

Holding up Half the Sky

By Alison Bailey

Wearing a black cashmere mock dress from the Ralph Lauren collection, Angelina Jolie was seen leaving the Pacific Design Center's *Half the Sky* book party last month. The 34-year-old actress has said of the book, "For female readers it gives a new sense of what it is to be a woman. For husbands, sons and fathers, it will infuriate and astound you. You will not want to put it down."¹ Bill Gates, Sr. calls the book "a stunning read."²

Is it possible that global gender injustice has become the nouvelle cause of our century? Pinch me if I'm dreaming, but I keep coming across news stories in the mainstream press that speak about gender injustice as a matter of fact, just as feminists have done for centuries. Are Americans finally "getting it" that gender oppression is real, and more importantly, that solutions exist?

The recently released book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (Knopf), by Pulitzer Prize winners Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, is making an impact.

The book makes two main arguments: first, that gender inequality is the greatest moral challenge of our time. According to WuDunn, "In the 19th century the paramount moral challenge was slavery. In the 20th century it was totalitarianism. Now, it is the brutality that is inflicted on so many people, in so many countries because of their gender."³ Women and girls continue to

be trafficked and forced to work in brothels without pay. Many die in childbirth or suffer from postnatal maladies because they have no access to hospitals. In many parts of the world, families feed, educate, clothe, and offer medical treatment to sons before daughters. Economist Amartya Sen coined the term "missing women" in 1990 to make visible the ways these practices have been responsible for the deaths of 100 million women.⁴ Follow-up studies place the number between 60 and 107 million.

The second major argument holds that solutions exist: it's not that we don't know how to educate girls in Somalia, get medical services to rural women in India, or pay Thai women a living wage. It's simply that women in so-called "developing countries" are undervalued, and neither donor nations nor their own governments see them as worth the investment. We know that providing women and girls access to health resources and to educational and economic opportunities are among the best ways to fight poverty and extremism. We have ample evidence that aid directed at women raises community well being.

Half the Sky is filled with women's stories about how microloans helped them overcome poverty and abuse. How a simple obstetric fistula operation saved them from a life of shame and begging. How women escaped from brothels to become bookbinders and, in turn, put their sisters through school. Feminists and human rights activists have heard these stories for decades, but now the broader public is listening to the message that women are not the problem, they are the (*cont'd*)

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solution. Today even the World Bank, U.S. Military Joint Chiefs of Staff, and aid organizations like CARE have awakened to a powerful truth: the most effective way to fight extremism, poverty, and violence is to invest in women. FYI, under the leadership of Hillary Clinton, the U.S. State Department has established a new Office on Global Women's Issues.

Half the Sky is without a doubt one of the most important books on the gendered dimensions of human rights issues to come along in a while. Most people outside of women's studies classrooms aren't exposed to this information, but perhaps now these issues will catch more media attention.

However, readers need to embrace the authors' call to arms critically. I have two main concerns. First, it's easy for Westerners to "get it" about gender injustice when it's happening to women halfway across the globe. The response of the privileged is often to want to save all "those poor women in the third world." Western feminists have a track record of constructing third world women as culturally oppressed and in need of rescuing.⁵ One thing I like about *Half the Sky* is that it understands third world women as political agents: women who are simultaneously oppressed and resistant, who learn to negotiate and navigate oppressive structures to yield the best outcomes their circumstances offer.

Next, many of us (celebrities included), need to turn the gender injustice lens back on the U.S. and ask parallel questions about women's access to health care, education, and jobs in the United States. We need to take our cues and learn from the voices of the women whose stories are so beautifully rendered in this book. Meanwhile, take a look at some of the organizations that helped to make these women's life stories so extraordinary by visiting *Half the Sky* at <http://www.halftheskymovement.org/get-involved>.

1. "Have You Heard: Book Party." <http://www.haveuheard.net/angelina-jolie-attends-half-the-sky-book-party/> (accessed December 3, 2009).
2. Bill Gates, Sr. "Half the Sky" HuffPost Review. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-gates-senior/huffpost-review-ihalf-the_b_286227.html (accessed December 4, 2009).
3. Global Health TV News Interview with Sheryl WuDunn. <http://www.globalhealthtv.com/news/> (accessed December 3, 2009).
4. Amartya Sen, "More Than 100 Million Women Are Missing" *New York Review of Books* 37:20, 1990. (December 20). <http://ucAtlas.ucsc.edu/gender/Sen100M.html> (accessed December 3, 2009).
5. For example, Victorian feminists in Britain deployed images of Indian prostitutes, and Indian women in general,

that were in keeping with the orientalist views needed for empire building: Indian women were backward, helpless, and subject to so-called "barbarian traditions." Currently the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) positions "third world prostitutes" as "injured bodies"—helpless victims in need of rescue.☼

Questioning Project Red

At the International Seminar Series on October 28, Dr. Teresa Barnes critiqued the way Project Red addresses the African AIDS epidemic. This philanthropic organization licenses its brand to other companies that donate part of their Project Red profits to buy medicine to treat AIDS.

Barnes, associate professor of History and Gender and Women's Studies at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, argues that while the program delivers medicine to people who need it, this model ensures that more money goes to promoting products "for the cure" and to pharmaceutical companies than it does to healthcare organizations. Further, Barnes points out that the program does nothing to address the structural problems underlying the spread of AIDS, particularly gender inequality. As long as young people don't respect themselves, their sex partners, and their bodies, Barnes points out, medicine alone will not stop the spread of AIDS.☼



AAUW Forum Features Women Authors

WGS affiliated faculty member Dr. Amy Louise Wood (History) and Dr. Duriel Harris (English) presented their recently published books at the fourth annual Women Book Authors Forum at Barnes & Noble on October 21. The event was sponsored by the Bloomington-Normal branch of the American Association of University Women. Dr. Harris read from *Drag* (Elixir Press) and

Amnesiac: Poems (Sheep Meadow Press) and Dr. Wood read from *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1950* (University of North Carolina Press). A Q & A session and book signing followed. (Cont'd)



The authors' books share complementary themes of race, gender, identity, and culture. "Particularly striking to the audience," said Grace Johns, assistant to the chair of the Department of Physics, "were Dr. Harris's transformative performances of 'Enduring Freedom' and other poems as well as Dr. Wood's chilling portrayal of lynching as a spectacle in American history."☀

Faculty Accomplishments

Alison Bailey presented "Reconceiving Surrogacy: How Should Western Feminists Think about the Globalization of Commercial Gestational Surrogacy?" at the Feminist Legacies/Feminist Future: Hypatia 25th Anniversary Conference in Seattle, WA, October 22-24.

Cynthia Edmonds-Cady published "Mobilizing Motherhood: Race, Class, and the Uses of Maternalism in the Welfare Rights Movement" in *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 37(3&4). She also presented "Situating Privilege and Oppression in the Classroom: Emotional Resistance, Acceptance, and Action" at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in San Antonio, TX, November 8; and presented "Race, Class, and the Rights to Motherhood in the Southern United States 1939-1950" at the annual conference of the Social Science History Association (SSHA) in San Diego, CA, November 13.

Elisabeth Friedman presented "The Archive and the Afterimage: Shimon Attie's 'The Writing on the Wall'" at the Feeling Photography Conference in Toronto, Canada, October 16.

Krishna Manavelli wrote "Gods and Goddesses of Shivapura," a translation of Chandrashekhar Kambar's "Shivapurada Deva-Deviyaru," which was published in *The Inner Mirror: Translations of Kannada Writings on Society and Culture* (New Dehli: The Book Review Press).

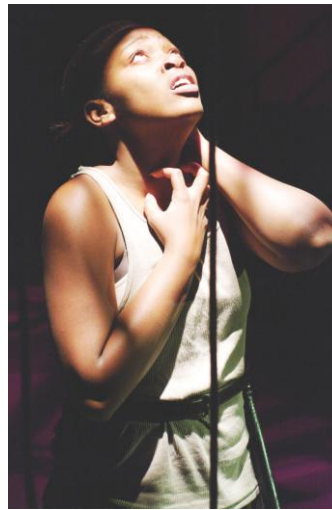
John Poole was invited to join the National Theatre Conference.

Ali Riaz presented "A Difficult Decision? Parental Choice of Qwami Madraahs in Bangladesh," at the Conference on Ideas and Innovations for the Development of Bangladesh: The Next Decade at Harvard University; and "Bangladesh Election 2008: The Results and the Implications" at the 38th Annual Conference on South Asia in Madison, WI, October 22-25. He also wrote "NGOs, Empowerment and Social Capital: Lessons from BRAC and the Grameen Bank in Farida Khan" in *Recreating the Commons? NGOs in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press Limited).

Susan Sprecher co-authored "Prototype Analysis of the Concept of Compassionate Love," with Beverley Fehr, published in *Personal Relationships*, Vol. 16(3).

Maura Toro-Morn presented "Fighting Windmills in the Heartland: Latino Studies in the Transnational Era" at the IUPLR Biennial Siglo XXI: The State of Latino Studies Conference at the University of Illinois-Chicago, Chicago, IL, September 24.☀

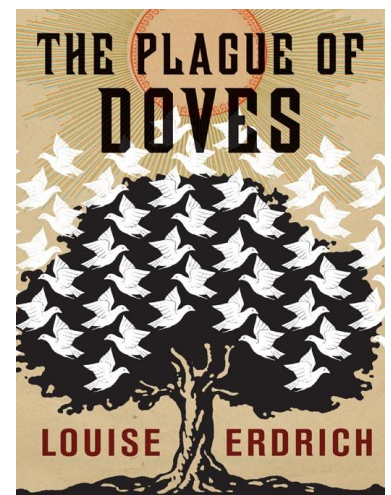
In The Blood



Crossroads Theatre's production of *In the Blood*, Pulitzer Prize-winning Suzan Lori-Parks's play about homelessness, was presented on October 21-25 in Westhoff Theatre. WGS core faculty member Janet Wilson directed, and Marketta Wilder (*left*) performed the lead role.

Erdrich Visits ISU and IWU

Renowned author Louise Erdrich spoke at ISU and Illinois Wesleyan University on October 22, sponsored by the Ames/Milner Visiting Author Program. She spoke at an informal chat at Milner Library in the afternoon, and read selections from her work at Wesleyan in the evening. The English Department had selected her novel *The Plague of Doves* for last summer's Common Reading Initiative. Erdrich, the daughter of a Chippewa Indian mother and a German-American father, explores Native American themes in her works. She is the author of twelve novels, as well as volumes of poetry, children's books, and a memoir of early motherhood. She won the National Book Critics Circle Award for her novel *Love Medicine*.☀



Women's Mentoring Network



The Women's Mentoring Network hosted its annual pizza social in Rachel Cooper on November 4. Tracy Bovee, an experienced life coach, spoke on self care and well being while guests enjoyed complimentary food and beverages.

Spectators reacted to Fisk's scenarios in a variety of ways. In some of the photographs, the viewers convey confused expressions—clearly, they do not know what to make of the situation. In other photos, spectators studiously ignore the models. Still other people laugh and otherwise express amusement. In one photo from the "Sleep" series, taken on a sidewalk in the quad, a male passerby audaciously jumps over the sleeping model. "I find all these interactions equally interesting," says Fisk. Her photographs show that people's reactions to unexpected or uncomfortable situations are not predictable.☀



PRIDE Report

By Breanna Mull

PRIDE, an ISU registered student organization, had a productive semester. The group started off with a September picnic on the quad and continued with meetings on healthy relationships, stereotypes, and gender identities. In October, PRIDE hosted a Halloween dance and participated in National Coming Out Day. Most recently, PRIDE members distributed red ribbons to mark World Aids Day. One of the semester's highlights was a lecture on "Homosexuality, Morality, and Diversity" by Dr. John Corvino, an associate professor of Philosophy at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Another main event was a panel discussion featuring Rick Garcia, director of public policy for Equality Illinois, and State Farm employees Peggy Burton and Jodi Erwin, who spoke about "coming out" in the workplace.

PRIDE's first meeting of the spring semester is January 13. Among upcoming events are a campus climate meeting and the annual trip to the Midwest Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Ally College Conference (the "Big Gay Conference") in February.☀

FLAME Report

By Breanna Mull

The fall semester is a busy time of year for most, and for FLAME this is no exception. Besides bringing (*cont'd*)

Student News

Public Interaction

Hayley Fisk's whimsical photography exhibit, "Public Interaction," is currently being shown at the WGS gallery. The black-and-white photographs stem from two of Fisk's interests, dance movement and outdoor photography. She "borrowed a friend of mine who had been dancing since she was a child" and started photographing her at various sites around ISU and uptown Normal. Fisk soon noticed a "humorous advantage"—people began to stare and laugh at the incongruous sight of a ballerina dancing outdoors.

After that experience, Fisk says, "the idea of photographing subject-viewer interactions became the basis of most of my work." She extended these investigations in two other series. In the first, a garden gnome comes to life and impishly explores its surroundings, swinging on trees in the ISU quad, for example, and peering into the Garlic Press window. The "Sleep" series was a direct attempt to confront viewers with an unconventional and potentially disturbing subject. Fisk's model dressed in her pajamas and lay down in random exterior locations such as the middle of the sidewalk outside Watterson Dining Hall, feigning sleep.

big events like Take Back the Night and the Clothesline project to campus, FLAME (Feminist Led Activist Movement to Empower) invited many guest speakers to meetings this past semester.

Yadira Ruiz, FLAME advisor and Director of YWCA Stepping Stones, kicked off the semester with a presentation on healthy relationships. Then it was Heartland Professor Sharon Migotsky's turn to speak about the history of women in advertising. Professor Erik Rankin from Politics and Government spoke on health care reform. Other eye-opening presentations were given by women in male-dominated fields, including psychology, ministry, and agribusiness.

Looking ahead to the spring semester, FLAME will host the "Vagina Monologues" in February and participate in April's "It Affects Me Week," a feature of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

To be part of the action, you can attend FLAME meetings every other Monday in Rachel Cooper at 7 p.m. Graduate and undergraduate women and men are invited to join us or drop by to see what's happening! "FLAME is able to make a difference because of the passion and dedication of its members. We would love to have even more people help us change the world," said Kati Cruger, public relations coordinator of FLAME.☀

Student Accomplishments

Shushan Avagyan, Graduate Certificate student (English Studies), received a University Club Scholarship.

Kelly Donnellan, WGS graduate assistant (History), presented "Gender in Cuba: Defining Equality within a Socialist Revolution" at the 2009 Conference on the Philosophy of History in the 21st Century: Prospects and Perspectives, Illinois State University, December 3.

Jenna Goldsmith, Graduate Certificate student (English Studies), received an Acorn Equality Fund Luke Scholarship for a second year. She also presented "The Rebirth of African American Feminism through the Blues" at the Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference, Michigan State University, October 8.

Teresa O'Donnell, Graduate Certificate student (English Studies), presented "Fictionalizing Loss" at the Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference, Michigan State University, October 8.☀

The Women's and Gender Studies Program presents

RICKIE SOLINGER

February 10-12, 2010

Illinois State University

Rickie Solinger is an independent historian. Her books include *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade*; *The Abortionist: A Woman Against the Law*; *Beggars and Choosers: How the Politics of Choice Shapes Adoption, Abortion, and Welfare in the United States*; and *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America*.



January 12-February 12:

"Beggars and Choosers: Motherhood Is Not a Class Privilege in America." Photo Exhibit, University Galleries, College of Fine Arts.

Thursday, February 11

9:30 a.m. "Beggars and Choosers." Gallery walking tour with Rickie Solinger. University Galleries, College of Fine Arts.

3:30 p.m. "Nine Ways of Looking at a Poor Woman." Milner Library, 2nd Floor Lobby. Book signing to follow.

Friday, February 12

1 p.m. "Who Gets to Be a 'Real' Mother in the United States: Race, Class, and the Fallacy of 'Choice.'" Women's and Gender Studies Symposium keynote address. Bone Student Center, Prairie Room North. Book signing to follow.

Gender Matters
Illinois State University
Women's and Gender Studies Program
Rachel Cooper 2nd Floor
Campus Box 4260
Normal, IL 61790-4260

CALL FOR PAPERS
Deadline January 15, 2010

**Fifteenth Annual Women's and Gender
Studies Symposium**

Undergraduate and graduate students are invited to submit papers and detailed descriptions of other types of presentations (e.g. short performance pieces and artist's talks). Papers and presentations are welcome on any topic related to the study of women and/or gender. Students must have a faculty sponsor.

For complete information, go to:

<http://womensandgenderstudies.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/CallforPapersFINAL.pdf>

Congratulations, Graduates!

Heidi Van De Voort, Music Education

Welcome, New Minors!

Jaclyn Dooley, Psychology

Amanda Pigott, Broadcast Journalism

Courtney Bishop, Political Science

Calendar

- Dec.-Jan. 27** "Public Interaction," art by Hayley Fisk. RC 237, WGS Gallery.
- Jan. 13** PRIDE meeting. SSB 375, 7 p.m.
- Jan. 22** Women's and Gender Studies Program Meet 'n' Greet. Fat Jack's, Bloomington, 5 p.m.
- Jan. 28** "Dirty Linens," art by Kayla Hueneburg. Opening and artist's talk. RC 237, 12:30 p.m.
- Feb. 3** "The Traffic in Talk about Women: Praise and Blame in Medieval French and Italian," by Dr. Gina Psaki. BSC, 3rd Floor East Lounge, 12 p.m.
- Feb. 4** "Le Roman de Silence: The Maiden-Knight Comes of Age," by Dr. Gina Psaki. STV 401, 3:30 p.m.
- Feb. 10-12** Fifteenth Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium, featuring Rickie Solinger (*see p.5 for more information*).