

Spring 2014 Newsletter

Volume 20, Issue 2

A Note from the Director



**Open Hours at the
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Monday - Thursday
8 AM - 9:30 PM

Friday
8 AM - 5 PM

Sunday
4:30 PM -

On Tuesday, April 1, as part of this year's QueerFest, Buck Angel came to speak for the weekly Women's Studies Brown Bag series. Because of the high number of people in attendance, the talk took place in Love Auditorium where most of the seats were filled. Buck Angel is a trans male, an adult film performer and producer, and now

Feminist Responses to Gendered Violence in Sri Lanka

On Tuesday, April 29th, the weekly Women's Studies Brown Bag was "Feminist Responses to Gendered Violence in Sri Lanka, Tactics of the Everyday: Working Class Women's Theater in a Time of War."

Professor Nimanthi Rajasingham presented her research findings on theater as a form of protest. She explained the underpublicized, underlying problem within export processing zones in Sri Lanka: the severe mistreatment of their workers. Every day these predominantly female employees show up for work, they are faced with adversity in variety of different forms. They are subjected to horrible working conditions for extremely long hours at a time, and all for minimal pay.

Additional oppression comes from military restrictions in the form of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which results in the prohibition of worker education within these labor zones. These instances of the unfair treatment imposed on many Sri Lankan workers promotes the widespread misconception of Third World women as objects made to be exploited. They are stereotyped as unresisting victims, passive, and easily manipulated.

However, currently, this very workforce is slowly and steadily attempting to escape workplace violence and breaking the mold of weak Sri Lankan women that society has built for them. They are accomplishing these small instances of refusase 9(inst)-63mBDCBT(ur)36(t)-11(1hPg-29(a)(a)4(p5ut)-6

The Women's Studies Brown Bag about MichFest, a women's music festival held each summer in Michigan was riveting, enlightening, and completely different than anything I have ever experienced. We heard from three speakers: a sophomore at Colgate, physics professor Catherine Herne, and Heather Dockstader who is the Interim Director of LGBTQ Initiatives. Each "womyn" was so enthusiastic about her experience there. From what I understood about this festival is that it is liberating, comfortable, spiritual, and full of feminists.

Each summer, women travel to Michigan to live on the land, build massive campgrounds, participate in a variety of events and activities, and bond together throughout their experience together. The camp is 650 acres of remote woodlands where women can camp together or alone. A crew is composed of women who volunteer to set up the camp at the beginning of the summer – they work hard to transform a rural forest into a space perfect for a women's festival. The word that seems to best articulate MichFest is "home" - each speaker described Michigan as a safe haven for women in which they felt completely comfortable and themselves. Nudity is encouraged, even during the long work shifts that each camper is required to do as part of their stay on the land. The goal of this feminist experience is for women to find comfort in their bodies - to feel liberated, safe, and welcomed in the new community. There are intensive, educational workshops that campers can participate in, as well as concerts and community service opportunities.

One of the most poignant parts of the talk was when Heather said the experience is about "sitting in conflict with sisters trying to figure it out." She explained that people come to MichFest with their own personal baggage, and it can be a difficult experience for some. However, she explained beautifully that in this supportive environment, women learn to face their problems together. It is a cooperative, amazing atmosphere in which women can succeed together and understand some of their deepest personal issues.

This August, Professors Meika Loe and Mary Simonson will be leading a trip of Colgate students to head out to Michigan for the 2014 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival! They are sure to have a great time and bring back many exciting stories and memories to share.



WMST Brown Bag Series - Spring 2014

- Last Chance for Justice** 1/21
Featuring TK Thorne, author
Co-sponsored with the Jewish Book Council
- Community Building at Colgate** 1/28
Aidan Davis '16, Valerie Garcia '15, Renyelle Jimenez '14, Gloria Kebirungi '15, Stephanie Nabine '16, Lindsey Skerker '14, and Michelle Van Veen '14
- Birthing Stories** 2/04
Debbie Alt, Brenda Ice, Jenna Reinbold and Priscilla Van Wynsberghe
- MichFest: A Movement Through Music** 2/11
Heather Dockstader, Catherine Herne, and Susan Miller '16
- Women and Postconflict Politics in Africa: Possibilities and Paradoxes** 2/13
Featuring Catharine Newbury
Co-sponsored with ALST and PCON

Q&A with Guest Speakers Hill L. Waters

Hill L. Waters (HLW) is a partnership birthed by two artist scholars, Durell M. Callier and Dominique C. Hill (class of 2005), committed to social justice, education, and critical performance pedagogy. HLW deploys performing arts (i.e. dance, theatre, music) to facilitate healing, highlighting their commitment to arts as transformation. Manifested within their pseudonym is investment in erasing boundaries while staying accountable to their communities of affinity, families and friends. Paying homage to each artists' family lineage, HLW incorporates their familial surnames signifying fluidity, emphasizing process and the journey to surmount struggle. The "L" stands for whatever you need it to be - perhaps that is love, or maybe it is life.

Through the collaborative efforts of both ALANA and WMST, Hill L. Waters brought together a collective of students for three workshops (Revolution Begins in the Self, Anger as Activism, and Building Sustaining Coalitions), and a Who Mad? open mic. All of these workshops, I believe, truly spoke to a need for people to be honest and most important, vulnerable. Vulnerability and its purpose are often taken for granted and perceived as weakness. Hill L. Waters challenged those who attended to understand that vulnerability in fact allows people to grow and hopefully heal in order to better facilitate social justice change.

To get a better sense of the creative process and background that goes into the revolutionary workshops, I have included a brief interview with Hill L. Waters that really speaks to their commitment and brilliance.

1. How did you develop the topics of the workshops demonstrated on your last visit to Colgate?
The topics developed for the workshop happened through a series of conversations with both the

2. How did you engage with these concepts during your time in undergraduate university, or did you at all?

Both Dominique and I were involved as student leaders at our respective undergraduate institutions, University of Maryland Baltimore County (Durell/Waters) and Colgate University (Dominique/Hill). Perhaps unable to articulate anger as a form of activism, or knowing that the revolution begins in the self, we were involved in student organizations, as well as campus and community service organizations that allowed us to express our anger in political and strategic ways. Durell aka

Lesbian Film Done Right

As part of a two-day event for the Queer Performance Series here at Colgate, Barbara Hammer—an experimental filmmaker primarily known for dealing with women’s issues and the lesbian experience—came to talk about her work. Hammer was a very engaging speaker who talked about her own personal history as a queer woman and how it has informed her film. For a long time Hammer was unhappily married and felt constrained by the expectations of married life before finally coming out as gay. She was shocked and dismayed by the state of the lesbian film scene, and she took it upon herself to explore this way of life with her avant-garde film experience.

Hammer is very interested in identity politics and its relationship with history. She spoke a little bit about the lesbian experience in film, and how historically men created and directed it. This is obviously problematic, as the lesbian experience is often misconstrued by the male gaze in vehicles like pornography or popular culture as something unauthentic and at its core, done for men’s pleasure. Hammer believes that a culture needs a history, and so started making her own videos about lesbian relationships and the queer identity. Her videos about lesbianism and feminism have a distinctly humorous streak, brought about by her inclusion of Choplin-esque music and moments of light heartedness. One such example in her work is when one of the women goes into a telephone booth labeled “The Closet” or when one woman is so overjoyed she loses her crutches and dances around.

It was surprising to me that pre-dating Hammer’s work, there was a severe lack of lesbian produced and directed lesbian film. How can one truly create authentic work about an experience and an identity that one does not share? Barbara Hammer went on to explore other concepts and create other films unrelated to lesbianism, but she certainly made an impact on the film world and gave voice to gay women everywhere with her ground-breaking work.

Breaking the Silence on Sexual Assault

On April 21, a group of students organized a silent protest in front of Colgate’s Memorial Chapel. This group wanted to bring light to the problem of sexual assault on campus, and they definitely made their voices heard loud and clear, even without uttering a word. Group leaders Cameron Costa ’15, Tess Cumpstone ’15, and Laura Wojcik ’15 began rallying those interested by starting a group called Breaking the Silence. Those part of the demonstration wore duct tape across their mouths to symbolize the silencing of sexual assault that occurs on campus. There were also fact sheets placed in front of the Chapel so that people could gather more information. Overall, the demonstration received largely positive reactions from professors, administrators, and students alike, but the group realizes this is their first step in joining the conversation around sexual violence and breaking the silence.





