

# AUTUMN 2012 DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

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*Sponsored by Poet's Hallway  
Tim 'm West performs at Dandelion's in the Concrete. See page 7 for the full story.*

Front page photos by Jen Pagonis



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DEPARTMENT WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES NEWSLETTER

## From the Department Chair

Greetings!

It's hard to believe that I'm writing my first letter of the year! It's already been so busy in WGS this fall that I feel like we've been back to school for much of the year. I cannot tell you how gratifying it is to see the vibrancy throughout our WGS community! Our professors are offering students cutting edge educational opportunities, we are sponsoring and co-sponsoring a myriad of programs around the university and the city, and our students are working in creative ways toward social change and social justice.

I'm delighted to report that we're starting 2012-2013 with a full and active WGS faculty. We also are happy to welcome a new staff person to our department -- Anna Assenmacher has been hired as the new Assistant Director of the Beck Research Initiative for Women, Gender, and Community. For the past two years Anna was a full-time graduate student in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at DePaul. She graduated with her M. A. last spring, and began her new position over the summer. Anna is also graduate of Calvin College (1999) with a B.A. in Business Administration and Finance. Under Anna's leadership, I feel confident that we will continue to work our mission of promoting community-based programs and research that allows DePaul faculty, students, and community members to effect social change through social policy, advocacy and activism, and community development.

Currently Anna is taking a leadership role in developing our WGS Service Learning and Internship Program (SLIP). SLIP will support community-based service learning and internship opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students.

(cont'd p. 2)

## Department Chair Letter (cont'd from page 1)

As part of the SLIP initiative, I will be teaching a new course this winter that is serving this program: WGS 352/452 - Gender, Community, & Activism: Community Based Learning in WGS. If you have questions about this program or this class, please feel free to contact me or Anna!

I suspect that many of you started the academic year as I did – attending the world premiere of Dr. Shakti Butler's new film and dialogue project, *Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequality*. Shakti facilitated workshops and discussions for three days during September and I think all those who participated came away asking new questions about building adaptive leadership skills toward healing, equity, and a more sustainable future. I want to offer a special thank you to Dr. Ann Russo from WGS who took the lead in planning this outstanding event.

Beyond *Cracking the Codes*, we have been involved with so many wonderful programs, speakers, seminars and conferences this fall! From documentary films, to speaker series, to performances, to conferences, our community of faculty and students is on the move. I can't possibly talk about all these activities here, so please see our website and read through the rest of the newsletter for more detailed information. I will mention one new program that is coming up this October. Visiting assistant professor, Misty DeBerry, is organizing a new opportunity for the DePaul community – *The Poet's Hallway: Writing and Performance as Transformation*. This three-day series of performances and events (Wednesday, Oct. 24-Friday, Oct. 26) provided a space that offers transformation and healing through performance and creativity. Hope to see you at future Poet's Hallway events!

You can see that we already have been busy this year. In addition to what I've already mentioned, this year we're continuing to focus some targeted attention on developing guidelines and resources for writing competencies among our graduate and undergraduate students. Moving forward, we have wonderful course offerings for winter, so drop by our office or check out our website to see what courses might be of interest to you.

Wishing everyone a wonderful and productive year! Please feel free to stop by my office to visit anytime!  
- Beth Catlett

## WGS Graduate Colloquium Series by Adriana Viteri



As part of the student led Women and Gender Studies Graduate Colloquium series, several 2<sup>nd</sup> year graduate coordinators alongside faculty advisor Sanjukta Mukherjee, are orga-

nizing bi-quarterly colloquium sessions. The goal of these presentations is to create an interdisciplinary academic community among various graduate programs. This space is intended to foster connections between departments, spark debate and discussion, and allow for a look at the scholarship being developed within multiple departments.

Each session is led by a guest speaker chosen from the wide-

ranging and diverse faculty here at DePaul. Through exploration of each professor's recent scholarship, research, activism or projects, we hope to learn more about their work as it relates to gender issues. We hope that the presentations will lead to opportunities for a broader discussion and collaboration among students of different departments.

(cont.'d p. 5)

## New Internship Opportunities for WGS Students by Anna Assenmacher



WGS students at new community partner Northwest Side Housing Center, Vincian Service Day

The Women's and Gender Studies Department is excited to announce the formal launch of the WGS Service Learning and Internship Program (SLIP) this coming winter quarter!

The mission of SLIP is to promote community-based service learning and internship opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students in the Women's and Gender Studies Department at DePaul University. To do so, we form long-term partnerships with both feminist-informed community organizations and other DePaul University departments and programs in order to produce multi-disciplinary, multi-course, and multi-year projects that serve our stu-

dents and community partners. We are committed to a collaborative effort among students, faculty, and community organizations to develop programs and research that promote social change.

The WGS Service Learning and Internship Program is housed within the department of Women's and Gender Studies at DePaul University and is administered by the Beck Research Initiative for Women, Gender and Community. Students will be placed with community-based organizations for both short-term and long-term internships according to their area of interest. Students may participate in the program in the following three ways:

- Register for **WGS 352/452: Gender, Community, and Activism: Community Based Learning in WGS**, which is an experiential/service learning internship course designed to provide students with an experience that integrates the feminist-informed theoretical work of the classroom with practical application in the community. This course will be offered for the first time in Winter Quarter, 2013
- Visit the **Internship and Job Board** to identify independently-offered opportunities and apply directly to jobs and internships
- Research organizations in our **Community Database** and develop a proposal for an independent internship with an organization of your choice

Please visit [www.beckresearch.org/slip](http://www.beckresearch.org/slip) to learn more!

### Internship Opportunities for WGS Students

Some of the exciting internship opportunities available to WGS students include:

**Common Community Coordinator** with Common Pantry, an emergency food provider in operation since 1967. The coordinator position will work with clients of the Common Community Program to address a set of peripheral social service needs which include assisting clients with SNAP applications, facilitating referrals for housing/legal/healthcare needs, managing partnerships with external organizations, tracking client interaction activity within a database, consulting with the Executive Director on goals & initiatives as well as obstacles to effective service, reporting on services provided and results of program on a monthly basis, and assisting in the communication of general announcements and events to clients.

**Research and Development, Social Media and Marketing, and Community Organizing Fellowships** with Northwest Side Housing Center (NSHC). NSHC is a community-based, non-profit organization that engages, educates and empowers the community to improve housing for all through housing counseling, financial education, community organizing, outreach, advocacy and supportive services. Interns will work with Northwest Side Housing Center's programs according to their interest.

**Media Intern** with Catharsis Productions, a cutting-edge theatre and consulting company that educates audiences on sexual violence through the use of humor and dynamic theatrical media to convey its messages. Responsibilities include inputting research and survey data, supporting office manager and co-owners with administrative duties, assembling and distributing promotional materials, archiving past publicity materials and press coverage, assisting in organizing company Filemaker database, and updating online social media pages.

## Choosing to Heal: A Review Shakti Butler's "Cracking the Codes" by Nicole Faust



Sitting. Letting eyes close. Breathing deeply. These actions, mundane as they are, take on wholly new significance when they come as directives from the voice of Dr. Shakti Butler. This voice is warm and soothing and fills the entire space of the room. Dr. Butler's voice centered and united the group of students, faculty, and community members who sat awaiting the premiere of Dr. Butler's most recent film "Cracking the Code: The System of Racial Inequity." The message of this film is not as soothing as Dr. Butler's voice. Instead, "Cracking the Codes" reveals the complex system of institutionalized and socialized racism in our country.

"Cracking the Codes" is comprised of interviews, archival footage, and segments featuring a spoken word artist who acts as a dramatic chorus throughout. Built into the film are pauses for discussion between audience members. This film demands an active viewer. The message and move-

ment of the film is framed by a diagram that links internalized and externalized forms of oppression to history, economics, culture, and identity. This diagram takes the shape of a figure eight, the symbol of infinity.

The film's first series of interviews center on history and ask "whose history?" A black woman interviewed recalls her mother explaining government-backed slavery. She recalls responding with shock and innocent confusion. "*How could they be so mean?*" she asked.

The second half of the film focuses on externalized forms of oppression. Interviewees discuss stereotypes and myths about black men, women, and youth. These interviews reveal the extreme inequities of our education system, predatory lending practices in low-income areas, and discriminatory profiling by law enforcement.

"Cracking the Codes" is a film that addresses both the abstract and concrete dynamics of racism, oppression, and othering that continue to shape life in the U.S. If pressed to write this review of "Cracking the Codes" using a single word, I would write "accountability." Dr. Butler asks us to recognize inequities as they exist in our world, to educate others, to intervene when we witness oppression in our daily lives, to be in open and honest dialogue with those around us, and to make the choice to heal.

Profound thanks to Dr. Butler for her insight and passion and to the Center for Intercultural Program, Office of Institutional Diversity, the Egan Urban Center, and Dr. Ann Russo for bringing the film and its creator to our campus.

## Colloquium series (*cont.'d from page 2*)

Throughout this upcoming year we hope to build the foundations of a WGS graduate cohort that moves toward academic and activist achievements in collaboration with students and faculty from many disciplines. The Colloquium Series will build peer-mentoring partnerships for writing and research and strive to create a vibrant, transformative, intellectual community throughout the university.

The fall colloquium series featured Dr. Barbara Speicher, a full-time professor at the College of Communications. Dr. Speicher gave a wonderful lecture about the 'The Rhetoric and Themes of the 2012 Presidential Race'. Save the dates for our winter quarter colloquiums: January 25<sup>th</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup>

Please contact Adriana Viteri at [aviteri@depaul.edu](mailto:aviteri@depaul.edu), Kristen Portland at [kristenkportland@gmail.com](mailto:kristenkportland@gmail.com), or Samantha Schooley at [samantha.schooley@gmail.com](mailto:samantha.schooley@gmail.com) if you have any questions or comments around upcoming or past events.

## Student Organization Profile: Spectrum by Rachel Wills



Autumn is not quite over—there are still plenty of pumpkin flavored items on the shelves and leaves on the ground—however, you may already feel as though you are trapped in a blizzard of busyness. Doesn't the refuge of a safe and accepting space sound like a must? Spectrum DePaul would like to offer you just that!

Spectrum DePaul is the largest of three LGBTQA groups on campus. Our focus is social advocacy, with which, we seek to create programming that is diverse and rich enough for there to be something for everyone! We have weekly meetings on Wednesday at 7:30 pm. Spectrum has a wide range of activities, including diversity/justice workshops, collaborative events with other groups, participation in the Chicagoland Queer Intercollegiate Alliance events and the annual Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Ally College Conference, Boystown/Girlstown scavenger hunts, froyo outings, mixers and more!

We also seek to build bridges on campus, provide a forum to facilitate dialogue, create a presence at DePaul and help to eradicate forms of discrimination. One of the main ways Spectrum does this is through its collaborative events. Most recently, we paired with In Our Words blog in hosting an open mic night. In the past, Spectrum has co-hosted a screening of the film "Milk" as well as a consent workshop with the Vincent & Louise House.

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So bring your passions, questions and uniqueness. Be a part of what we are doing on campus and in the greater Chicago area! Spectrum DePaul warmly welcomes you (that includes non-DePaul folk)! For more information about upcoming meetings and events find us on Facebook, or e-mail us at [spectrumdepaul@gmail.com](mailto:spectrumdepaul@gmail.com).

## Exploding the Limitations: What Being a Femme Means to Me by Elise Nagey



Female, feminine, femme—is there really a difference?

Look in any magazine selling femininity; the skin is light, the noses are slender, the hips are narrow, the clothing is decadent. It's normalized, so we aren't necessarily always aware of these things, but they're omnipresent. Feminine ideals are all tangled up in racism, classism, ableism, YouNameIt-ism. Femininity has a lot of rules, and one of the overarching rules is that it's nearly unattainable. Femininity will keep you busy and keep your money and energy tied up in trying to reach some imaginary pinnacle of perfection while you could be out doing magnificent things with your life - or exploring and constructing your own vision of femme that isn't dictated by capitalism and sexism.

Femininity is what's expected of you if you're assigned as female at birth. Femme exists between and around sex and gender assigned at birth. Femme opens up a space for people who weren't necessarily assigned as female at birth, those who might not ac-

cept a strict and naturalized gender binary, as well as those who reject that assignment as having any real personal meaning. Femme is embodied in trans women and cis women, trans men and cis men.

Femme rips open the rules and ideals and myths and codes of femininity and reconstructs them, stitching them back together with hot pink embroidery thread and silver tinsel. Femme identities have queer lineages. Femme/Butch is a binary; even those totally foreign to queer communities are nominally familiar with this. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, femme and butch were used to classify supposedly opposing ends of the gender presentation spectrum. Today that binary has been questioned and scrambled in favor of understanding gender identity and expression and sexuality not so much as spectrums, but as magical swirling clouds of chaos, juxtapositions, convergences, and contradictions. Femme has grown to include all sorts of identity and communities.

Femme is what you do with yourself in the world, the way millennia of ideologies of femininity collide in the sway of your hips and swoop of your eyeliner. Femme is a vision as well as a way of presenting; Femme isn't hierarchical or exclusionary. Femme isn't necessarily straight and isn't necessarily gay; femme can be asexual,

femme can be kinky, femme can be fluid. Femme is by/for people of color. Femme is by/for people with disabilities. Femme is by/for people who can't afford what Femininity is selling and wouldn't want to buy it anyway.

“Femme” can be hairy; “femme” can be scarred and lumpy; “femme” can have body mods, “femme” can be fat. Every vision of femme is different. We've culled influences and ideas from our experiences, from our friends, from babes on the internet, from artwork, from reclaimed catcalling, from vintage ads, from grandmothers, mothers and aunts. Femme is something I constantly define and redefine for myself, in community with other people and other femmes.

Femme is additive and inclusive and messy and affirming. Femme means you don't have to ignore or reject some parts of yourself in the service of gender coherence. Femme is about chosen community or cultivated isolation—about putting your energies where you think they help or flourish most.

Femme isn't about policing, about just the right amount of peachy lip-gloss, or the perfect tan, or the right clothes, or the right walk, or the right taste, though it's sometimes about that, too. Femme is about gestures, mannerisms, affectations and performance. It's about making the face you present to

the world represent the self you feel most like in that moment. It's about resisting the idea that traditional masculinity should be a requirement of your embodiment. Femme is contradictory and chaotic. It's unfixed, mutable, fluid, and heterogeneous.

Femme is a personal identity, but it's also a political one. It calls attention to the performativity of gender and sexuality. It questions the idea that there can be too much: too much blush, too much tulle, too many holes in your short shorts, too much calling out of racism, too many discussions about neocolonialism. Femme is resistance. Femme pushes back against the idea that people must act traditionally masculine to be powerful or traditionally feminine to be acceptable. Femme rejects white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. Femme explores and explodes the limitations placed on people when they're assigned female or male at birth.

"Female" reduces us to our anatomy in an arbitrary and often personally meaningless way, but "femme" opens up a space outside of the gender/sex binary. Femme gives us something sparkly and sharp to make our own and hand down in a way "female"—with all of its clinical prescriptivism—never will.

- Elise Nagy is a 2012 WGS alumna

## The Poet's Hallway: An Invitation by Misty De Berry

**THE POET'S HALLWAY:**  
Writing and Performance as Transformation  
Wednesday, October 24 - Friday, 26 | 2:30pm-6:30pm

**Memory, Embodiment and Transformation:**  
Wednesday, October 24  
3:30pm-6:30pm  
O'Connell Hall, Rm. 350  
1038 W. Belden Ave  
An evening with Misty Bernadette De Berry  
Join us for a performance reading, peace circle and workshop  
Doors open at 2:30  
Light snacks served free

**Defying Boundaries- Performance as Method:**  
Thursday, October 25  
2:30pm-6:30pm  
DePaul Art Museum  
838 W. Fullerton  
An evening with Sage Xaxua Morgan-Hubbard  
Join us for a performance reading, peace circle and workshop  
Doors open at 2:00  
Light snacks served free

**The he/art Experience:**  
Friday, October 26  
5:00pm-6:00pm  
DePaul Art Museum  
838 W. Fullerton  
An evening with Tim West and youth members from the Center on Halested  
Join us for a performance reading, peace circle and workshop  
Doors open at 2:30  
Light snacks served free

*The Poet's Hallway - a space that offers transformation and healing through performance and creativity*  
Questions? Misty Bernadette De Berry @mdeberry1@depaul.edu

Sponsors and Partners  
This event is sponsored by and in partnership with the Department of Women's and Gender Studies, the Irene Jack Research Initiative, the Women's Center, the Office of LGBTQA Student Services, the Center for Intercultural Programs,

I am super excited to invite you to participate in an amazing and special project I've created- it's called *The Poet's Hallway*.

*The Poet's Hallway* is a space that offers healing and transformation through performance and creativity. Grounded in transnational feminisms, performance studies, anti-racist frameworks and restorative justice models- the mission of *The Poet's Hallway* is guided by a vision to shift notions of traditional academic spaces. Instead of seeing such spaces as only sites for intellectual exploration, *The Poet's Hallway* aims to re-imagine- reshape them as deliberate sites for acts of creativity, healing, joy and transformation.

During its inaugural season (Wednesday, October 24 - Friday, October 26) I joined local artist-scholars Sage Xaxua Morgan-Hubbard and Tim West to speak to this quarter's theme- *Writing and Performance as Transformation*. Across three days we presented performances, peace circles and workshops titled: *Memory, Embodiment and Transformation*; *Defying Boundaries - Performance as Method*; and *The he/art Experience*.

I am thrilled that each quarter *The Poet's Hallway* will partner and culminate with events connected to Dandelions in the Concrete! Please keep your eye posted for more events to come!!

Looking forward to the rest of the year- it is an honor to share *The Poet's Hallway* with you!

# What's Normal Anyway?

by Morgan Boecher

*A webcomic about being trans male*



MRB



Written and drawn by Morgan Boecher, "What's Normal Anyway?" is a webcomic about being trans male. Check it out at <http://whatsnormalanyway.net/> The WGS Newsletter staff would like to thank Morgan for kindly giving us permission to reprint this comic.

**Do you create comics? The WGS Newsletter would like to continue featuring comics in upcoming issues. If you would like to contribute your own work, email [wgs.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:wgs.newsletter@gmail.com)**

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## **Want to write for the newsletter?**

Have an idea for a story you would like to see included in the newsletter? Or do you have artwork, poetry, essays, or photos you would like to see included in Winter's issue?

E-mail us your work, suggestions, feedback, questions, comments, and concerns at [wgs.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:wgs.newsletter@gmail.com).