

Colgate Center for Women's Studies Fall 2014

Volume 21, Issue 1

An Open Letter to Students from Women's Studies

This faculty response concerning the semester's events was released on December 10, 2014.

Dearest Students:

We write this letter in the spirit of solidarity and love. And we begin this letter with one word: brokenness; one potentially problematic idea: "to be broken." And then to ask, "what does it mean to break, to be broken?" Certainly, the events of this last week, this last month, this last semester have left many of us with broken hearts and a more general sense of brokenness: a broken justice system that facilitates impunity and the abuse of power, a broken society where the humanity of the racialized and the poor is subject to daily assaults and being disappeared, a broken world altogether where the cracks reveal far too many injustices. There is much that is broken. And we recognize that in this vulnerable moment things and persons nearest and dearest to us feel all the more fragile, easily broken, as we pause to also reflect on the histories and structures that render some lives, some bodies, more fragile, more easily broken, than others. It's possible that many of you, as you read these (broken) words, are likely feeling that brokenness in your hearts. And that some of you are likely feeling that brokenness in your bodies and in your very spirits, the week's/semester's/year's events leaving you feeling weary, broken-down, on the side of a shadowed road with your spirits deflated, while "hope," that elusive winged thing, speeds by, sees you for a moment, but can't be bothered to stop to help with the repairs. Many of you know this brokenness far too well, so well in fact that it's beginning to feel like a broken-in shoe. And you are tired.

As feminist faculty, we write this letter to say that we know this brokenness too, and that we are living with that brokenness, albeit in ways both similar and different, alongside you. We write this letter in an effort to recognize and name that brokenness and to note that we are here, standing beside you amidst the fissures and the cracks that have been revealed. Without undermining or glossing over the very real pain that has resulted from so much breakage, we write this letter from a space of hope for what these heart-breaking moments of rupture might reveal and what lessons they might teach us about how we want to be and belong as a community here at Colgate and beyond. Breaking offers opportunity for building anew. After all, "[a] writer's heart, a poet's heart, an artist's heart, a musician's heart is always breaking," says Alice Walker. "[I]t is through that broken window that we see the world." As we look, cautiously perhaps, through these broken windows in our midst, what can we now see? What connections and opportunities for new relationships and alliance-building does such breaking reveal?

The events of this last week (and prior) have served to illuminate the inherent brokenness of a system—a broken system that facilitates students feeling uncared for, unseen, unsafe. We write this letter to let you all know that we recognize this brokenness and that we take seriously our responsibility to make sure those gaps in the system are addressed so as to trace the threats to their source(s). With all of that said, we thus hope that this letter will signal a different kind of break—the fracturing of a narrative that tells you that you are in this alone. You are not alone. This letter gestures towards the possibility inherent in what we recognize is a heart-breaking moment, but one that has also broken open the opportunity for us to share our stories of breaking and being-broken—stories that might bring us closer to recognizing the deeper bonds and commitments we need to have to one another during these heart-soul-body breaking times, not only as a source of support for one another but as partners in the fight against injustice and oppression.

We are here, with you, and so are many unnamed others.

In solidarity,
Your feminist faculty.

Open Hours for the Center for Women's Studies

Mon - Thu:
8am - 9:30pm

Fri:
8am - 5pm



Reflection on the National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference: Feminist Transgressions



In mid-November, several Colgate students, faculty and staff arrived on the beautiful island of San Juan, Puerto Rico to attend the annual National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) conference. This year's theme, Feminist Transgressions, explored feminist insubordinations in locations where we love, labor, protest, resist, play, create, and/or celebrate within institutions, in private, within local and global communities, and in other spaces.

Upon arrival to the Centro de Convenciones de Puerto Rico (convention center), we received a welcome tote with a thick book of the conference schedule.

All sessions were composed of feminists and Women's Studies scholars from all over the nation. Some talks were interactive, requiring audience participation, from sharing your name and institutional affiliation, to answering thought-provoking questions and sharing with the group, to learning Bomba dance movements (a native dance of Puerto Rico). Some panelists engaged the audience in personal stories and testimonios. Other panelists presented their feminist performative art pieces or played audios of their Black Queer feminist beatmaking tracks.

One of the highlights of the 2014 NWSA conference was the keynote speaker: bell hooks. During her speech, she covered a wide range of topics such as violence (racialized violence; violence between women; violence in academia), intersectionality and self-love. Her speech was very insightful and relatable, applicable to the different spaces we inhabit on a day to day basis.

During the question and answer session, hooks gave several pieces of insight I think are worth spreading. For instance, she mentioned that Frida Kahlo reminds her that even in the greatest context of pain, we can still be creative. I appreciated this thought, because everyday I see fellow feminists and social activists use pain (and anger) as their pushing force to do what they do. This pain drives them to make beautiful works of visual art; performative art pieces flows out from this pain; this pain is the reason why they plan and execute public protests.

For four days, a group of Colgate students experienced one of the largest Women's Studies conferences, for the first time. We had an amazing experience, surrounded by so many feminists, social activists, allies and scholars engaging in topics that intersected in every way possible. We have learned about past and present feminist transgressions, and hope to be a part of future feminists transgressions wherever necessary, in order to create a more equitable society for all individuals.



Happenings in the Center!



Piecing together the Center library after our summer renovations, which expanded our lounge area



Three sections of Intro to WMST made the annual journey to Seneca Falls to learn about the US Women's Rights and Slavery Abolition movements



The Center welcomed LGBTQ Initiatives with a new office space. Here's a couple of their interns hard at work!



Colgate Advocates invited author and activist Kenyon Farrow to discuss the LGBTQ movement beyond marriage equality



Nina Here Nor There author, Nick Krieger joined us to discuss his gender transition journey



On November 8, 2014, the Center for Women's Studies celebrated its 20th Anniversary



This Semester's Brown Bags!



We kicked off the series with The F Word and heard from students what "feminism" means to them



We de-stressed by talking about The Gift of Self-Love. Attendees gifted themselves with ten minutes in our breakout sessions focused on writing gratitude letters, practicing deep breathing, walking, Reiki, and heating/massage therapy



Our annual Coming Out Stories panel saw the highest audience attendance this semester: 105!



Prof. Madonna Harrington Meyer visited us from Syracuse to discuss her research on grandmothers as caregivers and workers

Fall 2014 WMST Courses

- ANTH221:** Kinship and Marriage
- ANTH315:** Gender and Culture
- EDUC303:** Gender, Education, and International Development
- EDUC312:** Women and Education
- ENGL207:** New Immigrant Voices
- ENGL208:** Sex and the Global City
- ENGL341:** Critical Theory
- ENGL363:** Contemporary Fiction: Global Debate
- ENGL405:** The Brontes

- FREN453:** 20th Century French Literature II
- WMST202:** Intro to Women's Lives
- HIST311:** Women's Rights in US History
- LGBT350:** Sexuality, Gender, and the Law
- POSC415:** Social Justice in Politics and Policy
- SOCI369:** Women, Health, and Medicine
- WMST302:** Women's Lives Biography and Autobiography
- WRIT347:** Language and Gender

WMST Brown Bag Series - Fall 2014
Tuesdays at 11:30am

The F Word

Tess Cumpstone, Damaly Ferreira, and Samantha Hom

Colgate at MichFest

Meika Loe, Susan Miller, Mary Simonson, and Sarah Wooton

Hispanic Heritage Month: Latin@ Identity at Colgate

Cindy Gaete, Manny Medina, Gisselle Perez-Leon, and Andrew Prieto

Grandmothers at Work

Madonna Harrington Meyer, Syracuse University

Remembering Dr. Maya Angelou

Drea Finley, Che J. Hatter, and Suzanne Spring

Coming Out Stories

Jarrell Anderson, Bennie Guzman, Michael James, and Colin Ren

This is Not A Play About Sex

Cast and Core of TINAPAS

Feminisms in Africa

Mary Moran, Professor of Anthropology and ALST

Inverting the Narrative: Gender and Development

Students of EDUC303

From the Archives: 20 Years of the Center for Women's Studies

WMST Student Interns

Respectability Politics

Christelle Boursiquot, Alexandria Davis, Berlisha Morton, Monica Murphy, Nagesh Rao, and Julia Won

The Gift of Self-Love

Janel Benson, Emily Khazae, Dawn LaFrance, Meika Loe, Kezia Page, and Anna Rios-Rojas

Feminist Transgressions: Student Experiences from NWSA

Kristi Carey, Melissa Melendez, Martha Montufar, and Natasha Torres

Gender Equity Under Title IX

Janet Judge, Sports Law Associates



Janet Judge, esq. joined us to discuss how Title IX has changed on college campuses throughout the years



The Center for Women's Studies Staff

Director

Meika Loe

Program Assistant

Che J. Hatter

Administrative Assistant

Letta Palmer

Student Interns

Alexandria Davis '16
Sylvie Lauzon '16
Noufo Nabine '16
Liza Paudel '15
Stephanie Rameau '15
Natasha Torres '15

A Note from the Program Assistant's Desk

The Center has welcomed a few changes this semester. We christened our newly renovated space, honored our feminist legacy by celebrating 20+ years of WMST, and welcomed our first 100% faculty member to the campus community. We also participated in some long-standing traditions such as the Seneca Falls trip comprised of students from our three intro courses and our weekly Brown Bag series is as popular as ever.

Throughout a turbulent semester, WMST has expanded while being committed and critically engaged. In response to the campus climate as well as recent events, students engaged in multiple protests, demonstrations, and change making movements, beginning with a 100 hour sit-in that sparked Colgate's 21-point inclusivity initiative. Student activists also successfully orchestrated this campus' first Sexual Climate Forum, which generated honest conversations regarding assault, agency, and disciplinary action. As an alumni, it is simultaneously exasperating and affirming to witness students claim this university as their own and raise their voices against injustice, structural violence, and complicity. As the WMST Program Assistant, it was encouraging to see our faculty and staff publicly support students and forefront conversations regarding solidarity, feminist self-care, and substantial social, administrative, and academic change.

I have no doubt we will see this atmosphere continue into the next semester and well beyond this academic year. The work needed to re-imagine our community and hold it accountable has just begun. I look forward to the Center remaining an open and crucial space for facilitating the best support, communication, and action we can provide throughout the process.

- Che J. Hatter

Allegorical Athena

Submissions are being collected for the annual publication of *Allegorical Athena*, a gender-oriented magazine edited and produced by the Center for Women's Studies. Please submit any original pieces of artwork, poetry, prose, and/or photography relating to gender issues. Suggested topics include (but are not limited to): beauty perceptions, media representation, sexuality, relationships, and sexism.

For more information or to submit works, please contact the Center for Women's Studies at wmst@colgate.edu

Find us online!

colgate.edu/wmst

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colgatecenterforwomensstudies](https://www.facebook.com/colgatecenterforwomensstudies)

<http://colgatefeminism.blogspot.com/>

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