



MAY 2010 VOL. I • ISSUE 3

# esimone connecting to the "Feminist" in you...

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### Free your mind and the rest will follow...

This 1992 EN VOGUE song, I think, truly sums up the liberating feeling students, staff, and professors have after what has been considered a long Winter semester. But the theme of freedom wasn't only among students. Throughout the 2009-2010 year, the Simone de Beauvoir Institute (SdBI) Forum Committee (R. Berger, M-A. Cobbler, H. Martinez Villeda, J. Matson, L. Meyer, G. Rail & T. Salah) organized events that spoke of mobilizing activists, teachers, community members and bystanders to help liberate those in prison, those assaulted by homophobia or other forms of discrimination, and those who are stuck in working conditions not by their own choice. So, while the semester was busy, it was also a good one. Constant events kept

SdBI on its toes and participants wanting to be part of the many happenings.

For the upcoming 2010-2011 year, SdBI will continue to orga-nize and/or cosponsor events in the academic community as well as in collaboration with Montreal community organizations, to fulfill our feminist, anti-racist, anti-ableist, anticlassist and queer/sex-positive mandate. Providing a nice balance of academic and activist happenings will remain our aim!

As summer approaches, we hope that you all enjoy the unique Montreal culture, maybe volunteer for an organization of your choice and, most importantly, that you be safe: we want to see you back next semester!

Melissa-Anne Cobbler

### Hello & Goodbye: M-A says "adieu"

THE JACKSON 5 said it best - "I never can say goodbye." However, after my short stint with the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, I am extremely thankful for the opportunity to have worked alongside the many students, professors, staff members, fellows, and research associates. I know it's been a busy year, but I hope our events were fun, enlightening and, most importantly, engaging.

As I pursue my graduate studies, I must say that I have made many valuable connections by working at the Institute, which in turn will be invaluable to my academic, professional and personal life. I send a very special thank you to Dr. Geneviève Rail for her insight, wisdom and kindness during my time with the Institute, Dr. Viviane Namaste who always kept me smiling, Belinda Bowes for



her warmth and the many others who were just a pleasure to work with :-)

So, though I bid farewell, I ask that you all keep informed, connected, and active. Without many of you being advocates or just being plain old rabble rousers, important foci would be lost. Be well and thank you to those who showed support and a positive spirit.

# International Women's Day Social

TEABAGGING, an Anne of Green Gables queer love story, and Mary Poppins as a dominatrix? Yes, I know - very interesting. This and more were part of SdBI's International Women's Day social held March 8th. And the event turned out to be indeed very interesting! The universal 2010 theme - Equal rights, equal opportunities: Progress for all, was reinforced by the many students, Professors Trish Salah and Gada Mahrouse, and Montrealbased performance artist Davna McLeod who came to celebrate an evening of true solidarity alongside laughter and fun.

Screening her experimental videos, "that's right Diana Barry- you needed me," "teabagging & other beauty secrets," and "Ultimate SUB Ultimate DOM," McLeod, a graduate of Concordia University's Master of Fine Arts program, was a perfect fit to commemorate not only the global strength of women, but also to bring hilarity to the unique "peculiarities" of women, whether identified as straight or queer. Having to kick students out of the Institute well after 10pm, the social was an evening that allowed students, professors, and staff to mingle and once again rejoice in an atmosphere that celebrated womanhood.

A special thanks to Professor Trish Salah for her help in organizing the social and Evelyne Langlois-Paquette at Studio 303 (**www.studio303.ca**) for the additional promotion and for sending Dayna our way.

*Dayna McLeod* is a Montreal-based performance artist and all around queer-identified extraordinaire (see her films, spoken word and art on http:// daynarama.com)



(L to R) SdBI fellow Dr. Lorna Roth, and SdBI professors Dr. Trish Salah and Dr. Gada Mahrouse



SdBI students enjoying each other's company



Lillian S. Robinson Scholar Dr. Erica Meiners and Dr. Trish Salah



McLeod presenting one of her videos

### Feminist Café Series

#### Mobilizing Bystanders to Stand Up

ACTIVIST, professor, and Lillian S. Robinson Scholar Dr. Erica Meiners has been mobilizing bystanders, policy advocates, academics, and other community activists to support prison abolition work and queer/ immigrant rights initiatives, to name a few. Introduced by SdBI Principal, Dr. Geneviève Rail and Associate Professor Dr. Elizabeth Meyer, Dr. Meiners presented her talk (Building Abolition Futures: Feminist Troubles *with Protection in a Prison Nation*) on March 18th, thus offering an engaging discourse on the "queering" of sex registries within the United States as a response to the prevalence of sexual violence against women and children. Dr. Meiners discussed prison abolitionist work and its linkage to a feminist framework and how community mobilization can annihilate a structure that places queer and racialized individuals at the forefront of sex crimes.

Liam Michaud, Marty Fink and Joshua Pavan, members of the Prisoner Correspondence Project, were present at the event to speak about their project and how it mobilizes the queer and trans community through penpalships to discuss the experience of being on the "inside" and to bring to light the local and national projects that support having their voices heard. Both discussions were complementary, engaging, and provided connections to discourses around prison abolitionist work and issues of importance within queer/trans communities. Dr. Meiners also hosted a roundtable on March 19th, 2010 with various queer academic activists (Therese Quinn, Francisco Ibáñez-Carrasco and Alan Wong) who shared common stories on the pleasures and struggles of queer activism.

**Dr. Erica Meiners** is an Associate professor of Education and Women's Studies at Northeastern Illinois University. She has published *Right* to be hostile: Schools, prisons and the making of public enemies and Flaunt It! Queers in the struggle for education and justice, with Therese Quinn - queer activist and former Fulbright Professor at the University of Helsinki, Finland (August-December 2009).

*The Prisoner Correspondence Project* is a working group of the Quebec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG) at Concordia University and an affiliate group of the 2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy. See their work at: www.prisonercorrespondenceproject. com



Dr. Erica Meiners with PCP collective members (L to R) Liam Michaud, Marty Fink and Joshua Pavan



Dr. Geneviève Rail, SdBl Principal, and Dr. Meiners

### **SPOTLIGHT** Bienvenue Marilou Gagnon



NOUVELLE stagiaire postdoctorale Marilou Gagnon, professeure adjointe à la Faculté des sciences de la santé de l'Université d'Ottawa, vient de terminer un projet de recherche doctoral sur la trajectoire des femmes vivant avec le VIH/sida qui développent des changements corporels (lipodystrophie) une fois sous traitement antirétroviral. Elle sera à l'Institut à partir du mois de mai pour faire un stage postdoctoral avec la professeure Viviane Namaste. La lipodystrophie est une condition médicale qui redistribue les gras dans le corps et Marilou s'y intéresse car les répercussions psychosociales de cette condition sont nombreuses et profondément dérangeantes pour les personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida. Travaillant en collaboration avec la Chaire de recherche sur le VIH/sida de l'Université Concordia dans le cadre de ses recherches postdoctorales, elle examinera l'expérience des personnes vivant avec le VIH/sida qui ont fait appel à des traitements réparateurs pour contrer les effets de la lipodystrophie - plus particulièrement la lipoatrophie faciale, une condition hautement visible qui se caractérise par une perte de la masse graisseuse au niveau du visage. L'Institut Simone de Beauvoir vous souhaite la bienvenue !

# Fighting Homophobia



DR. ELIZABETH MEYER has been on a mission to bring the issues of queer bullying and sexual harassment in high schools to the forefront. Presenting *Gender, bullying, harassment: Using queer pedagogy to disrupt discourses of power and popularity in schools* on March 25th, Meyer spoke of firsthand experience witnessing queer bullying and harassment in her years as a high school teacher in the United States. Working with students, colleagues

and community advocates, Meyer described the intimidating and hurtful effect of homophobia and harassment in schools and its impact on drop-out rates, division among administration and violent behavior among students. Assistant Professor in the Department of Education at Concordia University and Ph.D. graduate of McGill University, Dr. Meyer, used a queer and poststructuralist feminist perspective model. Meyer engaged attendees, many teachers themselves, to interpret the signs of such harassment and the ways through queer theory, to improve the educational experience for both teachers and students.

**Dr. Elizabeth Meyer** is the author of Gender, bullying, and harassment: Strategies to end sexism and homophobia in schools, and co-author of Queer youth and the culture wars: From classroom to courtroom in Australia, Canada, and the United States,



A full house of attendees



Dr. Chantal Maillé (R) and attendee

published in the Journal of LGBT Youth. She is also the co-founder of *Sprinkle: A Journal of Sexual Diversity* and her work can be viewed at **www. freireproject.org/blogs/lizjmeyer** 

#### To Tibet with Love

DR. TRACY ZHANG presented one of the most interesting talks, From Peasant Daughters to "Factory Nuns": Carpet Weavers' Subject Formations in Modern Lhasa on April 1st. Originally from Shanghai and a Montreal newcomer, Zhang spent over a year in Lhasa conducting an ethnographic study on the lives of female Tibetan carpet weavers often labeled as "passive victims of the Chinese State." Zhang spoke of gender politics and their link to global and local power relations, and how these placed women in a role instrumental to the competitive carpet weaving market involving Nepal, Tibet and the Western world. Through her profound friendship with two female carpet weavers -Samgye and Lobsang - Zhang was able

to understand how gender ideologies pushed women in specific jobs if they're not working on the farmland. Also, having been raised in the country side and having then moved to a big city, Zhang had a deeper connection to these women for she understood the complexities of their lives and the changes that often occured so rapidly. The transformations many of these Tibetan carpet weavers experienced (e.g., becoming more vulnerable to bad working conditions due to privatization, losing power to the point of wishing to be a man in their afterlife) as well as their strategies to "make it" in such environment were discussed by Zhang who concluded on the carpet weavers' complex subjectivity and agency.



Dr. Tracy Zhang with a few carpet weaving workers

For further information on *Dr. Tracy Zhang*, winner of Simon Fraser University's graduate scholarship in communication, please visit: www2.fas. sfu.ca/FAS-Thinking/applied-thinkingdecember-2007

# **NEWS, HAPPENINGS & OPPORTUNITIES**

#### SdBI's Response to Bill 94



ON MARCH 25th, the government of Jean Charest announced Bill 94, an act that would prevent women wearing the niqab from accessing hospitals, daycares, schools, universities, and other public services, and would bar women in niqab from working in the public sector.

To read the SdBI full response to this bill, please visit our website wsdb.concordia.ca

### Notes from Delhi

BOLLYWOOD comes to mind for many who think of India. However, on April 9th, 16 students who completed the course "Narrating Women's lives: Canada and India" (organized by the University of Delhi, in collaboration with SdBI's Dr. Chantal Maillé and Dr. Rachel

Berger of the Department of History) presented a different perspective on the country. With an early "Indianinspired" lunch that brought out staff, students, professors, fellows and research affiliates, the rest of the afternoon was spent listening to papers



by students and the stories of a oncein-a-lifetime experience.

For more information please see Concordia's Journal article: cjournal. concordia.ca/archives/20100318/ classactioncomparing\_and\_ contrasting\_womens\_lives\_in\_india\_ and\_canada.php

## Launching... Sprinkle

ON APRIL 23rd, about forty supporters of *Sprinkle*, a McGill community-based academic journal of Sexual Diversity



Members of *Sprinkle* editorial board (L to R) Val Lippman, Emma Gray, Anna Hodgins and Tess Peterson

Studies, gathered to launch its third volume. The party took place upstairs at Burritoville where friends gathered to

eat, drink and celebrate the little purple journal and its contributions to undergraduate academic discourse. The food (all provided by Burritoville) was delicious, the speeches concise, and the enthusiasm palpable. Sprinkle was simultaneously launched in its online version through the Paulo and Nita Freire International Project

for Critical Pedagogy last night. It can be read at: http://freireproject.org/ sprinkle

Also congrats to the two Concordia Students, *Julie Matson* and *Liam Michaud* whose work was published in the recent issue of *Sprinkle* and who are students of the SdBI!



Two contributing authors: Matthew Stern and Lynsey Grosfield

# WSSA... Not your ordinary student association

ON TUESDAY March 30th and Wednesday March 31, 2010, WSSA, in partnership with the 2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy, hosted a workshop and film-screening with Canadian filmmaker Gwen Haworth. The workshop dealt with the importance of trans selfrepresentations, auto-ethnographies and DIY film-making. It was interactive and informative, and was enjoyed by a great group of participants.

The movie screening, a documentary that shares the touching, personal story of Gwen's gender transition, showed in collaboration with the Queer Cinema class, was thoroughly enjoyed by all Gwen - a sign that her film affected all of us in a positive way.

On April 10th, WSSA was honored at the ASFA Spring Ball with an award for "Most Improved Member Association." The SdBI is exceptionally proud of this, knowing that WSSA's hard work has been recognized, especially since WSSA was constituted by a small team of three students in 2009-2010. Given late by-elections which meant a late start in the Fall semester, WSSA put together an amazing series of fun and engaging events that are completely relevant to creating feminist discourses.



WSSA Members (L to R) Andrea deBruijn, (VP of Finance), Julie Matson, (VP of Events), and Hector Martinez Villeda, (VP of External Affairs)

who attended. The film discussion after the screening generated a good dialogue between film-maker and audience, leaving everyone wanting more! After the formal discussion ended, there was a steady stream of individual praise and thanks for



WSSA members enjoying the Spring Ball



Filmmaker Gwen Haworth



### Golden Eye

Simone de Beauvoir Institute student and photographer *Maryam Es Haghzade*, has taken some of the most engaging pictures for the Institute and WSSA. Her work can be seen in e-Simone's March newsletter ("Simone's Birthday Party!") and in this issue ("Fighting Homophobia"). Many of her great pictures we just didn't have enough space to showcase so we must pay credit. Thanks Maryam and keep taking lovely photos.

# **Spitting Lyrics**

The Women's Studies Student's Association had a busy month! On April 16th, they held a double feature film screening at the de Sève Cinema, showing the documentaries "Live Nude Girls Unite" and "Hot and Bothered: Feminist Pornography." Both of these films seek to empower women's sexuality by exploring the intersection between feminism, sex work, and the pornography industry. The People's Potato provided a delicious vegan lunch at intermission, and all were invited to participate in a facilitated discussion following the films in order to create a conversation about the continuing relevance of sex-positive feminist action.

WSSA finished off the semester with a bang, hosting Sister Spit, a group of seven radical queer writers, performers, and artists for a day of workshops at Concordia and a live performance at Il Motore in the evening! Over 100 people attended the workshops, which included titles such as "Building a DIY Literary Career," "Radical Voice and Movement," "Zines and Feminism" and "Trans 101." Despite the snowy weather, Il Motore was packed for Sister Spit's performance. The audience was treated to Sister Spit's mic-rocking mélange of spoken word talent, and the Simone de Beauvoir Institute's own Trish Salah gave a striking feature



WSSA members with Sister Spit cofounder Michelle Tea



Sister Spit Crew (L to R) Nicole J. Georges, Annie Danger, Len Plass, Elisha Lim and Michelle Tea

performance, reading from her book of poetry, *Wanting in Arabic*. After the show was over, the fun continued with a celebratory dance party hosted by Cruise Controle. All in all, another successful event!

WSSA would like to express its gratitude to ASFA, the Concordia Council on Student Life, the 2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy, Rachel Berger and the Department of History, QPIRG Concordia, all their volunteers, and especially those working at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute for their incredible support during this last event and throughout the year. Best wishes for a wonderful summer and see you next semester!



A workshop in progress...

# **Poetic Energies**



Rachel Zolf and Trish Salah

WHAT do you call an event with two great literaries at a lively bookstore with a crowded house? Poetic Bliss! On Sunday, April 25th, Coach House Books in partnership with the Simone de Beauvoir Institute hosted Rachel Zolf's book launch for her recent manuscript *Neighbor Procedure* held at Librairie Drawn & Quarterly in the vibrant Mile End area.

Introduced by Dr. Rachel Berger (Department of History), Dr. Trish Salah read a few verses from Wanting in Arabic, which confronts transgender politics, war, sexuality and the refusal to remain silent. Borrowing works from unlikely neighbours, such as Dadaist Marcel Janco, blogger-poet Ron Silliman and two women at the gym, Zolf's book enacted her experience visiting Israel during the Israel-Palestine war of grief, anger, and valor through sound and pure emotional expression. Through conversation, the audience was able to value how evocative both poets are and how their work and experiences complement each other.

Further information on *Rachel Zolf* and her previous work, can be found at Coach House Books - http://www. chbooks.com/ biographies/ rachel-zolf-0 *Dr. Trish Salah* is a Montreal-

Montrealbased writer and a teacher at the Simone de Beauvoir

Institute, Concordia University and in the Department of Sociology at Bishops' University. Her book *Wanting in Arabic* and further information can be found at TSAR Publications - http://www. tsarbooks.com/TSARAuthors.htm







Poets in harmony

### Félicitations



Congratulations to *Isabelle Lamoureux*, SdBI's Documentalist/ Librarian for being accepted in the Library and Information Studies doctoral program at McGill

University! Having joined the SdBI in September 2005, Isabelle has been the focal person to assist students in their research and support students with their studies. Furthermore, Isabelle has managed access to electronic information resources, provided great referral to other community and government organizations, and promoted the visibility of the Reading Room. So, we wish to say "all the best" to you Isabelle and again, félicitations from your SdBI family.

#### Our Heartfelt Thanks to Melissa-Anne!!

I would like to join all of the students, professors, staff persons, fellows, research associates and community friends and collaborators of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute to give our sincerest thanks to Melissa-Anne Cobbler, our SdBI Events Coordinator and Information Officer, for the outstanding work she has accomplished during her stay at the Institute. Melissa-Anne has been a model of professionalism and has put together so many messages, letters, posters, newsletters, meeting minutes, room requests, equipment requests, lectures, seminars and events that it seems like she has worked at the SdBI for 5 years. For me, personnally, it has been a pleasure having her next door all year and benefiting from her fabulous energy and outstanding artistic talents (Feminist Café posters must be framed)! Melissa-Anne will be entering the research-intensive period surrounding her thesis and so I understand her need to be away from the position of Events Coordinator, but I know she will remain close to the Institute and I am thankful for that. Best wishes, Melissa-Anne, for the exciting year ahead and thank you so much, once again, for your amazing contributions. Dr. Geneviève Rail SdBI Principal

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Montreal International Women's Conference

Participants from five continents will gather in Montreal, *August 13-16*, *2010*, to discuss building a Global Militant Women's Movement in the 21st Century. And they will take a step towards this goal with an action plan and the formation of an International Women's Alliance on the last day of the conference, August 16.

The conference will bring together women active in their communities and on the frontlines of struggles against imperialist globalization, war and violence against women. We will hear from women resisting fundamentalist and reactionary policies and defending women's and human rights in Houses of Parliament, in the Parliament of the streets, and beyond.

Participants will assess the achievements, shortcomings and setbacks of the worldwide women's rights movement during the last 100 years, honour the pioneers and celebrate the centennial of International



Women's Day (1910 - 2010). The organizers include Femmes de Diverses Origines - Women of Diverse Origins in Montréal, Gabriela-Philippines, Action Network for Marriage Migrants' Rights and Empowerment (AMMORE), Asian Rural Women, representatives from women's organizations in all parts of the world as well as individuals.

Also, an Honour Committee of matrons of the conference distinguished women who support the intiative - has been set up and so far includes Dr. Shree Mulay (Associate dean of Community Health and Humanities, Memorial University, Newfoundland); the MLA Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Minister responsible for Multiculturalism, Government of Manitoba), Edith Ballantyne (retired Secretary-General of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) and Janet Lumb (Artistic Director of the Festival Accès-Asie).

This conference will be a milestone in advancing the progressive, global women's movement and we hope you will join us in this endeavour.

To register and to view a more complete description of the workshop themes, go to: http://wdofdo. wordpress.com/

For more information or to volunteer your services, please contact *Tess Tesalona*, conference coordinator, at the Immigrant Workers' Centre: (514) 342-2111.

#### CONGRESS 2010 - CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY Local and Global Social Justice Movements Monday, May 31, 2010 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

#### Featuring: Janine Brodie, A. Aziz Choudhry, Gada Mahrouse, Sunera Thobani

Women's organizations played a pivotal role in persuading the government to establish the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. This panel will explore the role of the women's movement and social justice activism in local and global struggles for equity. Speakers include Janine Brodie (Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, Canada Research Chair at the University of Alberta), A. Aziz Choudry (McGill University), Gada Mahrouse (Simone de Beauvoir Institute) and Sunera Thobani (University of British Columbia).

This panel is organized as part of the Federation Equity Portfolio's 'Equality Then and Now' series, marking 40 years since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

#### Feminist History Society La Société d'histoire des féministes

The Feminist History Society is a project of the Women's Education and Research Foundation of Ontario Incorporated ("WERF"), a registered charitable organization in Canada. The members of the volunteer steering committee for the project are Beth Atcheson, Constance Backhouse, Shari Graydon, Lorraine Greaves, Diana Majury and Beth Symes. For more information please visit **www. feministhistories.ca** 

### Praise for Research Associate Dr. Chengiah Ragaven



On April 23rd, students Andrea Cawthorn, Amanda West and Taylor Kenney from the

International Studies Programme at Central Connecticut State University wrote to the Institute expressing their deep appreciation for Professor Chengiah Ragaven who is a SdBI Research Associate.

A survey of students in the program concluded that Professor Ragaven has made students philosophically and politically conscious. One student even stated that "Dr. Ragaven has pried my eyes open with the Jaws of Life." The SdBI is proud and congratulates Dr. Ragaven for his wonderful contributions!!

### Keeping in Touch

*e-Simone* is a regular publication of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute. Its purpose is to promote the organization and its activities in the community as well as to provide information about issues related to scholarship, collective movements, and opportunities rooted in, and stemming from, a pro-feminist perspective. If you wish to submit event information, jobs, educational and publication opportunities, please do so in August for the FALL 2010 issue. Thank you to all!

Events Coordinator & Information Officer E: coorsdbi@alcor.concordia.ca

# Girls Action Foundation ZOOM IN ON GIRLS!

Thursday, May 20th, 2010 from 5-7 p.m. The Girls Action Loft: 24, Mont-Royal West, Suite 601, Montreal, QC Zoom in on Girls is a gathering of individuals and organizations who work with girls and young women...or for those of who wish to do so! The Zoom event focuses on issues related to young women, where participants are invited to share their knowledge and experiences while exploring action strategies.

Girls Action Foundation invites you to



VOICES FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN 2

May 13th at the Eastern Bloc (7240 Clark St.)

Doors open at 8 p.m. and show starts at 9 p.m.

#### Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) Call for Papers

Demeter Press is seeking submissions for an edited collection on: **Mothering: Anthropological Perspectives** Editors: Michelle Walks and Naomi McPherson Pub Date: 2012/2013. New Deadline for Submissions: July 1,

Black Motherhoods

2010.

Editors: Karen T. Craddock, Nicole Balan and Saundra Murray Nettles Pub Date: 2012/2013 Abstracts due: **September 1, 2010**.



attend the Zoom evening cocktail where you can network with others who are passionate about, and active in, women's issues, to celebrate the amazing work that is being done in Quebec for girls and young women and to discover Girls Action's "Why Girls?" resource tools.

Please confirm your attendance before May 10th, 2010. For more information: T: 1-888-948-1112 E: miranda@girlsactionfoundation.ca

Admission is a sliding scale from \$10-15 dollars (whatever people can afford) Performances by: Moe Clark James Irwin Alessandro Naccarato Chandra Melting Tallow Kyra Shaugnessy North, my love All the proceeds go to the organizing work done by Missing Justice (**www. missingjustice.ca**)

Please see **www.demeterpress.org** for more information

Thank you again for your continued and sustaining support of ARM/ MIRCI and Demeter Press. We hope to see you at one of the above conferences planned for 2010/2011 so that we may thank you in person and celebrate with you the birth of MIRCI and, most importantly, the essential work you do as maternal scholars and activists.

Andrea O'Reilly and Renée Knapp Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI) W: www.motherhoodinitiative.org & www.demeterpress.org E: info@motherhoodinitiative.org & info@demeterpress.org