

Women's Studies News

COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES
& SCIENCES

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Dear Friends of the Department of Women's Studies,

As many of you may know, Diana Scully will step down as the chair of Women's Studies upon her retirement from VCU at the end of June. It is certainly no understatement to say that Women's Studies at VCU would not exist without the indefatigable efforts of Diana. Through her energy, determination, and perseverance, Women's Studies has been transformed from a program with a only minor in the late 80s to an independent department with a thriving major by 2006. The presence of Women's Studies can be felt throughout the College of Humanities and Sciences, indeed the university. Additionally, Diana has been instrumental in providing Women's Studies students with the opportunity for international experiences through unique study abroad programs allowing them to attend the International Congress on Women and explore countries such as Spain, Morocco, UAE, Japan, Korea, Uganda, and Kenya. We applaud Diana's service to the Department of Women's Studies and to the university community as a whole; she will be sorely missed.

Because we wanted to ensure continued momentum in Women's Studies, we convened a Women's Studies Advisory Planning Committee chaired by Karen Rader (Director of Science, Technology, and Society Initiative). Among its recommendations was the immediate appointment of a successor to Diana. I'm happy to report that Dr. Janet Hutchinson will assume the role of chair in July. Dr. Hutchinson, Associate Professor of Public Administration and an affiliate faculty member in Women's Studies, focuses in her research on child and family policy, and feminist theory particularly in relation to organizational behavior and development in the field of public administration. Additionally, the Department of Women's Studies will have a new location in Stark House at 915 West Franklin. Finally, we are working to increase the number of the faculty in the department both through recruitment and new approaches to existing faculty appointments.

We are committed to continuing the success the Department of Women's Studies has already realized under Diana's guidance, and look forward to working with Janet in the years to come.

Best,
Catherine Ingrassia
Executive Associate Dean,
College of Humanities and Sciences
Professor of English

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Chair's Update

Diana Scully

It's spring, a lovely time in Virginia (despite my allergies) and particularly significant to me this year because it is my last semester at VCU. After 33 years, I am leaving, not "retiring" because I will continue to work, seeking new and different challenges in service and volunteering related to human rights and social justice, particularly issues related to women, violence and poverty. It is exciting to think that I might have the opportunity to work with or for former students who now scattered throughout the community working for social change.

As I reflect on my years at VCU, I am not completely satisfied even though Women's Studies has grown from a handful of courses in 1989 to a department offering a BA in 2009. Not completely satisfied because Women's Studies could be so much more with different administrative support. This past academic year, a large committee, chaired by Dr. Karen Radar, Associate Professor of History, was convened by Dr. Fred Hawkrige, Interim Dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences, and charged with plotting the future of Women's Studies at VCU. As Dr. Catherine Ingrassia, Associate Dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences, indicates in her article (opposite column), Women's Studies has the support of the College. Rumors about its demise are just that—rumors.

I leave with many fond memories of wonderful colleagues in Women's Studies, Sociology and in departments throughout VCU. It has been gratifying to see how many people have been willing to give generously of their time, even though it was not part of their job description and carried no particular reward, because they believe in the importance of Women's Studies. If Women's Studies has succeeded, it is because of them. I haven't said it enough--thank you.

Many of my fondest memories are of the students who I have been privileged to teach, advise and mentor, some of whom are changing the world through teaching at VCU and elsewhere around the US, and others through social action work in non-profit organizations and NGOs. I will always remember the pleasures and trials of traveling with students on study abroad trips to China, Korea, Japan, Uganda, Kenya, United Arab Emirates, Spain and Morocco. It has been a joy to take part in creating global citizens who are aware of women's issues and activism around the world. Through the generous support of the Sledd Family Charitable Fund, which established the Women's Studies International Experience Scholarship, I sincerely hope this tradition continues.

My colleague and friend, Dr. Janet Hutchinson, Professor of Public Administration, will become Chair of Women's Studies on July 1. I hope she has as rewarding a time as I have had.

Women's Studies Study Abroad, Summer 2008



Alhambra in Granada, Spain

Diana Scully

I had the great pleasure of once again leading a summer study abroad, this time to Mundos de Mujeres/Women's Worlds 2008, hosted by Universidad Complutense de Madrid in Madrid Spain. Our group consisted of 12 students, and besides me, two other faculty members, Tammy McKeown and Angelina Overvold. Two of the students, Audrey Blake and Shauna Fecher, were funded by the Women's Studies International Experience--



Alcazar, Seville, Spain

see their comments on Page 3 (For information on the Women's Studies International Experience Scholarship go to <http://www.has.vcu.edu/wst/scholarship.htm>.)

Based on my experience at several previous Women's Worlds conferences (1981 at University of Haifa, Israel; 2002 at Makerere University, Kampala Uganda; and 2005 at Ewha Women's University, Seoul Korea), I was somewhat disappointed in Madrid. It was not as well organized and the physical arrangements lacked convenient space for gathering and networking, so important in previous conferences. Nonetheless, students,

indeed all of us, were thrilled to have the opportunity to hear presentations from women from all over the world, for example, Nawal Al-Sadawi whose talk, "Creativity, Women and Dissidence," sparked controversy among attendees for its criticism of the Bush Administration.



Kasbah, Tangier, Morocco

As with previous Women's Studies Women's Worlds study abroad trips, our group traveled extensively after the conference. In Spain we enjoyed the spectacular city of Madrid and the unexpected opportunity to participate in Gay Pride Madrid and the Parade which passed in front of our hotel on the Gran Via. We visited Moorish castles and catholic cathedrals in the medieval towns of Avila, Segovia, and Toledo; experienced flamenco and the famous Alcazar in Seville; looked in awe at the inspiring world heritage site of Alhambra in Granada; and enjoyed the beaches on Costa del Sol, especially the fire-



Study Abroad Group, Summer 2008

works over the Mediterranean in celebration of the Virgin Carmen. In Gibraltar, located at the southern tip of Spain but a British territory, we viewed the continent of Africa from the top of the Rock while feeding the Barbary Macaques (monkeys) who live there. Another highlight was our ferry boat trip across the Straits of Gibraltar to Africa where we spent the day in Tangier, Morocco exploring the narrow streets of the Kasbah and shopping in the Medina.

Despite an ambitious itinerary (my fault) and oppressive heat at times (not my fault), it was a wonderful experience, one that students say they will long remember. To see a slide show of our trip, go to <http://www.has.vcu.edu/wst/slideshow.htm> and click on Spain.

CONSIDER A DOUBLE MAJOR!

Did you know that you can add **Women's Studies** as a **second major** by taking four additional courses (total of 30 credits) beyond the six courses (18 credits) required for a minor?

Go to

<http://www.has.vcu.edu/wst/major.htm>
for degree requirements

Reflections on the Women's Studies International Experience Scholarship



**Shauna M.
Fecher**

This past summer I had the privilege of traveling to Spain and Morocco with the Department of Women's Studies. This experience would not have been possible had it not been for the Women's Studies International Experience Scholarship I was awarded not long before the trip. In fact, the scholarship came at the perfect time. I was just about to withdraw from the program because I realized that I could not realistically afford it. I was encouraged to apply for the scholarship and as luck would have it, the day I went to pull my name from the list of participants, I was handed a letter telling me that I had been awarded the scholarship.

We traveled all over Spain and were able to attend *Mundos de Mujeres*, a global feminist conference. There we attended lectures about topics ranging from sex trafficking to women's roller derby. While the conference was one of the main reasons for the trip, some of my favorite moments of the trip were completely unexpected. Most of us were unaware that it was Gay Pride week in Madrid and that our hotel, located on Gran Vía, was on the main route of the Pride Parade. It was such a unique experience to walk outside of your hotel only to be greeted with thousands of people filling the streets of Madrid in pride and solidarity. I was thrilled that we had the privilege to join them. Another one of my favorite memories was having the opportunity to spend my 21st birthday on two different continents (Spain in Europe and Morocco in Africa). I highly doubt that I'll ever have a birthday like that again!

Going on this trip was truly one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I got to travel all over Spain with a group of women I truly admire and respect. I was able to meet feminists from all over the world and listen to what their concerns were for the women of their communities. It was definitely an eye opener and I appreciated the opportunity to learn about the lives of these women from their first hand accounts rather than reading about them in text books. I am truly grateful for the experience and the opportunity that was given to me when I received the scholarship. And to think, it almost didn't happen!

Audrey Raeder Blake

For as long as I live I will never forget that day. The day Dr. Diana Scully asked me to drop by her office before class. The day my luck changed. The day Dr. Scully told me that I had been awarded the Women's Studies International Experience Scholarship.

On my way to her office, I prepared myself for the worst. I was convinced that Dr. Scully had asked me to drop by before class so I wouldn't cry in front of my classmates when being told I did not get the scholarship. So when I sat down in her office, I bravely told her I knew why I was there and then said, "I didn't get the scholarship." Dr. Scully nodded and handed me the official letter, as I read the words "Congratulations, I'm pleased to inform you..." I think I screamed. I know I cried. You see, the past few years have been difficult--to say the least. Oh, I knew I had worked hard at VCU--I had a good GPA and I knew I was a good student. But my personal experience has shown me, to make it in this world, a woman sometimes needs more than just being a hard worker. Sometimes she needs a hand up.

The Women's Studies International Experience Scholarship enabled me to join Dr. Scully, Dr. Angelina Overvold, and a group of very dedicated women studies students on a study abroad to *Mundos de Mujeres / Women's World 2008*, hosted by Universidad Complutense in Madrid, Spain. At the conference, I sat in awe as I heard lectures from the world's leading feminist scholars and activists, women whose work I had studied in my Women's Studies classes.

One thing I noticed at the conference was that our VCU group wasn't typical. Most of the conference attendees were women's studies professors who were at the conference to present papers and they had been funded by their universities. A conference such as this one is very expensive--I know that I would never been able to experience it without financial assistance.

The Women's Studies International Experience Scholarship is designed to help highly motivated, albeit financially needy, students to pursue the dream of studying abroad. This is exactly what I was able to do. However, not once during the time in Spain and Morocco was I made to feel like a charity case.

In the future, I hope to give back to my community what I have been given by the Department of Women's Studies at VCU--assistance, without judgment. By receiving this scholarship I was given the opportunity to broaden my personal horizons and to further my personal understanding of the needs of women all over the globe.

Back to Thailand!

Shayne Thomas

The Women's Studies International Experience Scholarship was established in the spring of 2007. The purpose of the scholarship is to provide VCU Women's Studies students with demonstrated financial need the opportunity to study abroad for academic credit as part of either a summer or semester study abroad or other international or global activist experience where academic credit is earned. The experience is supposed to be related to the study of women or associated issues and have a direct impact on the recipients' career goals

As the first recipient, I spent the fall 2007 semester studying globalization and development with the Council for International Education and Exchange (CIEE) based in Khon Kaen, Thailand. I was drawn to the CIEE-Thailand program because of my interest in sex worker's rights. I knew that the booming sex industry in Thailand was certainly linked to the country's development- women were moving from their homes in rural areas to Bangkok and other cities to work in the sex industry and send money home to their families.

The CIEE-Thailand program uses a popular education model that utilizes group process, and takes students out of the classroom and places them in various communities across the Northeast to live, listen, and learn from people who have personally been affected by globalization and development projects. I was really attracted to the program's emphasis on active and experiential learning. I felt this approach left a more lasting impression than traditional forms of education because it was so personal.

The CIEE-Thailand program offers internships to people who enjoy or want to learn more about group process and the inner-workings of a socially engaged, alternative education study abroad program. I applied and was recently offered a spot on the fall 2009- spring 2010 four person intern team, so I will be returning to Khon Kaen, Thailand in July to intern with CIEE- Thailand for a year!

When explaining this internship to family and friends I liken it to community organizing, with the students being the community. The CIEE-Thailand program is unique because much of the learning takes place outside the classroom, and because of this it is essential that students come together as a group to process, discuss, and develop a common understanding about what they are learning. As an intern I will develop a broad range of skills that relate to working with students on group process and facilitation. I will also assist the CIEE-Thailand program in vision and goal setting sessions to plan two academic semesters, and will gain knowledge of all aspects of the CIEE-Thailand organization while gaining group building and facilitation skills.

I'm really excited to return to Thailand and for the opportunity to continue to learn and work with the CIEE-Thailand program. I hope to offer a gendered/feminist perspective to the program. Lastly, none of this would have been possible if it weren't for the Women's Studies International Experience Scholarship. The scholarship has opened many doors for me, and I hope this internship is just the beginning of a long line of exciting experiences.

Century of Change: The Progression of Women's Rights in Twentieth Century Spain*

Jillian Ketron

The twentieth century was one of great upheaval for the citizens of Spain, and no group would experience more drastic changes than Spanish women. When the wildly unpopular King Alfonso XIII abdicated the throne to Spain in 1931, Spain's Second Republic began, and the country was suddenly

faced with the task of recreating its own government. Official debates regarding the specifics of the government being created took place in the legislative body known as the *Cortes*. In regards to the issue of whether or not to grant women the right to vote, progressive politicians



Mujeres Libres, 1936-1939

were surprisingly averse to the idea, while much of the support for women's suffrage actually came from highly conservative politicians who were largely opposed to women's rights. This strange situation stemmed from the prevalent notion that the women of Spain, raised in a highly traditional society with limited access to education, would not think for themselves if given the right to vote, but rather would vote as their priests instructed them. As the Catholic church was perhaps the most conservative force in Spain at the time, progressives viewed any increase in its influence as a disaster to be avoided at all costs, even if the cost was the further oppression of the women of Spain.

Surprisingly, of the three women who had managed to be elected to the *Cortes* during Spain's constitutional debates, only one actively supported women's enfranchisement. After heated debate, the proposal for women's suffrage was passed by the Spanish legislature on October 1, 1931. However, women's enjoyment of this right would be short-lived, as public dissatisfaction with the government and political discord culminated in July 1936 with the Spanish Civil War, fought between the

(Continued on page 5)

Nationalists (or the conservative Right, led by Francisco Franco) and the Republicans (or the political Left). Though most women continued to be confined to their traditional roles during the conflict, many women contributed to their cause in remarkable and unconventional ways. Reactions to these women ranged from derision to praise, but whatever the reaction was, these women could not escape their perpetual status of "other" due to their womanhood. When a newspaper printed a poem praising a woman known as "Rosie the Dynamiter," who continued to fight at the front lines after losing a hand, it declared, "Rosario, dynamiter, you can be a man." Similarly, a woman known as "La Pasionaria" for the impassioned speeches she gave in support of the Republican cause was characterized by her supporters as a "virgin, saint, mother," she was portrayed by her enemies as a "whore" and a "violent, fearsome woman."



**"Only those who think that women are not human beings could deny their equal rights with men."
-Clara Campoamor**

Unfortunately, all progress made by women was undone when the Spanish Civil War ended in 1939 with a victory by Franco and his Nationalist supporters. Until Franco's death in 1975, the only political participation women were allowed was through an organization known as the *Seccion Femenina*, which pushed women to embrace a secondary status in which they were valued only for their roles as mothers and wives. The organization's creed included instructions such as, "Do not comment on any order; obey without hesitation" and "Do not stand out; help someone else to excel."

Following Spain's move to democracy in 1975, women have campaigned to be treated equitably but with mixed results. Surely, the political gains by women are quite remarkable. Currently, 9 of Spain's 17 cabinet ministers are women, and the country's Vice President is Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega. Spain's political parties are legally required to designate a minimum of 40% of their legislative seats for women. Furthermore, in 1978, Spain's government established the *Instituto de la Mujer*, a bureau of the government specifically devoted to addressing women's issues. However, some progress remains painfully slow. It was not until 1981 that divorce was legalized in Spain. Abortion still continues to be illegal in Spain, except in cases of rape or danger to the mother's physical or mental health. Though most women in Spain seek abortion for either personal or socio-economic reasons, 98% of registered abortions performed from 1992-2004 were listed as being performed due to "serious risk to the woman's mental health."

As it is in much of the world, "feminism" is viewed with suspicion and derision in Spain. For all the positive qualities of Spain's government, independent feminist organizations that challenge the established social order remain weak and unpopular. In this way, Spain is quite interesting. While the experiences over the past 100

years of women in Spain are highly unique, they have basic characteristics which resonate with women all over the world. Impressive gains in women's rights have improved the situation, yet made the general public complacent with decreased, rather than eliminated, discrepancies between the statuses of men and women. While women's rights are popular when they can be incorporated easily into existing systems, support dwindles when the established hierarchy is threatened. Studying the lives of women in Spain, much like studying the lives of women in many countries, provides us with the opportunity to learn about the diverse and unique experiences of women across different cultures while also identifying commonalities with which all women can identify.



**Current Women's
Representation in Spain:
9 out of 17 cabinet ministers**

* Excerpted from Study Abroad research paper by Jillian Ketron.

What Can You Do with a Degree in Women's Studies? News from Kelly Showker Mulira in Cameroon

I have been thinking a lot about you all, and the Department, and I would really like to do something to contribute back to VCU. As you may know, I became a United States Diplomat, and I am currently working in the Political/Economic Section of the US Embassy in Cameroon on the west coast of Africa. I have been working a lot with women's civil society groups here in Cameroon, reaching out to them, organizing events, doing reports on the status of gender relations in Cameroon, and even representing the Embassy in a working group between international donor groups here, so working with Unicef, Unifem, FAO, Canada, GTZ and others. I have also been interacting with the Dean of the Women's Studies Department at Beau University in South Western Cameroon. Basically, I am getting a good foothold here, and making a wide network of contacts in the field. I love my job and I would definitely not be sitting where I am sitting today, if it had not been for the study abroad trip with your Department to East Africa.

(Just as the Newsletter was ready to go to press, I received a long email from Kelly describing her new job and proposing a VCU study abroad trip to Cameroon. Kelly was one of the students on our 2002 study abroad trip to Uganda and Kenya and graduated with a major in Women's Studies in 2003. I've included a small excerpt of her email here because the next time someone asks, "What can you do with a degree in Women's Studies?" just answer, be a diplomat! Diana Scully)

14th Annual World Studies Student Research Conference

Audrey Blake, Morgan El-Shafey, Jillian Ketron, and Shayne Thomas participated in the VCU World Studies Student Research Conference held in November. Each woman presented a research paper to a crowd of students and faculty, on a panel entitled **Feminist Perspectives on Global Issues: Insights Gained from Women's Studies Study Abroad**. The women spoke on a broad range of issues including Audrey Blake, Austrian model of intervention in domestic violence cases, Morgan El-Shafey, the need for integrating gender studies for primary and secondary schools, Jillian Ketron, the women of Spain in the 20th century, and Shayne Thomas, the social and environmental effects of dams in Thailand.

VCU Student Organizations!

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Circle of Women is a student organization dedicated to building schools and educating young girls in developing countries. Our 2008-2009 mission has been the building of a secondary school for the girls in Wardak, Afghanistan, as part of Project Wonkhai, which registered 1200 students in March 2009. In addition to the construction of the Wonkhai School, Circle of Women provides its teachers with monthly salaries, along with initial textbooks and school supplies. The Wonkhai School also functions as an after-school vocational program to equip the women in the Wardak community with the necessary skills, such as making silk and jewelry, to provide for themselves and for their family independently. We believe that our commitment to the education and vocational training of the women in Afghanistan is of great importance in promoting positive social change.

As a fairly young organization, the Circle of Women chapter at VCU is working to spread awareness of women's conditions in Afghanistan, where the Taliban's frequent attacks on young girls often prevent them from getting an education. We hold weekly meetings to discuss the latest changes and developments in Wardak as a result of the Wonkhai School, along with recent news concerning women in Afghanistan and other developing countries. Our main mission for the 2009 spring semester is recruiting volunteers and sponsors for our students in Afghanistan, and organizing fundraisers. We are confident that our contributions will make a world of difference in the lives of the Wonkhai students.

For information about Circle of Women contact Fahimeh Manjili at manjilifh@vcu.edu.

S.A.V.E.S is a group of VCU students working as peer educators to raise awareness about intimate partner violence, sexual assault and stalking. We also work to promote a better understanding of healthy relationships. We strive to promote primary prevention of these issues by creating positive social change on our campus and in the community.

S A V E S

It is our mission to promote freedom from violence for everyone. We work under the principle that these issues occur regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation. We aim to create a community that speaks truth to the use of violence as a mechanism of power and control over others. Social change through awareness and education is our biggest resource for prevention.

We strive to involve students in events and program that will open their eyes to the epidemic of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Through annual events such as The Clothesline Project, The Red Flag Campaign and Take Back the Night we aim to teach people new ways to look at these problems, as well as offer strategies for healthy relationships.

For information feel free to contact saves@vcu.edu. Also, check out our website: <http://www.studentorg.vcu.edu/saves/>

VCU's **Men Against Violence (MAV)** is an organization of students and alumni dedicated to the prevention of sexual and intimate partner violence, coercion, sexual harassment, stalking, and sexist behavior. The group's aim is to educate men within the community and is open to anyone interested in becoming a member.

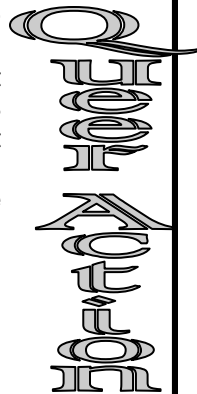
While we are a relatively young organization, we already have been afforded the opportunity to reach the public through both intimate, small settings such as residence-life programming and event-oriented, larger settings such as hosting the acclaimed filmmaker and anti-sexist activist, Byron Hurts. Despite these successes, there is always more work to do and more people to reach.

If you are interested in becoming involved in the movement to end gender-violence within our communities or attending an event/meeting, contact MAViolence@gmail.com or Jonathan Yglesias at yglesiasjl@vcu.edu

MAV

Queer Action (QA) is dedicated to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and questioning (LGBTQI) activism at VCU and in Richmond. QA is unique in its specific commitment and acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of queer liberation to other liberation struggles including those of women, racial minorities, immigrants, and the poor.

For more information contact QA at queeraction@vcu.edu



Amendment, a student literature and arts journal at VCU

promoting social change through artistic expression, is an annual publication accepting submissions year-round. Our mission is to expand publishing opportunity for emerging artists and writers, while increasing awareness on social and political issues. We publish poetry, short fiction and creative nonfiction, essays, photography, drawings, paintings, and other forms of fine and applied arts. Submissions should be emailed to amendmentvcu@gmail.com, and include your name/pen name, title of work(s), contact information, and a brief contributor biography. We're always looking for talented editors to join our staff, but experience is not required.

To become a staff member, simply send an email to the above address and/or show up at one of our weekly meetings in the Student Media Center located at 817 W. Broad Street.

VCU VOX

Voices for Planned Parenthood (VOX) is a nationwide program that aims to energize and mobilize a new generation of pro-choice Americans. Through VOX, college students across the country organize events on campus to raise awareness about reproductive rights and sexual health. VOX also works to support their local Planned Parenthood health centers, and mobilize advocates of reproductive freedom. VOX promotes accurate information and education about safe sex. VOX is the voice for choice on the VCU campus and supports a woman's right to choose what is best for her and her body.

VOX hosts a Sex Talk Live each fall and spring semester with two sex experts who answer questions and lead discussions. VOX also hosts an annual FREE HIV testing on World AIDS Day. Other VOX events include hosting a speaker supporting a woman's right to choose for women's history month in March.

If you have any questions about VOX or are thinking about joining you can contact Elizabeth Leatherland at leatherlanea@vcu.edu.

Student Reviews

2009 Sex Workers' Art Show

Ramey Connelly

As the final audience members took their seats at the Firehouse Theater on the evening of Wednesday, March 25, the crowd was bustling with curiosity. Appearing in Richmond for their Limited 2009 Dirty South Tour, the Sex Workers' Art Show combines spoken word, music, burlesque, and multimedia performance art in an exhilarating and stunning cabaret-style show. Bringing together people from all arenas of the ever-varying sex industry, the Sex Workers' Art Show seeks to humanize those people who work within the industry. As their website proclaims, they ultimately strive to "dispel the myth that they are anything short of artists, innovators, and geniuses!" If this is their intention, then they have been wildly successful.

Sex work has obviously been a highly controversial topic in all arenas; more recently, it has become a great controversy in the world of feminist theory. While many feminists believe that sex work perpetuates the oppression of women, it nonetheless remains that a huge proportion of the world's women are part of the sex industry, whether voluntary or not. The Sex Workers' Art Show seeks to break down the ugly stereotypes of sex workers as fallen women, dope addicts, or disease carriers. Instead, they are women at work, striving to make ends meet in a job market which underpays women at every economic level.

This is not to say that the show portrays sex work as a purely positive experience. The performances often touch on darker subjects, including ignorance, harassment, and violence. This is one of the central aspects of the show- to give a voice to people in an industry, in a community, who are so often kept silent. Whether you agree with what they do and what they say or not, all they ask for is that you watch, listen, and maybe even learn a little.

The end result is an amazing collaborative effort which breaks beyond a traditional dichotomous stance on sex work as being either "positive" or "negative". Instead, it challenges the viewer to reach a greater understanding of the complicated ways that sex workers experience, interpret, and feel about their work and their lives. Sometimes scathing, sometimes hilarious, and always brilliant, the Sex Workers' Art Show smashes boundaries of gender, sex, race, class, labor, and sexuality with finesse.

For more information, visit.
www.sexworkersartshow.com

Author Inga Muscio at VCU

Shannon Le Corre

Every year VOX tries to bring woman-positive, thought provoking speakers to Richmond. In the past we've attempted to help our feminist community discuss controversial issues including porn (Gail Dines) and reproductive freedom (Sarah Weddington). We've even aided in bringing Black Panther leader Kathleen Cleaver. This year the author of *Cunt* and *Autobiography of a Blue Eyed Devil*, Inga Muscio was suggested. Everyone's eyes lit up as their imaginations whisked them away to their favorite moments with *Cunt*. Mine would be reading it in the Boston airport and having a mom move her child away from me! Oops!

Unlike most speakers, Inga had a way of connecting with the audience. It didn't seem like a lecture—more of a comfortable talk, a discussion even. To our surprise she chose to give her speech entitled "Racist Anonymous." It turned out to work quite well—in a room full of middle class, mostly white feminists, race would be the elephant in the room. In a casual and often joking manner, she brought to our attention the perils of white normativity (think heteronormativity, only with race instead of sexuality!) and how racism is ever present and something we as people and more importantly as Americans, need to confront. These are all themes she covers in her book *Autobiography*.

Her positive aura left everyone feeling like they could make a difference, or at least talk about it in non-threatening way with each other! So make yourself uncomfortable and check out her books and essays, because honestly who doesn't want to read a book with a naughty title in a crowded place?

For more information visit
<http://www.ingalagringer.com/>



VOX members with Inga Muscio

Women's Studies Award Winners 2009!

Outstanding Senior Women's Studies Award



Audrey Walls

Receiving the Outstanding Women's Studies Student Award has left me practically without words, which is a pretty big deal since I'm an English major as well as Women's Studies major. Every Women's Studies class I have taken thus far

has been nothing short of an amazing experience, and I count my professors and my peers as among the best people I have met at VCU. After I graduate, I hope to successfully combine my love of English and Women's Studies by pursuing a graduate degree in English that will allow me to focus on feminist literary theory, gender/queer theory, and women's writings. With any luck, my dream job would be working as a professor at a university, teaching both English and Women's Studies courses and leaving the Dead White Guys of "canonical literature" in the dust!



Jillian Ketron

I began my time at VCU as a History major with no plans to pursue Women's Studies (at least, not formally). However, after taking a few history courses which focused on women's history, I decided to add Women's Studies as a second degree. Even with the

added workload, it has turned out to be one of the best decisions I've made. By entering VCU's Women's Studies program, I was able to participate in last summer's Study Abroad program to Spain, where I got to hear the opinions and stories of feminists from around the world. The classes I have taken in Women's Studies have given me the opportunity to learn the history behind the many issues that continue to be relevant for myself and women in general. Not only has the program taught me how to notice and understand instances of inequality, but it has-most importantly- addressed ways in which to confront the situation and promote change. What I have most appreciated from my time in the Women's Studies Department is that, because the department is small and tight-knit, I have been able to get to know so many of my professors and other students so well. After graduating from VCU in May with B.A. degrees in History and Women's Studies, I will continue my research into women's roles in resistance movements in Chile and Argentina as part of Virginia Tech's Latin American Area Studies Master's program. I hope to continue to use my experience in Women's Studies to make myself more well-rounded, both as a scholar and as an individual.

Women's Studies International Experience Scholarship



Christian Halley

Deciding to become a Women's Studies major during my sophomore year of college was the best decision I've made in terms of my education. While my other major, Political Science, is interesting, it has not changed my life and my entire worldview in the way that Women's Studies

and feminism have. When I decided I wanted to study in Uganda and Rwanda with SIT, the price was daunting; after receiving the Women's Studies International Scholarship, however, I will be able to finance my trip and take part in a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that will almost certainly change my life. I plan to use the scholarship to aid in my research on women's rights in post-genocidal Rwanda, which is currently an underdeveloped field of study since it is such a new period in terms of Rwanda's history. I am extremely grateful to receive this award and will use it to expand my studies of women throughout the world.

Women's Studies Black History in the Making Award



Melissa Flood

When I first came to VCU, I had no idea what Women's Studies was. In fact, my freshman year, I entered as a Chemistry major following the pre-med track. After taking one Women's Studies class, I knew I had found my passion.

I had never felt so empowered and proud to be called WOMAN. When I graduate, I plan to use my degree to enter into the federal government or a large corporation in hopes of working in their EEO office. More importantly, when I leave VCU, I will take all I have learned and encourage other women to learn about their past, present, and future. We have come a long way, but we are not nearly done!



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