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**Inspiring
Woman: Ellen
Johnson-Sirleaf**
by Alex Nichipor

In 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was elected president of Liberia, making her the first democratically chosen female president on the African continent.

Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's country of birth, has a rich and unique history. A country located in West Africa, about 43,000 square miles in size, it was founded in 1822 as an American colony by former slaves. White abolitionists and slaveholders encouraged this "repatriation" movement, but the colonists themselves saw it as an opportunity to begin a new life free from the stain of slavery. They established schools, universities, cities, and farms, with agriculture and shipbuilding becoming the primary industries. They maintained an ambivalent relationship with Liberia's native African population, however, and it was the discrimination against the indigenous peoples that created the unrest and agitation that led to the Liberian Civil Wars.

Johnson-Sirleaf's story is one of struggle and triumph. Both of her parents were born into poverty, but eventually attained influential positions in Liberian society and politics. Johnson-Sirleaf herself studied economics and public policy at the JFK School of Government, an extension of Harvard University. She served as Finance Minister in Liberia until she was forced into exile in Kenya. She returned to her home country to participate in politics and to run against Samuel Doe in the presidential elections. As punishment, she was sentenced to 10 years in prison, although she was only forced to serve part of the sentence before going back into exile.

She became Vice President of the African Regional Office of Citibank in Nairobi, Kenya, learning management skills that would serve her well in the future. After Samuel Doe was assassinated, she came back for good to Liberia, which was in the throes of a terrible civil war. She played an active role during the peace meetings and was a major part of the transitional government. In 2005, she ran against the famous Liberian soccer player, George Weah, and won. Her inauguration was attended by Laura Bush and Condoleeza Rice, among others.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is well-loved by the people of Liberia, who call her the Iron Lady, an affectionate and accurate nickname for this stubborn, smart, grandmotherly figure. As a woman, she is a

symbol of hope for a people who have suffered for decades under the corruption and war spread by male leaders. All the same, she has her work cut out for her. From 1989 to 2003, Liberia was engulfed in civil war. Infrastructure and commerce were utterly destroyed, the government was thrown into chaos, and 200,000 people lost their lives. Considering that the population of Liberia is only about 3 million, that is an enormous loss – about one person out of every 17 people was murdered. The unemployment rate in Liberia is about 85%, and its illiteracy rate is roughly the same. Life expectancy is only 41 years, with thousands succumbing to preventable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis. This is exacerbated by the fact that there are only 30 doctors left in the country. The war was especially wicked to women: they were gang-raped, they saw their male relatives murdered, and they lost their children to rebel recruiters or starvation.

Now that the war is over, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is attempting to alleviate her country's suffering by reviving its economy. Liberia is rich in gold, diamonds, wood, and rubber, but the country was under trade restrictions due to the unrelenting civil war. Sirleaf-Johnson has lifted these restrictions, as well as signing agreements with iron mining companies that will create thousands of jobs over the next few years. She has also made education free and compulsory for all elementary-school aged children in Liberia.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is also a source of inspiration for women on the African continent. She is a woman who has attained the highest office in her country at a time when many Liberian women still suffer patriarchal oppression in the form of child marriages, rape, and female genital mutilation. For the women of her country and her continent, she is a sign of what they can attain.

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Gender Wars: Female Soldiers Through History by Alex Nichipor

Female soldiers have proved invaluable to the United States Army during its campaign in Iraq. Unlike the male soldiers, they can search Iraqi women without violating cultural norms, and their presence is said to put women and children more at ease.

The US military bans women from front-line combat, but unit commanders utilize legal loopholes to assign female specialists to all-male combat units for short periods of time. There is one major flaw in this arrangement, however: *there are no front lines in this war.*

Military units with female soldiers come under attack by Iraqi forces just as often as all-male units, and – surprise, surprise – women soldiers fight back. But because of the edict banning women from direct combat, these female soldiers do not receive the same military training as their male counterparts, nor are they entitled to receive government support for combat-related trauma. The lack of recognition for women who have participated in the front lines also prohibits them from advancing in rank and achieving leadership roles. The bigwigs in the Pentagon shuffle their feet and dredge up tired old arguments – women do not have the same physical strength as men, they are more likely to be raped, they would distract their male counterparts – never realizing that the discussion over whether or not women can participate in direct combat is moot: women are already doing it. (7)

I don't mean to pin all the blame on the US military, although they must change their policies to reflect the reality of women's lives (they must also take into account the actual lives and needs of people living in the Middle East, but that is a whole different story). Israel, too, has banned its female soldiers from direct combat, despite the contributions of female fighters, snipers, and unit commanders during the War of Independence. Apparently, this edict is not meant to demean women, but rather to "maintain harmony in the ranks." Studies conducted by the Israeli government discovered that child-free women soldiers performed as well or better than their male counterparts. The problem lay with men rather than women: male soldiers often lost all control when they saw a female comrade injured or killed. (8)

At the height of both world wars, there were about one million women in the Russian army, serving as combat soldiers, fighter pilots, and snipers. The Russian military found that women made particularly excellent snipers: they excelled in dexterity, and the size differences between the sexes were rendered moot by this advanced technology. One female sniper, Lyudmila Pavlichenko, made over 3000 confirmed kills during World War II, and was named a Hero of the Soviet Union. However, despite the Soviet doctrine of complete equality between the sexes, many military

academies still refuse to admit women. Since education in a military academy is often the key to high ranking positions, this is a powerful discrimination tactic against women. (9)

In essence, the militaries of the world benefit from female soldiers – but they could never admit this, or fully reward these soldiers for their work. After all, femininity is incompatible with military skill. I think it's about time we retired this sorry argument. Female soldiers are nothing new: they have been present at every point in human history.

Archaeologists have discovered a 70,000 year old tool that points to the existence of fighting women in prehistoric times. Called the atlatl, it is essentially a long stick with a little cup on the end. The butt of a spear is placed in the cup, the body of the spear balanced along the long part of the atlatl, and then the weapon is whipped forwards, propelling the spear to speeds of up to 150 miles per hour. Archaeologists theorize its use by ancient women based on the physical requirements needed to use this weapon effectively.

The phenomenon of fighting women continues up through recorded history. The Rig-Veda, an ancient Indian scripture, tells the story of Queen Vishpla. She lost her leg in battle, so she had herself fitted with an iron prosthesis, and returned to the front. Fa Mu-Lan took her ailing father's place in the Chinese army for twelve years, fighting with extraordinary courage. Queen Mavia, leader of the Saracen army, drove the Romans out of her country. The Romans were so awed by her, that when Rome came under attack by the Goths, they requested her assistance (she is said to have helped them out by sending a contingent of her cavalry). The Trung sisters drove the Chinese army out of Vietnam after raising a people's army 80,000 strong. Women played a major role in this army: many of them were generals, and one of these, Phung Thi Chinh, was pregnant at the war. She gave birth during a battle, then picked up her newborn baby in one hand and her sword in the other, and returned to the front lines. Salaym bint Malhaud fought in the armies of Muhammad, the prophet, while she was pregnant, with knives and daggers strapped around her enormous belly. (There are a lot of stories about pregnant fighting women. Whether this is a reflection of history, or whether it is a mythic reflection of the archetype of the woman who brings death as well as life, I can't say). The indigenous peoples of Africa and the Americas, along with the martial cultures of medieval Japan and Europe, organized women's militias to defend their communities while the men were away due to work or war.

Those with an interest in US military history will not be disappointed, either. Women participated in Revolutionary War battles; one of them, Deborah Sampson, gave lectures about her experience all across

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Finding Feminism through Islam

By Raechel Doughty

There are many stereotypes aimed at Muslim women, and being feminists is definitely not among them. Imagining Muslim women as globally repressed and without autonomy ignores women whose lives are affected positively by Islam and erases the work of Muslim feminists, who fight for gender equality not *despite* their religion, but *through* it.

Just as there are innumerable schools of thought about Christianity (and feminism), Islam is not monolithic or static. Australian Muslim feminist blogger Umm Yasmin (an Arabic moniker meaning “Mother of Yasmin”) states that Islam has an underlying ethic of equality, and that the Qur’an *recognizes* but does not *condone* patriarchy, just as it recognizes but does not *condone* slavery. It is true that some use Islam to justify misogyny, but Islam is not inherently misogynistic. In recent decades, Muslim feminists (some of whom may not call themselves “feminists” – but Umm Yasmin believes that it is shown when Allah taught Adam the names of all things that names have power, and removing the name feminism takes power away from it) have reinterpreted the Qur’an as egalitarian, and see in it a call to practice social justice. In rethinking issues of gender through the frame of Islam, Muslim feminists around the world are promoting justice without condemning the religion or their culture as a whole. This approach may legitimize concerns for women’s rights in the eyes of opponents, and also acknowledges that women’s positive experiences with Islam can and do co-exist with aspirations of social justice and gender equality.

One aspect of Islam that non-Muslims might point to as inherently anti-feminist is the code of dress for women, the look of which varies depending on the place and the person. The Qur’an verse concerning hijab (modest dress) states (in one interpretation):

“And say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and protect their genitals [and] say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their genitals, draw their khimar to cover their cleavage [breasts], and not display their beauty, except that which has to appear, except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands’ fathers, their sons, their husbands’ sons, their brother or their brothers’ sons, or their sisters’ sons, or their women, or the slaves, or eunuchs or children under age...” (El Guindi)

This edict does not intend to punish women or to suppress their sexuality, but seeks a distinction between private and public. Sexuality and pleasure are celebrated in marriage, but in public, modesty is practiced to respect the body and desexualize interactions. A Western journalist investigating Muslim sexuality in Morocco, Jordan and Egypt found that many women

feel liberated by wearing a headscarf or chador (two types of hijab), stating that they felt people related to them as an individual. In Western clothes, they felt objectified, judged, and constantly measured themselves against exhausting standards of beauty. A short film made for One Nation, an organization connecting and exploring issues within the American Muslim community, features a young woman arguing with her reflection about the oppressiveness of hijab. The film suggests that hijab provides an escape from male-controlled corporate beauty standards, and even that hijab is a threat to consumerism.

In France, hijab is banned in schools, and to wear any kind of hijab risks legal repercussions. On the other hand, in Saudi Arabia, hijab for women is compulsory, and to wear a type of hijab that is considered unsatisfactory is dangerous. The feminist issue at hand is not hijab itself, but the fact that women’s dress must not be controlled by coercion and violence.

While it may subvert beauty ideals, hijab does not completely shield women from sexism. The Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights surveyed victims of sexual harassment and found that 72.5% of those polled were veiled at the time of their attack. Umm Yasmin points out that such misogyny is a violation of the *male* code of modesty that the Qur’an also requires. Her interpretation states: “Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And Allah is well acquainted with all that they do.”

As Umm Yasmin finds that there is no justification for sexism in the Qur’an, activists have turned to the Qur’an to stop the painful and dangerous practice of female genital cutting (FGC). FGC, also known as female genital mutilation and female circumcision, is practiced by Muslims and non-Muslims in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, but in most of the Muslim world, it is rare or non-existent. Still, many continue to believe FGC is necessitated by Islam. FGC involves excising part or all of the labia, the clitoral hood and/or the clitoris. Some activists are wary of outright banning, because they believe the practice will continue, only without the option of going to a medical professional, putting girls and women at even more risk. The Muslim League of Women points out that FGC is an inherently dangerous procedure (which can cause life-threatening hemorrhaging during childbirth, chronic urinary tract and other infections, infertility, psychological trauma, sexual dysfunction, menstrual problems and more), and thus having it performed in hospitals by medical professionals will not eliminate risks and is not a solution.

Ibrahim Lethome, legal advisor of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, found that Muslim university students were astonished to learn that FGC has no reli-

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Internationally Fighting Sex Trafficking

by Katie Hermance

Human beings are currently being bought and sold around the world, under the technical name of human trafficking. "Trafficking against persons is an evil, a crime, a threat to society that preys on its most vulnerable members...operators have extensive underground connections and with corrupt public officials...No single country, no single government agency, can tackle head on against trafficking." This statement comes from Cecilia Flores-Oebanda, the Founder and Director of the Visayan Forum Foundation (VFI). During an interview with HumanTrafficking.org Flores-Oebanda explains how she was introduced to, and why she became so involved with, human trafficking.

The previous quote was in response to the first case she came across of a trafficked child domestic worker. She explains that the root causes for human trafficking, particularly in the Philippines, is that it serves the overseas job market and recruiters are paid very well (HumanTrafficking.org).

Many of the victims being trafficked are women and young girls. There are promises of well paying jobs and opportunities for very impoverished and vulnerable families. After a recruiter finds a desperate family and obtains a victim the recruiter gives the family as little as twenty dollars and the victim is now indebted to him.

Flores-Oebanda says that victims are pushed by "poverty, unemployment, lack of educational alternatives, peer influence, social expectations and armed conflict...Many believe in making family sacrifices" (HumanTrafficking.org). Also, women and girls are more vulnerable than boys because often they are seen as just another mouth to feed, while boys can be used for more strenuous work and carry on the lineage of the family.

Cecilia Flores-Oebanda has founded the Visayan Forum Foundation which combats trafficking by working with police, the Coast Guard, and Shipping Companies in order to infiltrate popular transit points for trafficking victims. VFI also operates numerous halfway houses where victims of sex and labor trafficking can work on recovering. These shelters are only temporary and provide spiritual, physical and mental support to their occupants. Flores-Oebanda calls these halfway houses the "nerve centers" for education and advocacy against trafficking.

An Anti-Trafficking Task Force helps to enforce laws, detect traffickers and protect victims of trafficking. VFI is also creating television infomercials in order to warn families about the dangers of these recruiting predators. Flores-Oebanda notes that the only way to win the war against sex trafficking is through prevention and education. The more people

know about sex trafficking, the less likely they are to be conned by the predators of sex trafficking. Cecilia Flores-Oebanda is the Phillipine and Southeast Asia Coordinator for Global March Against Child Labor and the current Chairperson of Child Workers in Asia.

Flores-Oebanda is not the only woman who has taken an initiative in order to stop the sex trafficking industry. An organization called Equality Now has also stepped up in order to fight. In June of 2008 the organization addressed the UN General Assembly and announced their global campaign for the government of India to fight against sex trafficking by criminalizing buyers of prostitution services (Anantnarayan).

Eighty percent of trafficking victims are women and children and most trafficking is sex trafficking. Many times, victims of sex trafficking are minorities from poor countries. Sex trafficking is a multi-billion dollar industry, and Equality Now believes that if the demand for sex trafficking stopped, then the industry itself would disintegrate (Anantnarayan).

The United States is described as being mainly a transit point for sex trafficking. A transit point is where women and children are brought from one country and handed off to people from another. On average about 16,000 people are annually trafficked to the United States although thousands of sex trafficking victims are kept within the States. In July 2008 an article was written in the New York Times questioning the Bush administration regarding to sex trafficking within the United States. John R. Miller noted that President Bush (President at the time) "denounced the sex trafficking of women and girls around the world. A little more than two years later, he signed into law a bill that included a broad array of measures to reduce the domestic demand for sex trafficking."

Yet, in 2006 the Justice Department started a campaign to fight against a bill that Miller was proposing which would strengthen the government's anti-human trafficking efforts. The State Department did not want to be required to give names of possible traffickers because of other alliances and partnerships they may have in regards to American profit. While Miller's proposal would have made it much easier to prosecute pimps, who many times control the trafficking victims through both physical and mental abuse, the Justice Department strongly opposed it.

Miller states that there is a strong clash among groups. For example, those wanting to help sex-trafficking survivors (feminists, religious and secular groups) are fighting against the Justice Departments' "lawyers (mostly men), the Erotic Service Providers Union and the American Civil Liberties Union whom believe that most women engage in prostitution as a career choice not because they have been forced," (Miller). The main divide here is that one side sees prostitution as a freely chosen career and the exercise of female autonomy while the other side asserts that many women arrested for prostitution are actually sex-slaves forced to sell their

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Rape in Italy

By Lauren Palana

The first week of my semester abroad in Rome was devoted to cultural orientation to acclimatize American students to the differences inherent in living in a foreign country. One of the most stressed differences was that rape is not handled in Italy the same way it is in the United States, mainly that inviting a man into your home is considered consent for anything that happens afterwards. Rape in Italy has been an object of contention for decades. Unfortunately, in practice, the rape law hasn't changed much since it was first created by Benito Mussolini despite the drastic amount of change and the broad scope of the Italian feminist movement.

The Italian feminist movement was one of the few political forces that managed to cross party lines in the First Republic following the fall of fascism. In a relatively short amount of time, women went from being legally subordinate to their husbands and confined to the home and child-rearing (Everhart) to having the right to equal pay and access to jobs, legalized divorce and abortion, and Mussolini's law making it a crime for women (but not men) to commit adultery was repealed (Hellerman 51-52). The rape law, however, somehow managed to survive the hey day of the Italian feminist movement virtually unscathed. This law, credited to Benito Mussolini, defines rape as a crime against public morality, makes a distinction in punishment for penetration and other violent sexual acts, and defines statutory rape for women under fourteen or the mentally handicapped (Everhart). New laws that would change the definition of rape from a crime against the public to a crime against a person and place stricter penalties for rape were presented in 1979 and 1987, but failed in Parliament. It wasn't until 1996 that Mussolini's law was modernized and rape became a violent crime against the victim (Everhart).

The 1996 law placed rape and other violent sexual crimes at an equal level, acknowledging that acts like molestation were equally as damaging, raised the minimum jail time to five years (but retained the maximum of ten), required automatic prosecution of people accused of rape, and legalized sex between consenting minors (Everhart). The bill presented to Parliament also contained legislation defining marital rape, an issue that had been excluded from Mussolini's rape law and was meant to further equalize the roles of men and women in a marriage. The Catholic Church opposed this, saying that marriage was an institution that was outside the jurisdiction of Italian law (Guarino). The Church also disagreed with legalizing sex between consenting minors, preferring that it remain a crime. Fortunately, the power of the

Church in Italian politics had waned and this legislation passed, and subsequent attempts to make divorce and abortion illegal again have failed.

As the saying goes: things in Italy may look beautiful but never work. In 1999, the Italian Supreme Court overturned the conviction of a man accused of raping a woman because "It is common knowledge that it is nearly impossible to even partially remove the jeans from a person without their cooperation..." (Time International). This ruling cause outrage among women around the world and women in Italy led by Alessandra Mussolini, the granddaughter of Benito, wore jeans in solidarity. In 2006, the Supreme Court also reduced the sentence of a man convicted of sexually assaulting his fourteen year old stepdaughter because the girl was not a virgin at the time so it was thought her assault would be less psychologically damaging (Ms. Magazine). More recently, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi caused an uproar when he claimed rape would be an issue until "[there] are as many soldiers on the streets as there are pretty girls" (Totaro). Berlusconi, who is not known for being sensitive towards feminist issues (during his campaign he suggested that the solution for poor single mothers was that they marry millionaires), later claimed that his remarks were meant as a "compliment to pretty Italian girls, of which there are millions" (Totaro). Clearly, feminists in Italy have a long way to go before rape is recognized as the serious crime that it is and prosecuted fairly.

"...inviting a man into your home is considered consent for anything that happens afterwards."

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Parting Words from our Graduating Seniors

Vanessa M. Andrukonis

Vanessa M. Andrukonis is a Sociology major with minors in Women's Studies, Social Work and Anthropology. She is from Granby, MA. She says that within her first year of college, she was aware of the WMST program at MCLA and was interested. She had even considered transferring to a school where the major was available. WMST was the first of three minors she ended up declaring. Her first WMST course was Intro to WMST; shortly after that class she declared her minor.



She is currently employed as an Outreach and Tracking Caseworker with The Key Program and will go full-time in June 2009. She is also in the application process with the Peace Corps. Her nominated date, project and location are March 2010, Youth Development in Eastern Europe. She will stay with The Key Program in Berkshire County until then.

If someone was planning to pursue a WMST minor Vanessa mentions that she usually informs an undecided student about the courses that she took with the WMST minor, as well as the classes that apply to the minor. She likes to share what she's enjoyed about the minor, which includes the variety of courses available, as well as its interdisciplinary nature "Because the minor is fulfilled by various departments and courses, it keeps the course content interesting and is informative/educational on various levels," she adds.

The most important thing (piece of information, idea, experience) she will take from her WMST classes as she graduates, she informs us, is that overall, "I value the different areas of WMST that I've learned about through the minor." She learned about women's history, present and future. She plans to continue her own WMST research to achieve a more developed understanding of the topic, and to also, perhaps, contribute to the field someday. Also, through the WMST minor, she's learned about other disadvantaged minorities and the social implications that limit them. "Being more aware of, and educated about, the non-dominant peoples in our society makes me a more rounded individual, both personally and professionally."

Tania Goodermote

Tania Goodermote is a Sociology major from North Adams. She learned about the WMST minor through her mother-in-law, Cindi Spencer, who graduated with it. Tania also felt like it would increase her knowledge. After graduation her plan is to "GET A JOB. In these hard times I am finding it is very hard to do this one task."

If anyone seemed interested about the WMST minor Tania would advise them to just do it. She thinks that the classes are fun and you learn something about yourself as a female or male. She adds that, "The classes allowed me to see what women go through and how we adjust our lives everyday just to be safe."

The most important thing that Tania took from her WMST classes was that, "You do not have to agree with everything in the feminist movement. As long as you agree with women's rights to live free and safe with no restrictions, then I feel you can call yourself a feminist."

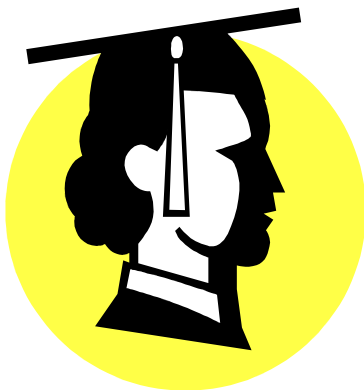
"Thank you to all my WMST teachers," she adds. "You have encouraged me to believe in myself and allowed me to lift my head a little higher in life. I will treasure my time in your classes and hope someday when I am able to use the skills you taught me, I can say that I did them well because of you."

Parting Words from our Graduating Seniors

Katheleen Hermance

Katheleen Hermance (from Granville, NY) is an English major with a concentration in Literature and Creative Writing. She heard about the WMST minor at the Women's Center, where she has been working for the past four years. She says, "As soon as I entered the Women's Center during my introduction with Dr. Sue Birns I was told about the WMST minor. I always knew that I wanted to minor in Women's Studies but the problem was finding the time to take extra classes in conjunction with all of my other classes. Dr. Sue Birns is a great persuader, in the best possible way."

After graduation she is attending graduate school. Her goal is to attain her MA in Literature and her certification to teach, most likely at the College of Saint Rose in Albany, NY or Fitchburg State College in MA. She notes that when she does begin teacher she will "definitely be teaching women's studies in my literature classes."



If Katie was trying to encourage someone to go for the WMST minor she would tell them that, "The WMST minor is perhaps the best minor to get. Not only will you be learning about the things that affect you personally, man or woman, but it lets you take diverse classes that you never would have imagined you would take." Through her Culture and the Body class with Dr. Sumi Culligan, she ended up going to Hawai'i with Professor Culligan's Travel Course. Katie adds that, "WMST helps to bring so many voices that have been silenced to the forefront and I can not think of a better reason to take this minor than to have the opportunity to listen to the women who fought to give me the chance to even be at college!"

The most important thing that she has taken from her WMST classes is, "Chances are you're a feminist, if you believe in equal rights and equal opportunity; if you think that it is appalling that every year women have to wait an extra four months in order to catch up to the dollar amount that men made last year; if you care about injustice and want to end the innumerable kinds of hatred and intolerance around the world. If you believe any or all of these statements, chances are you are a feminist and you just don't know it."

Katie also says that the first time she met Dr. Susan Birns she told her that she was a feminist. "I wasn't exactly sure what my feminist philosophy was or why just claiming to be a feminist scared so many of my friends (female and male). But I am one-hundred percent, to the moon and back a feminist. I don't know of another single person from my home town, where there are more farm animals than people, who would proclaim to be a feminist. But I know they are there. And if I end up teaching there, I can assure you that when the next generation goes off to college, there will be plenty of men and women declaring that they too are feminists."

Parting Words from our Graduating Seniors

Lindsay Karlsberg-Gerstein

Lindsay Karlsberg-Gerstein is an English Major with a concentration in Creative Writing, from Clifton Park, NY. She heard about the WMST minor when she was retaking Introduction to Women's Studies last year. "I took it freshman year and since I was not a very good student back then, I did not do so well in the class, but this time I just loved every minute of it!" Lindsay took it with Amy Stevens and Stevens was so passionate about the topic that it made Lindsay want to be passionate about it as well. Stevens brought a pamphlet to class about the Women's Center and becoming a Women's Studies minor and Lindsay picked it up and looked through it. "I thought it would be really hard to have a minor, but after looking through the classes that I would need to become a Women's Studies minor, I realized that the classes looked more like fun than like a lot of work. Don't get me wrong, there is a lot of work involved, but it's fun work!"



After graduation, Lindsay is going to be doing the Disney College Program in Florida from August 10th- January 2nd. "I am very excited about that! After that, I'm planning on going to graduate school to get my Masters in Speech Pathology." Although, she is not sure if she wants to work with older or younger people yet, she is sure that she'll figure it out once she's in school.

Lindsay notes that she would encourage someone to get a WMST minor because they will learn a lot and have fun at the same time. "I would tell them that you don't just take classes on feminism (not that that would be a bad thing, but it could scare some people off), but you take all kinds of classes. I've taken a Business class, Sociology classes, a Social Work class, and Women's Studies classes." Lindsay adds that the things a person learns in these classes can be applied everywhere, so the WMST minor is one that would be beneficial to everyone! "Also, you get to hear about cool things like Bitches, Bimbos and Ballbreakers and then you can be a part of something great!"

The most important thing Lindsay says that she will take from her WMST classes is that "you will most likely learn about computer stuff as well as Women's Studies stuff [in a class with Amy Stevens]. I learned quite a bit about myself while becoming a Women's Studies minor, and I'm really happy about that! I've learned that I'm a feminist!"

"I wasn't going to take a minor because I thought it was going to be too much work, but I'm so happy that I changed my mind! Yes, there is a lot of work involved, but I've enjoyed it. My best semesters here (grade wise and overall) have been since I started taking Women's Studies classes (with the exception of freshman year... oops)."

Erin Kunigel

Erin Kunigel is from Rotterdam, NY and is a Sociology major. She heard about the WMST minor from her advisor and other professors.

After graduation she plans on going back home and working at a summer camp for the summer, then applying to the Department of Social Services and the Department of Children and Families in Schenectady County.

If someone asked her for advice about whether to do the WMST minor or not, she would tell them to seriously think about adding it because it is a great minor and everyone learns so much.

The most important thing Erin will take from her WMST classes as she gets ready to graduate is the information she has learned. "You can take it with you and really apply it to real life situations and also you would not learn these ideas and topics in any other department on campus."

Gender Wars: Female Soldiers Through History, continued

the colonies. At least 400 women disguised themselves as male soldiers to fight in the Civil War, serving on both the Union and Confederate sides. Some of them achieved the rank of officer.

Empowering? Certainly. It's hard to think of yourself as inferior and fragile when you are lopping off heads with the best of them. This, of course, made female fighters a threat to the patriarchal order of things, and one of the best proofs we have for the wide-ranging existence of female soldiers is the vast array of laws enacted against their existence. Women were legally forbidden from serving in many organized armies throughout history, so those who disguised themselves as men risked not only a soldier's death, but discovery, disgrace, and even execution by their own side.

Female soldiers were also put down in more insidious ways. They are, after all, a serious blow to the underlying ideologies of gender, and they must be dealt with accordingly. Greek myths are filled with Amazons: it seems the Greeks were quite obsessed with strong, athletic women, but they were always defeated by male heroes, like Hercules, Achilles, and Hippomenes.

Indeed, the defeats of women warriors seem to be more popular than their victories. Everyone knows about the defeat of Cleopatra's armies by the future emperor Caesar Augustus, but who has heard of Tomyris, who defeated the Persian army and killed Cyrus the Great himself?

The defeats of female soldiers and leaders are not due to "feminine weakness," but rather to the fact that the situation must be really bad before women are allowed to become war leaders. Boudica, a Celtic queen who led a revolt against the Romans in 60 AD, is a good example of this. Roman troops had beaten her, raped her daughters, and taken away her right to autonomous rule, so she organized a

massive army that destroyed the two major Roman settlements in Britain and wiped out an entire Roman legion. She lost the final battle for the same reason other Celtic war leaders lost to the Romans: the traditional haphazard Celtic method of fighting was easily turned back by the Roman forces' solid discipline and almost limitless resources. (2)

Like Boudica, most female warriors in history do not fight for particularly feminist causes. Rather, they move onto the battlefield when their entire culture and way of life is threatened. The rape of her daughters was one of Boudica's reasons for leading her rebellion, but this may have been because this act threatened her daughters' sovereignty. The quality of being female is a liability in the arena of war, often for ideological reasons rather than physical, and the womanhood of many female fighters has to be played down, the women themselves seen as honorary men. "I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king!" Queen Elizabeth said to her troops on the eve of their decisive confrontation with the Spanish forces (10). A folk song sung about the Rani of Jhansi, an Indian queen who led a rebellion against the British Raj, goes like this: "How well like a man fought the Rani of Jhansi, how valiantly and well!" (11). People throughout the ages have deliberately tried to make these heroines seem unrepresentative of women in general.

Still, however inspiring we may find the warrior, we still have difficulty facing up to the reality of the war. You may have enjoyed my descriptions of these historical warriors, but I am sure your hackles bristled when I spoke of the Iraq war at the beginning of this article. The past century has seen unparalleled amounts of bloodshed and savagery, and it has stained all of us.

Indeed, there are as many women who oppose war as there are women who participate in it. Many early feminists, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, believed that war was a moral failing stemming from patriarchy and an overemphasis on traditionally masculine values. Gilman's utopian novel, *Herland*, describes a perfect, all-female society that does not suffer war, because they have bred out all masculine traits. The second-wave feminist movement was closely allied with the anti-war movement, and even today, many feminists identify as pacifists. This feminist opposition to war stems from the suffering as women and children become "collateral damage," killed thoughtlessly by enemy forces, or raped to emphasize the defeat of their communities. Indeed, rape is absolutely epidemic during times of war, when the infrastructure breaks down and atrocities abound. It is no real surprise that women would rise up as warriors.

Many feminists are pacifists, but many feminists are soldiers, too, and many, many more seek inspiration from the warrior women of the past, of whom I have named only a very, very few in this article.



Lyudmila Pavlichenko, famed Russian WWII Sniper

Finding Feminism Through Islam, continued

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gious basis, and has since focused on the teachings of Islam to stop FGC. The Muslim League of Women states that FGC pre-dates Islam itself, and that FGC violates the basic tenants of Islam, which guarantees the integrity of the body and soul. They applaud the many doctors, scholars and activists worldwide that use Islam to dismantle this harmful practice.

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Sex Trafficking, continued

bodies in order to pay their abusive pimps/recruiters/kidnappers.

In April 2008 a memorandum of understanding was signed promising to combat human trafficking in various Asian regions, including Myanmar, China and Cambodia (humantrafficking.org). Many more situations like these are popping up around the world in the fight against sex trafficking. Women like Flores-Oebanda, who have not given up the fight, have made great impact in many ways.

Rinat Davidovich is another woman who has done inspiring things for survivors of human trafficking. She is the director of one of the Maagan shelters in Israel which works to get survivors work visas and also helps to rehabilitate them (IRIN). Although the survivors pledge to never again work as prostitutes, many times once they are on their own back with their families the same traffickers will return demanding the rest of their money. Therefore, the women are many times forced back into the sex trafficking industry fearing that their families will be harmed if they do not comply.

Sex trafficking is the largest form of slavery in the United States and the world has a long fight ahead of it if human trafficking is ever to be defeated. The main

problem in fighting trafficking in many people's view is the demand for it, and that it is a multi-million dollar industry. Yet, women and men from around the world are finding different ways to fight this threat to society. Through journalism, legislation, education and rehabilitation small steps are being made. These small steps are crucial ones and what comes indirectly from them is the voice of millions declaring that silence is not an option when it comes to protecting the women and children of the world who are so often silenced with violence.

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Susan B. Anthony Women's Center

Year in Review 2008 - 2009

Clothesline Project
in the Fall Foliage Parade

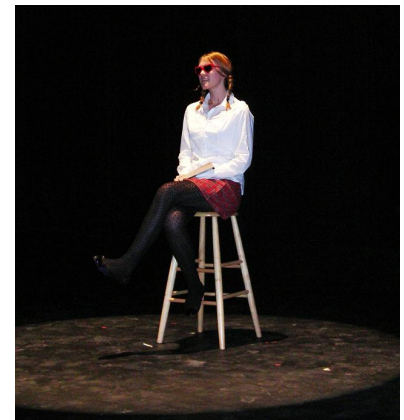


Domestic Violence Awareness
Month Display



StereoTalk II:
What is Gender?

Women's History Month Display



Bitches, Bimbos and Ballbreakers:
A Theatrical Production Based on the
Guerrilla Girls' Illustrated Guide to Fe-
male Stereotypes

Seventh Annual Women's Studies Dinner
Celebrating 15 Years of the Women's
Center and 20 Years of Women's Studies
at MCLA

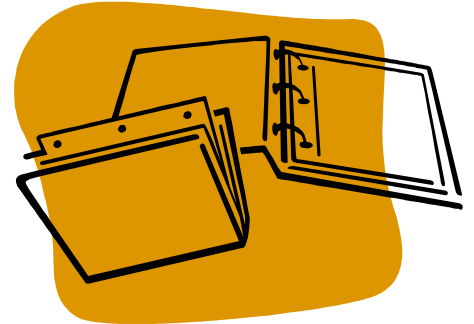


Cell Phone Collection for Battered
Women

Susan B. Anthony Women's Center

Year in Review 2008 - 2009

School Supply Collection for the Helen
Berube Teen Parent Program



Four Special Topics
Newsletters

CO-SPONSORED EVENTS:

Tom Digby:
Feminism Needs Men,
Men Need Feminism



An Evening with
Abena Koomson



National Girls and Women
in Sports Day

Jennifer Miller
of Circus Amok



BE ONE WOMAN'S HERO



Donate Your Used Cell Phone!

Each year we collect used cell phones and chargers to be donated to women who are survivors of domestic violence. They are sent to an organization that reprograms the phones and distributes them to women to be used as a life line in the case of an emergency.

We're collecting them at the Women's Center(CC322) until Commencement.

Contact Us: x5497, womenscenter@mcla.edu, or Campus Center Room 322

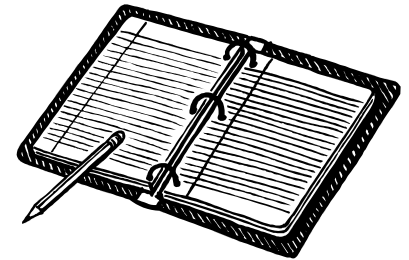
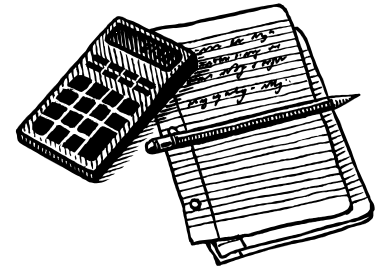


WAIT!

Don't trash your school supplies!

Donate them to someone in need!

The Susan B. Anthony Women's Center is accepting slightly used and new supplies. We're seeking notebooks, folders, pens, pencils, loose-leaf paper, binders, etc.



There will be collection boxes at the front desk of each resident area, or you can bring donations right to the Women's Center, Room 322 on the third floor of the Campus Center up until Commencement!

Questions? Contact us at womenscenter@mcla.edu or x5497.

Mail to:

Susan B. Anthony Women's Center
 Campus Center Room #322
 MCIA
 North Adams, MA 01247
 Phone: 413-662-5497
 E-mail: womenscenter@mcla.edu

The Susan B. Anthony Women's Center is now on Facebook!



Susan B Anthony Women's Center

Wall Info Photos Discussions Notes +

Add our page to stay up to date on events, newsletters, volunteer and employment opportunities; check our hours with ease; check out our favorite links and pictures; and more!

Have a marvelous summer!