Letter From The Chair

Hello and welcome to the 2012-2013 academic year! We wish a wonderful, productive academic year to all of our students, undergraduate and graduate; and, to our alumni, we hope you will accept our invitation to contact us with your news, personal and professional, to share in our next newsletter. We extend a special welcome to our newest majors and minors with an open invitation to become involved “GSEXers”. Join our advisory committee; participate in our invited lectures; be a part of our events, and spend time in our offices meeting with faculty, with each other, and for quite time in our conference room and mini-library. We’re fully wified and welcome you to the Crenshaw ‘club house’.

We have made remarkable strides in the past twelve months, and look forward to a very productive new academic year. First, we extend a rousing welcome to our newest faculty member, Associate Professor Kimberly N. Brown who comes to us as a senior faculty member from Texas A&M University. Please read all about Dr. Brown and her accomplishments after this brief welcome. We extend our thanks to Dr. Jim Coleman, Dean of the College of Humanities and Sciences, for making it possible to hire Dr. Brown, the Department’s first faculty member assigned 100% to GSWS.

Secondly, our students had the opportunity to accompany two of our faculty, Dr. Archana Pathak, and Professor Liz Canfield, on a month-long study abroad trip to India this past summer. Read about the India trip in this newsletter. The trip’s success was due in great part to Dr. Pathak’s very hard work and her special knowledge of the cities visited and the vibrant culture of each, and to her many family and friends who made possible opportunities that would not have been available to us otherwise.

I also wish to thank Adrienne Sledd for her generous international travel grant which was divided equally among our travelers to defray some of the expenses of the trip. I also wish to thank Adrienne’s Mom, Belinda Sledd for her continuing support. Already in the planning is the next study abroad to Brazil! Stay tuned for more information and plan to join us in the summer of 2013.

In the coming year, we will once again honor the memory of Mrs. Anne Clay Crenshaw in whose home our offices reside, and whose early efforts helped to establish the Richmond chapter of what is now the League of Women Voters. We will resume the Crenshaw Lecture this year at about the same time that we observe the installation of a Virginia Historical Marker in her honor at 919 W. Franklin Street. We owe the work on obtaining the historical marker to Ray Bonis, the Cabell Library’s archivist. His efforts in our behalf have been outstanding.

Also this year, our course rubric will change from WMNS to GSWS. As you might guess, this is a monumental task since the rubric appears in so many places in the undergraduate and graduate bulletins including all cross-listed courses, and the VCU website. In this instance, we thank Dr. James Mays for his special efforts in making this change possible.

As we build our alumni list, we will be alerting alums as well as students about our sponsored lectures including our Feminist Scholars brown bag lunches, and special events. Be sure to get in touch and stay in touch! In the meantime, Best wishes to all,

Janet Hutchinson
Chair
Meet Dr. Brown

Kimberly Nichele Brown, Ph.D., was most recently an associate professor of English and the former director of The Africana Studies Program at Texas A&M University. She specializes in black feminist theory, contemporary African American literature and culture, Africana film, and American and Africana literatures. The focal threads that weave continuity into Brown’s research agenda are issues regarding race, gender and representation: i.e., black agency and self-actualization, black subjectivity, the black body, as well as questions of audience and spectatorship. In her book, *Writing the Black Revolutionary Diva: Women’s Subjectivity and the Decolonizing Text* (Indiana University Press, August 2010), Brown examines how African American women since the 1970s have found ways to move beyond the “double consciousness” of the colonized text to develop a healthy subjectivity that attempts to disassociate black subjectivity from its connection to white culture. Brown traces the emergence of this new consciousness from its roots in the Black Aesthetic Movement through important milestones such as the anthology The Black Woman and Essence magazine to the writings of Angela Davis, Toni Cade Bambara, and Jayne Cortez. In the spring, Brown is slated to teach Black Feminist Thought and the Department’s Senior Seminar (Gendered Approaches to Racial Passing). Brown is on leave this fall to work on her second book project, tentatively titled *Incognito Stances: Cross-Racial Espionage in Contemporary Film and Literature*, which explores the gendered nuances of an alternate employment of cross-racial masquerading or racial passing as an act of resistance or subversion.

Meet the new Administrative Assistants

The department has two new admins, Safiya Bridgewater and Jessica Jude. Safiya and Jessica are both recent GSEX alumni. Safiya graduated in December 2011 with dual degrees in International Studies and Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies. She is currently in the Post-Bacc Certificate Program for Nonprofit Management. Jessica graduated in May 2012 with a degree in Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies and a minor in African American Studies. Safiya and Jessica have a lot in store for the upcoming school year. Along with managing upcoming art shows and department events, working with the Department’s Advisory Committee on general recruiting and alumni outreach activities, Jessica and Safiya will be working on a brand new GSEX website, and will be blogging and social networking all along the way! Please don’t hesitate to stop by during their office hours if you have any questions. For accessibility call 828-6710. During our office hours, Safiya and Jessica are more than willing to come outside to talk to you or hunt down a professor you’d like to speak to (during their office hours) and send them outside. Jessica and Safiya are both so excited about working with past, present, and future GSEXers to make the 2012/2013 school year the best yet!

Office Hours

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email them: bridgewatesu@vcu.edu or jnjude@vcu.edu
This Past Year

in events

Art of Surviving

“Art can...take our unexpressed thoughts and desires and fling them with clarity and coherence on the wall, a screen, a sheet of paper, or against the long silence of history.”

--Adrienne Rich

On January 30th, 2012, GSEX and The Wellness Resource Center at VCU hosted host the Action Alliance’s provocative exhibit, “The Art of Surviving.” The exhibit featured visual art and poetry created by survivors of sexual violence by artists from ages 19 to 75. The GSEX department also be hosted art and writing workshops every Monday during the month of February in order to provide a space for people to create works that responded to the exhibit. On February 27th, there was also a speak-out open-mic event to raise awareness about how sexual violence affects our communities.

Open Minds

This past spring semester was the debut of the GSEX department’s Open Minds service learning class. The course, taught by Liz Canfield, focuses on the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) and resistance to institutionalized power. The class is one part VCU students, one part prison inmates, and one hundred parts intensity. On Fridays during the semester, GSEX students went to the women’s tier of the Richmond City Jail for writing workshops with the inmate students. The spring course was so successful it was extended into the summer as a short summer semester course. Liz Canfield also taught a senior seminar class that focused on the issues of the Prison Industrial Complex last spring. The students from that class presented research posters at VCU’s Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) symposium in the VCU Commons.

We can only begin to tackle the concrete and barbed wire that divides our world when we start with that on our own doorstep.

--Protest slogan, UK, 1982

On Our Own Doorstep

April 23rd was the opening night of the spring/summer GSEX art show hosted by students from the Open Minds class. On Our Own Doorstep (title inspired by quote above) was a collaborative arts show of words and images with the theme of resistance to institutionalized power. Students from the class distributed zines with select readings from GSEXers and inmates in the course. During the opening there was space and time set aside for a poetry reading. Students in the Open Minds class picked their favorite selections from the zine to read the crowd. The pieces read ranged from hilarious to emotionally intense, but all of the words were vulnerable and true. If you haven’t checked this show out yet, you’re in luck! On Our Own Doorstep will be up through the end of September.
Lavender Graduation

On April 27, 2012, the GSEX Department, along with OMSA, the LGBTQ Subcommittee of the Equity and Diversity Committee, Provost’s Office, the MCV and VCU Alumni Associations, Queer Action and the MCV Health Collective, sponsored VCU’s inaugural Lavender Graduation. Over 100 guests came to VCU’s beautiful Scott House to honor 40 graduating seniors who identify as LGBTQ or as allies to the LGBTQ community. Speakers included Provost Beverly Warren, PhD; Chris Woleben, MD, Assistant Professor of Pediatric Emergency Medicine at VCU (1997 graduate of VCU); and Aaron Gilchrist, Anchor at NBC Channel 4 in Washington D.C. mid-1990’s, Lavender graduations have been celebrated on college campuses since then but have become more common over the last ten years. VCU’s upper administration was highly supportive of this celebration and many GSEXers participated in this special day.

GSEXers in the Community

Girls Rock! RVA

In Spring of 2010, GSEX professor, Liz Canfield, showed Girls Rock!, a documentary about the Rock and Roll Camp for Girls in Portland, Oregon, to her Intro to GSEX course. Girls rock fever caught hold and then GSEX students met, organized and fundraised along with other members of the Richmond community, over the course of a year, in order to host Richmond’s first ever, girls rock camp in the summer of 2011. The camp is all-volunteer run and organized and is absolutely free for campers.

This past August, Girls Rock! RVA organizers, most of whom are GSEX alumni, held the second rock camp with even greater success. There were twice as many campers as the previous year, the camp was an extra day longer, and the week was one day longer (Monday through Friday with a showcase on Saturday). The campers had instrument instruction and band practice all week long to get ready to rock the showcase. Excitement and jittery nerves were through the roof by the end of the week, but the showcase was an incredible success—family and friends of the campers and volunteers, as well as community members came out to watch the 10 girl bands rock the show. And rock it they did! By the end of the showcase, there was nary a dry eye in sight.

Website: girlsrockrva.wordpress.com

The very first graduate from the GSEX post-baccalaureate certificate program, Morgan Krug, receives a rainbow cord from Provost and vice president of academic affairs, Beverly Warren, Ed.D., Ph.D.

Fundraising for RRFP

Every spring, an all-volunteer local nonprofit organization, Richmond Reproductive Freedom Project (RRFP), organizes a Bowl-a-Thon, which is a fundraiser where members of the Richmond area community form teams to raise funds in creative ways. All money from the fundraiser goes directly to breaking down barriers to abortion. This year, GSEXers, Safiya Bridgewater, Jessica Jude, Toshi Yingsling, Morgan Krug, Brianna Gribbin, Elizabeth Albrecht, Aaron Kemmerer, and Liz Canfield worked together to raise money for RRFP. They hosted a dance party at Babes of Carytown, a spoken word open mic at The Camel, screen printed tees and patches, and even had their own Super Uterus mascot, GSEXer Cody Platt. Team GSEX came in as top fundraising team, raising over $4,700. They won a trophy too! (Stop by the Crenshaw Building and you’ll see it on the mantle in the foyer.)

Team GSEX celebrated their collective awesomeness by dressing up as nerdy punks and dancing the night away at the bowling party.

superuterus.tumblr.com
GSEXers in the World

Cole R. Cridlin, according to his website, grew up on a backroad in rural Virginia and is inordinately proud of this fact. He writes, “After completing three bachelor’s degrees in English, French and Gender, Sexuality & Women’s Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA, I would like to say that I know what I want to do with my life. That would be a lie.”

Well it seems as though cole has an inkling of what to do. He won a Fulbright Grant to teach English abroad, in France, and that’s no small accomplishment.

Cole is a GSEX alum who also completed two other bachelor’s degree in English and French. He also is a graduate of VCU’s Honors College. Having won an Undergraduate Student Fellows grant in 2009, he is no stranger to France. This time around he will teach English in the suburbs of Paris at the Lycée Evariste Galois a Sartrouville, an upper-level secondary school that prepares students for the baccalauréat degree required for admission to French universities. He also will hone his French language skills through coursework at the Alliance Française and study French Theory. He will also be GSEXing it up by volunteering with local organizations and activist groups, such as the Centre LGBT de Paris et Île de France.

Congratulations, COLE!

GSEXers in India

After amazing experiences leading GSEXers to the Women’s Worlds Global Feminist Conference in Canada the summer before last, Dr. Archana Pathak and Prof. Liz Canfield led GSEXers in India this past summer. In order to go on this trip, the students enrolled in an intensive summer course in intersectional feminist, queer and postcolonial theories and practices that allowed students to work within various social justice organizations and engaged directly with local activists and scholars in Mumbai and Delhi.

And there were excursions too. Between May 15th and June 15th, 8 GSEXers Visited Elephanta Caves, Gateway to India, Marine Drive, Mani Bhavan, the National Gallery of Modern Art, Chowpatty, Mahalaxmi Temple, Dhobi Ghat, Flora Fountain, Bombay University, Victoria Terminus and Nariman Point, Birla Temple, Red Fort, Fatehpur Sikri, Rashtrapati Bhavan and Ghandi’s memorial.

GSEX students in front of the Taj Mahal

From left to right: Professors Liz Canfield and Archana Pathak with gandhiji

GSEX India students and professors
Keep in Touch

Social Media

We love you. And we want to keep up with you just as much as you want to keep up with us. We have a new tumblr! And it’s so so fresh. Also we will be posting and responding regularly on Facebook and Twitter. Please follow us. These social media will be a great way to get the most up-to-date word on what’s going on within the department.

tumblr: vcu-gsex.tumblr.com
twitter: twitter.com/vcuWMNS
facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/119296113604/

We need you. The GSEX Advisory Committee needs new and returning members to get the ball rolling for this semester. If you want to help to grow and create progress for your department, this is a great way to be engaged as a student. There are a few main goals of the committee, such as recruiting new GSEX majors and finding creative ways to encourage departmental growth. We will also be creating programming through GSEX that will be open to the entire VCU community (a great way to get more folks involved with the department!), and most importantly you will be the voice for the GSEX student body.

Email: jnjude@vcu.edu

Come In

We miss you. Just stop by to say hi! Reasons to come into the GSEX Crenshaw House: Check out the current art show, Get a sip of water from the water fountain in between classes, Check out our new book collection, Pick up a GSEX department zine, Check yourself out in the big mirror in the hallway, Get some condoms, dental dams, or lube, Check out our bulletin board for upcoming feminist events, Chill out or study in the conference room when it’s unoccupied, use our gender-neutral, single occupancy bathroom, Introduce yourself to the new administrative assistants.

Donate

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In the next issue:
   Artshow!
   Meet the Profs!
   Queers & their pets!
   & more!