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Women's Studies Newsletter

University of Rhode
Island
Volume 12,
Issue 4
April 2006

The Directors Column:

The news this month is mixed, some sad, some good.

We mourn the unexpected passing of Stephen Myles, Assistant Director of the URI Counseling Center, and an adjunct affiliate member of the WMS Program. Steve was a good friend of the program. He taught the WMS 150 Introductory course on occasion, and he was a supporter of our activities. At the time of his passing, he was planning the Honors Colloquium for Fall 2006, on the topic "Songs of Social Justice: The Rhetoric of Music." The Colloquium will be dedicated to his memory. The WMS Program will co-sponsor one of the evenings which will feature Rosalie Sorrels and Peggy Seeger, as our Carlson Lecture. Steve will be missed by all who were blessed to know him.

Steve's family designated the Mother Jones Scholarship Endowment at the URI Foundation for donations in his memory.

The good news:

The WMS Program will induct charter members into our newly formed chapter of the WMS Honor Society, Iota Iota Iota. We are especially pleased that 28 of our majors and minors qualify for this honor.

Dr. Donna Bickford, Lecturer in WMS and advisor to our majors and minors, will start her new career as Director of the Women's Center at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in June. Dr. Bickford received her PhD in English at URI, and was a TA for the WMS Program while a student. We will miss her, and wish her success at her new job.

Professor Dorothy F. Donnelly has endowed a scholarship for a WMS major or minor. The scholarship will be awarded on the basis of academic excellence, financial need and participation in campus and community service.

Join us to celebrate at the University Club on Wednesday, April 19 from 4:00-6:00 PM.

Students who plan to enroll in WMS 300 our Field Experience course: please think about which agency you might like to work for. The WMS Program would like a student from WMS 300 to work as a planning and program assistant in our office in Roosevelt, as well as a student to edit our newsletter. Either of these positions will give you valuable experience and insight into the workings of the WMS Program.

Professor Karen Stein,
wmsdir@etal.uri.edu



Please visit our webpage at: www.uri.edu/artsci/wms

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Questions, Comments,
Concerns?
Contact the editor of this
newsletter,
Jennifer Baker at
Cuteshadow@mail.uri.edu

Calendar of Upcoming Events

March 29, 2006

Film Showing of
"Iron-Jawed Angels"
(Co-Sponsored with
Women's Center)
3:00pm
Galanti Lounge



April 9, 2006

URI New Chapter of
Iota Iota Iota
Honor Society
Initiation Brunch
10:30 - 12:30
Univesity Club

April 11, 2006

**Dana Shugar
Colloquium**
Professor Julia Johnson talks
about "Transracial Feminist
Alliances: Connecting
Through Differences."
5:00 - 6:30pm
URI Women's Center



April 18, 2006

**Dana Shugar
Colloquium**
Professor Kendall Moore
discusses "HIV, AIDS, and
Women"
5:00 - 6:30pm
URI Women's Center

April 19, 2006

Celebration of Donna
Bickford, WMS
Graduates, and
Dorothy F. Donnelly
Scholarship Endowment
4:00 - 6:00pm
University Club



April 25, 2006

Fredrika Wild Schweers
Memorial Lecture on Women
and Health.
Breast Cancer: New and
Emerging Treatments
and Technologies.
7:00pm
White 113

★ **Scholarships** ★

Eleanor M. and Oscar M. Carlson Endowed Scholarship for Single Mothers!

Criteria: Student must be a woman who is a single-parent head of household with one or more dependent children. Preference will be given to candidates who meet one or more of the following:

- a. candidates who have followed a non-traditional education track;
- b. candidates with financial need;
- c. candidates in good academic standing, with at least 12 credits at the college or university level;
- d. Rhode Island residents;
- e. candidates pursuing a major or minor in Women's Studies

The Dorothy F. Donnelly Scholarship!

Awarded to a major or minor in Women's Studies. Based on a combination of excellence, community or campus service, and financial need.

Patricia Farnes Essay Contest!

Criteria: The contest is open to all URI undergraduates enrolled for the 2005-2006 academic year. Papers may be submitted by students or nominated by faculty member. Each student may submit only one paper. Faculty may nominate up to three papers each. Essays will be judged on strength of argument, clarity of writing, quality of writing, and attention to mechanics. Submissions should be 1,200 to 3,000 words long. Shorter or longer papers will be disqualified immediately

*** For ***

More Information and Specific Criteria, as well as DEADLINES for each scholarship, please visit:

<http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/scholarships.php>

Congratulations to...

- * **Rebecca Johnson**, the recipient of the *Mother Jones Scholarship*.
- * **Samantha DeMuro and Victoria Lockhard Morton**, two recipients of the *Carlson Trust Scholarship*.
- * **Melissa Zuba**, the recipient of the *Dana Shugar Scholarship*.
- * **Alexis Coppola**, recipient of the *President's Excellence Award* in WMS.

Student Contribution

Review of Neil Simon "Brighton Beach Memoirs" by Bridget K. Druken

(Please note: Original writing was edited for length.)

"Brighton Beach Memoirs" is a phenomenal play written by Neil Simon. It takes place during the late 1930's. The play is about the Jerome family, with special attention paid to Eugene, a 15 year old who narrates the play. The family consists of Kate and Jack Jerome, who have two sons named Eugene and Stanley. Kate's sister Blanche is a recent widow and lives in the Jeromes' house with her two daughters, Laurie and Nora. The play focuses on real problems that the family has to go through: not enough money to house and feed seven mouths, Stanley losing his job due to gambling, Eugene's pestering ways, Nora's desire to leave school and become a dancer, and more. Throughout the play, we see life through Eugene's perspective, which is one of a young man coming into adulthood. He likes to write down his memories in order to one day become a writer.

It is interesting to contrast boys that grew up over half a century ago, to boys who grow up today. The similarities and differences are worth studying in order to try to understand the cycles and paths which masculine figures travel. This short play depicts a clear picture of many male characters: the pubescent Eugene, the older brother Stan, and the hard working father Jack. Every person who reads the play can relate to Eugene because everyone goes through puberty.

Eugene is my favorite character because of his wit. He uses his innocence and humor to make serious situations seem light. He inserts monologues to the audience to explain certain situations. Even during the 1930's, Eugene thinks about many of the same issues that boys in today's society do:

Eugene: "I kept dropping my napkin a lot so I could bend down to get a good look at those virginal creamy-white legs. She [Nora] was really deep in thought because she left herself unguarded a few times and I got to see halfway up her thighs that led to the Golden Palace of the Himalayas. (Simon, 515)

Because of the different era in which Eugene grew up, certain aspects of his maturity might not seem as extreme or vulgar compared to today's era. For example, a young boy in today's society is more likely to call a girl a bitch, slut, or whore. Eugene is a dynamic character sculpted not only by the era in which he lives, but also by his family, friends, and schooling.

The play peeks into a boy's mind. It shows the different personas that a male can have. It is easy to place yourselves in the shoes of many characters. I recommend this play strongly to others, especially for Women's Studies purposes.

Works Cited:

Simon, Neil. "Brighton Beach Memoirs." [The Brighton Beach Trilogy, Random House], The Collected Plays of Neil Simon Volume III. New York: Random House, 1991, 483pp.

Student Contribution

WMS Student's take on Habit for Humanity in Georgia.

Jaime Hill and Caitlin Shelton

(Please note: Original writing was edited for length.)

As many of our fellow students were flying to warm spring break destinations, the URI CSV class was off to an "Alternative" Spring Break. We flew to a small city in the southern part of the state of Georgia to participate in building a house for Habitat for Humanity. We arrived in Atlanta on Saturday, and continued our journey on to Albany, Georgia. This was the location of the Habitat site where we would be working. After almost missing the bus at a rest stop along the way in "who-knows-where" Georgia, we finally arrived to meet the rest of our classmates as well as students from Purdue, University of Central Florida, University of Minnesota, and Marquette at Camp Kirksey in Albany, GA.

Beginning the next morning and for the four days following, we rose before 7am each day. This was to ensure making it to the Habitat site by 8am. There were two sites where we worked: the first worksite, where we spent four out of five days, was in an old house which was donated to Habitat for Humanity. It was being completely gutted and reconstructed. When the house is completed it will become the Albany office of Habitat for Humanity. The other site, a single family house, was being built for a family in Albany. We were lucky enough to work with the family, painting the walls of the house that would soon be ready for their occupancy.

Each morning, we were split into groups and assigned to different tasks around the house. Our specific task was working on the floor of the porch. After the first day we got quite handy with the tools we were using and began to take great pride in "our" porch. As we worked on the floor, another group of URI students worked at rebuilding the columns surrounding the porch. By the end of the week we had finished the floor, despite the small obstacles we had run into along the way. In the end, we were proud of the work we had done, as well as the small amount of carpentry skills we had acquired.

Although we were always exhausted at the end of the day, the richness of this experience was not lost on us. We were able to experience a different kind of culture. The community embraced us and provided us with southern home cooking each evening. We took away a sense of accomplishment; a sense you get when you realize how big the world is and the feeling you experience when you contribute something positive no matter how small it may be. It was difficult while we were there because we were out of our comfort zone, however, most of us agree that we would do it again. We enthusiastically recommend it to anyone looking for a journey in self-discovery and civic engagement.



Spotlight On...

Alexis Coppola

Alexis Coppola, a current senior here at URI, truly represents an admirable student. Alexis is a Women's Studies and Political Science major, with a self-designed minor in Peace and Nonviolence Studies. While here at URI, she demonstrates activism in two organizations: Students for Promoting Awareness for Gender Equality (PAGE) as well as Students for Social Change. A couple examples of her activism include participating in the March for Women's Lives in D.C, and being a volunteer escort for Planned Parenthood.

After graduation in May, Alexis will be working on the political campaign for Jennifer Lawless. Lawless is running for the U.S. House of Representatives in Rhode Island's Second Congressional District. In addition to working side by side with Jennifer, she will be working at URI to promote voter registration and inform students of Lawless's campaign. As of September, Alexis will be volunteering in the Peace Corps in Sub-Saharan Africa. Her work there will focus on HIV prevention as well as developing better sanitation and disease control systems. Alexis is extremely excited and is hoping to further help the community through her involvement.

The best advice Alexis offers an undergraduate is to get involved. She feels it opens you up to new opportunities and experiences while also meeting new people and having fun. But most importantly getting involved provides a person with a voice. PAGE not only raises awareness, but also educates students about how to work for social change. Alexis says, "as citizens and students we should all be giving some of our time to fight for social justice."

AND

Donna Bickford



Donna's advice to leave URI with is to not just get involved, but be involved and take action to change things we don't like. Work towards social justice and attend all of kinds of events that give us new knowledge and new ways to think about things. Donna's service at URI includes: The Women's Studies Advisory Board, the Women's Center Advisory Board, the Civic Engagement Advisory Board, and the Violence Prevention Task Force. Also, she was proud to be involved in founding the Dana Shugar Spring Colloquium Series, since Dana Shugar was a mentor to Donna.

Donna aims as the new, and first full-time, director for the Women's Center at the University of North Carolina, to provide education, advocacy, and outreach to students, staff, and faculty. She feels, "The Center has a strong foundation, robust programming, and some important projects already underway. I'm eager to work with the Center's excellent staff to expand these activities, and to develop additional initiatives that respond to the needs and interests of faculty, staff, and students on the UNC campus."

URI Women's Center



Announcement

Do you need Housing for next year?
Are you in one of the following majors?

Animal Science and Technology, Aquaculture and Fishery
Technology, Biology, Chemistry, Clinical Laboratory Science, Computer Science, Engineering,
Financing, International Business, Management and Information Sciences, Marine Biology, Math
and Statistics, Physics, Microbiology, Physical Oceanography.

***The Women's Center W.I.S.T Program
may be for you!!!***

**Contact Us at
874-2097 OR wist@etal.uri.edu**

PAGE Update

URI Students Promoting Awareness for Gender Equality

P.A.G.E. will be having an event Wednesday April 12, 2006. The event "An Affirmative Day of Action: Women's Issues" is going to be located in the Hargde Forum of the Multicultural Center from 3-8pm. The event will include Women's Studies senior projects, the documentary "The Abortion Diaries," an activist from Planned Parenthood discussing current issues. Dr. Bickford, of the Women's Studies Department, will be speaking about the importance of activism. We encourage and invite everyone to join us.

If you have any questions regarding the event please contact P.A.G.E. president, Colleen Hayes - Costello at IrishRose_Colleen@yahoo.com.

URI Students Promoting Awareness for Gender Equality meet every Monday at 7pm in Roosevelt Hall room 311.

Editor's Column

What Does the Vagina Monologues Have to do with Politics?

Jennifer Baker

On Tuesday, February 28, 2006, the URI College Republicans held a presentation titled "PDAY versus VDAY: Using Absurdity to Expose the Absurd." I knew this was going to be an interesting event before the presentation even began. The presentation was supposed to start at 7:00 PM. At 7:20 PM, sophomore Sara Biancuzzo asked the U.R.I College Republicans Chairman, Ryan Bilodeau, "Is this going to start soon, I have things to do?" Ryan responded with, "Why are you in a rush, do you have babies to abort?" I still cannot see how that answered her simple, yet appropriate question. Ryan's comment foreshadowed a night of unanswered questions and generalizations that were not accurate.

The U.R.I. College Republicans brought a woman named Monique Stewart to speak about her opposition to the "Vagina Monologues". Stewart is the Executive Director for Roger Williams University College Republicans (<http://www.rwucr.com>). Less than twenty minutes into her lecture she made the comment, "A lot of you are feminist elitists, the only way you know how to give birth is through abortion." This was the second abortion comment I had heard that evening. I began to wonder how the Vagina Monologues has anything to do with abortion. Stewart was supposed to be arguing about a play dedicated to ending violence against women. Abortion, or the termination of pregnancy by various means, is a heated legal and ethical debate. Despite the confusion, I continued to listen to Monique Stewart and try and hear her argument.

At the beginning of the lecture, Monique claimed, "Women have so much freedom, it is disgusting!" According to Merriam Websters Dictionary, freedom is defined in many ways, including the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action, as well as the quality of being frank, open, or outspoken and unrestricted use. If women are free then myself, along with many other people would not have marched at the Rhode Island annual "Take Back the Night", to demonstrate that we wanted respect and not to fear our streets. Every 15 seconds a woman in the United States is physically assaulted (U.S. Department of Justice). I would say that women are more free today than one hundred years ago, however, statistics alone show just how inaccurate Stewart's statement was.

Stewart's first argument was not against the Vagina Monologues themselves, but against the creator of it: Eve Ensler. Stewart's opinion is that Ensler was a "nobody" using the example that she was making 18,000 dollars a year. This showed that Stewart judges one's success on how much money he or she makes. Later, a question was posed by an audience member, "Aren't we all just nobodies then?" Next, Stewart said Ensler's Vagina Monologues only got famous because she got celebrities to endorse the production. This is accurate, but no one would get a message across if it were not for some form of publicity. We should praise Eve for utilizing resources effectively.

She also argued that Ensler cannot be considered credible because she refused to release the sources of her monologues. Stewart feels that if we do not know who really told the stories, how can we believe them? Well, it looks like Stewart pays very little attention to what goes on at her own school. On February 21, 2006 a woman named Sun Kim came to speak to more than 100 people at Roger Williams. Who is Sun Kim? Kim was one of the women who were abducted by the Japanese army and forced into sex slavery during World War II. She is also a source that Eve Ensler bases the monologue "Comfort Women" on. Kim is open about the fact that she works for the Vagina Monologues and is not hiding her identity.

It is obvious that before something is proven it is just a story. In the case of Sun Kim, her purpose is to try and talk about what happened to her because there is no tangible proof. Her country refused to acknowledge her and many other women on the issues she faced. A woman or man who is harrassed may have no tangible proof, just a story. It takes a collection of information to prove the case. It does not mean he or she was not harrassed just because they lack any physical evidence. Interestingly, Stewart contradicted herself because she made a proclamation that she knew of a guy who said he "took a girl to the Vagina Monologues just to get laid". Stewart never gave us the name of this "guy" and only gave us that story. If we cannot believe Eve Ensler, then we cannot believe Monique Stewart either.

Even though Stewart was asked not to laugh at anyone's comments, she continued to do so. By the end of her lecture, a variety of attendees were disturbed. Karen Baruffaldi, a second year graduate student at URI, proclaimed "I believe in God, I am Republican, and I support the Vagina Monologues. I don't want everyone to think that Republicans are against the Vagina Monologues - the point of the monologues is to raise awareness and they do."