

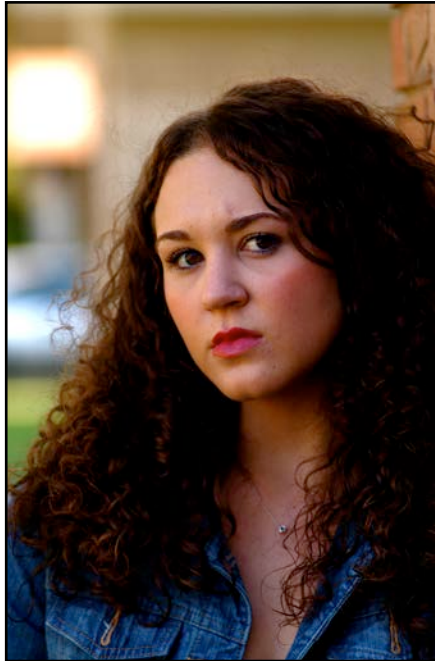


The Women's and Gender Studies Program

Activist-in-Residence Shelby Knox Visits OU With FOCAS Funding

The Women's and Gender Studies' Center for Social Justice hosted Shelby Knox as the spring '11 Activist-in-Residence, thanks to a generous grant from the Friends of the College of Arts and Science. Knox, who recently began a new position at change.org, arrived in Norman on March 1 and went straight from the airport to her first classroom visit.

Knox gained notoriety as the subject of the documentary, "The Education of Shelby Knox," which was an official Sundance Film Festival selection in 2005 and has been featured on PBS's P.O.V. series. The film follows Knox through her personal journey from a 15-year-old girl vowing a purity pledge to a more politicized high school senior. During her visit to OU, Knox described the moment her transformation began: one of her close friends became pregnant at the age of 15. She asked her friend how this could have happened and her friend replied that she had believed her boyfriend when he said it wasn't possible to get pregnant the first time you had sex. Shelby began to question the sex education they had received each year from "Father Ed," a minister who was the official source of all of the sex education to which the students were exposed at school. Shortly thereafter, Knox became active in the Lubbock Youth commission, where she became



involved in campaigning for comprehensive sex education. Their cause became associated with the cause of students who were working to get a gay-straight alliance club started at the high school. "We were the 'bad kids,' so we were always lumped together," she says. During her visit to OU, Knox visited several classes and met with students at an informal lunch and at a Women's and Gender Studies Student Association meeting. She also met with Norman community members at a Youth Open to Sexual Orientation meeting. She gave a public talk on March 3, International Women's Day, titled "Why Women's History Matters." Knox is a self-described history buff who says she is "passionate about women's history." She recently started the Radical Women's History Project, which posts newly discovered women's histories to the internet.

Since the film's release, Knox attended and graduated from the

Want to know more about Shelby Knox?
visit: www.shelbyknox.com



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University of Texas, Austin. She lives in New York City and works as an activist. As a young woman working in women's issues, she said she continues her personal journey. As posted on her blog, "To be 100 per cent honest, it's sometimes hard for me both publicly and personally to unravel my identity from the 15 year-old, virginity pledging, Southern Baptist girl in the documentary about my high school years. I've started signing my emails as 'SK,' a conscious divorce from an identity that gave me a tremendous platform and wonderful opportunities but, at times, imposes crushing expectations."

www.shelbyknox.com/about



Miriam Perez, Radical Doula Blogger and Activist, Visits OU

WGS and the Women’s Outreach Center’s LGBTQ Advisory Board kicked off the spring semester in the cold of winter with a January campus visit by activist and blogger Miriam Zoila Perez. Perez, who traveled to Oklahoma to speak at the Reproductive Justice conference in Stillwater, added a second stop in Norman to her itinerary, much to the delight of her OU fans. She met with

students in the WGS library for an informal discussion in the morning, followed by lunch with students at a campus corner restaurant.

At lunch, she said that over the weekend she had visited a crowded lesbian bar in Oklahoma City. She remarked that she was impressed by the lesbian bar she visited in Oklahoma City because it went against all the expectations she had about Oklahoma and the queer community there.

“Despite the fact that I’ve visited similar establishments all over the country - cities like DC, NYC, SF - the bar I visited there was the largest I had ever seen,” she said. “These bars still exist in big cities, but are often smaller and draw less of a crowd. My tentative (and outsider) assessment of why that might be is because folks in the lesbian community in Oklahoma need bar space more than folks in a city where the queer community is more dense or more visible. Outsiders might assume there would be a really small LGBT

community in a conservative state like Oklahoma, but in reality, the community does exist and is quite vibrant.”

In her afternoon public lecture, *Feminism’s Identity Crisis*, Perez explored feminism, feminist identity, gender-queer identity, her own identity as a queer Latina and reproductive justice. The lecture was very well attended and served to raise awareness levels for many of the students in attendance who benefitted from her sharing her experiences. WGS senior, Madeline Ambrose, said, “I loved having Miriam at OU. Her talk highlighted the intersectionality in feminism in academia, activism and interpersonally. It was amazing to have a national activist and writer come here and encourage our work on campus and in the community.”

Perez is an editor at feministing.org as well as the founder and sole blogger for RadicalDoula.com where she writes about her broader progressive vision for birth activism.



Miriam Zoila Perez

Students and Faculty Attend OSU Feminist Workshop

On the first Friday of the spring semester, several students from the OU Women’s and Gender Studies program braved the cold and icy streets and highways to drive to Stillwater. The Oklahoma State University Gender and Women’s Studies Program hosted the GWST Regional Workshop on Sexual and Reproductive Health. Topics covered at the conference included reproductive health and sexuality, birthing rights and “new eugenics,” and criminalizing reproductive and sexual health. Talks were given by such activists and scholars as “RadicalDoula” Miriam Perez, Lynn Paltrow and Andrea Smith.

OU Law student Mallory Carlberg presented on a panel about comprehensive sex education. In this panel, the audience was asked to relate sex education myths that they had grown up with or had been taught in school. The audience then was asked to discuss ways that sex education programs could be introduced into Oklahoma and throughout the region.

Jonathan Contreras, OU student and blogger, attended the conference both in person and digitally

through the live tweeting, which was encouraged during the proceedings. Technology and the ability to unite disparate groups and build community was a central theme of the conference.

Martha Skeeters, WGS professor, participated in the conference in her capacity as a founding leader of the Oklahoma Coalition for Reproductive Justice. She discussed recent actions at the state capitol that were intended to inform and alert state legislators of the presence of voters who oppose increasing restrictions on abortion access in Oklahoma.

One of the highlights of the conference was a panel discussion including WGS major Sandra Criswell who described local organizing efforts in response to the presence on OU’s campus of the Justice for All display in November 2010.

As one student participant stated, “Having a conference that connects young activists to national and regional activists, as well as to each other, is so important to young feminists in Oklahoma. It seems like a great first step in building community.”



MEET WGS GRADUATE, JULIANNE DAVIS

Julianne Davis graduated magna cum laude with a degree in Women's and Gender Studies in December 2010. She is pursuing a master's degree in human relations at OU.

This is her story:

I was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest. This area of the country is very liberal and forward-thinking. I assumed the entire United States was like this because I never knew anything different. Growing up I was (and still am) extremely independent and enjoyed living life outside the influence of others. I loved experiencing new places and decided that when I turned 18, I would move across the country. So I did. I decided to go to Baylor University in Waco, Texas. I had never been to Texas before so I thought I might as well give it a shot. One of the deciding factors for this decision was when I read a quote from a Baylor student about the university. I can't remember exactly what it said but the student thought if you aren't Baptist, Republican and Texan, don't bother coming. I was none of those things which is what inspired me to attend even more.

It was difficult to transition from a place where the majority of people in my surroundings supported and shared my values and ideals to a place where most feminists and liberal people were living underground. I was definitely experiencing culture shock. I was completely surprised by the anti-feminist attitudes and traditional culture. I didn't understand how a person would not call themselves a feminist, and little things started to



bother me like when guys held doors open for me. I really just did not understand Southern culture and why it was so sexist. I slowly began to realize the need for people to understand the value of feminism and women's rights. I never before realized there was anyone who wouldn't support those things (oh how naive I was). This is when I decided to major in Women's and Gender Studies. Unfortunately, Baylor did not have that major, which is not very surprising, so I decided to transfer to the University of Oklahoma, which has probably been the best decision I have ever made.

I do not think there is any major better suited to who I am and what I am about than Women's and Gender Studies. I felt at home in the program because I was finally surrounded by people who thought like me and valued the same things I did. It gave me an open and welcoming environment to share my frustrations with the sexism abounding in the Southern culture.

This program has completely changed my mindset about men and women. Now, I am constantly analyzing sex, gender, roles and relationships in media and everyday situations. It also taught me that when I encounter sexist situation, to not respond out of anger and hostility. Instead, I take that opportunity to teach and react with patience and love. The program also revealed to me the passion I have for helping women and working with them. I hope whatever job I have in the future, I am able to encourage and positively affect the women in my environment.

I am now obtaining my master's in human relations with an emphasis in human resources, though I am not sure where this will take me. Regardless of where I go in life, I want my goal to be about fighting injustice and encouraging women. I am so thankful I chose to become a Women's and Gender Studies major. It has taught me so much about the issues facing women around the world, how to recognize sexism in our everyday lives, and how to effectively fight sexism. It gave me a place that felt like home even when I was 2,000 miles away. If anyone feels the way I do and needs a comfortable place to share what they are experiencing, I would encourage them to take any Women's and Gender Studies course. At least, it will provide them with a safe place a few days a week to come and find strength, support and community.

*--Julianne Davis
WGS graduate*



A MESSAGE FROM ACTING DIRECTOR, SUSAN F. SHARP

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the staff and faculty who have helped me this semester in my role as acting director. In particular, I would like to thank Barb Houser and Stephanie Heck for helping me to learn the ropes so that I (hopefully) wouldn't drop the ball somewhere. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to Committee A (Lupe Davidson and Zoe Sherinian) and chairs of our committees, Penny Pasque, Catherine Hobbs, Katie Barwick-Snell, Clemencia Rodriguez, Lupe Davidson and Ralph Beliveau. I am amazed at the amount of work that has been accomplished by each of our committees. It is certainly a testimony to the program that Jill Irvine has built that is runs like a well-oiled machine with minimal oversight.

It has been an exciting semester, with many successful events. All of the events surrounding our Activist-in-Residence, Shelby Knox, were well-attended and very successful. Recently, we had a couple of presentations by Mary Kay Reinemann on nonviolent communication and

there were no empty seats. We have selected a new group of graduate research fellows for next year and admitted a number of students to our graduate certificate in Women's and Gender Studies.

Again, thanks to all of you for making this a highly successful semester!



TRAVELERS TO CIVIL LIBERTIES CONFERENCE

Four students were selected for travel scholarships to attend the Civil Liberties and Public Policy conference at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts April 8-10. Caitlin Campbell, Sandra Criswell, Molly Oakley-Rattler and Lessa Keller-Kenton attended the 30th anniversary conference.

In addition to the four students who were awarded funding from the WGS program, eight additional OU students attended the conference with funding assistance of the CLPP conference organizers. The eight were charged with

raising a portion of their funding themselves. They currently are seeking additional contributions to meet their obligation before May 15. Individuals who wish to contribute toward their travel fund may contact the WGS office at WGS.ou.edu.

The students who attended stated that the conference informed them and expanded their vision of the possible. Campbell, a WGS major and graduating senior, said, "It was an awesome experience. I gained new perspectives on issues tied to reproductive justice. It was amazing to meet activists from around the world and from around the country. It was very inspiring. I would strongly encourage WGS students to apply for travel funding to attend the conference next year."

Keller-Kenton, a WGS graduate certificate student, said, "CLPP was an amazing experience, especially to a first-time attendee like me. The opportunity to listen to and work with activists from around the world opened my eyes to a variety of issues that I hadn't really considered before. Having

attended this conference, I now have a better grasp of the direction I want to take in my own activist efforts in Oklahoma.

"Every workshop I attended was highly informative, but two that really struck me were the workshops titled 'Colonized Spaces, Criminalized Bodies' and 'Disability Justice and Reproductive Justice.' The former discussed the ongoing effects of colonialism and its link to aggressive over-policing of minority communities. The latter addressed the interconnections between disability justice and reproductive justice, such as eugenic practices and the definition of medical/mental 'disorders' in relation to women's reproductive autonomy.

"I greatly appreciate Women's and Gender Studies for providing me with the opportunity to have attended CLPP—truly, it was a life-changing experience!"

Stephanie Heck, coordinator for the Center for Social Justice, who also attended, said that the conference made her feel part of the larger reproductive justice activist community.





Activist-in-Residence Talk Spurs Professor to Begin “The Welcoming Project”

Attending the Activist-in-Residence Shelby Knox event, “Gay-Straight Alliances in Rural America,” inspired Meredith Worthen, assistant professor of sociology and women’s and gender studies, to ask herself what more could she do in her community to contribute to a more positive environment. As a Sooner Ally, she thought about ways that she could extend Sooner Ally intentions beyond campus borders. With the help of Kathy Moxley of the Women’s Outreach Center and co-creator Brian Eddins, The Welcoming Project came into being.

The Welcoming Project was created to encourage local businesses, organizations and churches in Norman, and throughout the United States, to display signs for the purpose of making LGBTQ individuals and allies feel welcomed as patrons. The goal of the project is to increase the visibility of businesses, organizations and churches that are welcoming through providing free signs to display in their windows and on their websites. Several local businesses have agreed to be early members of The Welcoming Project, including Forward Foods, Wild Hare Beadery, Yogalife Studio, Michaelangelo’s, Heartstring Bead Shop and Yoga, Roxy’s Funky Art Boutique, and Wise Women Concierge Services. Participating businesses, churches, and organizations can be found in Oklahoma City, Stillwater, Tulsa, and even in Texas.

“We feel that this is the perfect time for Norman and other parts of the country to show support for LGBTQ individuals and allies,” said Worthen. “With the recent 2010 victory of the City of Norman Human Right’s Commission’s initiative to declare October as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender History Month, the community is aware that LGBTQ individuals and allies are an important part of it.”

Eddins, co-creator of The Welcoming Project and Realtor with Don Cies Realty, said, “It is remarkable how much a small gesture like displaying a welcome sign can positively impact LGBTQ individuals and allies. As a member of the local business community, I am proud to display The Welcoming Project sign and show this community that I support them.”



STUDENTS AWARDED TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIPS



Ashley Edwards, left, and friend in D.C.

Ashley Edwards was selected as the recipient of a travel scholarship to attend the 2011 Young Feminist Leadership Conference in Washington,

D.C., March 10 through 12. Ashley is one of 15 students who have recently declared a minor in the newly established social justice minor. Ashley said, “Attending the National Young Feminist Leadership Conference this year was an amazing experience. It was truly inspiring and motivating to see all these strong women leaders speaking, and also to meet the amazing women and men our own age making substantial change happen in their communities. The most outstanding speakers were Eleanor Smeal, Tina Tchen, Steph Herold and Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis. All of these women had unique standpoints, important messages and an infectious ability to both energize you and empower you. I

encourage everyone to seek out opportunities to attend in the future! It was a great weekend!”

Paul Mitchell, WGS graduate certificate student, applied for and was granted travel support funds to attend, “The Body and the State: How the State Controls and Protects the Body,” at the New School in New York City Feb. 10-12.

Madeline Ambrose, Women’s and Gender Studies senior, was awarded partial support to attend the National Women’s Studies conference in Denver in November 2010. She was a presenter on a panel.



Women's and Gender Studies Faculty and Student News

STUDENT NEWS

- **Julianne Davis** graduated magna cum laude in December 2010 with a degree in Women's and Gender Studies! Congratulations!
- **Madeline Ambrose**, WGS senior, traveled to the National Women's Studies Association conference in Denver in November 2010.
- **Amina Benalioulhaj's** film *Women Behind Bars* has been accepted into the deadCENTER Film Festival in Oklahoma City June 8-12. Amina would like to acknowledge the contributions of WGS professor Susan F. Sharp, WGS alum Cassandra Ketrick and former OU Amnesty International president Sarah Warmker, to the film project.
- **Caitlin Campbell** and **Madison Melon**, WGS seniors, were selected as invitees to join Phi Beta Kappa academic honor society.
- **Britan Mills**, WGS minor, will be competing for Miss Oklahoma in June as Miss Sooner State. In August, she will begin teaching for Teach for America in Tulsa.
- **Lindsey Vandeventer**, WGS major and McNair Scholar, presented research on masculinity in Greensboro, N.C., and at University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. She represented OU WGS community at the feminist action project conference at the University of Texas.

FACULTY NEWS

- **Monica Alzate** received a grant from the OUHSC School of Community Medicine Community-Based Participatory Research Grant to conduct the study, *Latina/Hispanic Teen's Reproductive Experience in Oklahoma: Knowledge and Expertise from the Latino Community Development Agency (LCDA)*.
- **Marcia Chatelain's** first book, *South Side Girls: African-American Girlhood in Chicago, 1890-1950*, is under contract at the University of Illinois Press. She was awarded a 2011 Oklahoma Humanities Council Faculty Research Scholar Grant and she was named a 2011 German Marshall Fund of the U.S. American Fellow.
- **Michelle Cox** presented *Pre-service Teachers: Does Cultural Responsiveness Affect Anticipated Self-Determination to Teach in Specific Settings?* at the 2011 American Educational Research Association Annual Conference in New Orleans.
- **Lupe Davidson** published the book *Convergences: Black Feminism and Continental Philosophy*, State University of New York Press, 2010, with Kathryn T. Gines and Donna Dale L. Marcano.
- **Jennifer Davis Cline** has a forthcoming article, *To Make a Revolutionary Cuisine: Gender and Politics in French Kitchens, 1789-1815*, in the September 2011 issue of *Gender and History*.
- **Penny Pasque** and S. Errington Nicholson published *Empowering Women in Higher Education and Student Affairs: Theory, Research, Narratives and Practice from Feminist Perspectives*, Stylus (2011). In addition, she was a Diamond Honoree, Class of 2011, American College Personnel Association, Washington, D.C., and she was awarded the Jon Pederson Excellence in Graduate Student Mentoring Award, 2011, awarded by the Graduate Student Association, Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education.
- **Cindy Rosenthal** and Ronald M. Peters, Jr. published *Speaker Nancy Pelosi and The New American Politics*, Oxford University Press; Rosenthal also published *The Mentor Gap: A Barrier to Women in Legislative Leadership, 2010*, *Gender and Women's Leadership: A Reference Handbook*, edited by Karen O'Connor, Sage Publications; as well as the forthcoming *Nancy Pelosi as Organizational Leader: Through the Lens of Mary Parker Follett*, in *Women in Executive Branches*, edited by Melody Rose, Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- **Susan F. Sharp** received the Outstanding Faculty Member of the University award from the Oklahoma University Student Association. Her recent publications include Conner, Sonya G., Jennifer Hartsfield and Sharp, Susan, "Differential Effects of Childhood Abuse on Pathways into Delinquency: A Retrospective Study of Incarcerated Women." *International Journal of Crime, Criminal Justice and Law*
- **Zoe Sherinian's** film, *This is Music: Reclaiming an Untouchable Drum*, has been accepted into the DeadCENTER film festival and will be shown at noon, Saturday, June 11 in the downtown Oklahoma City library theater.

Nonviolent Communication Expert Presents

Nationally recognized nonviolent communication expert Mary Kay Reinemann visited campus in April to meet with students and to conduct workshops. Reinemann gave a public talk in the Oklahoma Memorial Union titled "Speak Peace: Expressing Your Honesty in Ways that Work," which was attended by more than 60 students and members of the community. In addition, she presented a workshop in the Women's and Gender Studies library focused on responding to feelings of anger. Reinemann's work in non-violent communication is based on the work of Marshall Rosenberg.

Reinemann's visit to Norman was co-sponsored by the Norman chapter of the Oklahoma Educational Studies Association.

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