I hope this latest newsletter finds you in great holiday spirit and taking a respite, if only briefly, from worries about social injustice and oppression. I know it’s a very difficult time for many among us, but take some time to reminisce about good things and good people, and know that we’re thinking of you.

We want to extend a hearty congratulations to our Summer and Winter 2013 Graduates! It’s always a thrill for faculty to meet our students’ families and friends, and to see their happy, even glowing, faces as they walk across the stage during our department’s ceremony. This year, as last, our College of Humanities and Sciences Dean, Jim Coleman, led the festivities, encouraging the audience to clap, yell, and flash pictures to the glee of all present. As we usher our newest graduates on to their next home away from home (working, going to graduate school) we encourage each one to remember us, to keep in touch, and to share their news with us.

Also, we encourage each to let us help if help is needed in making decisions about next steps. Most of us have a lot of experience in the work world and in life, generally, that we’re happy to share if it helps.

I’d also like to thank the alumni that responded to our last newsletter request to make contact with us. Some of our more senior alums let us know that they’re still getting used to our new name, and to those, we want to say that we haven’t forgotten women’s issues in our desire to become more inclusive. In fact, we believe that inclusiveness is a hallmark of feminisms (yes, plural, now) and continue to press for all of the rights we’ve fought for, for so long. We try not to be disheartened that we seem to be going backwards on some issues and welcome our alumni efforts to remind our policy makers that this should never happen. In the meantime, please let us hear from you.

Best wishes for a happy holiday Season,

Janet
CONGRATULATIONS!
DECEMBER 2012 GRADUATES!

Majors:
Cecelia Choi
Alina Collins
Kitty Meader
Kaela Shear
Stephanie Stapleton

Minors:
Tiffany Bartlett
Katherine Carroll-Thompson
Sarah Lambert
Lillian Virgil
Jaleel Young

Left to right: Kate Carroll-Thompson, Cecilia Choi, Alina Collins, Stephanie Stapleton Jones, and Kitty Meader
Alina Collins’ decorated cap

Kitty Meader
Upon graduating with a degree in Women Studies from VCU, I moved to Philadelphia, where I completed a Masters of Education (M.Ed) in Urban Education: School to Community Partnership and a graduate certificate in Women’s Studies from Temple University. Recently, I finished Post-Graduate work at Arcadia University in Applied Behavioral Analysis and Autism. I am currently a Lead Clinician in a School Therapeutic treatment program for children with behavioral and mental health disabilities.

I also devote my life to working as a radical birth and full-spectrum Doula, and with various organizations around prisoner issues, such as the Books through Bars program, the Questioning Incarceration Coalition and the Human Rights Coalition for prisoners in Philadelphia.

In 2011, I received an Art and Change Leeway Grant; a grant for Women to create social change through their artistic and cultural work for my photography project entitled “Mamas”. In 2010, I was awarded the first ever Black Women’s Blueprint “Black Woman Rising Activist Award” and a grant from Philadelphia’s Fund for Survival Support Work for my “Summer for the Sistas” Project; a subversive project I created of positive images of Black Women with words of encouragement, beauty, and upliftment, written by Black Women for Black Women in their community. [Seen on next page and also at: www.summerforthesistas.blogspot.com.]

I am the creator behind the Ntozake Shange School of Literary Thought, a literary circle and safe space for Black Women to create through the written word and is one of the members and founders of the Black Feminist Working Group, that produced the 12 point platform on Black Feminism, “What Sistas Want, What Sistas Need”. The platform will be published in Virginia Eubanks, Alethia Jones and Barbara Smith, upcoming book, by the State University of New York Press.

My work has been published in the Research for Teaching English journal, Specter Magazine, and Spelman’s “Aunt Chloe” journal.

I just want to end with this: Women Studies really changed my life. I got to sit in the presence and learn from powerhouse professors such as Elizabeth Canfield, and Rose Landrum-Lee. These Women exposed me to a vast history of Women’s struggle and taught me to stand in my power as a Woman. Lessons I will keep with me forever! Proud to be an Alumni of this program.
On our bulletin board, directly in front of the door of The Crenshaw House, is a copy of Iresha’s Black Feminist Twelve Point Platform, *What Sistas Want, What Sistas Believe.*
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Beth Harris

Beth is a dual degree senior majoring in Photography and GSEX. They work at Holiday Barn, where they walk, play with, and clean up after dogs, and when they’re not making super serious work, they like to photograph dogs. One of Beth’s amazing photography projects is Undressing Gender.

Undressing Gender
(in progress title)

In my work, I investigate the performativity and ambiguity of gender. I am interested in exploring gender identity as a spectrum, rather than the socially constructed false binary of male/female that is seen as mutually opposite.

I aim to obscure and reveal identity in subtle ways and make the viewer question what they are seeing. By representing bodies through a queer lens, I make the viewer engage with bodies existing along a spectrum. There is a subtle confrontation of how the subject does not fit neatly into binaries of gender or sexuality. I am interested in how bodies as well as objects are signified with gender presumptions and consider how to challenge the immediate assumptions that viewers make when viewing my work.

Identity is a very important theme throughout my work, and I use a queer theoretical lens to explore identity and to gain a better understanding of myself. I predominantly use self-portraits to emphasize the personal nature of my work and to give myself a safe space to investigate my feelings about gender and situate myself within the context of non-binary and genderqueer gender presentation. Therefore my self-portraits are vulnerable, but display strength by revealing. By using simple backgrounds, I aim to show the narrative through the subject and not the surroundings. Using objects such as clothing, a chest binder, and a strap-on, are reminiscent of childhood dressing up in clothes, and allow me to unpack the cultural as well as person meanings of these items.
**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 medium will be a 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
- **web** gsws.vcu.edu
- **facebook** www.facebook.com/groups/119296113604/

**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 art show, 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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To donate;, mail checks payable to: VCU Foundation/Hellmuth Fund PO Box 842026 Richmond, VA 23284-2026

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**Advisory Board**

*We need you.* The GSEX Advisory Committee needs new and returning members to get the ball rolling for next 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 gsws@vcu.edu if interested.*

**College of Humanities and Sciences**

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**VCU**

**Next Issue:**
- student projects
- alumni news
- spring events
- & more