

University of Oklahoma

Women's and Gender Studies Program

Activist-in-Residence Pramada Menon Visits from India

“If you were to draft a sexual rights charter, what would you include?” challenged Activist-in-Residence Pramada Menon. The question was posed to breakout groups during the afternoon workshop titled “Chasing Rainbows, Dispersing Clouds: Working on Sexual Rights in India.” Ideas generated included the right to love anyone, the right to be free from violence, the right to the freedom of gendered expression and access to public spaces, such as bathrooms. Menon met with students and faculty from different classes and groups over her week-long visit. She discussed the similarities and differences between activism in the United States and activism in India. She talked about the decriminalization of consensual adult sex in India in 2009 after changes were made to the Colonial Sodomy Law.

Menon describes herself as a queer feminist activist. In her work she has played multiple roles, from administrator to organizer to implementer. She has provided training on issues of gender, sexuality, sexual rights, violence against women and human rights. She has served in an advisory capacity on a number of boards in India and internationally. Her work began with marginalized communities in rural India on issues of sustainable livelihoods. This experience led her to work at a national and international level on human rights and its

intersections with issues of violence against women, disability, sexuality, and sexual rights and gender.

Menon met with WGS students and faculty in several different formats, including a meet-and-greet breakfast titled “Croissants, Conversation and Challenging Authority.” She spent time hanging out with students in the Women’s and Gender Studies library and met with several small groups for lunches, including the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer (LGBTQ) Student Advisory Board, Delta Phi Omega and the India Student Association.

Menon gave a public lecture, “Rants and Raves: New Ways of Social Protest in India,” which focused on the historical context of social protest in India as well as current movements.

“Her talk about land rights and nontraditional protest really hit home for me because even though she is from a very different place, her knowledge is very relevant and will have an impact on how I construct my activism,” said WGS minor Elly Roberts.


Menon led the “Chasing Rainbows” workshop with a large group of students and faculty. Participants discussed what sexual rights mean to them. She described aspects of the sexual rights climate in India, as well as her perspective on the queer community.


Menon is the co-founder of Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action, or CREA, a human rights organization based in New Delhi and New York. In addition, she is a performance artist. Her standup routine, *Fat, Feminist and Free*, examines gender, sexuality and body image.



Carly Palans, Activist-in-Residence, Pramada Menon, Elly Roberts, Milo Rhodes, Kale Mather and R.E. Davis







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WGS Center Launches Clyde Snow Social Justice Award

"I met Clyde Snow soon after I joined the OU faculty in 2000," said Clemencia Rodriguez, professor of communication. "I don't know what I was more impressed with, the man or his work. And then, while traveling in Europe, Latin America and Africa, when I mentioned that Clyde Snow lives in my town and frequently agrees to speak about his work to my students, colleagues and friends asked in disbelief: "You actually *know* Clyde Snow?" In human rights and social justice circles worldwide, Clyde Snow is seen as a hero; as someone up there with Nobel laureates. Ever since the creation of the Women's and Gender Studies Center for Social Justice, I thought wouldn't it be fantastic if we could honor Clyde Snow and his work? He is an exceptional human being and perhaps by honoring him, others might be inspired to work toward social justice in their own way."

Clyde Snow is a forensic anthropologist. His work has affected the lives of people around the world as he has used his skills to reveal the fate of people murdered by violent regimes. His work has helped to restore humanity to those "disappeared" individuals by uncovering what happened and thereby providing answers to their surviving loved ones and communities.

Rodriguez proposed to the Women's and Gender Studies faculty that the center establish the Clyde Snow Social Justice Award. The faculty approved, and the process was set in motion. The award, which will be given annually, will honor individuals whose work contributes to the victims of human rights abuses. About \$6,000 has been raised toward the \$200,000 that is needed to permanently endow the award. For more information, visit peace.ou.edu.



Clyde Snow, forensic anthropologist and honoree of a new award

Body Image vs. Reality: Students Celebrate Love Your Body Day

Students from the fall 2011 class of Body Image vs. Reality commemorated Love Your Body Day by making posters and T-shirts and chalking throughout campus. Adjunct Professor Roksana Alavi provided the students with fabric markers and paints and photographed each completed T-shirt. Students also set up a table on the South Oval, and distributed literature about body positivity and eating disorders. They also provided space on poster boards for students to share what they love about their bodies. Love Your Body Day was started by the National Organization for Women Foundation "to challenge the message that a woman's value is best measured through her willingness and ability to embody current beauty standards," according to their website.

"This was my first experience with 'Love Your Body Day' and it definitely will not be my last," said student Etzel Doss. "I work with 6-to-12-year-old girls. I let them in on the day and what it stands for and for the rest of the day they went around saying that they love their bodies, etc. Even to this day, some of my little girls come up to me and say they love their bodies. It's too cute. This concept should be taken into elementary schools to start them young on healthy body image."

Students from the class also organized a screening of *Killing Us Softly 4*--the fourth in a series of films by author and filmmaker Jean Kilbourne. Throughout the film series, Kilbourne seeks to shed light on the objectification of women in media and advertising. Kilbourne recently co-authored *So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids*. Kaysee Johnson, a student who helped organize the screening, said, "Organizing the event was so awesome! We loved being able to raise awareness about the effect the media has on our body image. It was nice to share what we are learning and to assure others that they are not alone in their struggles with self-esteem."



Body Image vs. Reality students



Body Image students making "Love Your Body" T-shirts in the WGS library



A Message From the Director

It's great to be back from my year away on research and sabbatical leave. I missed you all! Thanks so much to acting directors Catherine Hobbs and Susan Sharp for their capable oversight of the Women's and Gender Studies Program this past year.

This has been another exciting fall as the program continues to grow and prosper. We have more students than ever taking WGS courses, and our social justice minor continues to attract new students. Our graduate certificate program is bursting at the seams, with 10 students recently graduated from the program and an additional 27 pursuing the degree. Thanks to all the faculty who currently teach courses for and mentor our students in the WGS certificate program.



Jill Irvine

The Center for Social Justice has been off to a great start this year, hosting our fall Activist-in-Residence, Pramada Menon. A prominent gender equality activist in India, Pramada shared her experiences and thoughts with students on campus in a variety of ways, including class visits, lectures, workshops and a film screening. The center also welcomed a great group of 2011-12 graduate research fellows in September. In addition to presenting their own research on social justice, the fellows are planning a campus screening of short films made by students on the theme, "What Is Social Justice?" Stay tuned for more information on that upcoming spring event. Finally, fundraising for the Clyde Snow Award is gaining momentum. We are looking forward to honoring Clyde in May for his amazing work in human rights forensics and to launching this bi-annual award to an activist who has worked to restore dignity to victims of human rights abuses.

Other events planned for the spring, co-sponsored by the WGS and the Center for Social Justice, include: "Take Root: Red State Perspectives on Reproductive Justice," in February, and "Celebrate! Title IX Turns 40," in May. Many thanks to our wonderful Board of Advisors, which conceived the Title IX celebration and has been working hard to make it a success. We are fortunate to have so many dedicated supporters among our alumni, our Board of Advisors and members of the community!

— Jill Irvine, director of the OU Women's and Gender Studies Program

Get to Know an Alum: Jennifer Cox

Jennifer Cox is a 2009 alumna from the OU Women's and Gender Studies Program. After working at the Women's Outreach Center as an administrative assistant, Cox started her master's degree in the Educational Studies Program and the Women's and Gender Studies Graduate Certificate Program under the mentorship of Professor Susan Laird.

Cox is studying gender diversity and sexuality in sex education curricula, and hopes to generate innovative educational approaches to teaching about sexual consent to

students, both in the classroom and in our communities.

She also has served as a rape crisis advocate with the Women's Resource Center since 2008, and a Sexual Assault Response Team Advocate with OU since 2010. Her current projects include Oklahomans for Reproductive Justice and serving on the writing staff for a social justice and animal rights blog, *Because We Must*.

Cox lives with Phoebe (canine) and Iris (feline) and she says that they essentially run her life. She

enjoys dance parties, thinking about deep gender and Luce Irigaray.



Whitney Patterson facepaints Jen Cox

Scholarships and Awards Given at Spring Awards Ceremony



Lisa Frey and Jordan Ward



Courtney Doody and daughter



Jordan Jones and daughter



Elicia Reynolds-Medaris and daughter

Women's and Gender Studies awarded five scholarships to single mothers attending OU. Three students were awarded the Betty Baum and Norman Hirschfield Award: **Jordan Jones**, a microbiology major who plans to pursue a career in medicine; **Elizabeth Kendrick**, a graduate student studying counseling psychology; and **Elicia Reynolds-Medaris**, an undergraduate in European history. The Betty Baum and Norman Hirschfield Award was permanently endowed in Women's and Gender Studies by E.J. Hirschfield and Alan Hirschfield in 1999 in memory of their parents.

Two students were awarded the EOS Empowerment of Spirit Award, an award for single mothers established in 2009

through the leadership and generosity of Norman residents Cindy Merrick and Ally Richardson. This year's recipients were **Courtney Doody**, an undergraduate student in sociology-criminology, and **Michelle Beasley**, an undergraduate student in special education who plans to pursue a master's degree. The EOS award is funded contingent upon continuing private donations.

In 2009, the Women's and Gender Studies Program's Center for Social Justice introduced an annual Social Justice Award for students and faculty. **Jordan Ward**, an undergraduate student in Women's and Gender Studies, was recognized as the student social justice awardee for her campaign to

revise OU and the OU Police Department's sexual assault policies.

Martha Skeeters was awarded the faculty social justice award for her work establishing the Oklahoma Coalition for Reproductive Justice.

Caitlin Campbell was awarded the WGS Outstanding Senior Award for her excellent academic record as well as her involvement in leadership activities. Campbell is a recipient of the Lottinville Award and the Ewing Fellowship. She holds a 4.0 grade-point average. She was selected as a charter consultant for The Oklahoma Group. She is an Honors student and in addition to her WGS major, she is pursuing a minor in nonprofit organizational studies.



Graduating Majors



Madeline Ambrose and Susan Sharp



Caitlin Campbell and Susan Sharp



Molly Oakley-Rattler and Susan Sharp

Congratulations, WGS and SJ Majors, Minors, Graduate Certificate Recipients

Congratulations to the following students:

Bachelor of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies, May 2011: Madeline Ambrose, Keely Adams, Rave Clay, James Dupree, Elizabeth Gudgel, Kelsey McMurray and Lindsay Nordstrom

December 2011: Caitlin Campbell, Madison Melon and Eulonda Rushing

Minor in Women's and Gender Studies, May 2011: Brittany Bland, Madeleine Fontenot, Rhonda McKee, Sonal Patel, Naomi Snow, and Roseanna Sontheimer

Graduate Certificate in Women's and Gender Studies: Sonya Conner, Julia Daine, Martha Galvan-Mandujano, Beth Green-Nagle, Jennifer Hartsfield, David Heath Holt, Lessa Keller-Kenton, Paul Mitchell, Shawn Snidow, and Robin Stroud



WGS Inaugurates New Minor in Social Justice

Sixteen students have declared the new minor in social justice since it was established in the fall 2010 semester. According to Stephanie Heck, project coordinator for the Center for Social Justice, the purpose of the social justice minor is to offer undergraduate students at OU the opportunity to develop an additional field of knowledge and capabilities that blends the theory and practice of social justice. Courses offered through the social justice minor introduce students to the complexities and critical analyses of structural inequalities and injustices. The courses utilize multidisciplinary and feminist approaches that recognize the struggles for liberation and the importance of social movements, advocacy and activism (locally and globally).

The social justice minor involves a core of required and pre-approved elective courses, as well as the implementation of service-learning activities and internships. The resources of the Center for Social Justice within the Women's and Gender Studies Program (i.e., the social justice internship, service learning, social justice events, speakers, and Activist-in-Residence Program) will enhance the learning

experiences of students who choose the minor.

Heck said that the components of the minor focus on the values of equity and fairness, human rights and the need to act against such different expressions of injustice as exploitation, marginalization, violence and cultural oppression. Graduates of the social justice minor program are able to recognize and demonstrate the skills needed to address unjust practices in the public and private sectors within a range of fields, including education, health care, law, economics, media, journalism, human services and public service.

Social justice minor Shai Fenwick said, "I love the idea of a social justice minor, partially because the classes are compelling — I want to take all of them — and partly because I want to work intelligently on making the world a better place to be. Just by being where we are, being able to afford college at all and not struggling for basic representation and survival, is a place of privilege. Leveraging that position to improve standards of representation and living for those less fortunate feels like a personal responsibility, and this minor will help me educate myself to better achieve that goal."

Panel and Banquet to Celebrate 40 Years of Title IX

The Women's and Gender Studies' Board of Advisors is hosting a banquet to celebrate the passage of Title IX on April 18, 2012, in the Molly Shi Boren Ballroom of Oklahoma Memorial Union, with Sherri Coale, OU women's basketball coach, as the keynote speaker.

The impact of Title IX has been extensive, reaching far beyond college sports.

An afternoon panel will be held prior to the banquet to discuss Title IX. The panel will be organized by Women's and Gender Studies adjunct instructor and former director of Recreational Services at OU, Jackie Farley. Title IX is now referred to as the Patsy T. Mink

Equal Opportunity in Education Act. The law, passed in 1972, states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." The law was renamed in honor of Patsy Mink, principal author of the act, for her work for equal rights. Mink was the first Asian American woman elected to Congress and the first woman elected to Congress from Hawaii. She served 12 terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. For more information about the banquet, or for accommodations on the basis of disability, email wgs@ou.edu.



Head Coach Sherri Coale



Faculty News and Publications

- **Monica Alzate:** "Adolescent Pregnancy in Columbia: The Price of Inequality and Political Conflict," *International Handbook of Adolescent Pregnancy: Medical, Psychosocial and Public Health Responses*, A. Cherry and M. Dillon (Eds.), NYC: Springer.
- **Michelle Cox:** "Cultural responsiveness and motivation in preparing teachers," Lambert Academic Publishing.
- **Jill Irvine:** was recently selected as a Research Associate of the Five Colleges Women's Studies Research Center in Amherst, MA. She has recently published "Leveraging Change: Women's Organizations and the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the Balkans," *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 15, #1; "Exporting the Culture Wars: Concerned Women for American and Global Activism," *Women and the Right: Comparisons and Exchanges Across National Borders*, Kathleen Blee and Sandra Deutsch, editors, Penn State University Press; "Right-wing Women in the Balkans, 1990-2005," *Women of the Right: Comparisons and Exchanges Across National Borders*, Kathleen Blee and Sandra Deutsch, editors, Penn State University.
- **Nyla Ali Khan:** "Negotiating the Boundaries of Gender, Community, and Nationhood: A Case Study of Kashmir," *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies: Alam-e-Niswan* 18.1 (2011): 1-30, "Kashmiriyat and What It Means to Me," *Seminar* 627 (November 2011): 82-87, and "Plutocracy and the Plebeians," *Seminar* 622 (June 2011): 26-30. Presentations: "Discourses on the Parchment of Kashmir: Gender, Community and Nationhood," at the National Women's Studies Association Conference in Atlanta, GA, 11/11/11, and "Discourses on the Palimpsest of Kashmir" at the 40th Annual Conference on South Asia in Madison, WI, 10/21/11.
- **Lara Mayeux:** *Popularity in the Peer System*, Gullford, January 2011.
- **Penny A. Pasque:** "Women of color in higher education: Theoretical perspectives." *Women of color in higher education: Turbulent past, promising future. Vol. 8.*, G. Jean-Marie and B. Lloyd Jones (Eds.), Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald.
- **Clemencia Rodriguez:** *Citizens' Media Against Armed Conflict: Disrupting Violence in Columbia*, University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- **Rachel Robinson-Keilig** was recently accepted to attend the upcoming *Institute for Feminist Academic Psychologists* in San Antonio. It is a special institute within Div. 35 (Society for the Psychology of Women) of the American Psychological Association.

Take Root: Red State Perspectives on Reproductive Justice

The Women's and Gender Studies Program is excited to present "Take Root: Red State Perspectives on Reproductive Justice 2012 Conference" in collaboration with the Center for Social Justice, the Student Organizer's Collective, Oklahomans for Reproductive Justice, the Abortion Access Project, National Advocates for Pregnant Women, Gender

and Women's Studies at Oklahoma State University, the Oklahoma Coalition for Reproductive Justice and Trust Women. The conference to be held on the OU-Norman campus Feb. 24 and 25 will provide an introduction to reproductive justice for students, academics, practitioners, advocates and members of the public.

Friday, Feb. 24 (evening)

- Media for Social Change
- Change the World and Eat Too: Professional Development for Activists
- DIY Organizing

Saturday, Feb. 25

- Criminalizing Bodies in Red States: How it's Affecting You
- Perspectives and Priorities from Communities of Color
- Religion and the Reproductive Justice Movement
- Speaking Up, Speaking Out: Organizing Against Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault
- From Local to Global: A Conversation About Sustainability and Environmental Justice
- Allies, Adversaries, and Bystanders: Recognizing Privilege



For information on accommodations on the basis of disability, email wgs@ou.edu.

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