The Center Hosts its Inaugural Conference

On February 5-7 the Center for Race and Gender hosted its inaugural conference Con/Vergences: Critical Interventions in the Politics of Race and Gender in the Lipman Room of Barrows Hall. The goal of this conference was to showcase cutting-edge research on race and gender and to promote discussion about future directions in the study of race and gender. With twenty-four renowned academics presenting their work and over three hundred people attending the conference, Con/Vergences successfully achieved this goal.

The possibility of a CRG-sponsored conference originated during an evening brainstorming session at the 2002 Tangled Strands dissertation workshop at the Westerbeke Ranch in Sonoma County. While generating ideas about how the Center might best fulfill the vision of the 1999 TWLF student movement, retreat participants suggested that the Center could utilize its unique position in the university to bring together preeminent scholars from various institutions across the country engaged in research on the study of race and gender.

Last spring, a smaller group of graduate students (with no previous conference-planning experience!) began to meet regularly with Center director Evelyn Nakano Glenn to further discuss what this conference might become and how we might bring it to life. After many long and spirited discussions, we decided upon six distinct panels: “Race, Gender and the Nation-State”; “Race and Masculinities”; “Toward an Indigenous Feminism: Nationalism and Gender in Native American Studies”; “Sexualizing the Racial Body”; “Transnational Political Economies”; and “Reconstructing History and Resistance.” Out of a combination of optimism and naïveté, we compiled a wish list of possible invitees for each of the panels.

Words from the Director

The national debate over affirmative action in college admissions now seems settled due to the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in the University of Michigan case. The Court upheld the right of universities to consider race in admissions procedures in order to achieve a diverse student body. Some defenders of affirmative action have now turned their attention to a related—and very serious issue—namely the extreme socio-economic class inequities in college admissions.

A recent article in the New York Times underlines the urgency of this issue. While families have long dominated the ranks of students at prestigious private institutions, their advantage has sharply increased in the past decade. Moreover, the inequities are also increasing at “top” public institutions. At the University of Michigan, more freshmen this year have parents making at least $200,000 than have parents making less than the median national family income of $53,000. The NY Times article also reports that at 42 of the most select public institutions, including Berkeley, 40% of the entering class this year came from families earning over $100,000, an increase from 32% in 1999. Still another study of the 250 most selective colleges and universities in 2000 showed that 54% of first year students came from families in the highest quartile of income vs. only 11.8% from families in the lowest quartile. The slots taken by the well off helped families have long dominated the ranks of students at prestigious private institutions, their advantage has sharply increased in the past decade. Moreover, the inequities are also increasing at “top” public institutions. At the University of Michigan, more freshmen this year have parents making at least $200,000 than have parents making less than the median national family income of $53,000. The NY Times article also reports that at 42 of the most select public institutions, including Berkeley, 40% of the entering class this year came from families earning over $100,000, an increase from 32% in 1999. Still another study of the 250 most selective colleges and universities in 2000 showed that 54% of first year students came from families in the highest quartile of income vs. only 11.8% from families in the lowest quartile. The slots taken by the well off helped

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Words from the Director
Upper middle class students gain an advantage in the top universities

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shrink the ranks of students from families in the middle 50% of income, whose share shrunk from 40.9% in 1985 to 33.2% in 2000. The bottom quartile’s share shrunk only slightly from 1985, probably because their share was so low to begin with. The trend toward greater class inequality can also be seen at Berkeley, where according to a *Berkeleyan* article, there was a 10% decline this year in admitted students who qualified for federal Pell grants and a 13% drop in those eligible for federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants for low-income students.

The growing inequality has been fueled by increasing competitiveness and the frantic desire of professional and well-off parents to get their children into the best schools. Parents and students have become increasingly savvy about the college admissions process. Those who can afford the expense enroll their kids not only in SAT prep courses and summer enrichment programs abroad, but also pricey summer camps that coach them on SATs and ACTs, writing personal statements, and interviewing skills. These privileged kids also get taken to visit prospective schools.

Unfortunately, advocacy for class-based admissions criteria has been tainted by the fact that some opponents of affirmative action used the argument that colleges should consider low-income status rather than minority racial status in admissions. For these opponents, class and race were mutually exclusive, such that

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Race, Gender and Sexual Coercion Under Slavery and Colonialism

On April 1, Sara Clarke Kaplan and Lisa Ze Winters presented parts of their dissertation research for the CRG Forum. Entitled “Race, Gender and Sexual Coercion Under Slavery and Colonialism,” this CRG forum was an opportunity to discuss both the dynamics of sexual violence that were constitutive elements of slavery in the U.S. and colonialism in Africa and the constrained forms of sexual and gendered agency that emerged in response to these dynamics. In addition, both Kaplan and Winters discussed the problem of writing histories about people whose experiences are largely absent from the historical record raising important theoretical and methodological questions about history, memory, and alternative ways of understanding the past.

Kaplan, a Ph.D. candidate in the department of Ethnic Studies, presented “Love and Violence/Maternity and Death.” In her paper, Kaplan discussed Toni Morrison’s novel, *Beloved*, in order to problematize the way in which gendered dichotomies often align radicalism with a masculine, public sphere and reform with a feminine private sphere. Noting that most of the scholarship that examines the radical embracing of death as a form of black resistance has largely excluded black women and that scholarship that has attempted to address this exclusion tends to draw attention to black women’s reform work within the domestic sphere, Kaplan argued that *Beloved* can be read as “a feminist rearticulation of black radical politics.”

Focusing on the enslaved maternal figure in *Beloved*, Kaplan pointed out that, in the context of the coercive sexual relations of slavery, the infanticide that haunts the novel can be seen as a way of expressing a maternal claim on a child who is owned by someone else. Kaplan noted that Sethe’s act of killing her baby precipitates a structural and social crisis in the “calculus of slavery” and provides an example of a radical embrace of death that is both within the sphere of and disrupting of domestic relations.

Winters, a Ph.D. candidate in African Diaspora Studies, presented “Cultured Concubines: Visual Depictions of the *Signares* of Senegal,” a part of her

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Spring 2004 Undergraduate Grants

The Center for Race and Gender is pleased to announce its Spring 2004 Undergraduate Grant recipients. Congratulations to the following Berkeley undergraduates who were awarded grants ranging from $200-1000 to carry out their research or creative project:

Laurica Brown received a grant to conduct research on “Sexualized Racism and Its Affects on Black Teenage Girls.” Brown plans to conduct focus groups with black teenage girls between the ages of 12 and 16 in order to answer the following questions: “Does the over-sexualization of the black female body [in popular magazines and music videos] affect the way that teenage girls shape their identity? Are young African-American girls aware of how their racial identities are being constructed by mainstream media?” Brown is a junior majoring in sociology and is currently outreach coordinator for the June Jordan Poetry for the People Program.

Elizabeth Havstad’s project, “Addressing Poverty through Projects: The Favelas of Salvador, Brazil,” compares and evaluates government, NGO, church, and grassroots programs designed to relieve poverty in favelas, or urban slums, in Salvador. As Havstad writes, “the purpose of my project is to define characteristics that distinguish the projects that work from those that do not. Projects that can be successful in promoting real social progress...”

New Voices in Indigenous Research Inspires a Global Trend

Graduate student scholars from across North America and as far away as Melbourne, Australia converged on the U.C. Berkeley campus April 1st and 2nd to participate in the 2nd Annual New Voices in Indigenous Research Conference.

Program topics ranged from examining how racism affects physical health to representations of Native people in film and documentary. This year also featured a panel entitled “ Contesting Histories: When the Indigenous Historian Writes Back.”

“Indigenous scholars presented work and engaged each other in dialogue which is rarely possible with an audience of non-Native scholars,” said Danika Medak-Saltzman, co-chair of U.C. Berkeley’s American Indian Graduate Student Association (AIGSA), which sponsors the conference.

The AIGSA conference was unique because it approaches indigenous studies from a global perspective without eclipsing Native North America. This year Native Pacific Islanders presented on topics as diverse as language revitalization, history, and media representations of Native Hawaiian and Filipina women.

“The community alliance that we build is now being represented in the scholarship that we create together,” said Dory Nason, who also co-chairs AIGSA. “What we do here as students at Berkeley connects scholarship to what happens in the every-day lives of Indians and other indigenous people.”

Last year, presenters from Canada and even Europe’s indigenous Sami community discovered common issues, which affect indigenous people world-wide. Medak-Saltzman, whose research traces the historical connections between U.S. American Indian policy and Japan’s policies towards its indigenous Ainu population, hopes the transnational focus of indigenous studies will increase.

“We’re often encouraged to think of global indigenous communities as separate,” said Medak-Saltzman. “We have much more in common historically and politically than the average person realizes.”

Cherokee scholar Dr. Daniel Justice of the University of Toronto delivered the keynote address on Thursday April 1, 2004. Justice is the current vice-president of the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures. His talk was titled, “Unsettling Scholarship: Resisting Assimilation in the Academy.”

The conference ended...
Colorism Working Group Discusses “Yellowman”

Last February, the CRG Colorism Reading Group launched its initiation by attending the Pulitzer prizewinning play, Yellowman at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre. In Yellowman, Playwright Dael Orlandersmith pens a riveting exploration of colorism in a Southern black community through the lives of childhood friends and eventual lovers, Alma and Eugene.

Alma is a poor dark-skinned woman who endures her mother’s unrelenting invectives about her complexion and identity, while Eugene is a light-skinned, “yellow man,” heir to a prestigious family, whose complexion is resented by his dark-skinned father. Together, these characters struggle to honor an existence that belies the specter of color and race prejudice imposed by kin and kith alike.

I have to admit that I was a little skeptical when the lights revealed a small barren stage flanked by two people sitting in wooden chairs with glasses of water beside them. But what the setting of Yellowman lacks in scenery, cast, and costume, the play more than makes up for in pacing, content, and execution. Indeed, it is amazing how these two actors are able to pull the audience into the various characters and pivotal moments in their lives, through pure elocution—mostly accented monologues that engage dialogue sporadically—and small physical gestures. Ultimately, the fabric that interweaves Alma and Eugene’s lives unravels into a denouement that is piercing and tragic.

The Colorism Reading Group met after the play and discussed its impact. “I was really impressed by the play. It wasn’t what I expected exactly,” offered Rachel Quinn, independent scholar and member of the group. “While Alma understood the oppression that she faced, Eugene could not make sense of what he was experiencing—being told constantly that his social standing/skin color was powerful and coveted by others.

“What I found interesting, if distressing, was the way in which Eugene, as a man, directed the emotional abuse he’d dealt with his entire life into a violent act, while Alma, as a female character, sought freedom through education. This difference may commonly occur between men and women, but it may also be a stereotype employed by the playwright.

“In the end, it wasn’t surprising to me that the play turned tragic—the entire play was tragic, really.” Another member of the group, sociology graduate student Jennifer Jones, continued on page 5

Words from the Director

attention to class precluded attention to race. Moreover, their advocacy of income-based admission criteria was fueled by political expediency, rather than dedication to eradicating inequity or injustice. I doubt that any of these anti-affirmative action people had spoken out about the lack of educational opportunities for the poor prior to their involvement in the anti-affirmative action cause.

Fortunately, current proponents of policies to “level the field” for middle and lower income students, such as William Bowen, President of the Andrew H. Mellon Foundation, Lawrence H. Summers, President of Harvard, and Theodore Spencer, Director of Admissions at the University of Michigan, are also firm supporters of Affirmative Action who want to address both race and class.

Attempts to address inequality by tinkering with admissions criteria would do little more than remove a few obstacles at the end of a long path that most poor kids have fallen off or been pushed off along the way, whether by inadequate schooling, homelessness, or other severe deprivations. Moreover, the battle for affirmative action is not over, especially here in California where efforts to repeal Proposition 209, the initiative that has banned the consideration of race in admissions and hiring by state entities continue. Nonetheless, it is good to at least begin a broad-based discussion of class inequality and to examine the interconnections between race and class inequality and exclusion in our own backyard.

Evelyn Nakano Glenn
Director, CRG
Spring Undergraduate Grants Program

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in the favelas will play a part in moving Brazilian society towards racial equality.” Havstad is majoring in Urban Studies in the Department of City and Regional Planning and spent the past year living, studying and conducting research in Rio de Janeiro.

Christine Wei-Hsin Huang received a grant to support her work as curator of an art exhibit entitled “. . . But What Am I?: Perspectives on Racial, National and Sexuality Identity in the United States.” Huang’s art exhibit asks the question, “how do we, as a community and a larger society, move from ideologically wishing we were all the same to realistically accepting our differences and finding empowerment, value, and pride in our distinct identities?” She will do this by bringing together creative work that addresses issues of race, gender, and class in a variety of mediums. Huang is a senior majoring in Cognitive Science and Sociology.

Yulia A. Khouri was awarded a grant for her project, “The Paradox of Selective Feminism: The Comparative Study of the Status of African Domestic Female Maids and the Development of the Feminist Consciousness in Lebanon.” Khouri’s project looks at the interplay between the feminist movement in the Middle East and the status of migrant, female domestic workers from Africa. As Khouri writes, “foreign maids are a subject of ‘triple discrimination’ in Lebanon, as servants, as ‘non-white’ foreigners, and as women. Yet those who have been debating the abuse of maids have concentrated mostly on the maids’ rights as foreign workers in Lebanon; their rights as women have been largely forgotten, by women’s rights activists and academics alike.” Khouri is a double major in Psychology and Peace and Conflict Studies, and this research is part of her senior honors thesis.

Steven S. McCarty-Snead’s project, “Searching for Resolution Across Race, Gender, Religion, Politics and Economics: A Cultural Analysis of the Conflict Over Gay Marriage in California,” is designed to develop a more nuanced analysis of gay marriage that moves beyond the dichotomous presentation of pro and con arguments. As McCarty-Snead notes, “without an understanding of the ways culture intersects with the conflict, one cannot understand the plethora of underlying values associated with each position. Any attempt at resolution to this conflict must begin with an understanding of the role of race, gender, religion, politics, economics and other cultures in creating a perception of and position on gay marriage.” McCarty-Snead is double majoring in Peace and Conflict Studies and Political Science, and this project was conceptualized as part of his Multicultural Conflict Resolution class.

Priya Kandaswamy
Ph.D. Candidate
Ethnic Studies

Colorism Working Group on “Yellowman”

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reflected: “I thought it was a well-crafted script that dealt with the internalized problems of race and color caste. I was particularly impressed by the lead actress performance, but felt the male performance was lacking authenticity.

“But what the setting of Yellowman lacks in scenery, cast, and costume, the play more than makes up for in pacing, content, and execution.”

“A play that is constructed around dual monologues however, is really difficult to pull off, and I was impressed with the production overall.”

The CRG reading group will continue to meet throughout the semester and welcomes participation from other scholars conducting research on skin tone bias. The reading group meets biweekly on Tuesdays at the Center for Race and Gender from 6-7:30 pm. We discuss readings distributed the meeting before and hopefully relevant research by members in the hopes of forwarding scholarship on the issue. The Center is currently pursuing funding to establish a premiere clearinghouse for research on colorism here on the Berkeley campus. If you are interested in becoming involved in the Colorism Reading Group, please contact Lynnéa Stephen at lstephen@socrates.berkeley.edu.

Lynnéa Stephen
Ph.D. Candidate
Sociology

New Voices in Indigenous Research

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on Friday April 2, 2004 with a final keynote address from Muskogee activist Dr. Victoria Bombery, co-founder of the Seventh Generation Fund and current professor of Ethnic Studies at U.C. Riverside. Bombery’s address entitled, “Indigenous Hemispheric Consciousness: An Oppositional Discourse to Corporate Globalism” was held in the Tilden Room, MLK Student Union.

AIGSA sponsors the New Voices Conference every spring in conjunction with the American Indian Graduate Program, a U.C. Berkeley outreach effort which encourages Native American and Alaska Native students to enroll at Berkeley. For more information on AIGSA, contact Dory Nason at 510-642-3228.

Joe Rogers
UCB School of Journalism
CRG’s Inaugural Conference Con/vergences

Critical Interventions in the Politics of Race and Gender

Unprecedented work is showcased at the Center’s Inaugural Conference “con/vergences” featuring 24 high-profile researchers presenting to an audience of over 300 participants

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these proposed panels. To our surprise and delight, almost every scholar to whom we extended an invitation promptly accepted.

In the weeks leading up the conference, the Center received an overwhelming number of early registrants proving both that there was a real demand for a conference that dealt with the intersections of race and gender and that the organizing committee’s concerns over publicity were unfounded. Whereas the majority of registrants were students and scholars from the greater San Francisco Bay Area, the conference also attracted a great deal of interest from individuals throughout California and the nation.

In her opening remarks, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, director of the Center for Race and Gender, noted how the assemblage of the Center’s very own “dream team” of scholars reflected not only the prestige of Berkeley, but also the importance of the Center’s mission to promote new and innovative research. Throughout the conference many panelists echoed these sentiments and expressed their excitement about being a part of this unique gathering.

The opening reception for the conference was held at the Bancroft Hotel and featured a keynote address by Professor Lisa Lowe (Literature, UCSD). Dr. Lowe presented a paper entitled “The Intimacies of Four Continents,” which interrogated discourses of modern humanism by tracing the loss of the figure of the transatlantic Chinese coolie in British colonies in the Caribbean. By focusing on what she called the “particular obscurity” of the Chinese coolie, Lowe investigated the “extensive webs of connections, the crucial global intimacies out of which modern humanism, as well as modern concepts of race andgender, emerged.” Thus, Lowe drew attention to the “politics of our lack of knowledge” and exposed race and gender themselves as traces of modernist humanist forgetting.” As Lowe eloquently concluded, “race and gender are the residues and excesses constituted by humanist narratives of freedom.”

The opening panel on Friday was “Race, Gender and the Nation-State.” Featuring panelists Lauren Berlant (English, University of Chicago), Ruth Wilson Gilmore (Geography, USC), and Margo Okazawa-Rey (Women’s Studies, Mills College) and commentator Paola Bacchetta (Women’s Studies, UC Berkeley), this panel addressed issues ranging from race, gender and class in the U.S. military to the plight of immigrant airport screeners after 9/11 to the politics of obesity in the contemporary U.S. The papers on this panel shared a common concern in analyzing racism as a death-inducing process, or as Gilmore put it “the state-sanctioned and or extra legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death.”

The second panel of the day was “Race and Masculinities.” Professor David Eng (Literature, Rutgers University) began with a discussion of race and contemporary legal and political debates about gay marriage. Judith Halberstam (Literature, UCSD) discussed the politics of stupidity through a humorous and insightful reading of the stupid, white men in the film, “Dude, Where’s My Car?” This was followed by Abdul JanMohamed’s (English, UC Berkeley) analysis of blackness and masculinity in Richard Wright’s Native Son. The panel concluded with comments from Sau-ling Wong (Asian American Studies, UC Berkeley).

The last panel on Friday was “Toward an Indigenous Feminism: Nationalism and Gender in Native American Studies.” Joanne Barker (American Indian Studies, SF SU) began with a discussion of the relationship between gender, sovereignty, and self-determination in the debates about Indian women’s status and rights that lead up to the passage of Canada’s Bill C-31. Laura Donaldson’s (English, Cornell) paper analyzed the case of Nanyehi, the last Most Beloved Woman of the Cherokee, as “a rare glimpse of women’s contribution to theorizing self-determination and the process of nation-building.” The panel concluded with Kathryn Shanley’s (Native American Studies, University of Montana)

Keynote Speaker Lisa Lowe listens in on one of the panels. (Jim Block)
presentation, “Imagining Native American Women Before Contact and Now: Research Agendas for the 21st Century” followed by comments from Hertha Wong.

Lowes investigated the “extensive webs of connections, the crucial global intimacies out of which modern humanism, as well as modern concepts of race and gender, emerged.” (English, UC Berkeley).

The conference reconvened on Saturday morning with “Sexualizing the Racial Body.” Gayatri Gopinath (Women and Gender Studies, UC Davis) began by both interrogating the erasure of queer female subjects within dominant South Asian public cultures and examining the possibilities for queer diasporic cultural spaces that are suggested in the work of artist Parminder Sekhon. Evelyyn Hammonds (African American Studies and History of Science, Harvard) spoke about representations of African American men on the “down low” in her talk, “Silence and African American Sexualities.” Finally, Horacio N. Roque-Ramirez (Chicana and Chicano Studies, UC Santa Barbara) drew attention to the complex dynamics of building Latina and Latino queer political communities in San Francisco. The panel concluded with comments from Judith Butler (Rhetoric, UC Berkeley).

The next panel, “Transnational Political Economies,” examined issues ranging from the transnational circulation of women of color’s labor to the transnational circulation of the idea of the American dream. Angie Chabram Dernersesian (Chicana and Chicano Studies, UC Davis) used a close reading of the film Real Women Have Curves to highlight the ahistorical politics of Chicano women’s work. Grace Chang’s (Women’s Studies, UCSB) paper posed the question of how to redefine the idea of agency in the context of the trafficking of women and anti-trafficking discourses. This was followed by Inderpal Grewal’s (Women’s Studies, UC Irvine) discussion of “Transnationalizing the American Dream” and comments from Colleen Lye (English, UC Berkeley).

The final panel of the conference was “Reconstructing History and Resistance.” Emma Perez (Ethnic Studies and Chicano Studies, University of Colorado) gave a thought-provoking paper that discussed the difficulties in trying to reconstruct a history of peoples of whom there is no clear historical record. In particular, Perez stressed that in order to write a history of queer people of color that it is necessary to challenge the colonial ways of seeing that make subjugated knowledges and the agency of subjugated peoples invisible. In his paper, “Performative Reversals of the Name ‘Race,’ and the Dilemma of the Victims,” Etienne Balibar (Philosophy, UC Irvine and Paris-Nanterre) highlighted the tensions and contradictions in the use of the term race. The panel concluded with comments from Tyler Stovall (History, UC Berkeley).

Con/Vergences concluded with a roundtable discussion about new directions in race and gender studies and projects that the CRG can undertake to support emerging research on race and gender. In addition, the organizing committee has just begun the process of creating a Con/Vergences anthology that will include the papers presented at the conference.

The success of the inaugural conference would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of the CRG staff and conference organizing committee, the enthusiastic participation of affiliated Berkeley faculty, and the active engagement of the conference attendees. In particular, the CRG would like to thank the Townsend Center, the Social Science Dean’s Office, the Humanities Dean’s Office, the Student Association of Graduates in Ethnic Studies, the Graduate Assembly, the Executive Vice-Chancellor and Provost’s Office, the Letters and Science Division, and the departments of African American Studies, English, Ethnic Studies, History, Rhetoric, Sociology, and Women’s Studies for their generous contributions.

Stein Lee
Ph.D. Candidate
Ethnic Studies
“I find the most stimulating discussions of the issues of our time in art” remarks Laura Pérez, associate professor of Ethnic Studies and Director of the Beatrice Bain Research Group on Gender at UC Berkeley. This is not surprising considering that Professor Pérez has spent her career as a scholar, activist, and teacher illuminating the inextricable linkages between art and politics. Pérez’s research explores topics ranging from the Latin American avant-garde in the first half of the twentieth century to issues of spirituality in the work of contemporary Latina and Latin American women artists. However, the relationship between art—broadly defined to include not just visual art but writing, performance, film and even new kinds of digital media—and politics is a theme that unifies Pérez’s work across this diversity of sites.

Professor Pérez began to explore this theme as an undergraduate student at the University of Chicago. At Chicago, she completed a joint B.A. and M.A. program in Romance Languages, writing her thesis on the relationship between art and politics in the work of Latin American poets Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo’s Spanish Civil War books. Pérez continued to pursue her interest in the Latin American avant-garde in graduate school at Harvard where she earned her Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literatures, again specializing in contemporary Latin American writing. Her dissertation, *Contextos y proyectos de la vanguardia literaria nicaraguense: 1927-1936 (Contexts and Projects of the Nicaraguan Literary Avant-Garde)*, used a cultural studies approach to argue that the avant-garde was not simply a literary or visual phenomenon but a broader social project. In her dissertation, Pérez showed how avant-garde poets were involved in the production and use of various publications and even a fascist youth organization that were instrumental in ushering in the Somoza dictatorships. She stressed that the poets in question viewed this kind of work as inextricable from their vanguard activity.

Dr. Pérez noted that her focus on Nicaragua was meant to address the marginalization of Caribbean and Central American perspectives in Latin American literary studies that leads to the production of inadequate theories about the Latin American avant-garde as a whole. In looking at the Nicaraguan avant-garde, her dissertation was particularly interested in illuminating the seemingly exceptional relationship between a progressive aesthetics and a right-wing politics. Her research revealed that in fact politically reactionary avant-gardes, like the Italian Futurists, were more widespread than commonly thought. In the Nicaraguan case, this was very much a consequence of a highly class-stratified society that still drew its intellectuals and artists from recently displaced oligarchical families who had not yet, however, lost their cultural or social capital.

In conjunction with her academic work, Dr. Pérez was also very involved in community and campus activism as a graduate and undergraduate student. While at Harvard, she participated in the anti-apartheid movement that led to Harvard’s divestment of South African investments. She also co-founded the first Chicano/a graduate student association.

Pérez noted that her activism then and now has always focused on building coalitions amongst different groups. This multiracial organizing reflects Pérez’s broad concern about common issues confronting communities of color, gender, and sexuality in the U.S. and beyond.

After completing graduate school, Dr. Pérez went to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor to teach in the department of Romance Languages and the Program of American Cultures. Although she had studied Chicana/o literature as a graduate exchange student at Stanford and organized related campus events at Harvard, it was when she was at Michigan that the focus of Pérez’s work began to shift from early 20th century avant-garde to a more concentrated study of gender, sexuality and spirituality in Latin America and the U.S. from the 1960s to the present. While at Michigan, she developed a comparative course on Latin American and U.S. Latina women writers of the 20th century that was instrumental in this shift. She presented numerous studies in this area and published an essay entitled “Reconfiguring Nation and Identity: U.S. Latina and Latin American Women’s Oppositional Writing of the 1970s-1990s” through UCB’s Morrison Lecture Series on the topic in 1995. In that essay, Pérez argued that both U.S. Latina and Latin American women of this period rejected and attempted to reconfigure patriarchal national identity discourses in their writings. By identifying national gender inequities and cultural and geographic dislocations as new and common phenomena that might bring their work into greater communication, her research here attempted to move beyond the sixties- and seventies-era U.S. Latina distrust of their Latin American counterparts, which was grounded in class and race identity differences between the two groups.

During this period, Pérez also wrote about the politics of location of Chicana/o studies. Her essay, “Opposition and the Education of Chicanos” in *Race, Identity and Representation in Education* (Routledge, 1993), reflected on racializing disciplinary formations and pedagogies and resistance to these. She examined the differences of location of
Race, Gender and Profiling

At the February CRG Forum, Irum Sheikh and Zakiyyah Jackson presented their research on racial and gender profiling in the post-9/11 period. Both Sheikh and Jackson discussed emerging discourses and practices of profiling in the U.S. while at the same time pointing out that these discourses and practices are not simply a post-9/11 phenomenon. Rather, they noted the long history of racial and gender profiling in the U.S. and drew attention to the complex ways in which race and gender are intertwined in this history.

Sheikh, a graduate student in the Ethnic Studies program at Berkeley, presented findings from her dissertation, Manufacturing Terrorists: Racial Formations and 9/11 Detentions. As part of her research, Sheikh interviewed immigrants who had been detained in jails in New Jersey and Pennsylvania or had been deported to Egypt, Pakistan or India during the three months immediately following 9/11. In addition, she also interviewed the family members of detainees, examined newspaper coverage of 9/11 detentions and looked at various reports from governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Sheikh found that not only did the people detained have no links to terrorist activities, but that government officials knew this and continued to frame them. She argued that, in the three months following 9/11, arrests operated as a “public relations strategy.” The government used the arrests of Arab and South Asian immigrants as evidence both of the fact that the state was doing something to prevent terrorism and of the presence of a continued threat that demanded continued state action. For this reason, Sheikh argued that race was the primary reason for these detentions and deportations.

Sheikh also noted parallels between the detention of immigrants and the growing prison industrial complex in the U.S. For example, she discussed the case of a jail in Brooklyn that she tried to visit but was denied access to. The ninth floor of the jail had been converted to a maximum security detention center in which people of “high interest” were being held in 23 hour lock down. In addition to convergences in the use of prison infrastructure to regulate different racialized population, Sheikh also noted that the post-9/11 detentions relied on the production of a climate of fear in ways that parallel how the production of a fear of crime fuels the growth in prisons.

Jackson, a graduate student in the African Diaspora Studies program, presented a paper entitled “ ‘Gender’ Profiling after 911: A Discourse of Marginalization and Displacement of Blackness.” Beginning with a discussion of gendered terms and black ontology, Jackson went on to discuss the emerging discourse

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October 28-30, 2004
Lipman Room, Barrows Hall
University of California, Berkeley

As we begin the 21st century, political recognition –within the context of great population displacements and current globalization processes -- has been and continues to be a primary locus of struggle for Indigenous nations, international confederations, national, regional, and local organizations, and Indigenous persons at-large. In striving for recognition, Indigenous peoples have made a critique of the terms of recognition a critical part of the political struggle. Recognizing legal and racial identities as legacies of Imperialism, Indigenous activists and scholars are probing the ways that individual-centered western concepts embody gendered and cultured norms of citizenship. Indigenous groups are reimagining, challenging, and inventing new modes of political activism that are reshaping the contours of political recognition. Equally importantly, these re-rememberings and reimaginings are taking a multiplicity of paths and forms: legal, cultural, artistic, academic, socio-political, and economic.

This conference is being organized for the purpose of providing a forum for Indigenous scholars from a broad range of disciplines to address and reflect upon the most recent forms of “Indigeneity” and its politics of re/membering Indigenous identity in a global and local context. The conference will include participants from the UC as well as renowned scholars from outside of California and outside of the United States.

Confirmed keynote speakers include Leroy Little Bear, Wilma Mankiller, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith. In addition, the conference will consist of six panel discussions that will address several interwoven themes including:

* Indigenizing and Claiming Culture
* Indian-Indian Relations
* Mapping Our World View (Archaeology, Land, History, Religion, Language)
* Shared Experiences of Indigeneity in a Global Context
* Historicizing and Dehistoricizing Gender
* Critical Themes and Emerging Issues

For the latest information on the conference, check out the Center’s website. If you would like to get involved in the CRG’s Indigeneity Working Group, contact Majel Boxer at centerrg@uclink.berkeley.edu.
Faculty Spotlight

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post-colonial intellectuals and U.S. ethnic minority writers in “Reflections and Confessions on the ‘Minority’ and Immigrant I.D. Tour” published in Paragraph in 1995 and discussed alters and aterity in “For Love and Theory: An Ofrenda.” In “De lo rural a lo global: Martha Orozco y el reto del nativo del planeta,” Pérez described the goal of her research on spirituality, Dr. Pérez describes the goal of her research as “to bring our attention to the politics of spirituality, that is, how spirituality matters politically.” She noted that she has been engaged in a rethinking of the sixties not only as a time of political and social revolution but also as a time of spiritual revolution. In particular, Pérez’s work examines how spiritual practices are linked to a politics of decolonization.

According to Professor Pérez, “what has emerged in my most recent work on Chicana art is not only the study of gender, sexuality, and racialization, but the study of hybrid spiritualities.” Pérez explained that her use of the term hybrid spiritualities refers not only to the hereditary and cultural hybridity that has resulted from the violent mixing of colonizing cultures with indigenous heritage but also to the realities of post-modern urban life. The increasing mixture of people and religious practices in big cities has made the combination of previously disparate religious traditions a possibility. In this sense, hybrid spiritualities are not only chosen but represent a third entity created out of elements of different religious traditions. In the work of the Chicana and other Latina/o and Latin American artists she studies, these self-constructed spiritual hybridities are decolonizing practices.

Pérez writes about these issues in her forthcoming book, Altarities: Chicana Art, Politics, and Spiritualities (Duke University Press), which examines the emergence of Chicana spiritualities as another terrain of political and social struggles. In her book, Pérez looks at the work of over forty artists in the period between 1985-2000. While Pérez includes some very well known Chicana artists, she also draws on many younger, less established artists. Challenging canonical definitions of art and art history, Pérez suggests that the use of culturally alternative visual languages by some of these artists is a critique that exposes the language of Western art history as at best partial and at worst ethnocentric.

Dr. Pérez has argued powerfully against Western understandings of religion and spirituality in her work. She observes that one of the consequences of the hegemony of Western rationalism within the academy has been that matters of spirituality have often been seen as naïve and insignificant and are rarely studied except as points of difference and markers of cultural inferiority in relation to Western sociological, anthropological, or theological points of view. Pérez, who has taught in Ethnic Studies department at Berkeley since the mid-nineties, notes that even interdisciplinary programs like Ethnic Studies often simply accept Western colonial conceptions of spirituality and what gets to count as rational or intelligent. To date, there has actually been very little work in Ethnic Studies that has dealt with spirituality.

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Slavery & Colonialism

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larger dissertation project that examines the construction of and tensions within the category mulatta. Winters explained that Signares were economically powerful business women who had long-term sexual liaisons with European administrators. However, despite their economic power, their experiences and perspectives are absent from the historical record. Because the only written works that discuss the Signares were written by European colonists, Winters discussed the problem of trying to understand and write about historical figures of whom there are only traces.

In her talk, Winters shared a number of visual images of Signares. Posing the question of how these visual images might inform the histories we construct, Winters interpreted representations of the Signares in terms of the social context in which they were presented looking specifically at elements such as the setting, the Signares’ dress, their color, and their relationships to other figures in the images. Winters concluded by examining the historical process by which Signares came to be seen as mulattas, drawing attention to the processes by which racialized and gendered categories are superimposed upon the past.

Priya Kandaswamy
Ph.D. Candidate,
Ethnic Studies

Lisa Ze Winters discussed images of Signares such as this one at the April CRG Forum.
Laura Pérez

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as a practice of decolonization. Pérez considers it decolonizing to question the ethnocentricity of Western intellectual assumptions that all spiritual belief is a sign of ignorance or intellectual inferiority and that the West’s Christian beliefs are truer or more advanced than other spiritual practices. Part of Pérez’s work involves illuminating culturally different notions of “s/Spirit,” particularly as these are mobilized through and against each other. As such, Pérez’s work is very much an epistemological critique of colonizing, patriarchal, and heteronormative thought.

In addition to her writing on spirituality, Pérez has also published work that examines questions of aesthetics and identity in Chicano nationalism. Discussing her essay “El Desorden: Nationalism and Chicano/a Aesthetics,” which appeared in the anthology Between Women and Nation (Duke University Press, 1999), she noted that this work was part of her own effort as someone born in the sixties to grapple with Chicano nationalist ideologies. In this essay, Pérez challenged the progressivist narrative that there was first a Chicano movement, which was later followed by a Chicana feminist and lesbian critique in the 80s. Supported by archival materials, she argued that a Chicana feminist and lesbian presence actually emerged more or less simultaneously with the Chicano movement. While the feminist voice “disordered” the patriarchal discourse of Chicano nationalism, the lesbian voice, “disordered” the discourse of heteronormative Chicana feminists as well.

In addition to her research, Dr. Pérez is also a distinguished and well-loved teacher at Berkeley. She teaches graduate and undergraduate classes on contemporary Chicana/o, U.S. Latina, and Latin American women’s writing, visual and performance arts, and contemporary cultural theory. For Pérez, teaching is a very political activity that is not simply about imparting knowledge but about encouraging students to think critically. Pérez, who admits that she loves teaching, often asks students to examine their own responses to a text, including confusion, and to think about what these responses tell them about the piece. She remarked, “Education is about helping people to realize their own potential. It’s about learning to ask questions. I believe in empowering students to realize themselves as human beings and in breaking with the idea of students as passive recipients of knowledge.”

Dr. Pérez organized UC Berkeley’s first U.S. Latina/o performance arts series throughout 2000-2001, with the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance, where she is an affiliated faculty member. Last spring, she co-organized “Looking Back, Looking Forward: Latina/o Religiosities and Spiritualities. An Interdisciplinary Symposium.” Her current research is looking more broadly and deeply at hybrid spiritual practices in Latina/o communities from the 1960s to the present. In addition, she is co-editing an anthology on Latino art from the 19th century to the present and collaborating on a book/exhibition project on murals in San Francisco’s Mission district.

Dr. Pérez observes that among the most important questions facing artists and intellectuals today are how do we define community and how do we assert our social voice and power? Pérez has certainly grappled with these questions in her own work as a scholar, teacher, and activist and will no doubt go on doing so as she continues to make visible the complex entanglements of art and politics.

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Priya Kandaswamy
Ph.D. Candidate, Ethnic Studies
Profiling

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around “gender profiling” within certain transgender groups and the erasures that this discourse often produces.

Jackson noted the ways that the racialized binary between black and white is used to give coherence to other binary structures. She also drew attention to the ontological contradictions in categories like “black man” or “trans black man” that are produced by the ways that blackness functions as an object status and black people are denied rights of self-possession.

Jackson went on to point out the ways that discussions of gender profiling within trans organizations have reproduced the marginalization of blacks. For example, conversations that focused on the “excesses” of police failed to recognize the everyday violence experienced by black people at the hands of the police. Similarly, Jackson noted that while these organizations might criticize some practices of gender profiling, they still employed language that reproduced racist views of Islamic people and remained supportive of most of the enhanced security measures that have largely been directed at people of color in the post-9/11 period.

Jackson argued that the very concept of profiling exclusively based on gender is problematic in that it erases how gender profiling is contingent on factors like race, class and neighborhood. Not only do these emerging discourses about gender profiling assume a queer subject that is not raced, but in doing so they invoke critiques of racial profiling while at the same time erasing them. Jackson concluded by stressing the need for a more comprehensive analysis of state violence.

Priya Kandaswamy
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The Center for Race and Gender would like to thank the organizing committee, panelists, and all those who made our inaugural conference possible.