

Fall 2010

## Brazen (Fall 2010)

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# bra.zen

## A Feminist Reading of Non-Human Animal Oppression: An Interview With Dr. Julie Andrzejewski by Prof. Susan Thomas

*Dr. Andrzejewski is a professor, activist scholar, and Co-Director of the Master's degree program in Social Responsibility at St. Cloud University in Minneapolis. She has written numerous articles, is the editor of Oppression and Social Justice: Critical Frameworks, and co-author of Why Can't Sharon Kowalski Come Home, which was nominated for the Minnesota Book Award and received the national Lambda Literary Award. Andrzejewski has a long history of social action including founding a women's center, organizing nationally on GLBT, feminist, and disability issues, supporting legal actions against discriminatory institutions, serving as union president,*

*initiating program development and curriculum transformation for global social responsibility, and directing grants to foster global peace and justice. She recently initiated a project to develop national education standards for social justice, peace, environmental, and humane education. Her most recent publication, Interspecies Education for Humans, Animals, and the Earth (Routledge, 2009) helps readers understand the importance of integrating interspecies education into their schools and classrooms.*



Prof. Thomas: Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. As you know, Gender and Women's Studies

students are fully aware that each form of oppression, for example, heterosexism and racism, has its own unique circumstances. However, many more students might not be aware of the interrelations between the oppression of women, lesbians and gay men, people of color, and other marginalized groups in society and the

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## Why It Wasn't Titled "The End of Gender Essentialism"

by Emily Campbell, '13

This past June, The Atlantic magazine ran an article titled The End of Men, a treatise on the demise of traditional American masculinity, entailing a large-scale loss of jobs suited to the quintessential masculine personality, the widening collegiate gender gap, and the cultural emasculation that occurs in "modern, post-industrial society." The author of the piece, Hanna

Rosin, points to this apparent regression in masculinity as the flipside of women's progress, as men are instructed to "develop [their] feminine side" in order to catch up to women in the workplace. Rosin states that it is the "nurturing professions" which are expanding while the manufacturing economy erodes, and that women's talents of "social intelligence, open

communication, and the ability to sit still and focus" are prized far above men's skill set of "physical strength and stamina." And yet, despite Rosin's acceptance of gender stereotypes and a correlation between sex and personality, she observes that "the more women dominate, the more they behave, fittingly, like the dominant sex."

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### GWS Club Info:

- The Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance meets every Monday at 9PM in the Rat
- OUTloud meets every Wednesday at 8PM in the Intercultural Center
- The Coalition Against Sexual Assault holds office hours Sunday-Thursday from 5-9PM



### Gendering the Gulf Oil Spill: What GWS Can Teach Us About the Disaster

Months after the rig explosion that set off the worst offshore oil spill in history, women, relative to men, continue to disproportionately suffer the negative impacts of that spill. Yet the specific concerns of women have largely been absent from the oil spill disaster debate.

It is important to those of us teaching and learning in feminist communities to emphasize that all problems must be analyzed for gender-problematic dimensions and in a gender-differentiated way. In the case of disasters generally, feminist researchers have taught us that in many respects women and men are affected differently. For example, women are susceptible to different health effects from exposure to toxins and other pollutants than men; women suffer from increased rates of wife battering during and subsequent to disasters; women's lost assets are often inadequately accounted for in disaster loss assessments; women are less able to migrate in order to secure employment after a disaster; and women's disproportionately high levels of poverty go even higher following a natural or, in this case, anthropocentric disaster.

In the case of the Gulf oil spill, these gendered outcomes are clearly visible. First, women living in oil polluted areas are experiencing distinctive negative health consequences. Physicians and others have warned pregnant women living near the oil spill that their babies in utero are at a major risk of chemical poisoning. This is because their immune systems are not fully developed, leaving them incapacitated to fight off dangerous compounds. According to Dr. Gina Soloman, senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council, "Some of the volatile chemicals in the oil have been linked to miscarriage, preterm birth, and low birth weight" (Zaveloff, 2010). Dr. Soloman warns, "It is a good idea for pregnant women to avoid the areas where there are elevated levels of VOCs [Volatile Organic Compounds] in the air. These are areas that include noticeable smells of oil or visible oil and also any areas where the EPA monitoring system detects elevated levels. To be cautious, pregnant women may choose to avoid any areas directly along the waterfront and beachfront, even when oil is not visible," (Zaveloff, 2010).

We have also seen a dramatic rise in the number of men committing violent acts against women

in the Gulf Coast region since the spill. The mayor of Bayou La Batre, Alabama, for example, says they've had 320 percent more incidents of wife battery since the spill (McClland 2010). And according to Dr. Howard Osofsky of Louisiana State University there has been a dramatic increase in violence against women across the state. Marylee Orr, who runs the state's most effective environmental group, the 23-year-old Louisiana Environmental Action Network (L.E.A.N.), reports that "Plaquemine Parish has already seen domestic violence increase 100% since the disaster" (Bowermaster, 2010). Gulf Coast native Kindra Arnesen is so anxious about the effects of the Gulf Coast oil spill on women's well-being that she recently set up the Wives of Commercial Fishermen network to respond to pressures facing women in the community (Bigg, 2010).

Yet another gendered impact of the oil spill is the inadequate accounting of women's assets in loss assessments. In the case of the Gulf spill, damage has typically been equated with the loss of boats and nets of men who are fishers. This is because men are typically assumed to be the primary moneymakers in the family. As a result, more disaster relief resources have been allocated to replacing men's visible productive assets, especially boats and nets, than to helping women secure access to goods and services that would ensure their ability to continue to support their families (Thomas 2010).

Related to this has been the worsening economic situation of women relative to men since the spill. Prior to the oil spill, women of the Gulf Coast were already the poorest in the nation and since the spill their situation has only worsened. (Mississippi and Louisiana and are the first and second most impoverished states in the nation, respectively). Not only has women's representation in the workforce decreased in the wake of the oil spill, but so have their wages. According to researchers at the Institute for Women's Policy Research, women in these two states now rank in the very bottom among all the states in the nation on the indicators of women's status: they are now more likely to live and stay in poverty, to be primary caregivers in single-parent families, and to hold low-paying jobs. And in the commercial fishing areas hardest hit by the oil spill, they are also disproportionately women of

color and experience discrimination on the basis of race and sex (Santiago 2010).

The fact that men and women have not experienced the effects of the oil spill in the same way can be attributed to socio-economic class, race, gender and biology. Women in virtually every corner of the globe are unjustly crowded at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, and this is true of women living in the Gulf. It is these women, women without the means to protect themselves from environmental destruction, who are feeling the repercussions of the oil spill most painfully. Biological differences between women and men, discussed above, mean that

environmental toxins will have differential impacts on men and women. And women living in the Gulf and elsewhere do work and perform different gender roles than do

men. For women, childcare and family care taking are primary responsibilities. This ensures that women and children will be at the forefront of exposure to toxins in the home and in the external environment (Seager, 2006).

The environmental challenges that we face today as a global society are complex, but our understanding of its complexities has grown and continues to grow. Feminist scholars have made valuable contributions to our understanding of environmental issues and ecology. They have been especially involved in rethinking the ways in which environmental relations are understood. Feminist scholars have produced incisive critiques of the extent to which the ideological premises of Western science are environmentally destructive (Harding 1986; Seager, 2006). Indeed, feminists argue, Western science and the widespread reliance on scientific "rationality" are responsible for the immeasurable fallout we now face as a result of our destruction of our environment of (Shiva, 1989; Seager, 2006).

More recently, feminist scholarship has challenged the paradigmatic environmental

"The mayor of Bayou La Batre, Alabama...says they've had 320 percent more incidents of wife battery since the spill."

## From the Director, *continued*

understanding which frames environmental problems as breakdowns in physical ecosystems. If environmental devastation is structured as physical phenomena, then feminist, critical animal and cultural analysis is sidelined (Kheel, 2008; Mesina, 2009; Seager 2006). Feminist scholars have demonstrated that our environmental crisis is not just a crisis of ecosystems; it is, instead, a “crisis of culture” (Warren 1997; 2000; Seager, 2003, 2006). Feminist environmental analysis has focused anew on the institutions, behaviors, and norms that produce a culture of dominance and exploitation (Warren and Cheny, 1991; Seager, 2006; Steady, 2009;). Given than these institutions, norms and behaviors are gendered, it is obvious that a feminist analysis of gender, power and agency is critical to understanding the short and long term consequences of environmental destruction in general, and the Gulf oil spill in particular (Adams 2007; Seager, 2006; Warren 1997).

We now know more about the ways that gender, sex, species, race, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and politics are interrelated and together comprise the ecological system in which we live. The health of our society going forward depends upon our ability to care for our environment and all who live in it, to provide resources and opportunities for all members to work and make meaningful contributions, to resolve conflict, and to cultivate respect for differences. Many academic disciplines are involved in addressing these challenges, and Gender and Women’s Studies is pleased to be at the forefront of this effort. We are committed to a feminist political ecology and environmentalism that understands

that the earth is a living entity; that recognizes the interconnectedness of all life; that understands the relevance of power relations including gender relations in decision-making about the environment; that is neither androcentric nor anthropocentric, and that questions the presumption of technological progress and the domination of nature and other-than-human animals (see, for example, Adams). It is not acceptable that feminist thinking is marginalized in the official channels of environmental assessment, organizing, and policy-making (Harquail 2010; Seager 2006). It is not acceptable that feminist analysis is virtually non-existent in the environmental sciences (Benerjee and Bell, 2007). It is up to us to recognize that the interrelations among the conceptualizations of women, non-human animals, and the environment require a post-humanist, critical feminist analysis and response.

As we begin a new academic year, Gender and Women’s Studies will continue to work to provide our students with better information about the ways that structural hierarchy and environmental outcomes interrelate. A gender lens is essential in both helping to prevent further environmental degradation, and in steering sound political responses to environmental catastrophe when it happens. By providing better information about the ways that gender, race, species, and class shape environmental outcomes, we benefit our students, benefit the larger intellectual community, and benefit the organizations that one day will employ our students.



*L to R: Susan Thomas, Cais Thomas (daughter), Lori Rehfeldt (partner) hiking to the top of Yosemite Falls, Yosemite National Park, California.*

Welcome back. I hope you have a wonderful, engaging academic year.

*Professor Thomas will be teaching a new course, “Feminist Perspectives on Environmentalism,” Spring 2011.*

*Citations may be found on page 11.*

## New Major



Clarissa Harris, class of 2012, is double majoring in English and Gender and Women’s Studies. She is from the RDU area of North Carolina, emphasis on Bull City. She dreams of working for a women’s non-profit organization or being an editor of *Essence* magazine. She loves days with blue skies, green grass and white clouds; watching people do beautiful things; a really good weepy moment; African American culture; women’s empowerment; and chocolate animal crackers.

# Faculty, Alumnae, and Student News

## Faculty

**LeeRay Costa**, associate professor of Anthropology and Gender & Women's studies, was elected Secretary to the Southeast Women's Studies Association (SEWSA) for a two year term (2010-2012). She is also one of 20 faculty who have been selected to participate in a workshop on "Civic Engagement in the Women's and Gender Studies Classroom: Power and Privilege at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Nation" in Denver, CO, on November 11, 2010.

**Susan Thomas**, Associate Professor and Director, Gender and Women's Studies, and Associate Professor of Gender & Women's Studies, and Political Science, will publish her research paper, "The Rise and Fall of Civil Unions: Lessons from the Connecticut Legislature's Abandonment of Lesbians and Gay Men," in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Homosexuality*. Dr. Thomas has been named vice president of The Institute for Critical Animal Studies (ICAS). The ICAS, founded in 2001, is the first interdisciplinary scholarly center in higher education dedicated to establishing and expanding the field of Critical Animal Studies (CAS). Professor Thomas will oversee publication of the peer-reviewed *The Journal for Critical Animal Studies* (S.U.N.Y) and the CAS book series (Stanford), and will manage both the domestic and international CAS conferences, among other responsibilities. Also, Professor Thomas served as guest editor of the Fall 2010 special issue of JCAS "Women of Color and Animal Liberation."

**Michelle Ann Abate**, associate professor of English, had her article, "From Christian Conversion to Children's Crusade: The Left Behind Series for Kids and the Changing Nature of Evangelical Juvenile Fiction," appear in the current issue of the peer-reviewed journal, *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*. Her new book *Raising Your Kids Right: Children's Literature and American Political Conservatism* is now available from Rutgers University Press. In June Professor Abate gave a paper, "Plastic Makes Perfect: My Beautiful Mommy, Cosmetic Surgery, and the Medicalization of Motherhood," at the Children's Literature Association's Annual Conference held this year in Michigan. At the same conference, she also organized the session, "Writing a Biography of a Children's Author: Projects, Processes, and Problems."

## Alumnae

**Victoria Crump**, Women's Studies major class of 2006 and Ph.D. candidate at Indiana University, has a forthcoming publication; "Woman/Meat/Homo: Creating a Queer Ecofeminist Phenomenology," for the *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, a peer-reviewed journal from The State University of New York. Her non-normative phenomenology focuses on the interconnectedness of sexism, homophobia, classism, and speciesism, and examines the role that "orientation" (in its many forms and contexts) has within these frameworks. Crump's essay concludes with a discussion of how an ecofeminist "moral" epistemology benefits Animal Rights by challenging the rationality-based, "unemotional" aspects of this movement, questioning and resisting normative language and working "out of line with others" toward common goals, and by queering how we view animal/human relationships, the "natural" elements of life (and death,) and bringing the actions of the background into the foreground. Her Ph.D. concentration is in Sexualities, Desires, and Identities and her major is in Communication and Culture. Crump is also in her second year working as an Associate Instructor for undergraduates in Gender Studies 101. Finally, her coursework this summer has included research on the representation of transwomen in the media, society's perceptions of transwomen, and issues of transwomen and (hegemonic) femininity.



Victoria Crump, '06

## Students

**Paige Oberlin**, '11, was selected as the Hollins University NARAL Campus Grassroots Organizer for Fall, 2010. She will also continue to serve as the Co-Chair of both the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance and the Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

**Kelsey Deforest**, '13, spent her summer interning for Fisher for Ohio, Lee Fisher's U.S. Senate Campaign. She had the opportunity to explore the field, finance, and political departments of the campaign. When she wasn't working, she spent a lot of her free time teaching her fellow interns, a group of college guys, why Hollins is a "women's college" not a "girl's school" and having nerdy, political debates.

# Gender & Women's Studies Courses for the 2010-2011 School Year

## Fall

**GWS 141 Intro to GWS with Professor LeeRay Costa, T/R 8:50-10:20am and M/W 1:10-2:40pm**

**GWS 208 Gender, Ethnicity and Class with Professor Susan Thomas, M/W 11:30am-1:00pm**

**GWS 224 Women in Early Christianity with Professor Jan Fuller, M/W 1:10-2:40pm**

**GWS 320 Transforming Families with Andrew Matzner, Saturday 9:00am-12:00pm**

**GWS 334 Gender and Imperialism with Professor Rachel Nuñez, T/R 2:40-4:10pm**

**GWS 338 Survey of Feminist Thought with Professor Susan Thomas, M/W 1:10-2:40pm**

**GWS 345 Arab Women Writers with Professor Pauline Kaldas, M/W 11:30am-1:00pm**

## Spring

**GWS 215 Gender and Communication with Professor Lori Joseph, M/W 1:10-2:40pm**

**GWS 217 Rhetorical Theory: Ancient to Renaissance with Professor Jill Weber, M/W/F 10:20-11:20am**

**GWS 218 Global Gayz: Lesbian/Gay Movement with Professor Susan Thomas, T/R 1:00-2:30pm**

**GWS 219 Food, Culture and Social Justice with Professor LeeRay Costa, M/W 1:10-2:40pm**

**GWS 226 Gender and Women's History in Modern Europe with Professor Rachel Nuñez, T/R 2:40-4:10pm**

**GWS 230 Textual Construction of Gender with Professor Marilyn Moriarty, T/R 10:30am-12:00pm**

**GWS 243 Intro to Children's Literature with Professor Julie Pfeiffer, T/R 10:30am-12:00pm**

**GWS 312 Women and Social Movements with Professor LeeRay Costa, T/R 10:30am-12:00pm**

**GWS 317 Dress Gender Social Identity with Professor Kathleen Nolan, M/W/F 11:30am-12:30pm**

**GWS 350 SpTop: Feminist Perspective on the Environment with Professor Susan Thomas, M/W 1:10-2:40pm**

**GWS 470 Seminar in GWS with Professor LeeRay Costa, T/R 8:50-10:20am**

# Save the Date!

Thursday, September 16th, 7pm in the Hollins Room of the library-lecture by David Manuel Hernández, Ph.D.

Sunday, September 19th-Pride in the Park in downtown Roanoke

Thursday, September 30th, 8:15pm in the Green Drawing Room-Lecture by Susan Rebecca White, M.F.A, '05, author of *Bound South* and *A Soft Place to Land*

Monday, October 11th-Saturday, October 16th-Coming Out Week

Monday, October 18th, 6pm-Women's Leadership Awards at the Shenandoah Club, sponsored by Hollins

Monday, November 8th, 7pm-Cherokee recording artist Michael Jacobs in the Hollins Room of the library

Tuesday, November 9th, 7:30pm in the Theatre-Lecture by Rebecca Skloot, author of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

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## Reproductive Justice Under Attack—Again by Paige Oberlin, '11

The position of Attorney General is a powerful one in Virginia. With the last gubernatorial election, much of the focus was on now-Governor Bob McDonnell. While this was a rightful focus, and he has done nothing to prove a change in his stance on women's issues since the writing of his now famous thesis, I have a bigger concern for reproductive rights in Virginia. Virginia's Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli won the 2009 election with 58% of the vote. Since his election he has sued the federal government over healthcare, demonstrated incredible intolerance and bigotry towards LGBTQ communities, and most recently displayed his vehement contempt for women's rights and reproductive justice. Both McDonnell and Cuccinelli's overt anti-choice and bigoted ways have garnered much attention, even outside of Virginia. Both Rachel Maddow and Jon Stewart have dedicated segments to pointing out their outrageous actions. The plethora of conservative Senators and Congressmen/women in Virginia is something that all pro-choice activists should be concerned about, however, it is the Governor and specifically the Attorney General who are the most terrifying threats to women's rights.

While serving as a Senator, Ken Cuccinelli repeatedly introduced legislation that would have allowed the Board of Health to regulate

abortion clinics as if they were hospitals. Even with a vastly conservative Senate in Virginia, this legislation continually failed. Since Cuccinelli could not regulate abortion clinics through the legal process of the Senate, he has since decided to circumvent the Virginia General Assembly. At the request of Delegate Bob Marshall and Senator Ralph K. Smith (men who are on their own a huge threat to women's autonomy in Virginia), Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli drafted a 'legal opinion' granting permission for the Board of Health to regulate abortion clinics to severely stricter standards than other out-patient clinics. This legal opinion does what TRAP bills (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) have failed to do in the past. Pro-choice advocates like NARAL project that if the Board of Health were to exercise this power, 17 of the 21 abortion clinics in Virginia would shut down.

McDonnell and Cuccinelli have been in office for less than a year and their extremist, anti-choice, anti-LGBTQ rights agenda could not be clearer. To look at it optimistically, perhaps Virginians thought they were voting for men who weren't as socially conservative. Perhaps, it is surprising to those who went to the polls and selected these men, that such a personal agenda has been the top priority of such

respected political offices. I would like to think that Virginia, my home state, a place that I feel such a strong connection with, did not elect these men with the full awareness that they would be doing all they could to suppress the rights of all who are not wealthy, white and

“...17 of the 21 abortion clinics in Virginia would shut down.”

male. But, while I think that some who chose to vote for these two men now regret that decision, I can't help but believe it would be naïve to think they were acting in opposition to all of their constituents.

Governor McDonnell and Attorney General Cuccinelli cannot be allowed another term. Their continuance as leading politicians in Virginia means the steady demise of social rights. Deciding how to act in the next election season is easy—don't vote for them or others who share their repressive ideology, and campaign for those who support social justice. What isn't as easy, is deciding how to combat voter beliefs that have yet to recognize what equality looks like. How can an activist reach the minds and hearts of those who are so opposed to reproductive and social justice? Until this question can be answered, it is incredibly important and vital that activists in

*Continued on page 9*



## Call for Papers! Thinking Gender 2011

UCLA Center for the Study of Women announces **Thinking Gender 2011** 21st Annual Graduate Student Research Conference. Thinking Gender is a public conference highlighting graduate student research on women, gender and sexuality across all disciplines and historical periods. We invite submissions for individual papers or pre-constituted panels. This year, we especially welcome papers addressing women, gender and sexuality in relation to:

- *Food (sustainability, food justice, marketing, disordered eating, food preparation)*
- *Money (the economy, microfinance, entrepreneurship, consumerism, the global marketplace, business practices)*
- *The Academy (innovative research methodologies, human subjects, power relations, epistemologies, the Archive)*
- *Invented Pathologies (menopause, PMS, female sexual dysfunction, the medicalization of sex)*

Please see the submission guidelines at <http://www.csw.ucla.edu/thinkinggender.html>.

Send submissions to: [thinkinggender@csu.ucla.edu](mailto:thinkinggender@csu.ucla.edu)

Deadline for Submissions: **October 22, 2010, by midnight**

Conference is **Friday, February 11, 2011**, at the UCLA Faculty Center.



This year's 21st annual Pride festival will be held on **September 19th** in Elmoor Park in Roanoke.

Events kick off at 11am and end around 6pm.

Come out and be proud!

## Alexandra Pilafian Lee - Alumnae Biography

### Under Attack

*Continued from page 8*

Virginia continue their hard work. Awareness raising, campaigning, and voting for pro-choice, pro-equal rights candidates are the least we can do. Donating time or funds to organizations that fight so hard for social justice perhaps isn't the easiest thing to do in the current economy, but it is one way to prevent men like McDonnell and Cuccinelli from destroying the rights that our foremothers and sisters worked so tirelessly for. Don't let our sisters' efforts be in vain, don't let *those men* hinder *our rights*; they are counting on our silence to continue their extremist agenda. Don't just speak out, shout.



I graduated from Hollins in 2007 with a degree in Women's Studies. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life after graduation. The only thing I did know was that I wanted to end up in a type of job that involved working for a good cause, a job that improved people's lives in some way, especially women's lives.

Having never traveled abroad, I decided to be gutsy and travel to Armenia where I volunteered at the Women's Resource Center, a non-profit organization in the capital city of Yerevan. I also took myself out of my comfort zone and taught beginning and intermediate English classes to Armenian women, who were anxious to educate themselves and improve their English skills. I learned as much from them as they learned from me. They taught me about their culture, and what it was like to be a woman in Armenian society. This experience helped me discover that I had a real interest in doing work in the non-profit sector.

I realized how crucial it was to be able to have the privilege to educate and share knowledge with people who normally would not have access to such resources. It then



Alex Lee, '07

became really important to me that I find a job where I would feel I was actually making a difference working for a tangible cause, where I knew people's lives would be positively affected by the work I did. I was fortunate to find such work at FeedMore, Inc.

I currently am employed as a Philanthropy Assistant for FeedMore in Richmond, Virginia, which is comprised of the Central Virginia Foodbank and Meals on Wheels. I enjoy waking up every morning, knowing that I will make some kind of difference in someone's life, somewhere.

*Gender and Women's Studies would like to thank Alex Lee and her mother Marni Pilafian for their continuing generous support to the Shocky Pilafian - Mildred Persinger Award Fund in Gender and Women's Studies.*

## “Hostile States: Arizona and the Perils of Local Immigration Enforcement”

A lecture by David Manuel Hernández, Ph.D. He is currently completing a book manuscript on immigrant detention, tentatively entitled “Undue Process: Immigrant Detention, Procedural Rights, and Lesser Citizenship.” The book examines the racial genealogy of immigrant detention in the United States and explores how escalations in immigrant detention have occurred episodically over the last century at the nexus of racial inequality, xenophobia, and the construction of national crises.

**Thursday, September 16, 2010, 7pm**

**Hollins Room, Wyndham Robertson Library**

## *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*



Lecture by author Rebecca Skloot. Skloot wrote "The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks," about a southern African American woman, the daughter of slaves, whose cells were collected without her knowledge. Grown in culture and still alive today, Lacks' cells helped scientists develop the polio vaccine and uncover secrets of cancer, viruses, and the effects of the atom bomb, among many other uses. Q&A session and book signing to follow.

**Tuesday, November 9, 2010, 7:30pm**

**Hollins Theatre**

## Why It Wasn't Titled “The End of Gender Essentialism”

*(Continued from page 1)*

It becomes unclear whether Rosin's thesis is that women are getting ahead via their “nurturing” personalities or because they are increasingly acting like men. It follows that today's American male “cannot figure out how to be a man,” with women “setting the terms [for marriage]... too high for the men around them to reach.”

Rosin discusses women's socioeconomic gains in terms of men's losses—quoting sociologist Kathryn Edin, she suggests that fewer numbers of women are getting married because of a desire to be “in charge.” According to Rosin and Edin, choosing to stay unmarried due to an inability to “find men with a similar income and education” and a desire to make decisions regarding “whether to have a baby, how to raise it, [and] where to live,” reflects modern American women's dominance and a “my way or the highway” mindset. Rosin then notes (without irony) that “men's rights groups... are taking on an anti-woman edge... far from being celebrated, women's rising power is perceived as a threat.” One ‘adult enrichment’ instructor, Mustafaa El-Scari, commiserates with the men sent to him for failing to pay child support: “All you are is a

paycheck, and now you ain't even that! And if you try to exercise your authority, she'll call 911... What is our role? Everyone's telling us we're supposed to be the head of a nuclear family... it's toxic, it's poisonous, and it's setting us up for failure.” The article seems to imply that if men can't use physical force or monetary income to intimidate women into accepting their decisions, they lose sight of their own relevance. W. Bradford Wilcox, head of the University of Virginia's National Marriage Project, is quoted as saying that “the family changes over the past four decades have been bad for men and bad for kids, but it's not clear they are bad for women.”

What Rosin's piece does not address is what it means for women to be perceived as being “on top” at the expense of men's masculinity. The narrative of one sex dominating the other is an old one, falling short of questioning the need for hierarchical paradigms and gender stereotypes, and the role these assumptions play in sex discrimination. It may be that traditionally feminine occupations are currently growing at a higher rate than traditionally masculine ones; however, Rosin fails to note that a gendered wage gap exists within female dominated fields, such as secretarial work. She also skims over the reality that women

necessarily need to obtain higher education in order to compete with men on the sliding scale by which women make 78.7 cents for every \$1.00 a man makes. And despite women earning more diplomas than men, they account for only 18% of leadership positions in all fields. In women's political representation, the United States has dropped to the 69th position worldwide, behind Iraq and North Korea. This may explain why, despite Rosin's narrative of empowered single and working mothers, the Chamber of Commerce has opposed the Family Medical Leave Act and repeatedly cites pregnancy as a “voluntary choice,” thereby negating women's demands for paid maternal leave. The question of whether women can choose to have their male partners bear the next generation is, of course, moot.

In an interview with Katie Couric regarding the article, Gloria Steinem observed that American society is “mostly measuring progress by whether or not women are doing what men used to do... [Feminists] are trying to get to the point of shared humanity.” Ultimately, the greatest flaw in Rosin's piece is an acceptance of gender as a value judgment; until gender becomes irrelevant in determining an individual's worth and aptitude, we will never live in the post-feminist era Rosin would like to forecast.

## Commencement ; A Feminist Review by Kelsey DeForest, '13

I was first introduced to *Commencement* by J. Courtney Sullivan through an ad on Feministing that quoted a review by Gloria Steinem. I figured that was a pretty solid indication that there was a bit more substance to this beach read. *Commencement* is unabashedly “chick lit” (and, yes, I realize that is a disgusting term, but it is, at times, very accurate).

The novel is like sinking into a warm blanket of Hollins memory, which was much needed during a summer surrounded by college boys who seemed eternally stuck on “Wait, so there are lesbians at your school? Woah, that must be awesome.” The first half of the novel follows the years at Smith of an unlikely four-some who end up dorm neighbors in their first year, while the second half settle into their lives post-college and how their times at Smith continues to shape their destinies.

The great thing about the four protagonists, who alternate narrating the chapters, is that they end up capturing all of the different ways women can enter into a women’s college. There is the legacy, Sally, who is drawn to the traditions and teas. The Southern belle, Bree, wants a chance to grow away from her family and fiancé. Celia, whose sass tends to lighten the book at the grayest times in the girls’ lives, chooses Smith because it is the best school she got into. Finally, April, an at times two-dimensional portrayal of a radical feminist, sums up her choice, saying, “I came here because. . . I thought it was the most effective place to fight the patriarchy in this godforsaken country.”

The four become close in the permanent, familial way that women’s colleges foster. Looking back, Celia remarks, “There was sometimes no telling where one of them began and the others left off.” They are honest with each other the way sisters

are and tend to always think they know what is best for the others. Their post-college lives reflect that “They recognized that they were the first generation of women whose struggle with choice had nothing to do with getting it and everything to do with having too much of it—there were so many options that it felt impossible and exhausting to pick the right ones.” It’s a sentiment that I know a lot of women of our generation identify with.

The diversity of the four leads to substantial discussions about lesbian identity, with a particularly blunt look at the “lesbian-until-graduation” myth, trans inclusion, sex workers’ rights, promiscuity, motherhood, the lack of economic and racial diversity within the feminist movement, and other common points of division within the feminist community. The second part includes a harsh exploration of domestic sex trafficking in Atlanta.

One point of fracture is the polarizing ideas of the best way to be an activist. Sally, who volunteers with NOW and at a domestic violence shelter, is dubbed an “establishment feminist” by April, who becomes the assistant to radical feminist filmmaker, Ronnie Munro. Whereas April defines her politics by, “If it was radical to think that all women should be free and safe in the world, then why have a women’s movement in the first place?”, Sally is her contrast with the thought that “The women’s movement couldn’t be all about radical action and immediate change. That just wasn’t how the world worked.”

Ronnie brings public attention to women’s issues through jarringly honest documentaries; including a portrait of a wife beater that began with footage of him stabbing his wife to death. April’s work for Ronnie becomes increasingly

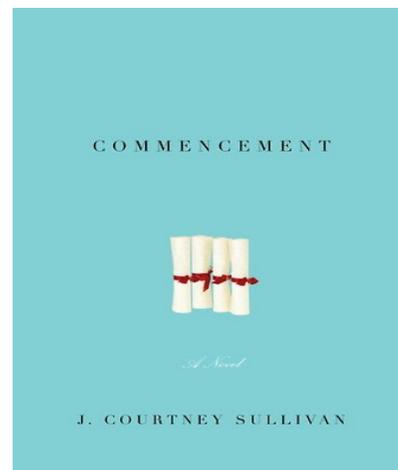


Image from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

dangerous. The novel ends asking readers: When does activism go too far, and is raising public awareness always worth the cost?

The novel is not without flaws. As it looks at the lives of women who attended Smith, all of the protagonists are middle to upper class, white women, who rarely acknowledge the role that their privilege plays in their livelihoods and politics. At times, the book demonizes radical feminism, though these moments are lessened by points of convergence between the moderate thinkers and the radicals.

Though not perfect, the book is intensely satisfying and comforting. My grandmother always called romance novels and similarly empty fiction Hershey bar reading. *Commencement* is more like a Kashi bar—delicious but with enough substance that you feel like you are doing something that is healthy for you.

Trigger warning: This novel includes graphic descriptions of sexual assault.

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# Interview with Dr. Julie Andrzejewski

(Continued from page 1)

exploitation of non-human animals. In other words, human/non-human animal relations may be explored as a feminist issue. Would you elaborate?

Prof. Andrzejewski: Yes, of course, there are many common features between the subordination of women and others and non-human animals. Feminist environmentalists and ecologists state that the ideology that legitimates oppression based on race, class or gender is basically the same ideology that sanctions the oppression of nature and non-human animals.

Prof. Thomas: What other examples come to mind?

Prof. Andrzejewski : The common use of non-human animal pejoratives that frequently target women (bitch, chick, cow, dog, pussy, sow, dumb bunny, queen bee) demonstrates the connection between sexist and speciesist language. These often refer to domesticated non-human animals, like chicken, cow, and dog, who are bred for service to humans. In a patriarchal social order the role of women and animals are similar: to be the possessed object. Meat and slaughter are used as metaphors for the oppression of women (e.g., “feeling like a piece of meat”) and in factory farming, female animals are often doubly exploited by first having their femaleness, their reproductive system, manipulated in order to produce milk or eggs for human consumption. When their reproductive efficiency ends, they are butchered for their flesh.

Prof. Thomas: Can you think of examples of science and dissection-vivisection that also reveal intersections of species and gender?

Prof. Andrzejewski: Ah, yes, scientific non-human animal experimentation often encourages “masculine” emotional detachment and desensitization in the struggle for scientific “objectivity” (which feminist standpoint theorists have taught us is impossible), whereas emotional responses toward “lab animals” and identification with them are often seen as

“feminine” and as an obstacle to objectivity. Further the knowledge produced in laboratories is often “gendered” as many non-human animal experiments on intelligence, aggression, competition and dominance are designed to establish essential differences between men and women.

**“The common use of non-human animal pejoratives that frequently target women...demonstrates the connection between sexist and speciesist language.”**

Prof. Thomas: I imagine you can also think of many linkages between racism and the oppression of non-human animals?

Prof. Andrzejewski: A look at factory farming, the slave trade, hunting, zoos, and scientific experiments show how people of color and non-human animals have historically been subjected to similar strategies of control and violence. Racist propaganda has compared people of color with negative stereotypes of animals, and people of color have been considered belonging to a subhuman species, lacking both reason and rights. Slaves have been treated like production units that can be bought and sold, and runaway slaves have been hunted much like animals are hunted today. Slaveholders thought that people of color quickly overcame separations, thus justifying splitting up families for the slave trade. Many arguments that have been used to justify slavery are used today to justify abusive treatment of animals. The zoo is another arena for researching speciesism-racism links. Western zoos have a history of exhibiting exotic non-human animals during imperialist endeavors in distant continents, and the non-human animal exhibits sometimes took place alongside displays of native peoples. These people were thereby brought “closer to nature” in a way that legitimated their status as deviating from the identity of white, Western humans. The exotic animal trade established in the late 19th century that sustained both zoos and circuses as well as the pet trade and laboratories, relied on colonial commerce in Africa and Asia. In these ways, the

zoo’s purpose of education and stimulation of scientific curiosity was actually built on colonial domination of both cultures and natures.

In scientific experiments both non-human animals and involuntary, marginalized humans have been used for the purpose of the “common good”.

Two well-known examples are the medical experimentation of Jews and Slavic people in Nazi Germany and the medical experimentation on Black men in Alabama from the 1930s to the 1970s known as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. Like zoos, developments in Western science have gone hand in hand with imperialist efforts, often based on ignoring the accumulated knowledge of people outside the institutions of science, such as indigenous peoples, or on appropriating and renaming their knowledge. Educational and commercially driven non-human animal experimentation/dissection/vivisection/biotechnology, for instance, can be seen as an invasion of other species, cultures and societies that deepens the exclusion of other knowledge systems.

Prof. Thomas: What role does the university have in educating our citizens about the linkages between speciesism [speciesism is the presumption of human superiority over other animals and their subjection to oppression based on this belief] and racism, classism, heterosexism, and sexism?

Prof. Andrzejewski: I think that it’s important to recognize that while educational institutions may claim to be objective and neutral, values, morality, and ethics are integral to the overt and hidden curricula in every institution. It is common for the hidden curriculum to contradict the stated values of the school. For instance, schools that pledge “non-discrimination” or “equality and liberty for all” may be stratified or

# Interview with Dr. Julie Andrzejewski

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segregated by race, class, gender or disability. Or, students may be targeted for abuse based on sexual identity or sexual orientation with no consequences. Similarly, non-human animals are often presented as the sympathetic protagonists of children's books, or the focus of environmental concerns. At the same time, live or dead non-human animals are subjected to experiments or dissection or vivisection in laboratories, eaten in cafeterias, or worn as clothing with no discussion whatsoever, or these activities may even be vociferously defended if questions are raised about them. Only when students are able to study, compare, and investigate the interrelationships of species in an honest and open way will they be able to make the kind or moral and ethical choices that we claim we want them to make.

Prof. Thomas: Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Prof. Andrzejewski: I would like to emphasize how important it is that we abandon the out-dated anthropocentric or human-centered approach to learning and adopt an interspecies paradigm. Interspecies education is founded in the holistic process of learning that all forms of life on earth are interconnected and interdependent with one another. This implies an educational approach emphasizing that compassion and a sense of justice extends to all humankind, to individual non-human animals, and to all species and ecosystems. Under this definition, students should be able to study, compare and investigate the interrelationships of species with one another, especially the effects of various human policies and practices on other species. Further, they should have opportunities to explore what actions can alleviate, prevent, or repair harm to other

species. The knowledge base for critical interspecies education is:

- 1) How is the well-being of humans interdependent with the well-being of other animals? In other words, why is it in human self-interest to learn about and act to protect animals?
- 2) What is speciesism and why should interspecies education be given the same study and critical examination as other moral and ethical issues of global significance?
- 3) How is the treatment of other animals and species interrelated with social justices, peace, and ecological survival?
- 4) A set of principles, based on these questions, will assist in the integration of interspecies education into the curricula for students, teachers, administrators and others.

Prof. Thomas: Excellent. Thank you again.

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Gender & Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary program that examines how systems of oppression/resistance and privilege operate. It is designed to provide students with an understanding of the importance of gender as a category of analysis, and its intersections with race/ethnicity, class, age, sexual identity, and (dis)ability.

The Gender & Women's Studies faculty are dedicated to creating an environment that fosters critical thinking, supports student activism, and emphasizes faculty/student and peer mentoring. Students are encouraged to question conventional wisdom and to participate actively in their education.

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