

Another Look at Gender and Race in the Obama-Clinton Debates

By Alison Bailey

Like most of you, I've been following the primaries and caucuses very carefully. For the first time ever a white woman and an African-American man are simultaneously vying for their party's presidential nomination. Race and gender have always been present in electoral politics, but they are more visible in this contest because it's not just a race between two white men. The candidates look different, but the rhetoric is the same: White women represent gender, black men represent race, and women of color are invisible. Or, as the title of Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith's famous collection on Black women's studies reminds us, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*.¹

This pattern is familiar. As I was thinking about this, I tried to remember a particular historical moment that illustrates the depth of our cultural tendency to erase women of color by conceptualizing white women as spokeswomen for women's rights, and men of color as spokesmen for racial equality. Then one day I picked up the *New York Times* and there it was: the heated exchange between abolitionist Frederick Douglass and Elizabeth Cady Stanton over the 15th Amendment. Stanton was a dedicated abolitionist and had been a close ally of Douglass, but later put all of her political energies behind the cause of women's suffrage because she did not think that Black men and "the lower orders"—the Irish, Germans, and Chinese—should get the vote before white women did.

The exchange that took place in New York City's Steinway Hall in 1869 is cited widely as an example of racism in the suffrage movement. Stanton wonders aloud, "Shall American statesmen . . . so amend their constitutions as to make their wives and mothers the political inferiors of unlettered and unwashed ditch-diggers, bootblacks, butchers and barbers, fresh from the slave plantations of the South?" To which Douglass replies respectfully, "When women, because they are women, are hunted down through the cities of New York and New Orleans; when they are dragged from their houses and hung from lampposts; when their children are torn from their arms and their brains dashed out upon the pavement; when they are the objects of insult and rage at every turn; when they are in danger of having their homes burnt down . . . then they will have an urgency to obtain the ballot equal to our own."²

Thus reminded of that exchange, I thought, how is it that Douglass fails to see that the horrors he lists describe the experiences of African-American women? And why doesn't it even occur to Stanton to reply, "Yes, exactly, Black women are the objects of rage and insult. They have had their children torn from their arms. That's why women need the vote." But this conversation did not happen, and it still is not happening 150 years later.

This dynamic is played out in our own community. The mural in downtown Bloomington at the corner of Monroe and Main Streets depicts (from left to right in order of importance) nine local leaders. In a popular *YouTube* video, local African-American poet Johnny Firefly calls viewers' attention to (*Continued*)

Inside This Issue

- 1 Feature Articles
- 3 Faculty Accomplishments
- 4 Student Accomplishments
- 5 Summer and Fall Course Offerings
- 6 Upcoming Events
- 7 Photo Gallery
- 8 Program News and Calendar

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the ways the mural marginalizes and segregates people of color by placing the only two non-white figures—Major Julius Witherspoon and Machina, a Kickapoo leader—apart from the seven white figures.³ But like Douglass, *Firefly* does not see how race and gender intersect. Why doesn't it occur to him that all the women are white and all the people of color are men? Why is there no poetic mention of women of color's absence on the wall?

The erasure of women of color from public recognition, public policy, and academic discourse has been a topic of interest for feminists, legal theorists, and critical race scholars for almost four decades. In response to this erasure, scholars have called upon us to think at the intersections of race, gender, social class, and nation so that all citizens are included in our public dialogues. As we follow the conversations around the primaries and caucuses over the next few months, I hope each of us has the courage to think about whose concerns are visible and whose have been erased.

¹Gloria Hull, *Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith, All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave (The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2003).*

²cited in Mark Leibovich, "Rights v. rights: An improbable collision course." *The New York Times*, 13 January 2008. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/13/weekinreview/13leibovich.html>> (23 February 2008).

³ Johnny Firefly, "Bloomington Mural." YouTube. 2007, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LTmpzq5ixA>> (23 February 2008). ☼

Holly Hughes Wows ISU

By Becca Chase and Julia Drauden

Provocative lesbian performance artist Holly Hughes blew into ISU for a high-energy three-day visit from February 27-29. During her stay she gave two talks, including the keynote at the Women's and Gender Studies Symposium, led a workshop for Women's Project, and performed at Westhoff Theatre. It's safe to say she made an indelible impression on all who came to see her or who accompanied her during her visit.

Hughes performed her piece "Preaching to the Perverted" on Thursday to a packed audience in Westhoff Theatre. Introducing herself as "the lesbian mime" and dressed in a white hooded sweatshirt with huge black polka dots and black pants, Hughes

performed on a bare stage with only a chair and black backdrop. She had a very personable and down-to-earth presence on stage. This made it easy to relate to her even as the content of her story reached beyond the average college student's experience.

From the beginning Hughes made it clear that she was "preaching" to the audience, which by default made the audience the "perverted." This comment was built on throughout the piece, proving through Holly's funny and thought-provoking narratives that the term "perverted" is subjective. She artfully played up this concept by poking fun at everyone involved in the storyline, herself most of all.



The performance intertwined a string of anecdotes about coming of age as a lesbian in the crux of conservative America in Saginaw, Michigan, with instances of censorship dating back to the late 1970s. Hughes focused mainly on the time when she was censored by the National Endowment for the Arts. Holly was a member of the "NEA Four," whose grants were revoked by the National Endowment for the Arts after board members deemed their work pornographic. The artists' case made it to the Supreme Court, which offered Hughes a unique perspective about what it is like to witness a Court hearing.

Bursts of laughter at Hughes's humorous persona contrasted with respectful silence as she explored the serious consequences of injustice and discrimination. The tension between Hughes's worldview and media responses to the NEA case mirrored the tension she built between the show's hilarious and serious moments and reminded everyone what the subject at hand really was.

Performative lectures

Hughes's visiting artist presentation on Wednesday and keynote talk on Friday at the Symposium blended performance with lecture, humor with politics, and provided the theoretical and biographical background for her work.

When Holly delivered her talk on "Performance as Visual Culture" to a crowd of over 150 listeners in the University Galleries, she noted that she was speaking in one of the epicenters of the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s. In 1990, gallery director Barry Blinderman used \$15,000 from an NEA grant to curate David

Wojnarowicz's controversial "Tongues of Flame" exhibit, which at the time was caught in the raging controversy over public funding for art with sexual content.

Performance art was, and continues to be, one of the many strategies social activists use to make the general public aware of their issues. Hughes's personal recollection of this history led to an extended audience discussion over the impact of the Internet on political activism. John Poole, acting director of the School of Theatre, raised the question of whether Internet activism is an effective alternative to other strategies. "In the 1980s," he said, "we put our actual bodies on the line" by demonstrating in the streets and participating in performative demonstrations by groups like Act Up!, an AIDS activist group.

At the Symposium, Hughes continued her discussion of art as activism. The arts are well suited to activism, she said, because "art is unruly, fueled by the id, not easy to contain. It can take you to scary places," challenge assumptions, and deal with contradictions and complexities.

Commenting on her use of humor to broach serious topics, Hughes said that humor "takes people into the volcano, but let's them feel like they can get back out." She cited the examples of African-American comedians like Whoopi Goldberg and Chris Rock.

Holly went to New York in 1979, in search of a lesbian community and to attend the New York Feminist Art Institute. "I had the expectation that we were going to come together and make vagina soft sculptures and erect them in Times Square and that would be the end of the military-industrial complex."

Then in 1980 some women opened WOW Café, a feminist theatre organization, in a space in the East Village big enough "for two lecterns and a lasagna pan." Any woman who contributed enough sweat equity could produce her own show. "We went down the rabbit hole. We dared to be wrong, to go too far, to break the rules." WOW Café nurtured many of the most important feminist theatre artists today, such as Lisa Kron and her group The Five Lesbian Brothers, Split Britches, Karen Finley, and Spiderwoman Theater.

Her work with WOW Café impressed upon Hughes the need for fostering community. "We tend to think of social change in terms of heroes: One rebellious person changes the course of history," but such a person is no one without being part of a community of activists. The

same goes for making art. Holly's advice to aspiring artists and activists who are graduating and going out "beyond [N]ormal" is to "find your own community and create those spaces, give yourself permission to go too far."

Holly Hughes's visit was sponsored by the Women's and Gender Studies Program, School of Theatre, Women's Project, College of Arts and Sciences, MECCPAC, Office of the Provost/Sage Trust, and University Galleries. ☀



Dr. Baron Pineda spoke as part of this semester's International Studies Seminar Series. Pineda is pictured above with (from left) Dr. Sam Catanzaro, Dr. Maura Toro-Morn, Dr. Alison Bailey and Dr. T.Y. Wang.

Faculty Accomplishments

Oforiwa Aduonum presented "Urban Bush Women: Deconstructing Nappy Hair towards Celebration and Healing" and "Can the Church Say Amen?: Redemption, Hope, and Hip-hop" at the African and African American Popular Culture Conference in Plymouth, NH (5-6 October 2007).

Dawn Beichner (with Jessie Krienert of Criminal Justice Sciences and Bill Anderson of Family and Consumer Sciences) received a Research and Scholarship Development Program Grant for a project entitled, "Proposed Community and Family Center for Prisoner Reentry." She also presented (with Cassia Spohn of Arizona State University) *(Continued)*

“An Examination of Victims’ Risk-Taking Behaviors and Moral Character Issues on Sexual Assault Case Outcomes” at the American Society of Criminology Meetings in Atlanta, Georgia (14-17 November 2007).

Sherrilyn Billger published “Principals as Agents? Investigating Accountability in the Performance and Compensation of School Principals” in *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 61, no.1 (2007): 90-107.

Kass Fleisher presented “Pedagogy” and “Advice to New Faculty” at the St. Mark’s Poetry Project, New York (8 October 2007); and “Midwest or Bust: Carla Harryman and the California Invasion” and “Intimate Revolt: Liberatory Forms of Documentary and Life Writing” at the Modern Language Association, Chicago (27-28 December 2007).

Ann Haugo’s book *Querying Difference in Theatre History* (co-edited with Scott Magelssen of Bowling Green State University) was published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing (October 2007).

Nancy Tolson, former WGS faculty member, published *Black Children’s Literature Got de Blues: The Creativity of Black Writers and Illustrators* (Peter Lang 2008).

Kirstin Hotelling Zona presented “Mary Oliver’s Ecocritical Corrective” at the Southwest Texas Popular Culture and American Culture Association Annual Conference in New Mexico (13-16 February). ☼

Right: Dr. Sara Cole with an impressive recent accomplishment. Son Quincy was born July 1, 2007.



Left: Alison Bailey presents the Dorothy E. Lee scholarship to winner Amanda Longton.

2008 Luellen Laurenti Award Winners



(From left) Beverly Poole, award winner Brandi Peak, Dr. Joe Laurenti, award winner Julia Drauden and Dorothy Witte.

Student Accomplishments

Annaliisa Ahlman (with Conor Burke, Celeste Burns, Rachel Griesinger, Katie Klemp, Megan Miller and Claire Small) performed “Who Are These People and How Are They Allowed to Get Away with It?” at the Illinois State University Women’s and Gender Studies Symposium (29 February 2008). Annaliisa also presented a workshop in Power Yoga at Midwest FitFest, a conference for university fitness instructors (23-24 February 2008).

Ricia Chansky presented “A Stitch in Time: Reclaiming the Needle in Third Wave Feminist Visual Expression” at the Illinois State University Women’s and Gender Studies Symposium (29 February 2008).

Jenna Goldsmith presented “The Consequences of Gender: An Examination of Sharon Block’s *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America*” at the Illinois State University Women’s and Gender Studies Symposium (29 February 2008).

Amanda Longton was awarded the Women’s and Gender Studies Dorothy E. Lee Scholarship.

Oren Whightsel presented “Queer(ed) Poetics: Analytical Conversations in Adolescent Literature” at the Illinois State University Women’s and Gender Studies Symposium (29 February 2008). ☼

WGS Courses Summer/Fall 2008

Summer

COM/ENG /LAN 128	Gender in the Humanities	Internet
CJS 307	Family Violence: Cross Cultural Perspectives	MTWRF 8 -10:50 am (3 weeks)
CJS 339	Women in Criminal Justice	Internet
POL 225	Women in Politics	MTWR 3:40 -6:10 pm (4 weeks)
POL 339	Lesbian and Gay Politics	MTWR 1-3:30 pm (4 weeks)

Fall

Undergraduate Required Courses

WGS 120	Women, Gender, and Society	MW 3-4:15 pm TR 11am-12:15 pm
ENG 160	Women in Literature	MWF 9-9:50 am
HIS 261	History of Women in the United States to 1865	MWF 10-10:50 am
PHI 246	Feminist Political Philosophy	MW 3-4:15 pm

Fall Electives

COM/ENG/LAN 128	Gender in the Humanities	MWF TR	2-2:50 pm 2-3:15 pm
CJS 339	Women in Criminal Justice	TR	11-12:15 pm 12:35-1:50 pm
ENG 260	History of Literature by Women	TR	2-3:15 pm
ENG 261	Women's Literature in a Global Context	TR	2-3:15 pm
ENG 360	Studies in Women and Literature	T	5:30-8:20 pm
ENG 495	Topics in English – Sontag	R	5:30-8:20 pm
FCS/HIS/SOC 112	American Family: Change and Diversity	MWF TR	8-8:50 am 9-9:50 am 9:35-10:50 am 12:35-1:50 pm 3:35-4:50 pm
		W	5:30-8:20 pm
FCS 222	Cultural Diversity in Dress	W	5-7:50 pm
FCS 233	Family Economic Resources	MW	10-11:15 pm
FCS 327	Clothing and Behavior	MW	2-3:15 pm
POL 225	Women in Politics	TR	12:35-1:50 pm 2-3:15 pm
PSY/ SOA 123	Human Sexuality	MWF	12-12:50 pm 2-2:50 pm
SOA 264	Minority Relations	W	5:30-8:20 pm
SOA 265	Personal Relationships	TR	12:35-1:50 pm

Fall and Summer

Independent Study and Internships

WGS 390	Interdisciplinary Research	Arrange
WGS 398	Professional Practice	Arrange
WGS 400	Independent WGS Research	Arrange

Offered fall 2008

ENG 495

Thursday 5:30-8:20 p.m.

Dr. Nathalie de Beeck

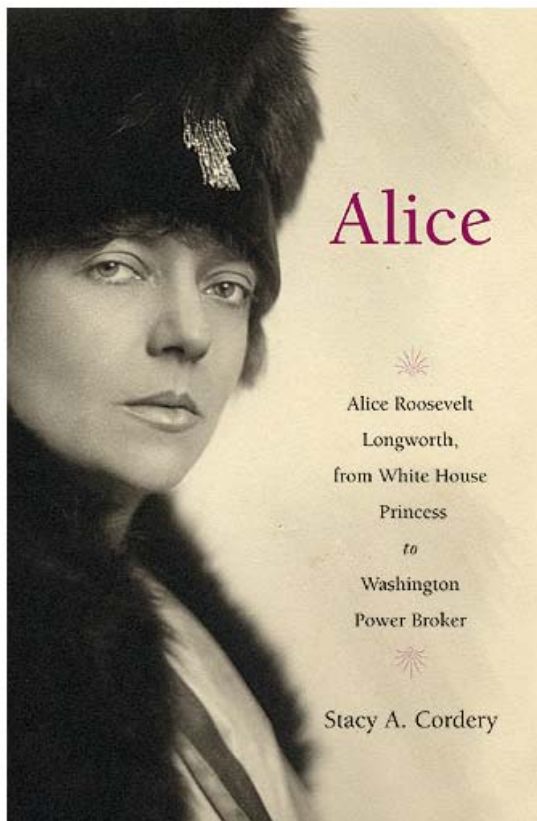
Susan Sontag:
Arts and Letters



Susan Sontag (1933-2004) modeled interdisciplinary ways in which a scholar can engage with cultural and critical studies.

Our in-depth study will provide experience in close study of a challenging artist/ critic and a distinct cult of personality, while investigating why any opinionated public figure may be remembered alternately as dedicated, elitist, brilliant, narrow-minded, arrogant, committed, silent, and/ or bold in his or her stance.

Upcoming Events



Celebrate Women's History Month:
Sponsored by Milner Library and
ISU History Department

A Chat with Stacy Cordery
author of
**"Alice Roosevelt Longworth,
from White House Princess to
Washington Power Broker"**

March 27, 2008
2:00 p.m.

Milner Library, Main Floor
Illinois State University

Book signing to follow presentation

For special accommodations and questions, contact Toni Tucker (309) 438-7402 or ttucker@ilstu.edu



Jane and Ariel

by Nicole Dieker

Monday April 21, 2008

5:30pm and 7pm

Bone Student Center Circus Room

Jane and Ariel explores how one woman begins to heal after sexual assault and finds strength through the help of a friend. This original one-act play by an ISU graduate student will be performed as a staged reading.

Co-Sponsored by Women's Project and YWCA Stepping Stones

If you need a special accommodation to fully participate in this event, please contact Janet at jmwilso4@ilstu.edu or 438-8949. Please allow sufficient time for this accommodation.

13th Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium



Above: Kyle Ciani and Janet Wilson enjoy lunch at the symposium.



Above: "Gendering Justice" panel presenters Jeremy Braithwaite, Emilienne Ngampa, Cori Johnson and Elizabeth Cleveland.



Above: Rachel Griesinger and Celeste Burns perform as part of Women's Project.



Above: Women's Project presenters visited after their performance.



Above: Vagina Monologue tickets were on sale.

The Vagina Monologues



Left: Ricia Chansky with the giant vagina.



Above and left: The Vaginas played to a sold out house.

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

Welcome, Newcomers!

New minors:

Christina Gilsdorf, Psychology
Jacob Long, Broadcast Journalism
Brian McNeas, Communication
Alissa Rzepcki, Politics and Government

New certificate students:

Bryan Asbury, Communication
Jodi Hallsten, Educational Administration
and Foundations

Calendar

Mar. 26 Luciano Tosta, "Representing and Misrepresenting Brazil: Violence in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema." International Studies Seminar Series. 3rd Floor East Lounge, BSC, 12-1 pm.

Mar. 27 Stacy Cordery, author of *Alice: Alice Roosevelt Longworth from White House Princess to Washington Power Broker*. Milner Library Atrium 2 pm.

Apr. 2 Caixia Yang, "The Influence of One Child policy on Child-Rearing, Family, and Society in Post-Mao China." International Studies Seminar Series. 3d Floor East Lounge, BSC, 12-1 pm.