Celebrating the Women’s Resource Center

Diana Vargas, Graduate Student

This academic year marks the opening of SDSU’s very own Women’s Resource Center. After much effort by many faculty members in the department, the University finally opened the center in August of 2015. During the Fall semester, the Women’s Resource Center reached out to the SDSU community, and hosted various events throughout the semester. Some of the events included the Feminist Food for Thought Series and a lecture by feminist activist and writer Jaclyn Friedman.

To better explain the goals and purpose of the WRC, I interviewed its coordinator, Jessica Nare, a graduate of the MA program in Women’s Studies at San Diego State.

What is the purpose of the WRC? What does the space offer the SDSU community?

The Women’s Resource Center strives to provide a vibrant, brave, and inclusive space that educates, empowers, and advocates for women’s rights and issues. The WRC provides support and advocacy, empowers student voices, connects community members to on-campus and local resources, and creates and facilitates educational programs and events.

Why do you think the WRC is an important space?

While women comprise over half of the population of students at SDSU (and on many campuses), we continue to experience marginalization. I think it is really important to invest in women-centered spaces to combat these forms of inequality. The Women’s Resource Center builds on a long legacy of feminist activism on campus to provide support and resources for female students at SDSU. Women experience interpersonal violence in epidemic numbers, are paid less than men, and are underrepresented in positions of power. In order to achieve greater gen-
Faculty News

Susan E. Cayleff

Dr. Cayleff’s book Nature’s Path: A History of Naturopathic Healing in America, the first of its kind on this topic, has just been published by Johns Hopkins University Press. With three colleagues in Women’s Studies (Bonnie Scott, Anne Donadey, and Irene Lara), she is co-editing Women in Culture: An Intersectional Anthology of Gender and Women’s Studies (forthcoming summer 2016). She continues to direct and mentor the Young Women’s Studies Club at Hoover High School, now in its twentieth year. As co-chair of SafeZones@SDSU, she oversees the LGBTQ social justice event programming, the experiences of 120-hour and 20-hour interns, the annual Lavender Graduation. Additionally, “SafeZones 101” was recently implemented and offers larger groups two-hour informational sessions on LGBTQ issues: pronoun and name usage, definitions, sexual/affectional orientations, gender identities, trans* issues, symbols used within the communities and campus and county-wide resources. So far it has been offered to all Residence Hall Advisors, the library staff, and soon student leaders in Greek life.

Film recommendation: Packed in a Trunk, the Lost Art of Edith Lake Wilkinson (2015).

Anne Donadey

Dr. Donadey’s current research focuses on filmic representations of the Algerian war of decolonization from the French. Donadey recently published a pair of articles with a focus on Outside the Law, a 2010 feature film by Rachid Bouchareb, a Franco-Algerian filmmaker.

She continues to serve on the University Senate and Senate Executive Committee.

Anh Hua

Dr. Hua is enjoying her sabbatical leave. At the moment, she is working on two books, one scholarly and the other more creative: Diasporic Postcolonial Feminisms and Gingko Memories: A Chinese Diasporic Feminist Memoir.
Besides these two book projects, Hua has also published in the following journals: *Frontiers; Feminist Formations; Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture; Asian Women; African and Black Diaspora; Journal of International Women’s Studies; Canadian Woman’s Studies; and in the anthologies Diaspora, Memory, and Identity: A Search for Home and Emotion, Place and Culture. It is difficult to narrow down to one or two of her favorite feminist films since watching films is one of her favorite recreational activities, but this year she enjoyed watching these feminist films: *The Danish Girl*, *Carol*, *Room*, and *He Named Me Malala.*

**Irene Lara**

Associate Professor Irene Lara recently Dr. Lara is working with three Women’s Studies colleagues (Bonnie Scott, Susan Caykoff, and Anne Donadey), to finalize a humanities based textbook: *Women in Culture: An Intersectional Anthology of Gender and Women’s Studies* (forthcoming summer 2016). She has written two introductory chapters for the volume based on her scholarly expertise: “Stories of Identity and Community” and “Healing and Spirituality.” With four of her previous students, she recently published “Passing the Sage: Curandera Scholar Activists in Academia,” about the research and mentoring seminar she has been leading through SDSU’s Faculty-Student Mentoring Program for seven years. This spring, one of her creative narratives, “From the Four Directions: The Dreaming, Birthing, Healing Mother on Fire,” will be published in the anthology *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Frontlines.* In terms of activist projects, she continues to facilitate the Curandera Scholar Activist workshops and Panocha Pláticas: Healing Sex and Sexuality in Community workshops, as well as advise the Association of Chicana Activists on campus.


**Doreen Mattingly**

Dr. Mattingly currently serves as the Women’s Studies Undergraduate Advisor. She has recently finalized *Feminist in the White House: Midge Costanza, the Carter Years, and America’s Culture Wars* (June 2016). The book tells the story of Midge Costanza, the committed feminist politician given a high-level appointment, only to discover that she is expected to be a powerless token. Her response shaped the relationship between the Carter administration and the women’s movement, and contributed to the culture wars that have shaped politics for almost forty years. Additionally, she recently pioneered a new class on local feminist organizations and activism, designed to help Women’s Studies majors envision paths to meaningful employment and social change. In January 2016, Dr. Mattingly took a class to Jamaica for a class titled “Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean.” She is currently starting work on a new book project on the second-wave feminism in California. In terms of activism, Professor Mattingly has been busy working for the California Faculty Association.


**Kimala Price**

Dr. Price’s current research projects include *The Verbal and Visual Rhetoric of the Anti-Abortion Campaign Targeting African Americans; The Intersection of Reproductive Justice and LGBTQ Politics* (in the edited volume *LGBTQ Politics: A Critical Reader* published by NYU Press). Her research is also focused on the intellectual and political history of reproductive justice. Her current activist activities include serving on the political endorsement committee of the Action Fund Board of Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest. Dr. Price is also the Co-director along with Professor Mattingly of the Bread and Roses Center for Feminist Research and Activism. The Center has successfully hosted two Social Justice workshops on campus bringing in community organizations and pairing them with graduate students of Women’s studies who do research in their organizations based on their needs.

Film recommendation: *Obvious Child* (2014).

**Esther Rothblum**

Dr. Rothblum is currently serving as the Women’s Studies Graduate Advisor. For the past twelve years, Dr. Rothblum conducted the CUPPLES Study, a longitudinal research program that compares same-sex couples who were united in a civil union during the first year that legislation was available in Vermont (July 2000 to July 2001) with same-sex couples in their friendship circle who did not have civil unions, and with their married heterosexual siblings. She is currently consortium principal investigator of a grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development of NIH for the third wave of this study. When the study began, Vermont was the only U.S. state (before any province of Canada) to legalize same-sex relationships. Same-sex couples came to Vermont from all over the U.S. to legalize their relationship; in the ensuing years many of these couples have married and others have terminated their relationship. The data comparing same-sex and heterosexual couples on mental health, factors affecting their children, division of labor, and relationship terminations are currently being analyzed. Results of this project have been published in sixteen academic journals and book chapters. Dr. Rothblum also continues to serve as editor of the *Journal of Lesbian Studies* and *Fat Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Body Weight and Society.*

Film recommendation: *The Polgar Variant* (2014).
Cindy Kim has now been with us for a couple of years and we are sorry to lose her to graduation in May! Her fun and smiling personality has brought joy to our office and her hard work has helped us considerably. We will miss her greatly, but wish her well for her life beyond SDSU!

The irrepressible and indispensable Teddi Brock has been the Administrative Coordinator of the department for over 16 years. Teddi can single-handedly run the program! She has overall expertise, has been, for years, a mentor to new hires in her league, and is the “go to” person on our floor. Teddi is very well-versed in departmental, college and university policies and of late has, unlike most faculty, mastered the endless list of new online forms that have rendered the faculty illiterate! Teddi has also assisted in Study Travel Abroad trips to India in 2013 and 2015. She also works for LGBTQ Studies and is integral to their Lavender Graduation as well as supporting the many other projects our faculty is involved in.

Women’s Resource Center

The WRC aims to be an inclusive space that really honors the intersecting identities of women on campus. The WRC is women-centered, but works to explore and address all forms of inequality and oppression. The WRC adds additional support to students on campus. For example, this semester we are partnering with the Center for Community Solutions to offer a “survivor circle” for students who have experienced sexual or dating violence. We are also working closely with the Counseling and Psychological Services to offer a weekly counseling group focused on women’s issues. The SDSU community can expect increased services for women, exploration of feminist issues, and opportunities to connect and build community!

How have students responded to the opening of the center? What types of programs/events opportunities can they look forward to?

Students are really excited! Students involved in the Women’s Studies and

- Shogofa Abassi
- Kristi Abrecht
- Patty Cardozo
- Christina Carney
- Geneva Robinson
- Darcuiel
- Hannah Evans
- Sue Gonda
- Moriah Gonzalez-Meeks
- Thomas Herman
- Jessica Nare
- Maggie Slaska
- Cat Thompson

Continued from page 1
feminist student orgs on campus really organized and advocated for this space to be created and realized. Our newly renovated cottage is beautiful and students are welcome to hang out here, study, hold meetings, and book rooms. We invite you to stop by! We have lots of events planned for this semester including a field trip to Los Angeles to participate in an International Women’s Day March and Rally, monthly “Feminist Food for Thought” lunches and discussions, and a Feminist Film Festival that will be kicking off in the fall. If you have ideas about events you’d like to see, let us know!

What are some of the WRC’s goals for the near future?
The WRC will be increasing the sexual violence training available to students, faculty, and staff in the fall of 2016. We aim to respond to the results from SDSU’s recent climate survey on sexual violence to really work to shift culture norms on campus. Stay tuned—more information will be available soon! Beginning in the fall, the WRC will host a Residential Learning Community called, The Women’s and Gender Equity House (WAGE). 30 first-year students will self-select to live on a floor together, be enrolled in an intro to women’s studies course, participate in a University Seminar with the Women’s Resource Center, and learn about feminism and contemporary women’s issues through local field trips. There will also be a similar learning community available to commuter students. We are excited about being able to connect and engage feminist students in their first semester at SDSU! Our final strategic goal is to help to coordinate a lactation program on campus. We need better support for students who are parents on campus!

This Spring semester began with an open house hosted by the WRC to celebrate their new space; the SDSU community can expect more great events as well as a safe, inclusive space. Furthermore, the key focus areas of the WRC are academic and professional success, community connections and relationships, health and wellness, identity exploration, leadership development, and social change. The center welcomes and encourages students and SDSU community members to stop by, and located at 5121 Campanile Drive (Next to the Pride Center on the corner of Lindo Paseo and Campanile). For more information, visit the WRC’s page http://www.sdsu.edu/WRC or facebook at http://www.facebook.com/SDSUWRC.
Internship with Nancy Pelosi

Nassim Moallem, Undergraduate Student

I ended up in D.C. interning in the U.S. Capitol because of the Sex, Power, & Politics Women’s Studies class I had taken. It taught me how today women are less likely to be in elected office because they are less likely to run. This point, that women were not getting access to these positions of power because we are told in so many ways not to even try, really stuck with me. So I tried and ended up succeeding in becoming SDSU’s nominee for the Panetta Institute’s Congressional Internship Program.

Twenty-four interns selected from CSUs and two other California universities went through an intensive two-week orientation at CSU Monterey Bay before being flown to D.C. Each of us was assigned to a different office of a California representative. I had apparently made a good impression, as women’s studies students tend to do, and got assigned the highest ranking California representative: Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi.

The entire internship became a very humanizing experience for most of us. We tend to see politics and our political structure as a high-powered almost mechanical institution. Actually getting to work in the Capitol, in the House Office Buildings, I realized instead how personal our political structure is. There are people working to make sure every aspect of our government is functioning. From the flag office to the Democratic cloakroom—we have built a system of government that is indeed being governed by people. Sometimes in life it can feel as if no one cares about what is happening in the world, that no one is doing anything to help others. I never felt like that on the Hill in D.C. There were people working to make progress on STEM education and criminal justice reform. Each briefing or hearing, press event and email, gave further connection to all the people who are actively working to create change.

We also see politics as an arena dominated by old, white men. On my initial entrance to the political workforce, I was surprised not to be working with any such people. In fact, most of the staff I encountered were women—both white women and women of color. They were doing the research, replying to constituents, sending the emails, attending meetings. Many of the other Panetta interns had the same experience, a pleasant surprise at unexpected diversity. With time however, I began to see what is much theorized in feminist texts on glass ceilings and the like. The higher up the positions went, the less and less women, the less and less color there was until you reached the members of Congress themselves.

It was easy to see how this gap influenced how our Congressional procedures play out. I found the Planned Parenthood hearing with the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and CEO Cecile Richards to be a striking example. I was frankly reminded of the Anita Hill hearings: a woman facing down a committee of men already against her. Yet our progress is evident within this comparison. The Planned Parenthood hearing included the disrespect and condescension of Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) and Representatives like Cynthia Lummis (R-WY)—but it also had the powerful voices supporting Ms. Richards and Planned Parenthood like Representatives Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Elijah Cummings (D-MD), and Brenda Lawrence (D-MI). Afterwards there was a press event with more supporters standing outside the Capitol, speakers including Leader Pelosi surrounded by a sea of pink holding Feminist Majority signs. In changing the demographics of our elected representatives, we are changing the dynamics of our government.

Women have definitely gotten their foot in the door of the United States Congress. We have held the door open wide enough for a few women to even slip into the room. I got my foot in the door during my D.C. internship. Now I cannot wait to get into that room.

The Young Women’s Studies Club

Andrea Guajardo, Graduate Student

Every week a selected group of graduate and undergraduate students take a trip to Hoover High School in City Heights to be mentors to students in the Young Women’s Studies Club. The goal of the Club is to create a more just, feminist, and race aware world. The meetings focus on topics varying from LGBTQ issues, sex education, self-esteem, and goal setting.

As the graduate coordinator, I am able to walk around the room and get a sense of what each group’s discussion is accomplishing and what issues they are discussing. The third meeting of Fall 2015 was entitled “Feminism 101”
Bread and Roses Symposium and MA Project

Emma Fuller, Graduate Student

The Bread and Roses Feminist Activist Research Symposia have been great opportunities for San Diego State students and the community to connect. These day-long events have allowed people to present research ideas to benefit non-profits working with women’s issues in San Diego and allow students and the community to come together and make change. The second Symposium was held in February 2016 and included: organizations presenting their research needs; student Bread and Roses Activist-Scholar Fellows talking about the research they are working on; a session on how to make writing a form of activism; and how everyone can get active in the election politics. This symposium highlighted feminist activism and how everyone could do something to make a difference in their community.

The first Bread and Roses symposium event led me to create a reproductive justice certification tool in San Diego with Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest. I was awarded grant money from the Bread and Roses committee to successfully help them with their goals, and expect to complete the research by August 2016. The project I am working on is creating an online certification tool for local businesses to assess their compliance with the reproductive justice model and what they can do to achieve a higher level. The goal of this project is for businesses to learn about reproductive justice, and how they can implement policies such as bilingual tools that will help their employees and the community. Among the policies we will examine are: child care, health care, diversity, LGBTQ inclusion, sick and parental paid leave and livable wages. In addition, higher levels of businesses will be evaluated for their social responsibility policies. Our goal is to identify businesses that are willing and eligible to join the reproductive justice network with Planned Parenthood.

This project will help Planned Parenthood create an even stronger connection to their community and the local businesses and it is essential they have local support.
Feminist Places in San Diego: Women’s Museum of California

Diana Vargas, Graduate Student

I have lived in San Diego for over 12 years, yet was unaware that one of the only six museums of women's history in the country is located right here in my hometown. Last semester, as part of Irene Lara’s Gender, Culture, and Representation graduate seminar, I visited the Women's Museum of California along with my classmates for the first time. My visit left me thinking about the importance given to women's history and of the fact that often, places such as these that are solely devoted to women are something that one must actively look for. I once again was reminded that little attention is paid to the contributions that women have made throughout history, and that a place devoted to honoring and preserving women's past is therefore a great challenge to androcentric understandings of history.

During my visit to the museum with the class, we were given a tour and were able to see the museum's archives. I was impressed at the amount of history contained in all the boxes, including books and women's clothing from various time periods. Being among all of those boxes, I was reminded of the importance of preserving women's history, and of the great work being done by the Women's Museum of California in honoring the past of San Diego women. The museum also had an exhibit on women who were involved in the suffrage movement in California during the early 1900s. Up until that point, all of my knowledge of the suffrage movement was of other women in other places working to get women the vote, so it was interesting to learn about women in San Diego who were also involved in that struggle. For some reason, knowing the stories of local women made that history more real and accessible to me.

Being able to visit the museum was a great privilege. Knowing of how much women's history is forgotten, I felt lucky to be able to visit the Women’s Museum of California and to know that they have worked to honor women’s lives since 1997. Preserving women’s history is indeed a feminist and political act, and it is great to know that such a place is right here in San Diego. The museum is located at the Liberty Station in Point Loma and is open from Wednesday to Sunday.

Real Problems Mon

Aubrielle Gardner, Undergraduate Student

In January, 2016 I spent eleven days in Kingston, Jamaica as part of a Women’s Studies faculty-led Travel Study Abroad course, “Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean.” During the class we visited a number of women’s and LGBT organizations, and heard lectures from the faculty at the Institute of Gender and Development Studies at the University of West Indies, Mona campus. My classes in history in Women Studies gave me a good framework for intellectually understanding our experiences, but I learned the most from my emotional responses.

The first thing I noticed about Jamaica is the wholehearted friendliness of its people. It was difficult to walk down a street without being greeted, smiled or waved at, which is a pleasant change compared to the ‘factory’ feeling US culture can sometimes have. Most locals are extremely proud of their beautiful country, which is why the problems were so upsetting. Litter was everywhere; I saw a man collecting drinking water out of a canal filled with debris and trash. The litter and failing infrastructure are symptoms of Jamaica’s financial crisis. Inflation and structural adjustment have plagued the country’s economy for decades. The largest part of Jamaica’s economy are remittances. The poverty was extreme, yet Jamaica is considered a middle income country. Jamaica’s economy is a glimpse of the systemic problems that result from globalization.

Sadly, the economy is one of many hardships. We were there to study gender and sexuality, but sex between males is illegal in Jamaica. The Buggery law—as it is called—is archaic and fosters extreme homophobia. The hate crimes against homosexuals are on par with Uganda, Russia and Brazil. We were fortunate to meet with members of a trans community brave enough to share their stories and answer our questions. Our hosts even had trouble attending the sessions for fear of being seen at a gay organization. Gay by association is real anxiety within this culture, regardless of how foolish it sounds. The inequality and discrimination for members of the LGBT community were heartbreaking, but an aspect of Jamaican life I would never have experienced if I had not been a part of a Women's Studies class.
My Experience in Women’s Studies
Rebecca Escoto, Undergraduate Student

My entire life revolves around feminism. Although she may not consider herself a feminist, my mother is the cause of my feminist outlook on life. As a Guatemalan immigrant, coming to the United States alone at the age of sixteen her life was filled with tremendous obstacles. She is determined to meet her goals and continues to fight in order to support a large family. She has taught me that, contrary to the messages given to girls by popular society, there is incredible power in being a woman, that we have the ability to create change. Before taking a Women’s Studies class in Spring 2014, I struggled from major to major, trying to find the perfect fit. “Women’s Sexuality and the Body” with Professor Heredia reignited the fire that my mother had lit when I was born. The course covered topics that I never knew existed in a university, from misogyny in music to the harmful constructions of women’s bodies. Women’s Studies classes consist of deep analysis and intellectual, feminist conversations with others who are passionate about the subject. This major connects the classroom to the outside world. Professors encourages students to engage in feminist activism and apply their classroom knowledge to their lives.

Being a recent graduate, I plan to use my Women’s Studies degree, in conjunction with my minor in Child Development, to provide needed services to the underprivileged individuals and families in my community. I want to work in a non-profit that is devoted to helping families from lower socio-economic backgrounds. My Women’s Studies courses have made me aware of the incredible injustices people of color face. It is also my hope to continue my education and attend grad school in the coming years.

The Andrea O’Donnell Womyn’s Outreach Association
Anna Waletzko, Undergraduate Student and frequent contributor to Huffington Post

I came across the Andrea O’Donnell Womyn’s Outreach Association (WOA) completely by accident, when I was a freshman looking to interview someone for a Daily Aztec story on sexual assault that I was writing. I sat in on a meeting, which coincidentally was their last meeting of the semester. I listened as they talked about what the word “feminism” meant to them, and found myself becoming increasingly interested. I’ve been a member of WOA for a year now, and it’s helped me get involved on campus, meet people who share values similar to my own, and learn more about what it means to be a feminist, especially on a college campus.

We live in a rape culture, a culture of sexual violence, and WOA strives to bring increased awareness to this as well as provide support to survivors. They fight for womyn’s rights on campus and in the greater community through education, activism, and advocacy. San Diego State has come a long way since the Take Back the Night March last November 2014, and even though I saw a guy wearing a “meninist” sweatshirt the other day, things are changing on our campus. This past semester was an exciting time in that change. WOA hosted events, guest speakers, film screenings, volunteered throughout San Diego and collaborated with other campus organizations including the new and very exciting Women’s Resource Center. One large scale event this past semester was Love Your Body Day, which WOA hosts annually as a celebration of body positivity and overall wellness of the mind, body, and spirit. The event included workshops, an outdoor yoga session, arts and crafts, as well as a panel of speakers from organizations that promote body positivity.

My personal favorite event which WOA sponsored was guest speaker Jaclyn Friedman, feminist, performer, and author of What You Really Really Want: The Smart Girl’s Shame-Free Guide to Sex & Safety. Friedman took an interesting approach, tying in comedy with things rarely discussed in the public sphere today. However, as more people like her begin to speak out about being sex-positive and safe these things become more comfortable and widely discussed. After the talk Friedman met with the WOA executive board members and other guests for dinner and conversation, giving the group tips on how to better navigate their way through a university setting as activists.

While WOA hosts these wonderful events, the most important thing they bring to our campus is a space that actively seeks to empower womyn, a space that allows student activists to connect with one another and organize against injustice.
Scholarships and Other Awardees 2015–2016

- **Betty Nesvold Scholarship**
  Nassim Moallen

- **Andrea O’Donnell Memorial Scholarship**
  Samantha Nordin

- **Joanne Davis Women’s Studies Scholarship**
  Thirada Kingphuang

- **The Sue Russell Scholarship**
  Michèle Jett

- **Oliva Espín Graduate Student Scholarship**
  Jennifer Setters

- **Undergraduate Research Paper Award**
  Shaila Homan

- **Graduate Student Jackie Wertz/Deborah Carstens Sistership**
  Marcela Rojas-Salas and Diana Vargas

- **Bonnie and Tom Scott Sistership**
  Julie Gardner

- **2014–2015 Outstanding Graduating Senior**
  Jessica Sabory, and her Most Influential Faculty, Huma Ahmed-Ghosh

**Congratulations to all!**

We thank our many donors who make our scholarships and awards possible and enhance the many programs that keep our mission alive: Deborah Carstens, Tiana Uribe, Elisabeth Eisner, The Burnham Foundation, Bonnie Zimmerman, Oliva Espín, Barbara Watson, Bonnie Kime Scott, Laura and Phyllis Hall, and the Nesvold family.

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Alumni News

**Caleb Rainey** is a 2012 SDSU MA graduate with a focus on Black feminism and multicultural LGBT literature. Upon graduation, he started a nonprofit called the Multicultural LGBT Literary Foundation. The Foundation’s mission is to "preserve and promote works by LGBT artists and authors of color". The Multicultural LGBT Literary Foundation began as a community book club to celebrate and preserve the literature and art of LGBT people of color and their allies. The Foundation incorporated in July 2013 and hosted its first writers in November 2013. The Foundation has installed multicultural LGBT literary collections in three San Diego high schools through their Words of Wisdom program, guaranteeing students’ access to LGBT literature that is racially representative and diverse. The Foundation has brought twenty-two LGBT writers and artists of Native, African, Asian, and Latino/a descent from around the world to San Diego to share their work. The Foundation has also hosted two literary festivals focused on LGBT writers of color and one literacy campaign targeted at gay and bisexual men of color. Some landmark events are Regathering of Spirit: Native Lesbian Poets with Chrystos and Janice Gould; Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Your Mothers Still Warn You About with Carla Trujillo and Felicia Luna Lemus; and We Alive: A Celebration of Black Lesbian Womanhood with Lenelle Moise. The Foundation hosts one of the largest literary fundraisers in San Diego called the San Diego Literary Gala. This year the President’s Office of SDSU bought a table for the 3rd Annual Gala which featured the Obama Inaugural Poet Richard Blanco. For the SDSU students, it was an amazing event.
During my first year as a graduate student in Women's Studies, I have had the wonderful opportunity to work as the Graduate Coordinator of SafeZones@SDSU.

SafeZones@SDSU is a social justice organization that works to ensure a campus atmosphere that is welcoming, informative, educational, and safe for all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex students and their allies (LGBTQ+). We have been on campus since 2007, under the co-leadership of Prof. Susan E. Cayleff of Women's Studies and Carrie Sakai, Psy.D, from Counseling & Psychological Services. Since then, SafeZones@SDSU has trained over 1000 people on campus including Public Psychological Services students, faculty, Safety, Health Services, Counseling and staff and many Offices, Programs and specialized groups.

The Graduate Coordinator of SafeZones@SDSU works with an interdisciplinary team to organize and fulfill the mission of both halves of SafeZones’ work: three-hour certified Ally Trainings offered regularly and the social justice event programming. The later utilizes interns doing LGBT Studies 120 hour internships and 20-hour interns from two General Education Women’s Studies classes. The interns’ involvement includes: tabling, panels, film nights, representing LGBTQ issues at SDSU open houses, fairs and orientations. Spring 2016 our big event is the Lavender Graduation—a celebration for LGBTQ+ students and allies that will be held on May 4 in the Alumni Center.

This semester we started SafeZones101. This initiative fulfills an educational need on our campus and complements our Certified Ally Training program. SafeZones101 is a two-hour dynamic and educational opportunity that covers relevant topics such as: definitions, appropriate name and pronoun usage, affectional/sexual orientations, gender identities, trans* issues, coming out, symbols within the communities, and on-campus and off-campus resources. It is ideal for learning basic information on LGBTQ+ issues. Its purpose is to provide a brave space for learning and discussion.

The opportunity to occupy a leadership role at SDSU regarding LGBTQ+ issues has been a deeply significant experience for me. I am able to combine my academic development with activism on a diverse campus with 35,000 students. I have the chance to grow holistically as a scholar/activist and have gained a community that I needed as an international student. This assistantship confirms the importance of collaboration between allies and LGBTQ+ identified people to create positive change.

Why I won’t Apologize for Reproductive Healthcare

Anna Waletzko, Undergraduate Student

For years now, I’d heard about reproductive healthcare. Most of the time, it was not in a positive light. In fact, the first time I heard about birth control, it was Rush Limbaugh, calling Georgetown University student Sandra Fluke a slut, simply because she was asking her university health center to provide birth control for students. He said, “It makes her a slut, right? It makes her a prostitute.” I didn’t completely know why this was such a disgusting thing for Limbaugh to say, but this was how I was thrown into the world of women’s health care.

Now it’s nearly four years later, and I’ve begun volunteering at Family Planning Associates Women’s Health Center in Mira Mesa, escorting patients into the clinic, and shielding them from angry protestors. This time, I have found myself at the end of similar comments, coming from “pro-lifers” (from this point forward they will be referred to as anti-choice) who spend their Saturday mornings attempting to prevent patients from accessing a myriad of healthcare options.

“I’m not saying you’re going to hell, but you’re in deep,” one young girl said to me as I escorted a young woman up the steps. “Give your child a chance, your child will be beautiful,” one woman practically yelled to a couple as they walked into the clinic. Some protestors read the bible out loud to us, and one gifted us with plastic fetuses. They scared the patients, who were often overcome by the rush of people charging at them.
Continued from previous page

as they stepped out of their cars. I felt sorry for the patients, many of whom were already nervous, anxious, or not feeling like they were supported in their decisions. I knew that if the protestors weren't there, we wouldn't have to be there, but if we weren't there, the protestors would still be there.

I often find myself defending the clinic and those like it (Planned Parenthood) with an overused argument: abortions only account for three percent of the services they provide for patients. But I’m sick of using that line of defense, because it shouldn’t matter if abortions are three percent of their services or one hundred percent. It shouldn’t matter, because it’s no ones choice but the woman receiving the care. So from this point forward, I’m vowing to not use that argument when confronted with anti-choice protestors, because the services offered by these clinics are not anything to be apologized for.

I wasn’t prepared for what I saw when I began volunteering, and I urge everyone to take some time and go at least once. It isn’t the most fun way to spend your Saturday morning, but it’s important, and it made me realize just how real this situation is. We’ve likely all heard about the shooting in Colorado Springs on November 27, 2015—carried out by Robert Lewis Dear Jr. who referred to himself as a “warrior for babies.” Ironic that a “pro-lifer” would resort to taking lives away, isn’t it? But still, I vow to not apologize for my right to healthcare services and my right to choose.

Fotonovela Project
Laura Ortiz, Graduate Student

My Master’s project took me to develop four fotonovelas. A fotonovela is Spanish for photo-novel. It is a photographically represented story with the aid of dialogue bubbles, similar to comic books, but with photographs.

Sample fotonovela (from CDC.gov)

While the fotonovelas are Latino centered, the themes they develop are universal. Browsing the California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CRLJ) website, looking at resources they offer Latinas, I stumbled upon their fotonovelas. They created these to educate parents on the necessity of their high school children receiving comprehensive sexual education. I absolutely loved them and they inspired the idea that I too could develop fotonovelas, but on the topics that I was looking to explore, while targeting the population I wanted to make a difference for.

There were many familial forces that acted upon me growing up as a Latina girl. When you are exposed to feminism, you begin to think differently, and feminism gives you the knowledge, strength, and vocabulary to challenge injustices. The strong patriarchal values that prevail in some Latino families are what keep many Latina women from reaching higher education, and although that is changing, it’s not quickly enough. We need to start changing the way society thinks about raising girls and treating women and the fotonovelas have the potential to plant seeds of change.

When I decided to develop fotonovelas I was thrilled and a bit scared since this was completely new to me. However, growing up I remember historietas (comics) and fotonovelas being available at newsstands and how they were such a popular form of entertainment. Some of those comics from my childhood are Chanoc (for children), and Hermelinda Linda (for adults). Once I decided to create fotonovelas, I had to narrow the topics to develop.

The fotonovelas’ topics are barriers to higher education for Latina girls, son preference, and coming out. Very often, Latina girls are raised with the expectation of getting married as the pinnacle of their life, while their brothers are usually raised with the expectation of having a job or career. Raising girls to be dependent only places them in vulnerable situations. Education is a tool that will allow girls and women a better life.

Another issue that affects Latina girls’ lives is son preference which is common in many Latino families. Unfortunately, when sons are preferred, daughters are devalued. This value system is problematic and the issues it engenders need to be made visible in order for them to initiate discussions that may lead to change. Recognition is the first step. My last two fotonovelas are about a girl and a boy coming out to their respective families. They feature stories that are common and I hope they will challenge the societal values that lead to negative scenarios.

Three of the fotonovelas feature teenage protagonists, and one features an expectant mother. They were created with to bring about conversations to create new, positive, and inclusive outcomes.
My Experience as a Graduate Student

Julie Gardner, Graduate Student

I would like to let incoming graduate students know that there is literally no way to prepare yourself for grad school. You really need to know what you’re getting into, and I wish someone had warned me. On the first day, during our orientation, a professor told us to remember that we did indeed apply to this program. I mistakenly thought that I’d be able to handle grad school fairly easily, especially since I was coming to the program straight out of college. I was used to school, right? I could totally manage reading feminist literature and writing papers about topics I loved. Or so I thought. I did read the suggested summer readings. But a graduate program is absolutely nothing like college at all. I think within the first two weeks of the program, I had a new opinion: undergraduate reading requirements are completely reasonable! I was just in no way prepared for the amount of assigned work.

Another challenge I faced was suddenly questioning myself all the time, wondering if I was even correct in my arguments on my papers. So the challenges of the work, on top of the amount, just lead to a very stressful start. I was not prepared to constantly doubt my scholarly abilities, especially because I always felt so confident in my undergraduate program. Imposter syndrome is very real.

But, for every negative thing I could say about how hard the work is, there really is an equal amount of positive things about this experience. Even my constant self-doubt became a positive after surviving the first semester, because it felt like an accomplishment. We did it! Not only did we survive, but we were successful! (So far.) We were accomplished scholars. My favorite aspect of the women’s studies department is the sheer variety of course topics available to me. So yes, you will read and write A LOT. But the interesting courses really do make it worth it. For example, in my Women and Sports class, my final paper ended up being about media coverage of Serena Williams. The topics I am not only allowed to but am actually encouraged to explore within an academic context is just unreal. Also, because I knew essentially nothing about ‘women and sports’ before enrolling in that course, I was able to learn a great deal. I also couldn’t believe how much one particular professor encouraged us all to write about ourselves. Reflecting on my own experiences, and then turning in what I had written about every week as my assignment was a totally new experience. It really helped me in terms of personal growth and understanding myself and why I feel the way I do, especially, for example, what ideas I have internalized and how I can begin to deconstruct those ideas when they are problematic.

I think the obvious answer to the question “what is the best thing about this program” is my cohort! Another piece of advice I would give to incoming masters students is to hang out with the people in your cohort, especially outside of class. There were so many times in the first semester when I was particularly struggling with something or I was super stressed out, when, before I could even mention my distress, a fellow grad student classmate would say exactly what I was thinking. It felt so good to have my feelings validated, and to know that I was absolutely not the only person who was panicking about the same deadline. They were a life line. Spending time with the women in my cohort really just turned that semester around. I felt so supported. Not to mention the amazing environment that is being surrounded by smart, diverse, ambitious women who all have such a specific similar interest. I had said before that it makes me wish I had gone to an all women’s college.

I will end this essay with something my mom said that really stood out to me on one of my hardest days. She said “If graduate school was easy, anybody could do it.”
Midnight, 100 °F, no air conditioner, on the first night of our trip, and the fire alarm goes off! Well, it was a desperate man knocking on the door type of alarm that woke me up. Someone was outside my room, screaming, forcing the door trying to open it, speaking Hindi, no light, no electricity, I was panicking and did not know what was happening outside! When my roommate, Nina, and I decided to finally open the door, as we had started to smell the smoke, we remembered that neither of us was an expert in using vintage door keys. Welcome to India...

I had the opportunity to meet an inspirational woman, founder of NAZ foundation, Anjali Gopalan. The mission of NAZ is to target HIV and AIDs. They care and support kids while creating awareness. This place was incredible, I had the opportunity to meet with the kids living there, they prepared lunch for us and Anjali spoke about related issues. I believe NAZ Foundation has made a huge impact in the lives of these kids that have been affected by HIV and AIDs.

Among other great foundations, I visited Jagori Campus which is an advocacy center for women’s rights and gender equality and located in Dharamshala in the lower Himalayas. I volunteered in the farming group known as the Green Leafs and visited local families and their farms. One of the families said they had been trying to cure their land for over seven years after having used fertilizers and pesticides. Now they only farm from six to eight crops per season and have returned to organic farming. Three generations live together and everyone to cares for each other. They seem to have no individual goals, and instead focus in activities that benefit the whole family. They all help with duties within the family, care for one farm, and have great respect for their elders. It was great to see this and before leaving their home, the family gave us some lychees from their tree.

Another fun and exciting adventure was trekking around the Indian Himalayan region. I went to Kareri Village, saw its beautiful surroundings, and jumped for a swim in the lake. After walking for hours, stepping in cow poop, and running into lovely leeches that would stick to our skin and shoes and make everyone scream and become hysterical, we arrived at our campsites. A group of kindhearted locals received us with warm chai and the most delicious dinner after the longest but most amazing trail of my life.

We also got to meet His Holiness, The Dalai Lama. Yes! I had the opportunity to visit his temple, roll the prayer wheels, and engage in an all-day audience with him, which was attended by about 100 students from San Diego. We learned about his life and struggles as he and Tibetan Buddhists were exiled from what is now part of China. But the best of all, we were all invited to his 80th birthday celebration and there we were, sitting in the front row. As he made his grand entrance and passed by, he stopped exactly where our group was. But not only he stopped, he shook the hand of Nathan, one of our group, and how I wish I could describe Nathan’s face at that moment. ASTONISHED!

As we stayed in McLeod Ganj for over a week, I had the chance to learn about Tibetan culture. This suburb in the area of Dharamshala is the home for these exiles and is an important place that keeps their culture, arts, crafts, and Tibetan Buddhism alive. The drive up the mountain through a narrow two-lane highway, full of drivers who seemed reckless to us, is the path to this fascinating region.

On our way back to Delhi, we visited many of the major sites that are not to be missed. The Golden Temple at Amritsar which is the main temple of the Sikh religion was beautiful and fascinating; they feed tens of thousands of people at no cost every day. Then we headed to Taj Mahal and nearby forts and on to Jaipur in Rajasthan where we spent a few days enjoying the sites and visiting organizations.

I will always remember and cherish this experience, as it has changed my personality and my goals. I left in June not sure what my goals were or if I had any at all. Now, I look forward to and I will create an organization focused on women empowerment, primarily in rural areas. Supporting the ideals of equal wage, education, leadership and creating awareness of women’s rights. In fact, I dare to say I learned more about myself in three weeks than in 22 years. In addition, that fire alarm, in my first night in Delhi, was nothing more than smoke coming out from one of the maintenance rooms.
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Commencement

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Miriam Melendez
Michelle Ann Marquez
Allison Marie Rubens
Teagan Elizabeth Taylor
Laura Lynn Wilbur
Jessica Marilu Valencia

Women’s Studies MA

Taylor Rose Wondergem
Lindsay Ilana Turner
Claire Judith Plourde
Mary Frances Marchan
Fallon Allyce Hughes
Ashley Marie Green
Lorena Gonzalez
Monica Catherine Murtaugh

[not pictured]

Dr. Ghosh, Bianca Campos, Michelle Marquez, Miriam Melendez, Allison Rubens, Teagan Taylor, Jessica Valencia, Laura Wilbur

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