention was not focused on me, but on the words, words floating tangible, resilient, and emotive above me. Words that all of us knew or could imagine, because that, after all, was the point.

My favorite part of the monologues was watching the two women perched on the side of the audience. I dare say that they were there for extra credit, because this was not what they had expected. I watched their faces pass from nervous laughter to embarrassment to squeamishness. Their cheeks were pink and one of them had a watch that she checked frequently. I knew that they were looking for an escape but to stand up to head for the door meant risking smacking right into one of the floating words in front of everybody. So they didn't, of course, but I might venture to hope that later that evening, in the quiet of her room—-one of them went home and looked straight in the face of her vagina.

--Emily Q. Shults, WS Student Worker
Walking the Consumer Tightrope: The Male Body on the Line

On February 28, the Women's Studies Program of Western Kentucky welcomed Susan Bordo, author of *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private*. Bordo is a professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Kentucky. Her presentation took the audience on a historical, visual tour of the changing concepts of male beauty. In the last 10-15 years especially, marketers have been vigorously promoting a lean, muscular male ideal to a society of consumers, many of them impressionable young men. Now, more than ever, men feel that they must live up to the media’s, and therefore, society’s requirements for the “ideal male body.” This commercialization, according to Bordo, was inspired by and is beginning to rival the omnipresent objectification in advertising of women.

Cultural meaning placed on certain visible (and hidden) aspects of a man’s body has changed often throughout our society. To give the younger members of the audience a visual idea of how standards of masculine beauty have progressed into the “ideal man” of today, Bordo compared images of male models (and “action figures”) from earlier and current advertisements.

So where do the new ideals come from? With regard to the changes in acceptable male-body standards, “nobody ever talks about consumer culture,” Bordo said. Consumer culture plays a major role—perhaps the major role—according to Bordo, in what consumers deem as necessary products for the betterment of their lives and, more importantly to the consumer, their looks. Women, over the past few decades, provided companies with large revenues from purchases made to enhance, hide, enlarge, reduce, and otherwise alter their body parts.

“The question to be asked is not ‘why is this happening now,’ but ‘why didn’t this happen sooner?’” The need had to be cultivated in a convincing manner, according to Bordo. She noted that in the early 1900’s, even the need to shave had to be suggested in a way that appeared to (even subtly threatening) men’s intellectual prowess. From shaving ads to underwear ads, the consumer culture discovered a new, profitable niche—correction, they created a niche—in which men’s masculinity has become an unattainable ideal.

“One moment,” Bordo said, “there’s a revolutionary new ad in which the male body is eroticized and put on display. The next day, twenty marketers of exercise equipment are exploiting men’s feelings of inferiority.” Sound familiar? According to Bordo, it should. From Barbie to Superwoman to today’s ultra-thin models, women know the strain of stretch in trying to reach that ideal. “I’m distressed,” said Bordo, “that this is the one area in which we seem to be achieving something like gender parody in this culture.”

Bordo reminded us that changes brought about through consumer culture are not likely to contribute to the betterment of society. “It’s great that there’s a flourishing of human sexualities, aesthetics, and new possibilities in these ads,” she said, “but there’s a downside to it all, too. One of the challenges of being a person in our time is figuring out how to walk the tightrope that allows one to engage in new pleasures and new possibilities that our culture provides, without falling off into the dangerous area of obsessions and disorders that our culture almost inevitably inclines us to.”

One day, both sexes may see the ridiculous loops being held by advertising ringmasters, and consumers will refuse to jump. In this consumer circus, as Bordo states in her book, men and women will realize that they are “merely standing on different sides of the same fun-house mirror, reflecting the distortions of each side back to one another” (298).

--Trish Lindsey-Jaggers, WS minor

Kathi Kern

A Revision for Women

Elizabeth Cady Stanton is a name associated with one of the greatest movements in U.S. in history: the struggle for woman’s suffrage. During a time when women were culturally, politically, legally, and economically inferior to men, Stanton rose to the challenge of fighting the notion that woman’s suffrage would be the downfall of western civilization. In doing so, Stanton demonstrated remarkable strength and courage in both her public and private life.

In her later years, she took on perhaps her most daunting task of all—collecting commentary by various women and including her own critique of the male-bias of the Bible. *The Woman’s Bible*, published in 1892 as the woman’s suffrage movement was gaining a new wave of support, created a tremendous public reaction from both her long-time critics as well as some of her supporters.

--see page 6
Women's Studies Awards Luncheon

Facing Challenges, Reaping Awards (photos by Sheryl Hagan-Booth)

Among those honored at the Women's Studies Program awards luncheon Friday, April 13, 2001, were three women who struggled to overcome poverty, abuse and tragedy. President Gary Ransdell opened the event at the Garrett Ballroom, explaining that Women's Studies was important to Western for providing "philosophical diversity" to the community. Yet, for non-traditional students Michelle Ross and Trish Jaggers, and for Community College assistant professor Jennie Brown, the Women's Studies Program and the award each woman earned carried deeply personal meanings.

In accepting the Seneca Falls Personal Empowerment Award, given each year to a person who has overcome personal adversity, Ross said: "I was married young at 19, had my first child at 20, second child at 21, divorced by 22 and lived as a single parent for eight years. There was a lot of struggle, minimum wage, federal housing, pretty much being alone and with very little support." Ross then spent 15 years in an abusive marriage, adding: "The children and I just thought we could love him out of being mean, but he nearly destroyed six people." Ross had the courage to leave and rebuild her life at Western Kentucky University, where she is a graduate student in Folk Studies.

Feminist Action Award recipient Jennie Brown chats with WKU President Gary Ransdell before the luncheon.

English major Trish Jaggers won the Women's Studies Program undergraduate writing contest. In accepting her award, Jaggers said, "My subject was the birth of my daughter in an environment where poverty was rampant. It was the realization that I was poor, that there was a dichotomy, that people were treated differently who were poor." Jaggers added: "Hopefully, I can make some difference and help to change the social structure in such a way that poverty is no longer a disease. It shouldn't be the basis of how you treat people."

Jaggers also presented the Catherine Coogan Ward Feminist Action Award to Brown. Brown, author of Blue Moon Rising: Kentucky Women in Transition, grew up in Casper, Wyoming, where she became intimately acquainted with self-reliance and adversity. Brown said: "I always had very strong role models in my life," reference to her mother and grandmothers. Their lives, she said, "took courage, love and the art of invention."
Margaret Morris, graduate winner of the writing contest, acknowledged the mentoring role that English professor Mary Ellen Miller played in her life by donating a check to the Jim Wayne Miller Scholarship.

Nicole Anderson won the Valere Scott Scholarship. The luncheon also recognized graduating women's studies students present at the luncheon. Those receiving the graduate certificate are Molly Kerby and Amy Slade.

Those graduating with a minor in women's studies are Paula Bowles, Emily Hearn, and "honorary minor" Emily Q. Shults. Olivia Smith, who has been the WS graduate assistant for two years and who is going to Emory University in the fall to pursue a Ph.D. in women's studies, was presented with a "surprise" award, to recognize her outstanding leadership and service.

--David Shinall, College Heights Herald
The AT HOME Project

Judy Chicago and Donald Woodman: Artists-in-Residence

Next fall, after more than three years of planning, the Women’s Studies Program’s long awaited At Home project with artists-in-residence Judy Chicago and Donald Woodman will finally happen. Guided by Chicago, participants will transform an entire house into a work of art. The house exhibit will open on December 9, 2001, and close in late January, 2002. As an art exhibit and an artistic process, At Home will raise awareness for both women and men about the gendered dimensions of domestic space. The University’s public television station (WKYU-TV) will produce a documentary recording the development and culmination of the project, and will air it on public television and distribute it nationally. A second exhibit, created by students of photographer Donald Woodman, will be a photo-documentary exploring the theme of home in Kentucky and documenting the process of creating At Home. It will be installed at the Kentucky Museum, also opening on December 9.

Women’s Studies Graduate Assistant Kalyan Permenta has designed a webpage for the project. Beginning in the fall, visitors to the webpage will be able to navigate through photographic images of the house, viewing the installation as it develops, and listening to audio clips from participants.

At Home is a collaboration of Women’s Studies, Potter College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, the Art Department and the Folk Studies/Anthropology Programs. Other underwriters and co-sponsors include Shutterbug Photo, the School of Journalism and Broadcasting, Citizens First, and a number of individuals.

http://www.wku.edu/Dept/Academic/Graduate/WStudy/athomemain.html

A Revision for Women

-continued from page 3

On March 28, 2001, the Women's Studies Program and the History Department co-sponsored Kathi Kern’s “Mrs. Stanton’s Bible: Religion and the Women’s Rights Movement.” Kern, an associate professor of History at the University of Kentucky, began with some background information on Elizabeth Cady Stanton, along with Susan B. Anthony, as one of the founding mothers of the women’s suffrage movement. After her introduction, Kern dove into Stanton’s struggle to revise the Bible. Not only did the clergy and men criticize her, but woman’s rights activists were so disapproving that she was pushed from the mainstream of the suffrage movement.

Stanton lost support from other suffragists for several reasons. First, choosing to take on the Bible was an unwise choice guaranteed to generate criticism. The new generation of suffragists that came of age in the 1890s sought to limit their activism to gaining the right to vote. Many, including her long-time collaborator Susan B. Anthony, believed that the vote alone would solve the problem of women’s inferior status. Stanton, on the other hand, saw the Bible as the oppressive force in the lives of women because it “justified the unequal status of women in politics and society.”

Challenging the language of the Bible was a dangerous undertaking for Stanton. By the end of her life, most of the younger feminists (including the National American Woman’s Suffrage Association) had disassociated themselves from Stanton. Anthony, though she disapproved of the “diversion” of Stanton’s energies from the fight for equal voting rights, refused to repudiate Stanton and The Woman’s Bible and spoke movingly on her behalf. A few other loyal friends stood by her as well. Stanton would not be deterred by the hostility. As Kern put it: “She knew she paid a price for her views and she made peace with her role.” Stanton showed the courage of her convictions in refusing to back away from controversy because it made people uncomfortable. Stanton’s belief in the power of words to affect the future for American women is perhaps best summed up in her introduction to The Woman’s Bible: “This book may be read for generations to come, and your word will stand as well as mine, to help or hinder the development of a grand womanhood.” On March 28th (and every day), these were indeed words to ponder.

--Jennifer Whipple, WS minor
Women's Studies Visiting Professorship

Philanthropy Katie Ward Style

Anyone associated with Western is well aware of the philanthropy of Katie and Bob Ward. In the past few years they have donated more than two hundred thousand dollars to the University. The Women's Studies Program has benefited most recently from the newly established Ward Visiting Professorship, in honor of Katie's family, the Coogans. Those of us fortunate enough to have been the recipients of Katie's common sense approach to personal giving can attest to her compassion and dedication to the individual.

During a recent visit to her home, I talked with Katie about the true meaning of philanthropy. Financial contributions are certainly an important part of philanthropic endeavors; however, some of Katie's best works had nothing to do with money. Over the years many students have turned to Katie in times of crisis. In the quiet manner she is noted for, she reaches out to all students, not just those who have taken her classes. Nontraditional and traditional students alike have benefited from her patience, wisdom, and no nonsense approach to life.

I originally met Katie through our mutual association with Women in Transition. I have witnessed her generosity in all its forms. Like the time she and Bob took in a family that needed a safe place to stay while escaping an abusive situation. The family was soon back on its feet thanks to the help provided by Bob and Katie. In another instance she recognized the signs of deep depression in a student who had recently lost her mother. Without intruding into the student's personal grief, Katie lent a sympathetic ear and gently suggested a good family grief counselor. In her own way Catherine Ward performs vitally needed acts of philanthropy every day.

The number of committees and boards Katie has served on is too long to list here. She considers the gift of time and talent as another form of philanthropy. Lending expertise, energy, and direction to any project she undertakes she continues to be in great demand. When I asked why she devotes so much time and money to Western when there are so many other worthy causes, her answer was both thoughtful and direct: "The University is a convenient mechanism to disseminate important values." It provides a way to maximize the power and potential of talented people who may otherwise never develop fully due to lack of opportunity. In this sense the University—and specifically, the Women's Studies Program—serves as a vehicle to spread people's largess to as many individuals as possible.

According to Katie, one way of helping people is to try and see each individual in his or her totality. By seeing beyond the obvious she is able to treat each person with respect and see her or his potential. By examining how the experiences of one generation impact the next and what we can all learn from each other, we are better able to develop a network for students, faculty, staff, and the community at large to benefit from the University various programs. For Katie, the Women's Studies Program combines the best of what WKU has to offer: academic training, an ethical emphasis on social justice, and the empowerment of women and men.

To sum it all up, philanthropy Katie style, is all about giving of yourself. You don't need to have a lot of money to be a philanthropist, just a love for people, a thirst for knowledge, and the desire to help.

--Catherine Mounce, WS Instructor

Dear Friends at WKU:

[Please send me literature about giving.]
[Please contact me about a personal visit]
[I would like to support one of the following women's studies initiatives (please circle):

- At Home: Judy Chicago in Kentucky See previous page.
- Scholarships
- The Gail Martin Lecture and Faculty Development Series
- WS book and video library

Name: ___________________________
Address: _______________________
City: __________________________
State: ______ Zip: _____________
Phone: _________________________

Mail this form to: Leslie Moseley Watkins
Office of Development
Western Kentucky University
1 Big Red Way
Bowling Green, KY 42101
At Home Project: Colloquia Series in Fall 2001

As part of the At Home project, a colloquia series is being planned. The Rodes-Helm Lecture Series and the Gail Martin Lecture and Faculty Development Series are co-sponsoring Stephanie Coontz and Michael Kimmel. In order to be accessible to all, we hope to schedule some events on campus and others in town.

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<td>Late Aug./early Sept.</td>
<td>Donald Woodman, on his photograph Judy Chicago, on her art</td>
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<td>September 11 8:00 p.m</td>
<td>Stephanie Coontz, &quot;Ozzie and Harriet Don't Live Here Any More: Coming to terms with America's Changing Families&quot;</td>
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<td>3rd-4th week of September</td>
<td>John Oakes, &quot;Kentucky Women Artists&quot; Visiting Professor, &quot;Feminist Art History&quot;</td>
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<td>Early October</td>
<td>Panel on historical and cultural practices relating to home and women's work</td>
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<td>November 7</td>
<td>Michael Kimmel, &quot;School Shootings and Domestic Peace: Meanings of Masculinity&quot;</td>
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<td>Mid-November</td>
<td>AT HOME participant presentations</td>
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<td>December 9</td>
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Endeavors Newsletter Committee

Kathryn Abbott, chair, History Dept.
Brandy Lee, WS Office Associate
Trish Lindsey Jaggers, WS Minor
Catherine Mounce, WS Instructor
Emily Q. Shults, WS Student Worker
Jennifer Whipple, WS Minor

Did you know?

Madame C. J. Walker was an African American entrepreneur who developed a line of cosmetics for African American women. In 1915, the Madame C. J. Walker Manufacturing Company employed over 3,000 people and was the largest black-owned business in the U.S.

"Housework won't kill you, but it's better not to take a chance." --Phyllis Diller