

# FEMINIST GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES

Wesleyan University 2017

## FGSS Hosts Science Studies Scholars



FGSS organized two events highlighting feminist and queer scholarship in science studies in 2016-17. The first of these was a visit by Angela Willey, who came to Wesleyan in October to talk about her recently published book, *Undoing Monogamy: The Politics of Science and the Possibilities of Biology*. The presentation was co-sponsored by FGSS, the Queer Studies Research Collective and the Science in Society Program. The event drew a broad audience, reflecting the “radically interdisciplinary” approach Willey takes in her queer-feminist exploration of monogamy. Willey teaches feminist science studies, queer/sexuality studies, and gender studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the Five Colleges Consortium. The Wesleyan community was one of the first audiences Willey spoke to about *Undoing Monogamy*, her first book.

Willey analyzes monogamy as a cultural construction and a scientific object, one that refers to embodied and material relationality. Her interdisciplinary study examines a range of sites for the production of monogamy’s meanings, including colonial sexual science, literary works, and contemporary neuroscientific research on vole coupling. Willey explained her desire to challenge the true/false framework that researchers typically use to interrogate the naturalness of monogamy. Instead of asking,

“Are humans wired for monogamy?” Willey asked, “What is the relationship between how we imagine social belonging and how we understand human nature?” This type of inquiry enabled Willey to explore the realm of what she calls “bio-possibility,” or open-ended ways in which biological bodies could participate in kinship and belonging. Willey’s work adds a materialist dimension to feminist and queer critiques of monogamy. Willey complicates biological claims about monogamy’s “naturalness” by critically engaging with scientific research, specifically in relation to pair bonding and attachment. Her ethnography of a neuroscientific lab is presented alongside literary analyses of the works of Alison Bechdel and Audre Lorde.

The second feminist science studies speaker was Michelle Murphy of the University of Toronto for the Diane Weiss ’80 Memorial Lecture. Murphy is a feminist technoscience studies scholar and historian whose work ranges from analyses of sexed, raced and queer life to studies of necropolitics and contemporary warfare. The lecture, titled “Chemical Exposures and Decolonial Futures,” outlined some of the arguments of Murphy’s upcoming book, *The Economization of Life*.

Dr. Murphy addressed how “chemical relations” – the social arrangements that bring chemicals into lives and experiences – are embodied, infra-structural, and emanate from the histories of colonization. Her research on “chemical alley” in the Great Lakes Region illuminates how toxicology, biochemistry, industry, colonization and reproduction all intermingle and impact

our environment, civilization, and bodies. Her interdisciplinary work seeks to answer several compelling questions: How can we build decolonial futures out of conditions of violence? What conceptions of life, chemicals, reproduction, and embodiment might help us to understand our chemically altered future?

Murphy’s work traces how colonialism and white supremacy make their way materially through air, water, soil, and history. She presented the neologism “alterlife” to address life that is already altered, chemically and otherwise, and remains open to alteration. This concept rethinks what are often considered damaged or toxified organisms and beings. Dr. Murphy coined the term “alterwise” to grapple with the difficulties of both accounting for the violence that has already happened and the need to undo it in the present. She also addressed how indigenous tribes in the Great Lakes Region are resisting the environmental devastation of their communities.

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# Letter from the Chair

The purpose of our work at FGSS has never seemed more critical to me than it has this past year. The election last November of the POTUS, and the subsequent attacks on immigrants, reproductive rights, health care, and the environment, have renewed a collective sense of urgency around feminist teaching, learning and scholarship. To those ends, we have been busy. In the past year, we offered new courses on social justice movements, Latina history, care work and biopolitics, and feminist postcolonial science studies (taught by Visiting Assistant Professor Elizabeth Garcia and Animal Studies Postdoctoral Fellow Katie Gillespie). We co-organized and collaborated on a number of events to address current political crises, which focused on reproductive justice, police violence against women of color, intersectionality and trans rights, and activist strategies. Our students wrote theses, essays, and presented papers on a range of pressing issues, and put their learning to use in community work, volunteering and activism. To highlight a few examples, Selene Canter '19 presented a paper on sexual violence and social media at the Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium Undergraduate Conference. Zandy Stovicek '17 worked in clinics throughout the year as a doula and taught a student forum

on reproductive justice. David Wade-Lopez '18 attended a forum at the White House on World AIDS Day, and spoke at a national summit on sex education.

The FGSS program is building on decades of work to create and sustain feminist, gender and sexuality scholarship. In 2017, we mark some significant anniversaries. It was forty years ago, in 1977, when a committee first convened to create a Women's Studies program at Wesleyan University. This was the same year that the National Women's Studies Association was established. Although there was initially no major, the Wesleyan faculty approved the creation of a program in 1979; the first Women's Studies major graduated in 1991. The name of the program shifted when students and faculty decided to highlight their inclusive, broad understanding of the field, and ten years ago, in 2007, the program graduated its first FGSS majors.

All together, this program has graduated roughly 275 majors. Our alumni are working in law, medicine, television, publishing and digital media, education, social policy, community organizing, international development, eco-tourism, the arts, and many other fields. At our Fall Symposium in 2017, we will invite



alumni to share their insights about how the study of gender, sexuality and feminism has influenced them, and how they have put their learning into practice. We look forward to seeing many of you there.

I've been grateful for the chance to chair this important program for the past three years, and I am thrilled to welcome Jennifer Tucker as Chair of FGSS for 2017-18. Professor Tucker is a historian of science and technology with a wide range of expertise. She has helmed the program in the past, and we are grateful for her expertise and leadership once again. I'd also like to thank our Administrative Assistant Jen Enxuto for her hard work all year, and students Jessica Perelman '17 and Maxine Go '20, who produced this newsletter with Jen.

**Victoria Pitts-Taylor**  
Professor of Feminist, Gender,  
and Sexuality Studies, Chair

## Faculty Spotlight



**Jennifer Tucker** taught a new course this spring, "Photography and Law: Mugshots, Privacy and Publicity, Obscenity, Copyright, Evidence." For a second course, "Seeing a Bigger Picture: Integrating Environmental History and Visual Studies," she invited BBC3 Radio Producer Rosie Dawson to visit Wesleyan to help students create a 1.5 hour radio program of features and interviews, based on their research, for broadcast this summer on Wesleyan's radio station, WESU. She was awarded a Public Scholar Award from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2016 and spent the fall 2016 in York researching a new book project about the early history of facial recognition technologies. Her publications this year included a co-edited special issue of *Radical History Review*, "Political Histories of Technoscience" (Winter 2017) with Simon Schaffer and David Serlin; an essay, "The Depiction of Popular Science in Victorian Illustrated News," in the *International Journal of the History of Science Society of Japan* (2016), and a book chapter, "The Tichborne Claimant, Popular Archives, and the "Evidence of Camera Pictures,"" in Kelley Wilder and Gregg Mitman, eds. *Documenting the World: Film, Photography and the Scientific Record* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). Jennifer was elected co-chair (2017-2021) of the *Radical History Review* editorial collective, and organized and co-chaired the "Firearms and the Common Law: History and Memory" conference at The Aspen Institute in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 14-15, 2016, co-sponsored by Stanford University, the Smithsonian Museum of American History, and Wesleyan.

# #SayHerName: FGSS Symposium on Police Violence against Women of Color

by Jessica Perelman '17

Just three days after the 2016 presidential election, one hundred and thirty students and faculty gathered in Memorial Chapel for the FGSS Fall Symposium, “#SayHerName: Gender, Race, and Police Violence.” The symposium memorialized Black and Latino women, including transwomen, killed by police. It highlighted activist efforts to combat police brutality against women of color, including the #SayHerName campaign created by Andrea Ritchie and Kimberlé Crenshaw of the African-American Policy Forum (AAPF). Ritchie, a police misconduct attorney, advocate for LGBTQ people of color, and a Soros Justice Fellow, and media scholar and journalist Sherri Williams were the featured speakers. Elizabeth Garcia, Visiting Assistant Professor of FGSS, moderated.

As the audience filled the chapel, a slideshow displayed the names and pictures of victims of police violence. The first slide showed an image of Deborah Danner, a woman of color who suffered from mental illness, killed by police just two weeks prior to the Symposium. The event was held in her honor. Her story and those publicized in the #SayHerName Report published by the AAPF illuminate the gendered, sexualized, and racialized nature of state violence. FGSS Chair Victoria Pitts-Taylor presented the opening remarks, acknowledging the palpable solemnity of the audience in the wake of the election of Donald Trump. Pitts-Taylor remarked on the space of the chapel, constructed in part for mourning and memorializing. That afternoon, the space was dedicated to grieving for the women of color, gender non-conforming individuals, and other marginalized people who had been victims of police violence.

The speakers explained how their work as both activists and scholars attempts to combat the pervasive invisibility of these injustices by raising public awareness. Ritchie’s talk was entitled, “Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color.” Ritchie detailed the scope of police brutality against women of color, immigrants, and gender non-conforming individuals. Police brutality against these groups is a pervasive but often overlooked phenomenon. After outlining the many ways in which women of color and trans women are disproportionately subject to racial profiling and gender-specific forms



Photo courtesy of Sofi Goode '17

of violence, Ritchie discussed the origins and purpose of the #SayHerName campaign and report. They were created to document unpublicized stories of police misconduct against marginalized people of color, especially women and those with mental illness. She called for creating comprehensive bans against multiple forms of profiling, including gender, trans, and racial prejudices, and expanding the demands of women and the LGBTQ population by bringing their stories to the center of legal analyses.

Sherri Williams followed Ritchie with a presentation entitled, “#SayHerName: Using Digital Activism to Document Violence Against Black Women.” Williams began her talk by explaining the ways in which Black women are made simultaneously hypervisible and invisible in the media. For example, Black women are depicted fighting each other on reality television series, while real violence faced by women of color is not portrayed in the popular media. She described the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes that contribute to the devaluing of Black women. Williams contended that since women of color are not presented as victims in the news media, their experiences are also excluded from the popular imagination. This is evident in the lack of movies, books, and documentaries about violence against Black women. She maintained that #SayHerName and other social media campaigns are vital tools for raising national attention about the injustices women of color face in police encounters.

Professor Garcia concluded the presentation portion of the event by emphasizing the importance of this work in the context of our changing political landscape. She raised

## FGSS course on #sayhername gets national attention

Last fall, Elle Magazine listed Wesleyan University’s FGSS program as having one of the coolest women’s studies courses in the nation. The magazine named Professor Elizabeth Garcia’s FGSS course, “#sayhername: Intersectionality and Feminist Activism,” as third of the 63 most compelling women’s studies courses in the nation. The class analyzed “the ways in which African American women and other women of color have been both targeted and silenced by racialized and sexualized violence.”

questions such as how students, academics, and activists can better connect with one another and what role social media plays in fighting the critical exclusions in mainstream media. Later, audience members asked for recommendations on activist strategies, communicating with others across differences, and how to avoid sensationalizing violence while calling attention to victimization.

While the #SayHerName report cannot eradicate police brutality against people of color by itself, it works to build awareness. In addition to sharing stories of victims, the report, to quote AAPF, “provides some analytical frames for understanding their experiences and broadens dominant conceptions of who experiences state violence and what it looks like.”

# TRAPPED: Reproductive Rights Film Screening and Panel

by Jessica Perelman '17

FGSS and the Wesleyan Doula Project co-hosted a film screening and panel on reproductive rights on October 10, 2016. The film TRAPPED, which premiered in 2016, won the Sundance Film Festival's Special Jury Award for Social Impact Filmmaking. The film addresses the impact of the 2008 Targeted Regulations of Abortion Providers laws, which were passed by conservative state legislators, and offers a compelling look into clinics, law firms, and homes as sites of the fight for women's reproductive rights. The panel featured an activist, a physician, and a legislator working on reproductive rights: Sarah Croucher, Executive Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut, Amy Breakstone '79, an obstetrician-gynecologist working in Connecticut, and Matt Lesser '10, a member of the Connecticut House of Representatives from the 100th district.

In the June 2016 case, *Whole Woman's Health vs. Hellerstedt*, the Supreme Court ruled that Texas' 2013 H.B.2 law, which greatly restricted abortion access in the state, placed an "undue burden" on women and was, therefore, unconstitutional. Despite this victory for reproductive rights, all of the speakers emphasized that the film's message is still incredibly relevant in the medical, activist, and political worlds. Lesser stressed the importance of voting in local elections because most abortion policies are created at the state level. Croucher added that the pro-life side receives significantly more funding than pro-choice organizations, which is why monetary donations to groups like NARAL in addition to votes for pro-choice politicians are so crucial at this time. Breakstone pointed out that physicians can still opt-out of abortion training during their residencies in order to illustrate how reproductive justice efforts can be targeted toward not only policies but also medical practices. She also explained that becoming an abortion provider is a high-risk profession with low economic returns. "These folks are heroes," she said in regards to the clinic workers highlighted in TRAPPED.

The film and the post-viewing discussion underscored the power of storytelling to make conversations about reproductive rights more accessible, relatable, and compelling for activists, scholars, and ordinary citizens.

## The Doulas Book Talk with Mary Mahoney: Stories from Supporting Actors

Mary Mahoney, one of the co-founders of The Doula Project, came to Wesleyan on February 15, 2017 to discuss her book, *The Doulas: Radical Care for Pregnant People*, co-written with Lauren Mitchell. The audience included students trained as full-spectrum doulas, FGSS majors, and others who were invested in reproductive justice. Alexandra Stovicek '17, a FGSS major and a co-leader of the Wesleyan Doula Project, introduced Mahoney, noting her accomplishments as an activist in the reproductive rights and justice movement. Before delving into her book, which was published by the Feminist Press, Mahoney first detailed the origin story of The Doula Project, a New York City-based organization founded in 2007 that provides free support to people across the spectrum of pregnancy.

According to Mahoney, a doula is defined as someone who gives "physical, emotional, educational, and spiritual support" to pregnant persons. Ten years ago, while working as a birth doula at a New York public hospital, Mahoney discovered a significant gap in the care for pregnant people: there were no abortion doulas, which often meant women undergoing abortions did not have any support. Mahoney embarked on a mission to persuade clinics to allow doulas to be present during abortion procedures. Eventually, a public hospital permitted the presence of doulas during abortion procedures. Mahoney proudly attributed this first success to clinicians trusting women professionals. Mahoney described several mishaps and insights that she gleaned while establishing the first network of doulas. "We tried to be professional by ordering these Vistaprint business cards?"

Unfortunately, Mahoney recalled, "the logo ended up looking like a flaming fireball fetus." Mahoney also disclosed more fundamental problems the project had to overcome during its beginning phases. For example, Mahoney soon realized that the label "abortion doula" was too narrow and missed an opportunity to recognize doulas who could support those who go through non-birthing pregnancy experiences, such as miscarriage. This is why the term "full-spectrum doula" exists today.

*The Doulas* explores the responsibilities and experiences of these care providers. "Doulas help everyone take a breath," Mahoney explained.

One of their particular roles is to witness others' experiences. "We are the supporting actors," Mahoney said. Mahoney and Mitchell used an oral history approach when writing this book. They transformed hours of transcribed interviews with doulas into a work of creative nonfiction. Mahoney read an excerpt from a chapter on second trimester abortions and told personal anecdotes, including the time she slept on the hospital floor while assisting with a 50-hour birth. Mahoney underscored, as *Publishers Weekly* writes in its review of the book, how "reproductive justice for the poor starts with the 'quiet brand of activism' of one-on-one support and telling other people's stories."



Mary Mahoney

# Loretta Ross on Reproductive Justice in the Age of Trump

by Jessica Perelman '17



Loretta Ross

Loretta Ross visited campus on Friday, April 14, 2017, to speak with more than one hundred students in Russell House on reproductive justice. The event was co-sponsored by FGSS, The Wesleyan Doula Project, and Adelpic Educational Fund. Ross, an author and activist who helped coin the term “reproductive justice,” co-founded the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective. According to Ross, reproductive justice, a term that goes beyond abortion rights, involves the right to make all reproductive decisions, including to have a child, to not have a child, and to parent a child. The concept addresses how certain individuals are reproductively privileged and others are disadvantaged. Ross’s work focuses on the intersectionality of social justice issues and how race, class and gender affect the delivery of social services.

During her presentation, Ross discussed reproductive justice in the context of white supremacy, an ideology that led to Trump’s election. Ross explained the importance of considering all forms of human rights violations, not just civil rights, when advocating for reproductive justice. Human rights include civil, political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, developmental, and sexual rights. Ross contended that we must fight for all of these rights, rather than only a select few. In conclusion, Ross encouraged student activists to participate in what she described as a ‘call-in’ culture, rather than call-out culture, in our social movements. Now, more than ever, she argued, we need to be inclusive of all of those who want to support the movement for reproductive justice and human rights.

Following Ross’s discussion, three Wesleyan students presented on their own activist projects. Jaya Sahihi '17, a SISP major, spoke about her research on the construction of motherhood and women as vessels in crisis pregnancy centers. Alexandra Stovicek '17, an FGSS major and co-coordinator of The Wesleyan Doula Project, presented her observations of reproductive injustice, specifically coercive contraception, in reproductive services clinics. Sofi Goode '17, an FGSS and Economics double major, concluded by discussing motherhood in prisons and the difficulties that incarcerated pregnant persons face. Goode’s thesis on the topic is this year’s winner of the Carol B. Ohmann Prize for Best FGSS Thesis.

## Student Forum on the Politics of Reproduction

by Jessica Perelman '17

Alexandra (“Zandy”) Stovicek '17, an FGSS major and co-coordinator of the Wesleyan Doula Project, taught a student forum in the spring semester about reproductive outcomes and experiences through a sociocultural lens. Fourteen undergraduates of varied class years, majors, gender identities, and knowledge about this topic enrolled in this for-credit seminar, which met once a week for 3 hours. Stovicek, with the guidance of Professor Victoria Pitts-Taylor, devised the syllabus and lesson plans. In addition to facilitating in-class discussions, Stovicek organized documentary screenings, including *No Más Bebés*, a film which reports on the sterilization of Mexican women at a LA hospital in the 1970s, and *After Tiller*, which is about third trimester abortion.

Stovicek also invited guest speakers, including a midwife and an abortion provider, to speak to the forum.

The course covered a range of topics, starting with societal ideas about pregnancy, parenting, and motherhood. The class then explored forms of reproductive oppression, such as forced sterilization and contraception. Readings on the reproductive justice movement explored the ways in which the pro-choice movement has traditionally failed marginalized communities, especially women of color. The rest of the semester was dedicated to learning about birth, surrogacy, reproductive technologies, and pregnancy loss. The final two weeks culminated in student research projects and

presentations. Students created art, op-eds, websites, and other creative works about the politics of breastfeeding, crisis pregnancy centers, birth in prison, and other topics.

Back in September 2016, Stovicek decided to teach the forum as a way to put her interests in education and training into practice. The forum was an invaluable experience for the students, some of whom had not taken an FGSS course before, and for Stovicek, an aspiring midwife. Stovicek reports that she was able to become better-versed in both pedagogy and the reproductive landscape through teaching this class.

# Alumni News

**Jennifer Blaine '92** is currently serving as a theatre arts instructor at The Kimmel Center in Philadelphia. She has a robust international coaching practice, assisting people to dissolve obstacles and create their lives by intention. Her most recent original one-woman show is called "The Vicissitudes of Travel." She will be debuting it in the Fall and intends to bring it to audiences throughout the country.

**Lynn Chen '98** double majored with Music. She is an actor and spokesperson for The National Eating Disorders Association.



Gina Cline '04

**Gina Cline '04** is the EVP of Curriculum and Instruction for American Reading Company, where she works to ensure that their K-12 curriculum reflects issues of race, class, and gender and that included texts represent multiple perspectives, especially minority perspectives in terms of race, class, gender/gender identity, and sexual orientation. She also serves as the editor of the company's children's publishing house, where she focuses on producing early reader texts that are socially and environmentally conscious and seek to privilege the work of authors and artists of color.

**Allegra Heath-Stout '12** double majored with Psychology. This past year, she married Laura Heath-Stout '11, moved to Somerville, MA, and started working at JOIN (Jewish Organizing Institute and Network) for Justice as the director

of the Jewish Organizing Fellowship.

**Jennie He '16** double majored with Philosophy. She is now an Assistant Dean of Admission at Wesleyan and works as the regional dean for Southern California, Nevada, upstate NY, and southern/central New Jersey. In addition, she is starting a Master in Liberal Arts at Wesleyan and is helping design an online magazine about Asian food by Asian Americans called, "Sad, Asian, and Hungry."

**Kelsey Henry '15** double majored with American Studies. She recently accepted an offer of admission from Yale University in their American Studies PhD program. She was awarded the Dean's Emerging Scholar Fellowship, as well as a national Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship for advancing diversity in higher education and diversifying the professoriate. Kelsey's research interests include aging and the life course, race and medicine, and disability studies.



Kelsey Henry '15

**Stephanie Hucker '11** double majored with Sociology. After graduating, Stephanie attended nursing school at Boston College, and now lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico and works as a Family Nurse Practitioner at First Choice Community Health. When not working, Stephanie enjoys hiking with her

husband, Dan Mendelsohn, '11, and her puppy, Umpire.

**Grace Kredell '10** double majored with Film Studies. After graduating, she trained with several practitioners in the healing arts community and opened her own client practice, which is centered in feminist coaching and divination. Last spring, she curated a three-month residency at the Women's Center for Creative Work in Los Angeles on the intersection between Feminisms, the Arts and The Occult. This summer, she is traveling to O'ahu to take part in Summer Forum, a discussion-based residency and think tank.



Grace Kredell '10

**Sarah Lightfoot '93** double majored with Sociology. She is a certified coach through Leadership That Works, and has raised millions of dollars for a variety of education and social enterprise organizations.

**Arianna Muirow '05** is working to complete her PhD in Geography at the University of Washington, where she is focusing on the integration of sustainable food and technology. She is also helping to launch a new food advocacy organization this spring called Food Action. Her Women's Studies degree continues to guide her academic and advocacy work in fundamental ways, including her approach

to teaching, research, and community organizing. In 2015, she married her best friend. They enjoy climbing big mountains together.

**Casey Reed '12** double majored with English. She currently lives in Los Angeles and is working on marketing new feminist TV series for Hulu, including "The Handmaids Tale" and "Harlots." For fun, she plays in an all-women's, "highly competitive" dodgeball league.

**Gwendolyn Rosen '15** double majored with Sociology. This summer, she will be speaking at Woodhull's Sexual Freedom Summit for the second time. Her presentation, "The Conscious Consumer's Guide to Being a Sexual Freedom Fighter," will explore sex positivity from the perspective of both consumers and business owners, and reflect on consumer activism.

**LJ Slovin '08** double majored with Sociology. They are currently a PhD student in the Department of Curriculum & Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia and were recently named a Vanier Scholar. In addition to studying non-binary queer youth and their relationship to schooling, LJ interrogates the ways notions of queer and trans safety/belonging on unceded land work to reproduce settler colonialism.



Rebecca Winkler '16

**Rebecca Winkler '16**, who has been working in Thailand for the [Mahouts Educations Foundation \(MEF\)](#) since graduation, won a grant from the European Outdoor Conservation Association (EOCA) for a project entitled "Walking Elephants Home." The MEF supports elephants and their handlers (mahouts) by creating ethical and sustainable tourism, providing alternatives to captive elephant tourism. In "Walking Elephants Home," small groups of elephants will be walked over 100 km from tourist camps to the forest to join previously released elephants. Tourists will now be able to visit the elephants in their habitat, and stay at campsites run by mahouts and their families. In addition to allowing elephants to live freely and providing jobs for mahouts, the project will study the integration of elephants into the forest.



Noa Wotton '10

**Noa Wotton '10** taught elementary school for five years after graduation. He has spent the past two years seeking adventure and perspective by spending time in the wilderness and traveling. He is excited to return to the classroom this coming September as a teacher at a Waldorf school in Portland, Oregon.

# Senior Thesis Writers

'Our Women are Brave on Alcatraz': Place and Memory in Indigenous Resistance, 1969-1971

Isabel Alter

**Advisors:** Professor Jennifer Tucker and Professor Ronald W. Schatz

**Inspiration:** The idea was first planted in my head when I went to Alcatraz with my mom for the Ai Weiwei art exhibit, which drew a lot more attention to the occupation than the normal exhibits do. I also really like local histories. I was drawn to the story of Alcatraz in particular because it has such an interesting place in the American imagination. I wanted to explore the local history of this 22-acre, hypermasculinized space.

**Favorite Discovery:** Right now, I'm thinking about the island as a utopian space in terms of all of these proposals for the island. The proposal that was supposed to happen right before the occupation occurred involved the creation of this giant space museum. This billionaire from Texas wanted to build a museum for scientific progress. He was going to build a giant spaceship statue on the island. It was a very wild plan. That's always weird and goofy to write about.

**Most Commonly Used Words:** Community, women, occupation, island, native, and indigenous.

**Dream Reader:** There are so many people involved in the occupation who are living and active today. In some ways it would be amazing to have someone like that read it... but also horrifying because I would be worried about what they would think if I have different conclusions.

In the Name of Protection: A Queer Abolitionist Critique of Reform

Sofi Goode

**Advisor:** Professor Margot Weiss

**Inspiration:** In Feminist Theories junior year, I wrote a paper connecting motherhood in prisons to theories about performativity and intersectionality. I felt really strongly about how a woman can lose custody of her child for acting in certain ways that go against the state's idea of motherhood. It was a ten-page paper and I felt like I had so much more to say.

**Favorite Discovery:** I had this breakthrough when I realized the entire prison-industrial complex was set up to ensure normative white futurity. In other words, prisons exist to contain people who threaten heteronormative white culture, such as queer people and people of color. This idea does a lot of work to justify the actively harmful treatment these people receive.

**Most Commonly Used Words:** Incarcerated, queer, normative, quarantine, and white.

**Dream Reader:** Kimberlé Crenshaw, because I feel like what I have written is so built out of law, policy and a really strong intersectional lens.

The Woods Could Creep Inside at Any Moment

Torii Johnson

**Advisor:** Professor Danielle Vogel

**Inspiration:** I wanted to play with the idea of femininity and what it has to do with my sexuality, my life, my family, and trauma. I'm really into mythology, meaning the stories we all tell, which includes religion stories, origin stories, and bedtime stories. Literature is the place where you can open up new realities to people and I always want to do that with my writing.

**Favorite Discovery:** I'm doing poems and companion "what I mean" prose, which have shown me that I can't just say what I mean. I've loved learning the games I play with myself while writing and then finding ways to get around these roadblocks.

**Most Commonly Used Words:** Metaphors about teeth and the mouth in general.

**Dream Reader:** Audre Lorde, because she could really radicalize my thinking on myself to a level I could never get to on my own.

Pedagogies of Consent: What Consent Teaches Us About Contemporary American Sexual Politics

Julia Morrison

**Advisor:** Professor Margot Weiss

**Inspiration:** I've been teaching sex education in local high schools through ASHA (Adolescent Sexual Health Awareness) since my freshman year. While I was teaching, I was struck by how inapplicable consent seemed to the students. I wanted to figure out what was so troubling about consent and why it is so hard for people to grasp when it's so widely used as a measure of what counts and what doesn't count as sexual violence.

**Favorite Discovery:** I ended up realizing that a lot of my questions were rooted in ethnographic moments that I didn't realize were ethnographic moments while I was having them. I am using a feminist framework to incorporate my reflexive work, which involves asking why proposed models of consent make sense to me based on my positionality.

**Most Commonly Used Words:** Subjective consent, dominance, patriarchy, public imaginary, cultural understanding, and sex.

**Dream Reader:** Jaclyn Friedman '93. In her book, *What You Really Really Want*, she writes, "Consent is not a light switch." The way she approaches consent inspired me to be creative about my thesis.

# Gender, Race, and Politics in the Trump Era

by Jessica Perelman '17

FGSS co-hosted two events in the Spring aimed at fostering dialogue about the political climate under the new presidential administration. The first of these was a panel discussion featuring a group of scholars and activists speaking about race, class and gender. Sociology professor and FGSS-affiliated faculty Kerwin Kaye organized and moderated. The second was a lecture on possibilities for activism by legal scholar and trans activist Dean Spade. Sociology professor Abigail Boggs, an affiliated faculty member of FGSS and also an alum of the program, organized the event and introduced Spade. Both events drew sizeable audiences to Wesleyan's Memorial Chapel.

The panel "Race, Class, and Gender after the Elections: Old Conflicts, New Hegemonies", co-sponsored by the Sociology Department, the Allbritton Center for the Study of Public Life, the Office for Equity & Inclusion, and the College of Social Studies, was held on March 31. The event featured Elizabeth Bernstein, Reina Gossett, and Nikhil Pal Singh. Bernstein is a professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and of Sociology at Barnard College, and author of the forthcoming book *Brokered Subjects: Sex, Trafficking, and the Politics of Freedom*. Gossett is an activist, writer, and filmmaker who wrote, produced, and directed *Happy Birthday, Marsha!* about trans activist Marsha Johnson. Singh, author of two books about race in America, is a professor in the History and the Social and Cultural Analysis Departments at New York University.

The speakers shared their perspectives on the election and its aftermath. Singh described his own post-election panic, which he said has slightly subdued because the administration has shown that it is "not capable" of acting on its promised agenda. He raised the question of how to assemble a coherent opposition to the Trump agenda of escalated deportations, immigrant ban, proposed border wall, and attempt to gut public support of health care. Gossett, who has spent years working as a community organizer, argued that the Trump administration is enacting forms of violence on marginalized populations. However, she noted that such violence reflects a longer history of oppression that includes settler colonialism, racism, and the prison industrial complex. Bernstein echoed some of these views and added that scholars must reconsider the future of neoliberalism and how this will impact both economic and cultural policies. Another key point discussed among the guests was the subject of visibility. Gossett worries



that representation and visibility are often traps that expose the most vulnerable people in our society. In an effort to protect these marginalized groups, Gossett advised that we must go beyond identity politics and identify the structures and systems that subjugate marginalized people. Singh added that while much of the public discussion about the election has focused on white working class people, other groups may encounter the police, healthcare, and education differently.

Despite the dismal political climate, all three guests expressed some optimism. Singh said that local politics matter now more than ever and that he has faith in the work of savvy students and young organizers. He challenged the audience to think with a multi-issues lens and to be cautious about preserving institutions that are destructive to millions of people. Gossett described her personal resistance strategy, which involves investing in those who are excluded from participating in the political system and determining how to enact change without buying into systems that oppress. She advocated for activists to support one another in their efforts to be "unruly and uncomfortable". Bernstein suggested that while the circumstances seem dire, protests have the potential to insert new issues into national conversations.

The subsequent, highly anticipated lecture by Dean Spade about activism in the Trump era, "What Becomes Possible Now," was held on April 7th. Spade is a lawyer, activist, and Associate Professor at Seattle University Law School, and author of *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics and the Limits of Law*. He is also a co-founder of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, a legal aid organization in

New York City that serves trans and gender non-conforming people of color. The first part of Spade's talk addressed the mainstreaming of LGBTQ rights movements, the increased visibility of trans issues, and the impact that heightened visibility has on the lives of vulnerable individuals. Spade discussed common pitfalls of mainstream, reform-minded campaigns for rights. Using the campaign against California's 2008 Proposition 8 as an example, Spade described how mainstream activism oftentimes fails to benefit the most marginalized groups. Marriage rights, for example, often do little to aid the poorest members of the LGBTQ community. Reforms can also expand harmful institutions, such as when crises in policing are addressed by adding resources to police departments and prisons. Spade then interrogated several liberal myths about political reform. He offered a list of measures to help activists determine if a particular tactic or reform is really transformative or only "recuperative."

The second part of Spade's talk was more optimistic. Spade offered specific strategies to help provide more material relief to marginalized people. He also argued that no one is disposable in social movements, and encouraged activists to treat one another generously and inclusively. He argued that deep healing is possible. In this event and the aforementioned panel, the audience engaged in a thoughtful Q&A, focusing on tangible recommendations about how to proceed in the current political circumstances. Spade responded to student and faculty inquires with inspiring advice. He encouraged everyone to learn how to give and receive feedback in a more compassionate and productive manner and to imagine impossible projects as we continue to find ways to survive and resist under the Trump administration.