

Gender M@tters Bi-monthly

Department of Gender Studies Bi-monthly Newsletter

Vol. 1, No. 1, December 19, 2008

Publications

- **Maria Bucur's** article "An Archipelago of Stories. Gender History in Eastern Europe," has just appeared as a part of the forum *Revisiting "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,"* in the December 2008 issue of the *American Historical Review*.
- **Lessie Frazier** received a contract on her book that is co-edited with Deborah Cohen, *Gender and Sexuality in 1968: Transformative Politics in the Cultural Imagination* Palgrave Press (forthcoming Fall 2009).
- Published in November by Ohio University Press' New African Histories Series is **Marissa Moorman's** book *Intonations: a Social History of Music and Nation in Luanda, Angola, 1945 to Recent Times*.
- Recently published in the e-journal "Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies" was **Jeanne Peterson's** article, "Precocious Puberty in the Victorian Medical Gaze". The article can be found at: <http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue42/issue42.htm> and is a revised and extended version of a talk she gave at the Gender Studies workshop some time ago.

Awards

- Two students from the Gender Studies department were elected to Phi Beta Kappa and attended the Phi Beta Kappa Initiation Banquet on December 9th. **Rebecca Lee Edmonds**, (Gender Studies/Political Science) and **Julie Ann Gillaspay** (Gender Studies)
- The recipients of The Kinsey Institute Student Research Grant Awards, 2008-2009 were announced on December 1st. They received over 40 highly competitive submissions from universities and programs across the country. All applications were reviewed by an interdisciplinary panel of sexuality researchers. **Brandon Hill's** proposal "The Face of Gender: Sexual Dimorphism, Facial Features and Transsexual Passability" is one of six that was selected for the grant. The abstracts of the awardees' projects are online at http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/research/student_grants.html

Conference Presentations

- **Lessie Frazier**, along with Deborah Cohen, presented at two conferences:
 - “More than mojo: gender, education, and the racialized erotics of ‘68” 1968: A Global Year of Student Driven Change Conference, Black Studies, University of California Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara, California) November 2008.
 - “Love-in, Love-out: 1968 Latin American genders, sex, and sexualities in comparative perspective” 1968 in Latin America: Events, Impacts, Legacies Symposium, CLACS, Indiana University (Bloomington, Indiana) November 2008.

Talks

- On Wednesday, December 3, Gender Studies faculty led a same-sex marriage discussion regarding the impact of the 2008 elections on same-sex marriage and the queer community. Faculty that participated were: **Maria Bucur, Marlon Bailey, Sara Friedman, and Mary Gray**. See the extended report below.

Announcements

- The Department of Gender Studies office will be closed for the holiday season beginning on Monday December 22, 2008 and will reopen on Monday January 5, 2009. Memorial Hall will also be closed during this time. If you do need to get into the building during this time please use your 1E-ENT key to gain entrance.
- Articles for the next Gender M@tters Bi-Monthly are due in the office by Friday, **January 16, 2009**. You can e-mail them to Nina Taylor at njtaylor@indiana.edu.

Report

Gender Studies Faculty Lead Same-Sex Marriage Discussion

Last Wednesday, December 3, several members of the Indiana University faculty gathered with a mixed audience of students, university staff, and community members to discuss the impact of the 2008 elections on same-sex marriage and the queer community. Conversation circled around California’s Proposition 8, which defines marriage as solely between one man and one woman, effectively overturning the gay and lesbian marriages that had been performed since June of this year. IU Gender Studies faculty took the lead in the panel, with the organizing and moderating being done by our own interim department chair, **Maria Bucur** (History and Gender Studies). Joining Professor Bucur were **Marlon Bailey** (Gender Studies and AAADS), **Sara Friedman** (Anthropology and Gender Studies), **Mary Gray** (Communication & Culture and Gender Studies Affiliate), and **Zakary Szymanski** (Journalism). To start the conversation, panel members shared insight and analysis on the topic from their field of expertise.

Sara Friedman led off with a historical overview of the legal victories and milestone court cases in various US states in the past 10 years. She identified two strategies used by LGBT legal challengers; a civil rights approach, in which anti-gay measures were challenged using the 14th Amendment's promise of equal protection under the law, and a privacy approach, in which the protection of individual freedom from state interference in private life is used to challenge governmental regulation of the private.

Mary Gray discussed the need to expand the conversation about the implications of same-sex marriage beyond the lesbian and gay community. She cited examples in rural areas, including Kentucky, where non-queer voters turned down a same-sex marriage initiative on the basis of it extending rights to a privileged few that weren't being extended to unmarried persons. She also reminded our audience of the importance of rural and other non-urban communities in this national debate, and the problematic clustering of funding and resources in major urban areas.

Marlon Bailey focused on the impact of race both in the recent Prop 8 protests and backlash, as well as the larger debate on same-sex marriage. Dr. Bailey outlined the ways in which the history of labeling the African-American family as deviant and dysfunctional creates problems when trying to mobilize support for alternative concepts of family. He also discussed the reaction of the black queer community in San Francisco to Prop 8 and Prop 8 protests, the lack of outreach being done in African-American and black queer communities, and ways in which the black community has been blamed for the bill's passing.

Zakary Szymanski brought his journalistic experience covering same-sex marriage issues to the conversation. He pointed out the ways in which media representation influenced the debate and the failure of gay rights organizations to learn from previous failed campaigns. He also discussed how alternatively-structured families and trans families in particular, often end up both excluded from and even hurt by same-sex marriage campaigns.

Responses and questions from the audience varied. Some reminded the panel of the frustration and difficulty caused by unequal inheritance and taxation laws for same-sex couples. Others found the focus of the national homosexual rights advocacy non-profit groups on same-sex marriage problematic, especially when other issues, including discrimination protection and basic civil liberties are still not in place for all people. And some questioned the very concept of homosexual identity as a relevant concept for dealing with queer communities and behaviors in non-Western or non-white communities.

One community activist shared a message from Indiana Hoosiers for Equality and encouraged audience members to sign a petition asking state lawmakers to support civil liberties protections for LGBT persons here in Indiana.

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Given the groundswell of grassroots political involvement and the national revival of interest in politics resulting from the 2008 presidential elections, this is a critical time to continue engaging in political activism and discussion around the issues that affect us most. Two main themes stood out in this participant's view as lessons learned from the discussion.

First, that same-sex marriage debates are about much more than marriage, or even a specific set of legal and fiscal regulations. The discussion involves everything from religion, financial

protection, custody and immigration law, health care, to concepts of civil rights and the American dream. Woven throughout these conversations, however, are inequalities of race and class that have not been adequately addressed by either academic or activist positions. Race and class disparity show up most clearly in the larger campaign's failures to create coalition and broaden the debate beyond marriage into conversations about universal health care, decoupling tax code from marital status, and changing concepts of what makes a healthy family.

Second, and in a related vein, this issue serves as an opportunity for the queer community to reassess our priorities and strategies 25 years post-Stonewall. While certainly same-sex marriage is an important step and goal for activist work, we must be sure not to push to the side lobbying, activism, protest, and outreach work that works with and on issues affecting queer youth, elderly, families, homeless persons, protection from sexuality and gender discrimination, safe sex education, and all the other issues that affect our families and communities. Millions of dollars have flooded into the Human Rights Campaign's coffers to support efforts to bring same-sex marriage; how much change could we effect if the same amount of effort was put behind all the other worthy projects on the queer community agenda?

Many thanks to Dr Bucur for her efforts in organizing this event and to the panelists for sharing their time and insight. Gender Studies encourages you to come join us in the spring for a "where are we now?" follow-up event!

Extended Report submitted by Katie Schweighofer