

# Highlighting Women's Issues

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Vol. 11 No. 2

Mansfield University's Women's Studies Newsletter

Spring 2003

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## Letter from the editor

by Denise Seigart

As I prepare this issue of Highlighting Women's Issues, there is much to think about. In a post 911 world, as we watch our country go to war once again, women and women's issues appear to be all the more important, all the more fragile. As women and men march in peace protests around the world, and women and men here debate the morality of a war with Iraq, things such as fall courses and small newsletters seem so insignificant. Can we here at Mansfield have any real impact on the events in the world around us? Will there ever be change in the way countries and governments deal with conflict? Will women ever truly have equality? Does the Women's Studies program have any real impact? At times, things can seem hopeless, and yet, even here we can see change.

This semester, for the first time, with the help of Dr. Longoria, *The Vagina Monologues* were produced at Mansfield University. Audiences were large, and the debate was peaceful and intelligent. We may have differences of opinion regarding how one ought to talk about vaginas, we may have differences of opinion regarding how women should strive for equal rights, but we can talk about them. There were no fights; there were no clamorous protests, with opposing groups trying to out shout each other. There was only thoughtful attention, conversation, and debate.

This semester, students at Mansfield had the opportunity to study women's and gender issues in four women's studies courses including Introduction to Women's studies, Gender and Communication, The Influence of the Slave Narrative and an English seminar on Emerson and Fuller.

This semester, art students displayed works that included their interpretations of the goddess, and the campus community was treated to works entitled The Blue Goddess, The Four Goddesses, and The Pregnant Madonna (among many others).

This semester, Jennifer Armstrong, who sings of women's equality and freedom, came to Mansfield to share her talents and particular outlook on life for two days during the Intercultural Relations Conference on Women Across Cultures.

This semester the President's Commission on the Status of Women sponsored an appreciation luncheon for 18 Mansfield women and men (faculty, staff, students and community members) who were honored by students for having a strong impact on their lives and for helping them to become stronger women (see names at the end of this issue!)

This semester, the Women's Studies Program, the Women's Center, the President's Commission on the Status of Women, and individual women and men on the Mansfield campus, made a difference. Men and women learned from each other. Debates ensued. Attitudes changed. Consciousness was raised, and we were all reminded that in whatever small ways, we can impact the world.

## Title IX-Women's Athletics Get The AX Under Bush Commission

by Emilee Danielson

By the early 1970's women in the United States had possessed the right to vote for a mere fifty years. However, in that time enormous strides were made in the fight to achieve equality for women. At this point in time more women were working outside the home, many were going to college, and the birth control pill had been introduced, giving women more control over their reproductive options. Now many women wanted to expand their fight for equality to include the athletic and educational realm. College-age women wanted the opportunity to play in sports just like their male counterparts, and many women with children wanted their daughters to have the opportunities that they didn't have. Thus the birth of Title IX.

Title IX of the Education Amendment Act is a federal law that was introduced in 1972. This law states that, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex (gender), 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." In simpler terms what that means is that no student, male or female, can be denied the opportunity to benefit from any educational program regardless of gender in any educational institution that receives federal funding. All students must have access to the same things in matters of participation, scholarships, equipment, coaching, locker rooms, etc. However, even though athletics has received the bulk of the attention, Title IX does not apply only to athletics. Under the law, all programs in an educational institution must be equal on the basis of gender. Under these regulations, Title IX has operated for thirty years. While minor changes have been enacted, and the law has been challenged a few times, its main statute has been in place for the duration.

However, the future of Title IX, and of all female athletics is now jeopardy. The Commission on Opportunity in Athletics, a committee created by the Bush administration, has recommended numerous and fatal changes to Title IX. Before the law's implementation in 1972, fewer than 30,000 women participated in intercollegiate sports programs sanctioned by the National Collegiate Athletic Association; by 2000, nearly 151,000 women were NCAA athletes. At the high-school level, the number of female athletes grew from 294,000 to nearly 2.8 million during the same time period. But some also blame the law for a sharp decline in low-profile men's athletics, such as wrestling, and thus the proposed changes. According to the Women's Sports Foundation, these changes would cause college women to lose 50,000 participation opportunities and nearly \$120 million dollars in scholarships. High school girls could lose nearly 350,000 opportunities to participate. But what is even more ludicrous is the reason behind the changes. The members of the Commission, which is composed of many anti-Title IX activists, base their reasoning for the changes on the stereotypical idea that girls and women do not have an active interest in sports or athletics and that funding for women's is taking money away from men's athletics . The Commission members have even entertained the idea that young women should have to prove their interest in sports before they are "given" an opportunity to participate. Donna Lopiano, executive director of the Women's Sports Foundation, worries that high-powered right-wing critics will use the lawsuit to advance their agenda on Capitol Hill. "There's no question that there are many informal connections between right-wing women's groups and this new

administration," says Lopiano. They have stated "boys should not be punished just because girls don't demonstrate as much interest in sports as boys do." She dismisses claims that Title IX unfairly overburdens non-revenue athletics such as track and wrestling with "gender quotas." She argues that wealthy schools with big-name football and basketball teams on the NCAA's Division I roster use Title IX as a scapegoat to hide gross funding inequities between Division I football and Division II wrestling. "It's a fact that every school could meet the requirements for Title IX compliance by dropping one competitive division down," Lopiano stated. According to Diane Monkiewicz, head field hockey coach at Mansfield, one of the biggest problems with the existing law is that it is not adequately enforced, so universities that are not in compliance never suffer consequences, it is a law with "no teeth". She stated "The proposed changes will dramatically affect women's scholarships and participation in sports, and should not be implemented."

I believe what is more important than the intended rape of Title IX is the issues that lie beneath it. In this country women struggled for seventy years just to have the right to vote, and eighty years later there are still many injustices against women. In the year 2003, in this country women are still not given equal pay for equal work, in this country every thirty seconds a woman is raped, every fifteen seconds a woman is physically abused. The bottom line is that in this country women are still not equal to men. So what does it say for our country, when despite the numerous examples of outstanding female athletes in the history of our country, a Commission selected by our President says that women do not deserve the same resources as men? Well, in my opinion, not a whole lot.

I believe it is our ethical responsibility to end discrimination on any basis. We can not allow our elected officials to play favorites or suffer from these types of delusions. Changes in the athletic equality requirements of Title IX could lead to sweeping changes in the equality of our educational systems. We cannot allow young women to have limited education experiences while male students are not under the same limitations. Simply because men and women are different does not mean male students should have access to more resources. All students deserve the same opportunities, regardless of gender, just as it states in Title IX.

If you are interested in reading more about these issues, or in contacting your local representative, please visit these web sites:

[www1.ncaa.org/membership/ed\\_outreach/gender\\_equality/index.html](http://www1.ncaa.org/membership/ed_outreach/gender_equality/index.html) or

<http://capwiz.com/fmf1/issues/alert/?alertid=1502866&type=CO>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A35362-2003Jan23.html>

"The problem is not Title IX. The problem is college presidents not putting a stop to the embarrassing waste of money occurring in men's football and basketball."

The problem is not Title IX.  
The problem is college presidents not putting a stop to the embarrassing waste of money occurring in men's football and basketball.

Donna Lopiano  
<http://www.womensportsfoundation.org/cgi-bin/iowa/issues/opin/index.html>

## An American Feminist in Russia

by Denise Seigart

"What is a feminist? " I asked my students. "What is feminism?"

"A terrible thing" they answered. "Feminists are lesbians, they teach women to hate men, they encourage women to do things they shouldn't do!"

"Really?" I said, "but I am a feminist."

Their eyes grew wide open, as it appeared I did not fit their image of what a feminist is. And so our semester long conversation began. As the exchange Professor from Mansfield University, I spent the fall semester at Volgograd State University with my daughter Maureen and her friend Haddie. One of the courses I elected to teach at VolgU dealt with American women. We covered a broad array of topics, including the feminist movement in America, gender, women's roles in the family, women at work, women in politics, women and religion, abortion, sexual violence and others. Like my American students, many of my Russian students had little exposure to feminist ideas or theory prior to our discussions; thus we had many great debates. I also often introduced feminist ideas into my two classes on conversational English, since it is my belief that

practicing a language is more fun if you have something interesting to talk about. Since women are not often introduced to their own history, I always like to start there. As noted by Adrienne Rich (1979);

*Suppose we were to ask ourselves, simply: What does a woman need to know? Does she not, as a self-conscious, self-defining human being, need a knowledge of her own history, her much-politicized biology, an awareness of the creative work of women of the past, the skills and crafts and techniques and powers exercised by women in different times and cultures, a knowledge of women's rebellions and organized movements against our oppression and how they have been routed or diminished? Without such knowledge women live and have lived without context, vulnerable to the projections of male fantasy, male prescriptions for us, estranged from our own experience because our education has not reflected or echoed it. I would suggest that not biology, but ignorance of our selves, has been the key to our powerlessness. "we need to demand more, not less, of women, both for the sake of their futures as thinking beings, and because historically women have always had to be better than men to do half as well. ... To think like a woman in a man's world means thinking critically, refusing to accept the givens, making connections between facts and ideas which men have left unconnected.*

In this excerpt I share with you a bit of our mutual learning experience.

When my daughter Maureen, Haddie and I agreed to spend the fall semester in Russia, we had little notion of what we were getting ourselves into. Nor, I suspect did the Russians know what they were getting. As Director of the Women's Studies program at Mansfield, in addition to teaching nursing, I love introducing students to feminist ideas and theory. Even in America, where according to many of our Russian friends we "have it all", I find students inadequately versed in the wealth of literature available to them regarding feminism and feminist theory. There has been much backlash against feminism in recent years (Faludi, 1992) and unfortunately many young women and men are reluctant to study feminism or associate themselves with the feminist movement. A question such as the one I asked my Russian students is often answered in the

much the same way at Mansfield. Thus I felt well prepared for the debates that ensued in Russia.

At first my students were resistant to discussing feminist ideas. Even other faculty said "Why should we worry about such things, we have bigger problems". "But", I cautioned, "don't you think Russian women should be involved in forming the solutions to those problems?" "Yes", they agreed, "that would be nice." "But we think American women have it all wrong, I like having doors opened for me, I like wearing high-heels, I like having him carry the heavy parcels, I like wearing lipstick and getting the attention of men." "Yes," I agreed, "these things can all be nice, but what do you give up in exchange for these small niceties?" As my daughter and I observed, the portrayal of women as sexual objects seems stronger in Russia, not that we don't have it at home as well. We noticed more see-through blouses, more thongs, and more stiletto heels than we normally see on our campus. And of course, there were the other male International students, who commented "Russian women take better care of themselves, they dress more feminine, they make better eye candy". Thus Maureen, Haddie and I schlepping around in our Birkenstock sandals and dockers weren't particularly pleasing. My irritation with the 34 year old American male who was admittedly a "student" so he could date 17 year old Russian women was difficult to suppress (or as he would probably tell you, impossible). I observed many beautiful young Russian women surrounding our American "friend" each day at lunch, and I warned my students they should be wary of American men who come here looking for "docile" Russian wives.

We discussed women's work, and what women are capable of. "In my country", I said, "most jobs are open to women, so they can choose whatever career they like, and they are not limited to those professions once traditionally reserved for women (e.g., teaching, nursing, secretaries). But we still have a long way to go before we have equality in work and salary opportunities." My students were surprised to learn that U.S. women still do not earn as much as men, on average. "But there are some jobs women just can't do, like coal mining", they said. "But we have women who are coal miners", I added. "Would you like to see pictures?" I shared with them photos from one of my favorite books, *Women* by Annie Leibovitz and Susan Sontag (1999). They were astounded to see pictures of women coal miners, women weight lifters, women in the military, and more. But some of my students say, "Yes-we have these kind of workers too, but they are not women. Some of our women work in construction, or on the railroads. But they are not women." "Should

women be restricted from jobs that require heavy lifting?" I asked. "Yes!" they agreed. "But what about the heavy lifting nurses, waitresses, and childcare workers do every day?" "It is dangerous for women to lift heavy loads, they are too fragile!" they answered. "Really?" I said, "and what about the babushka I saw carrying a large sack of potatoes down the road this morning? Is she a woman?"

### ***To be continued in the next issue!***

Faludi, S. (1992) *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*. New York: Anchor publishing.

Leibovitz, A., Sontag, S. (1999). *Women*. New York: Random House

Rich, A. (1979). *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, New York: W. W. Norton Inc. and Co.

## **Two Moroccan Feminists Come to Mansfield University**

*By Linda Rashidi*

Mansfield University is most fortunate to have on campus this coming summer two prominent Moroccan feminists, a wife and husband duo. Dr. Moha Ennaji teaches linguistics at University of Fes, where he is chair of the English Department. He will be coming to Mansfield on a Fulbright Grant from the Moroccan-American Commission. During his three-month stay, he will be working with Linda Rashidi in the Department of Languages and Literature on a project to develop Berber literacy. While MU may seem an odd place for a project on Berber, the language of the indigenous people of Morocco, MU has long had an active interest in literacy issues. And Dr. Ennaji's active interest in feminist and gender studies will bring a new perspective to literacy study and to the campus as a whole. Ennaji brings with him a great example of an Arab male who is actively involved in the promotion of women's rights; he works, both with his wife and in his own right, on scholarship that highlights the contributions that women have made to their cultures. His most recent book, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*, emphasizes the feminization of illiteracy that is a part of many countries today. This interest in women's issues is also seen in his latest articles and conference presentations: "The effects of migration on Moroccan women left behind", "Women and education in North Africa", and "Women

and development in North Africa" are but three of his most recent works.

Dr. Fatima Sadiqi, the female half of the duo, will be teaching a Summer Session II (June 23-August 1) course on Gender and Culture in Morocco: Arab Literature. Dr. Sadiqi is well known throughout North Africa for her publications and presentations on language and gender and Islamic feminism. In 2000, she was successful in establishing Morocco's first university program in gender studies. The Center for Gender Studies was active, however, even before its official recognition. In the spring of 1999, Dr. Sadiqi organized the First International Conference on Feminist Movements on behalf of the Center for Studies and Research on Women at Fes. Feminist scholars from around the world attended this conference and exchanged ideas on the meaning of feminism in various cultures. The proceedings of the conference were published in a volume entitled *Feminist Movements: Origins and Orientations* and edited by Sadiqi. Both Sadiqi and Rashidi have articles in this trilingual volume, a copy of which is in our library. Since that time, Dr. Sadiqi has had published a book, *Women, Gender and Language in Morocco* (2003), as well as numerous articles centering on the issue of women, language, and culture.

Sadiqi and Ennaji will be arriving in Mansfield in late June with their three teenage sons, the oldest of whom has completed his first year in college. The entire family is fluent in English (but also French and Arabic!) and looking forward to being here and interacting with the Mansfield community.

## **Scholarship Opportunity 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Undergraduate Women's Leadership Institute**

by Elizabeth Shaffer

Back in 1994 someone told me that I should apply for the Women's Undergraduate Leadership Institute. I had two children and a new house and couldn't. I also didn't know what it was. Most of the young women at last year's institute didn't know what to expect either. They were there because each of their universities across the state paid for them to go.

You can go too. You'd have to ask all of the women there last year to know why.

The Women's Undergraduate Leadership institute is held at the McKeever Environmental Learning Center in western PA. It is a good 6-hour drive from here. I know because I drove out there last year to be one of the people on staff and give a couple of presentations. Don't let that lead you to the false conclusion that the Institute is about seeing a lot of presentations. It's not. You will spend five days there if you go. People talk a lot in college about learning, growth, and building networks. Most of the people at the institute last year would certainly say that was what the Institute is about. Approximately thirty women from across the state of Pennsylvania met for the week last year to learn things that might help them become leaders. They learned that leadership could be a role. It also might be a way of living that is not connected to a role. Some learned that they could become close to other women and trust them in ways they hadn't experienced in regular college life. One learned that she could survive in "the country" for a week. They learned that there are a hundred different ways to be a leader. They learned to be quiet. They laughed together. They talked about the "untalkables." (Did you like the Vagina Monologues? Maybe you should consider going to the Institute.) Some learned to listen more. Some learned to talk more. Not because the Institute makes everyone change, or become the same, but because the Institute embraces diversity in womanhood that allows all to speak and express. The Institute encourages people to explore their boundaries, and sometimes transcend them.

If I sound a little flowery, I apologize. When I was asked to write this article, I thought "what a wonderful way to let others know about a terrific opportunity." Then I realized that a simple, logical explanation of what the Institute is falls so short of the experience. So I gave up trying and "got flowery." I can tell you this. The Women's Undergraduate Leadership Institute is a five-day paid conference sponsored by the Women's Consortium of the State System of Higher Education where young women from across the state system colleges come together to learn about leadership. This year it is from Sunday, July 27<sup>th</sup> to Friday, August 1<sup>st</sup>. The women bunk together in dorms. The food is good. Your schedule is busy. You do have to provide your own transportation, but that is all it costs. We can send three students from Mansfield University. Applications are available from the Women's Center or my office in Pinecrest 109. For more information, see me, Elizabeth Shaffer, Margaret Launius or the Office of Student Affairs which funds this scholarship. I went there last year as staff and I also learned, grew and built connection to a group of women I will not forget.

## **Education and Afghan Girls: Did You Know?**

In just the past two months, a total of 12 girls' schools outside of Kabul have been violently attacked by extremists. In most cases, the schools were bombed or burned. In some instances, the distribution of leaflets, containing threats against women working and taking off the burqa and against girls attending school, preceded the attack. (Noted by the Feminist Majority Foundation)

### **\*\*\*\*\*Celebrations\*\*\*\*\***

The following individuals were honored March 26<sup>th</sup> by the President's Commission on the Status of Women and students as outstanding mentors of women at Mansfield University:

Abe Ghods, Adrienne McEvoy, Ann Mabe, Betsy Kuhl, Bob Maris, Cindy Keller, Deb Casey, Dr. Tondelaya Baylor-Ayewoh, Gayle Kreitzer, Jane McGuire, Lou Brown, Margaret Launius, Nancy Sidell, Sharron Carrish, Theresa Standford, Tom Caufield, Denise Seigart, and Betsy Bisel

Margaret Launius, Ph. D., Psychology Department has presented several workshops this year including the following: August, 2002 *Power, Personality, and Leadership at the PA-SSHE Undergraduate Women's Leadership Conference*; September, 2002 *Measuring Student Learning: Using Student Portfolios in Undergraduate Program Assessment & Ignition to Liftoff: Identifying Outcomes, Demonstration Methods and Related Courses*, both presented with other psychology department faculty at the Best Practices in Assessment conference, Atlanta, GA; and *Characteristics Do Make a Difference: Leadership/Management Roles* in February, 2003 at the Western PA Municipal Managers Conference, Farmington, PA.

Lynn Pifer, Languages and Literature, presented her paper, "Thulani Davis's 1959: Telling a Transformative Tale of the Civil Rights Movement," on a panel entitled "Focus on the Folk: African-American Women Writers Critique Civil Rights Leadership Styles" at the 20th

Century Literature Conference at the University of Louisville on February 27. On March 8, she presented her paper, "*The Personal is Pedagogical: Teaching Women's Civil Rights Autobiographies*," at the Sarah Lawrence College's 5th Annual Women's History Conference: "Sisters in Struggle: Honoring Women Veterans of the Modern Civil Rights Movement."

Denise Seigart, Department of Health Sciences and Program Director of Women's Studies, had a paper accepted for publication in *We/Myi: The Women's Dialogue*, a journal published by the National Council for Research on Women. The article entitled "*An American Feminist in Russia*" discusses her experiences while teaching at Volgograd State University and an excerpt from the article is included in this newsletter.

### **\*\*\*\*\*Announcements\*\*\*\*\***

Women faculty, staff, and students!!!! Please join the SSHE Women's Consortium – Margaret Launius has applications and information. X4391

### **It's not too late to get into Summer Women's Studies Courses!**

*WS 1100, Introduction to Women's Studies,* Although most American women believe in their right to equality, a basic definition of feminism, many of them do not define themselves as feminists. In this course, we'll consider the relevance of feminism for women today by examining connections and differences between women as well as feminist approaches to work, families, race, class, and sexuality. We will focus on the significant impact of the feminist movement on American life particularly in the past 40 years. Professor Andrea Harris

*ENG 2220 or ENG 3320-* Dr. Sadiqi's Summer Session II course will acquaint American students with the heterogeneity of Islamic/Moroccan women and the diverse aspects which differentiate Moroccan women from Western women, from other Arab/Muslim women, and from each other. She has chosen some fascinating texts for the course, including Fatima Mernissi's *Doing Daily Battle*, Deborah Kapchan's *Gender on the Market*, Elizabeth Fernea's *A Street in Marrakech*, and Leila Abouzeid's *The Year of the Elephant*. Dr. Sadiqi is a lively and dynamic lecturer and teacher, who will add a refreshing note of diversity to our campus this summer.

## **Women's Studies Courses for Fall 2003**

*Eng 3326-01 Women's Literature*, This course brings together poetry and fiction by contemporary American women such as Sylvia Plath, Dorothy Allison, Sandra Cisneros, and Toni Morrison. We'll read these texts from a feminist perspective, asking questions such as: How do gender norms pose obstacles as women attempt to forge identities? How does women's writing challenge the literary status quo? We will examine issues central to women's literature such as identity, the body, and women's "place" in society and will pay careful attention to cultural differences between women including race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity. The course will teach students to read closely and analytically and to relate their experiences to the reading. Professor Andrea Harris, M-W-F 9am.

*WS 1100-02, Introduction to Women's Studies*, Although most American women believe in their right to equality, a basic definition of feminism, many of them do not define themselves as feminists. In this course, we'll consider the relevance of feminism for women today by examining connections and differences between women as well as feminist approaches to work, families, race, class, and sexuality. We will focus on the significant impact of the feminist movement on American life particularly in the past 40 years. Professor Andrea Harris, M-W-F 2pm.

*WS1100-01 Introduction to Women's Studies*  
Although most American women believe in their right to equality, a basic definition of feminism, many of them do not define themselves as feminists. In this course, we'll consider the relevance of feminism for women today by examining connections and differences between women as well as feminist approaches to work, families, race, class, and sexuality. We will focus on the significant impact of the feminist movement on American life particularly in the past 40 years. Professor Judith Sornberger T-Th 2pm.

*NUR 4402 Women's Health Issues* (cross-listed with WS) -This course is designed to explore and analyze a wide range of women's health issues from a multi-disciplinary perspective. Topics include reproductive health, violence against women, occupational health, poverty and women's health, incarceration, health of minority women, world women's health and many others. This course is presented in a seminar format

utilizing feminist pedagogy. A high level of student participation is expected. The course is not limited to nursing majors. Professor- Denise Seigart, Th 6-9pm

*ARH4410 -Women in Ancient Greek Art* -A study of women as subjects and patrons of ancient Greek art, with emphasis on the cultural and artistic milieu in which they are represented. Professor-Dr. Bonnie Kutbay, [online course](#)