

THE CCWH NEWSLETTER

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The Newsletter for the Coordinating Council for Women in History

MESSAGE FROM CCWH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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In past years, the CCWH has participated in the AHA annual election by sending out a questionnaire to candidates for AHA positions, compiling their responses, and publishing them in our fall newsletter. This year, for the reasons outlined below, we will discontinue the practice.

From the point of view of AHA candidates, it was onerous to respond to two separate questionnaires (they respond to an AHA questionnaire, of course, which is duplicated below). As a result, we received fewer responses than there were candidates. From the point of view of the CCWH, it seemed not the best use of CCWH resources to collate, publish, and mail out this information. We would send out a newsletter in either case, but the fall newsletter, as a

result of the questionnaire, was far more costly to reproduce and then to mail.

We encourage all of our members to visit the AHA website, at historians.org, to see the responses of AHA candidates to the following questions:

1. How do you define yourself as a member of the historical profession in terms of your interests, approaches, and special commitments?
2. What type of professional service have you given (organizational or institutional) that relates to this position?
3. What in your career, experience, and goals do you think will most significantly affect how you will serve in the position for which you have been nominated?

Candidates for president-elect are also asked to write a second paragraph on the following:

What do you see as the primary responsibilities, goals, and problems of the American Historical Association? How would you use the presidency of the Association to address them? In addition, candidates provide some information about former positions, fields of interest, post-secondary education, and publications. They can post their full vitae to the website, and many do.

We hope that CCWH members will be satisfied with our decision and feel that they gain sufficient information about candidates, including their attention to matters of gender in research and professional life, by visiting the AHA website. And, of course, we encourage you to vote in the AHA elections.

THOUGHTS ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

BY ROSA MARIA PEGUEROS



Rosa Maria Pegueros, Associate Professor, University of Rhode Island

Every new professor of color complains of the stress of balancing the ordinary demands of teaching and tenure, with family life, and with the needs of students of color (not to mention traditional students) for morale support, counseling, and help. It's the academic "third shift." Almost every faculty committee wants you to join, and you wonder about the ones that don't. Your mind becomes so sensitive

to every nuance of university life that almost without looking, you know where the pockets of anti-affirmative action, anti-multicultural faculty reside. The Hindu god Vishnu had the right idea—I could use all those arms! Now that I think of it, four arms wouldn't be enough: I need clones.

This summer, I spent the month of July doing what I do every July: teaching in my uni-

versity's Talent Development pre-matriculation program. My students are from disadvantaged backgrounds; most are students of color, a few are not. It is very hard work. Most of the students have had little or no preparation for college. Some act like high schoolers in the beginning, many of them sitting in the back, giggling, chattering, until they realize I

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CCWH AND MENTORING

BY JENNIFER SCANLON

Women have in many ways altered the academy and the world of public history, but women entering the historical profession still find themselves experiencing difficulties as they navigate the transitions from undergraduate to graduate student, from student to professional, and through the professional ranks. Graduate students may or may not find the men-

toring they need to help them find their voices and their confidence as they plan and write dissertations. New professionals face questions about workload, service and teaching obligations and expectations, and appropriate research trajectories. Mid-career, women may need advice yet again, as they feel "stuck" at the associate professor level or in a mid-level appointment in public history.

Mentoring relationships at each of these levels can help women identify and reach goals, understand their professions more fully, ask questions safely, develop new skills and knowledge, broaden networks, and achieve professional success.

The CCWH has a particular interest in fostering mentoring projects and relationships, and the following articles, which will be followed by others in

upcoming newsletters, focus on the need for as well as models of mentoring. The CCWH will host a session on mentoring at the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians in June of 2005, where we plan to continue the discussion generated here. Our goal is to encourage women historians to use a wealth of experience to foster success of others. We hope you will join the conversation.

REFLECTIONS ON GRADUATE MENTORING

BY ESTELLE B. FREEDMAN

Graduate mentoring has felt to me more like a mission than a job. Second-wave American feminism propelled me not only to become an historian but also to view my work as part of an educational and political movement. Along with subverting young minds in women's history and women's studies undergraduate classes, I wanted to make the profession more inviting to women and others who had not historically had the opportunity to enter the academy. I vowed that these future colleagues would have an easier time than those of us who trained in the sometimes inhospitable atmosphere of the early 1970s. To give just one example, during my first week of graduate school we were pointedly told that Columbia offered not only a Ph.D. but also an M.A., which was especially useful for the women in the class who might want to leave after a year and work "downtown."

Not surprisingly, my initial view of graduate mentoring was compensatory – to provide the welcome and support that I had not received. But reflecting back, I now realize that I also had positive models of mentoring. The college and graduate school teachers who fostered my career combined two quali-

ties. First, they gave me the impression that they offered almost unconditional support; as long as I made the effort, they would provide advice, challenges, opportunities, and varying levels of cheerleading. Second, they seemed to believe in my intellectual capacities and expressed high expectations for my work. This combination of support and expectation no doubt influenced my own mentoring style as much as my negative experiences did. Along with making students feel welcome in the profession, I wanted to communicate that I believed in their capacities to become excellent historians. In short, I had learned that good mentoring begins with a sympathetic ear and encouragement for graduate students as they face the usual terrors of orals, dissertation research, and job searches, as well as their own personal crises. But it simultaneously involves convincing students that criticism is a gift, not a judgment, and that extensive comments on substance and style rest upon a confidence in their abilities to grow.

To these two precepts I added some compensatory methods: a strong dose of professional socialization and a community of historians-in-training. Knowing the value of my political and orals study groups during graduate school,

I tried to foster cooperative graduate learning. As soon as I had a few students working on dissertations, we began meeting regularly to read work in progress and provide multiple critiques, always leaving time for a topic related to professional socialization. Over the years I incorporated the group model into my graduate seminars, asking students to imagine that they are co-authors of each other's work as they provide both support and constructive criticism at every stage of their research projects. I have also tried to create an intergenerational community of former students by practically forcing all of them to gather at Berks, OAH, PCB, or WAWH conferences and get to know, and sometimes to help mentor, the current crop of students.

For over 25 years now graduate advising has provided some of my greatest professional and personal rewards, as well as some of my most valued colleagues. Over that time, though, I have had to rethink my approach and learn new tricks. I once took it as my mission to get all of my graduate students through the doctorate and into tenure track jobs, assuming they shared my goal of transforming the profession. At some point, though, I realized that not every beginning

graduate student has to finish and follow in my footsteps. Some of them have made their own decisions to leave school and live more "normal" lives! I continue to offer strong support and high expectations, but I've learned to respect the differences between my choices and theirs. At the same time, I've learned that mentoring does not end with the degree and job; it can be a lifelong relationship. Finally, I can see that growing older has widened the gap between me and my graduate students, who were once almost my peers and who now study the history of my own lifetime. I fear I have become more intimidating as the age and authority gap has widened, so I have to work harder to retain a personal connection.

As a teacher, one of my greatest rewards has been to follow the careers of those I have trained. Aside from their scholarly accomplishments, I take pride in knowing that they too have made mentoring a priority. Together, I hope we can continue to instill in future historians a commitment to making the university more welcoming, more just, and more cooperative.

Estelle B. Freedman is the Edgar E. Robinson Professor in U.S. History at Stanford University

ON MENTORING, PART ONE

BY CAROL GOLD

This is a cautionary tale about what can happen when there is no mentoring. It is my story. In 1971, I was hired by the History Department at the University of Minnesota. I was the only woman in a department with 40 faculty members—39 men and me. I was the first woman the department had hired in 50 years and I was hired because the department had been told by the University administration that if they did not hire a woman, the University would lose federal funding. I am a Scandinavian historian, and was hired with soft money from a program called the Northwest Center for European Area Studies. Not only did the department not want to hire a woman, but when forced to do so, they used soft money from a peripheral program whose name no one could remember. (Neither the Center nor the position of Scandinavian historian exists any longer at the University of Minnesota.)

Not a good start. Nevertheless, several members of the department were really happy finally to have integrated the department and I was greeted warmly by them. But, from both sides of what turned out to be an age as well as a political divide, I was viewed as “the woman.” And I acted like a woman, often in ways of which I was unaware. This where the lack of mentoring plays an important role. Today, obviously no longer at Minnesota, I wish

that someone had explained to me what I was doing, what was going on, how my actions were being received. Would I have acted differently? I am still not sure. But I would have liked to have had the opportunity to have made conscious decisions. So now I try to provide new faculty with these options.

Let me give some examples. I moved to Minneapolis from Copenhagen, Denmark, where I had been living for two years. Women’s dress in the early 70s in northern Europe reached heights rarely seen in the U.S. and certainly never seen in Minnesota. So when I showed up at work, and in department meetings, in my very short mini-skirts – the height of fashion in Denmark – the men thought I was being provocative. I wasn’t; I was wearing my best and, in Denmark, completely acceptable professional, clothes. No one ever said a word to me and it was only much later that I understood the impact of my dress. I fully appreciate that dress is a very personal matter and we certainly should be allowed to wear what we want, but had I realized the statement my clothes were making, I might have changed my style. It was not the statement I meant to make. Incidentally, the next woman the department hired always wore pants suits.

I can tell a similar story about knitting, which I regularly brought to department

meetings. This often occasioned remarks I found strange, such as, “you’re the only one who gets anything accomplished at these meetings,” or, “how come you never drop your needles? My wife always drops her knitting needles.” In Denmark, bringing handwork to meetings was, at the time, seen as traditional and conservative. In Minnesota, I was, once again, proclaiming my difference and femininity to the men. And again, no one explained this. In all fairness to the men, they probably were not consciously aware of their response either.

The really difficult part of all this is the line between how we as women would like to be treated – equally – and how we still in reality often are – unequally. A good mentor would also have told me that I needed to finish my dissertation, at once! The fact that the two men who had been hired the two years before me still had not yet finished theirs had no bearing, in reality, on my situation. Uncomfortable with me, the conservative men in the department could, and did, use that as the excuse to non-retain me, even before I came up for tenure. The men all got six years; I got four. Women faculty need to know that we will be treated differently. Then we can decide how and where we want to push the system, but we need to be aware of the reality in order to do so.



Carol Gold,
Professor of History,
University of Alaska,
Fairbanks

Had I had a mentor at Minnesota who had been explicit about some of these issues, would I still be there? Probably not, as it was more (I would certainly like to think) than my personal actions which led to my non-retention, but I think some things would have been smoother. In retrospect, I realize that there was virtually no area in which the more conservative men in the department could feel comfortable with me, and so they were less likely to even try to treat me equally. Today I wish I had been more aware of this.

NEW MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR, JULIE GALLAGHER

I am very excited to be the new membership coordinator of the CCWH. Although I still feel relatively new to the field, I realize that my association with women’s history and women’s historians has been building steadily for over ten years, first

as a public high school teacher, then as a graduate student and now as a college professor. Women’s history organizations like the CCWH and conferences including the Berks and those organized by graduate students with interest in gender

and women’s history have been vital forums and have provided me with both opportunities and resources. They also have enabled me to build a set of colleagues and friends that stay with me no matter where my

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Julie Gallagher,
Membership Coordinator

ONLINE RESOURCE: WOMEN AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1600-2000

The online resource Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000 (<http://www.alexanderstreet6.com/wasm>) invites CCWH members to create document projects and submit book reviews, website reviews, and teaching tools for the website. The new, expanded site has become an online journal and database available to academic and public libraries by subscription. It includes 52 document projects with 1,250 documents, and 19,000 additional pages of books, pamphlets, and proceedings. The website co-editors will

continue to publish new document projects, book and website reviews, and teaching tools on a quarterly basis. Your institution may arrange a free trial at <http://www.alexanderstreetpress.com/request.htm>.

To contribute to the website please email the appropriate editor:
document project:
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The Center for the Historical Study of Women and Gender sends a periodic newsletter to inform faculty, librarians, and students about the website. To sign up to receive this e-newsletter, drop a note to Melissa Doak at mdoak@binghamton.edu.

THOUGHTS ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, CONTINUED

(Continued from page 1)
mean business.

This year, we had a discussion about Latinos in positions of authority. I mentioned that at my university, there are about 10 Latino faculty members in tenureable or tenured positions out of 625 faculty. They were incredulous. I felt like I was in one of those comic strips where the characters are so surprised, their eyes pop out of their heads. Gee, that makes only .012% of the faculty? Really? Is that possible? What about affirmative action?

What about affirmative action? The numbers are sickening. According to a report from the University of Southern California's Pew Hispanic Center in Washington from June 2004, twice as many Latinos as whites will quit college. The reasons? Many Latino students go to school part-time because their families rely on their income. Most live at home, so there are family responsibilities. Consequently, many attend a community colleges or "less-selective four-year college

where the overall graduation rates are lower." Without the constant engagement that a student who lives on campus has with the university environment, the likelihood of that student graduating decreases exponentially.

Immigration status is another impediment. Many states will not allow a student who arrived in the U.S. illegally to register. Some will allow them to register but will withhold financial aid.

There's a blockage in the hose and little is getting through. Many of the students in my classes have never done a book report; no one has ever taught them how to study or pushed them to write and rewrite and rewrite again. How can they excel without good work habits and a strong command of the English language?

The problem is deeper than the obvious points mentioned above. As professors of color, we are self-consciously role models. I often tell my students that they shouldn't get discouraged: "If I can do it, you can do it." Society generally looks to

people of celebrity status or accomplishment to be their heroes. I try to teach my students that ordinary people, doing ordinary jobs, can excel, can be the best in their field, and I encourage them to make both short-term and long-term plans that will lead them to distinction.

My father was a humble man who started out driving a truck at 16, during the Depression. Eventually, his asthma forced him to give up driving the truck and to work as a warehouseman, and as the years passed in his late fifties and sixties, he parked cars. The outstanding thing about him was his simple determination to do the best he could, without excuses. He never missed a day of work. In the warehouse, he became the shop steward or union representative. In the parking lot, he kept immaculate books that led to his promotion to a supervisor. And even with his modest jobs (he worked at three of them when I was in college, including being the night custodian for the parking corporation where he worked)

he saw three of his four younger children graduate from college.

When I find examples that will encourage my students, I tell them. I tell them about my father. For instance, one of my former students, a Dominican who lives in the poor Latino district just north of the capital, just won the prize for the graduating senior with the highest grade point average in microbiology. He said that once he realized he could get a "B" average, he pushed himself to see how far he could go. He is planning to be a cancer researcher. Another one is now the executive director of the Democratic Party in Rhode Island, the first woman and the first Latina to serve in that position.

If you give your students pie-in-the-sky goals, they can become discouraged. All the obstacles, from poor high school preparation to family responsibilities can pull them down. But if you show them attainable goals and people just like them who have succeeded, it changes their mind set. And maybe in the not too-distant future, we won't need affirmative action.

THE NEW WGHOM HOSTS ITS FIRST CONFERENCE

BY TAMMY PROCTOR, WGHOM VICE-PRESIDENT

Loyola University's Lakeshore Campus on the north side of Chicago was the site of the first Women's and Gender Historians of the Midwest (WGHOM) Conference in June 2004. With more than 120 participants, the one-day event brought together university faculty, graduate students, public history professionals, community activists, museum curators, independent scholars, and interested members of the public. It was a successful way to begin the conference tradition that WGHOM hopes to continue on a regular basis.

Included in the program were roundtable discussions of teaching women's history, the nature of oral history, and Chicago women's activism and history as well as research presentations on different aspects of American and world history through the lens of gender. Presenters came from most states in the Midwest and from further afield (one scholar even came from South Africa). The keynote presentation by Prof. Nancy MacLean of Northwestern University touched on the timely and important issue of the history of job discrimination

and equal opportunity in the United States over the last fifty years. Her succinct and informative lecture touched a chord with the audience, especially given the economic woes of the last couple of years. To look at the program and participants, please go to our website (www.wittenberg.edu/wghom).

This conference is the culmination of five years of planning to create a new organization based on a now-defunct former regional association called WHOM, which ceased operation in 2002. The reborn WGHOM plans to create a

website with resources for scholars and history professionals, a Midwestern women's history network, and it hopes to sponsor a conference every two-three years. Initial planning is underway now for the next conference to be held in the St. Louis area in 2006. Anyone interested in serving on a committee or helping with the planning should contact Beatrix Hoffman (beatrix@niu.edu), Tammy Proctor (tproctor@wittenberg.edu), or Stacy Cordery (STACY@monm.edu) for more information.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS

Colonial America

The Department of History of Columbia University seeks to make an appointment in early American History, broadly defined as the years from the early days of colonial exploration and settlement through the American Revolution. The position is rank open, and both senior and junior candidates will be considered. A Ph.D. is required by the time the appointment begins. The successful candidate will teach courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and work with doctoral students. The university welcomes applications from scholars in any area within the field. Letters of application and curriculum vitae, including e-mail address and telephone contact, should arrive by October 10, 2004, addressed to Professor Eric Foner, Colonial America Search Committee Chair, Department of History, 1180 Amsterdam Avenue, 611 Fayerweather Hall, MC2527, New York, NY 10027. Columbia University is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Employer especially interested in receiving application from

qualified women and minorities.

Early Modern Europe

The History Department at Columbia University seeks to appoint a tenured scholar of early modern Europe, specializing in the period between about 1450 and 1750. Please send letter of application and a c.v. to Professor Martha Howell, Chair, Early Modern Search Committee, Columbia University, Department of History, 1180 Amsterdam Ave, 611 Fayerweather Hall, MC2512, New York, New York 10027. We would like to have all applications by October 15, 2004. Candidates for faculty appointments in the History Department are required to hold the PhD by the time the appointment begins. Columbia is an Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Employer especially interested in receiving applications from qualified women and minorities.

18th/19th Century British and/or European History

The History Department at Columbia University seeks a

beginning Assistant Professor in the field of 18th and/or 19th century British and/or European history. All specializations will be considered, but the department has a special interest in candidates who place British history in an international or transnational context, whether they focus on economic, political, comparative, intellectual, imperial, religious or cultural history. The successful candidate will teach courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and work with doctoral students. A Ph.D. is required by the time the appointment begins. Please submit dossiers, and curriculum vitae by October 1, 2004, to Prof. Susan Pedersen, Search Committee Chair, Columbia University, Department of History, 611 Fayerweather Hall, MC 2527, 1180 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027. Candidates with a British focus will be interviewed at the North American Conference on British Studies in Philadelphia at the end of October. Columbia University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action and Employer. Minorities and

women are encouraged to apply.

Ancient History. The History Department at Miami University invites applications for a tenure-track assistant professor in Ancient History, specialization open, to begin in the fall of 2005. Duties include teaching advanced classes (both undergraduate and graduate) in area of specialty and participating in the rotation to teach the first half of either Western Civilization or World History; maintaining an active research agenda; and performing service to the university. PhD in hand by the date of appointment (August 15, 2005). Send letter of application, c.v., at least three letters of reference, sample syllabi, and a writing sample to: Carla Pestana, Chair, Ancient History Search Committee, Department of History, Miami University, Upham Hall Room 254, Oxford, OH 45056. Screening begins November 1, 2004, and will continue until position is filled. Miami University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer.

PUBLIC HISTORY NEWS

BY MARLA MILLER

With the new school year upon us, this issue's column reports on a successful collaboration between volunteer public historians and classroom educators. Founded in 1982, the core mission of the Massachusetts-based Veterans Education Project has been to address issues associated with youth violence, but the historical perspective these volunteers have brought to classrooms has also proven

valuable in history classrooms, in part because the VEP provides training that helps veterans cultivate "storytelling skills" that allow them to share their personal stories effectively with youth audiences. The VEP's methods for talking about historical events and addressing issues related to violence are included in a curriculum on the Vietnam War produced by the Vietnam Veterans

Memorial Fund, "Echoes from the Mall: A Teachers' Guide to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial and other Memorials in Washington, D.C." (www.vvmf.org).

Laura Lovett, my colleague in the History Department at the University of Massachusetts, reports on her experience bringing these voices into her U.S. History survey course.

Laura's own research considers gender, race and the family in twentieth-century America. Her current book project, titled *Conceiving the Future: Nostalgic Modernism, Reproduction and the Family in the United States, 1890-1930*, refigures American pronatalism in terms of family ideals and their role in reform efforts ranging from land reclamation to eugenics.

THE VETERAN'S EDUCATION PROJECT

BY LAURA L. LOVETT

Last fall, I asked my Survey US History class of 120 students how many had family members who had served in Vietnam. Close to half the students raised their hands. Of these, only two kept their hands raised when I asked how many had discussed the experience of war with their family member. The veterans in my class were more open about letting me know that they had served, usually in Kosovo, and were therefore more interested in thinking about US policies. With so many children of veterans, veterans, reservists, and members of ROTC in my class, I wanted to find a way to open up our usual discussion of war. So, this Spring, as US troops waged war in Iraq, I brought in US veterans to discuss their lives in the military and to demystify the experience of war. In doing so, I engaged my students with two valuable public history resources, the Veterans Education Project and the Veterans History Project.

Through the Veterans Education Project (<http://www.vetsed.org>), my students were able to interact with veterans from WWII, the Vietnam War, and Operation Desert Fox. Although I had lectured on the Double V Campaign, nothing I said could compete with having my students speak

with 80 year old Ray Elliott about his experience attempting to enter the Tuskegee Airmen's squadron, only to find himself enlisted as a porter in the Navy having admitting that he'd fainted once in his life. The response by students was overwhelmingly positive and for many deeply personal. Equally inspiring was the response from the veterans themselves. Inevitably when we thanked them, they told us that the experience was more important to them than to the students. For each of them, turning their experience into an educational opportunity was cathartic.

The Veterans Education Project was created by veterans to counter the efforts of military recruiters in high schools where they often glamorized the military by, for instance, landing a helicopter at a high school rally. Like the veterans who sought to prevent another war by describing the experience of the trenches after the first World War, the Veterans Education Project sought to share the experiences of veterans with students. Through their historical presentations, the Veterans Education Project promotes critical thinking about particular conflicts, about the political decisions that shaped them, and about the lasting personal consequences for veterans and their

families. Drawing on their experience of the violence of war and its effects, the Veterans Education Project has extended its programs to address teen violence and especially violence that affects girls and women in American society. All of the Veterans Education Project programs seek to demystify war and violence by debunking its glorification and exposing its real and prolonged emotional and physical harm. Teenagers are the target audience for this project; although when I asked them to address my students at the University of Massachusetts, they generously agreed to do so.

While the Amherst project is particularly well-organized and effective, it is thankfully not unique. Indeed, the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress is seeking to make stories like Ray Elliot's available as part of our national history. The audio recordings available online from the Library of Congress allow students to hear the voices of a wide array of men and women who served during wartime. The Veterans History Project also includes detailed instructions for collecting oral histories and abundant evidence of the success of their volunteers at events such as the WWII reunion in Washington DC during

May 2004.

Historical sources that allow students to use their senses can change their experience of history. Using the tapes which accompanied the WPA Slave narratives, for instance, has never failed to move students – who imagine historical events as remote until they realize they can hear the voices of those who experienced slavery. Similarly, the Veterans History Project offers an experience of military history that can have an undeniable impact. Listening to Rhona Marie Prescott's account of the wounded men she treated as a nurse in Vietnam is unforgettable. The lasting effect of her experience is evidence in her daughter's poetry describing her mother, which is included on Prescott's Library of Congress web pages.

As returning veterans from this war are integrated back into our classrooms acknowledging their experience and helping to contextualize it historically and culturally will be a challenge we all face. The Veterans Education Project and the Veterans History Project offer valuable models and historical resources for addressing that challenge.

Laura L. Lovett, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

CHINESE WOMEN AND FILM

BY REBECCA NEDOSTUP, CCWH OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Often it seems that both the academic and broader media worlds still have strong appetites for the consumption of Chinese suffering, and the suffering of Chinese women in particular. The novels of Amy Tan, Cultural Revolution memoirs such as *Wild Swans*, and feature films like *Raise the Red Lantern* have become staples of both world history and women's studies courses. Though they have proved valuable tools in broadening these fields beyond the European and American perspectives, one might also argue that they serve to perpetuate a pattern in which Chinese women serve as the relatively inert symbols of past or present barbarities and inequities.

In 1997, the cultural anthropologist Mayfair Mei-hui Yang released *Through Chinese Women's Eyes*, a groundbreaking documentary intended to replace mediated representations of Chinese women with direct interviews and fieldwork. Both taking advantage of the freer climate of "reform and opening up" and using it as her subject, Yang explored the changes that this new era of quasi-capitalism was bringing to the lives of urban, mostly educated, women in Shanghai. Yang's film centers on a thesis, also presented in her edited volume *Spaces of Their Own: Women's Public Sphere in Transnational China* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999), that the efforts of the Maoist state to erase gender difference actually discouraged the formation of a feminist consciousness in China. Ironically, Yang posits, now that the reform era has brought about a resurgence of the habits of the "bad old days" – ranging from the rebirth of prostitution and the mistress as status symbol to openly stated gender preferences in hiring – inequalities between men and women have become more pronounced causing a feminist

consciousness to emerge more fully. Certainly this is not the only available interpretation of the recent history of feminism in China, but it is a provocative one. *Through Chinese Women's Eyes* thus provides a starting point for understanding recent Chinese society, but with its focus on educated professionals living in China's coastal cities, it should not be considered the full picture.

Out of Phoenix Bridge and *Night Girl* help broaden the view. The directors of these films are of the generation born during the Cultural Revolution, and their subjects ten or twenty years younger. The very existence of the works – independently made, directed by women, and depicting the lives of young females who are in many ways at the margins of contemporary Chinese society – itself represents an enormous stride forward. Reading the descriptive blurbs for the films, one might almost be led to forget that a revolution (or revolutions) had taken place in China, for the lives of their subjects are painted in terms of the struggle between tradition and modernity, family and self-expression, and male versus female roles. Fortunately, the films themselves offer much richer and more complex experiences than simplified liberation narratives. In short, they tell stories that each of us needs to know in the age of globalization.

Out of Phoenix Bridge offers a rare entrée into the lives of China's vast "floating population" of rural-to-urban migrants. Director Li Hong, a Beijing native, remarks that she barely knew about the presence of her subjects -- hourly laborers living crammed into tiny ramshackle rooms -- behind the city's façade of urban renewal and headlong economic development. Yet, the film makes clear, that façade might not shine so brightly without these young women from rural An-

hui there to clean it for low wages. Li followed her subjects for three years, and, we see them negotiate the perils of life on the edge of "opening and reform": police who barely tolerate their semi-legal presence in the city; landlords who, themselves hardly rich, don't seem to mind turning the tables on these perceived yokels from the south; feared thugs and kidnapers, who don't show up, and attractive men wielding empty promises, who do. Gradually, a young woman named Xiazi emerges as the focal point of the film; intelligent and spirited – and not coincidentally, the one who remains in Beijing the longest – she still falls prey to worries that she cannot survive, much less succeed, if she does not marry soon.

Because these films are made by local directors does not mean that they come free of bias. In *Out of Phoenix Bridge*, in particular, Li Hong sends a fairly clear message about the superiority of an independent urban existence over the constraints of rural society, despite acknowledging the hardships and prejudices the migrants face in Beijing (the film ends on an ambiguous note, with the Beijing landlady roundly cursing everyone in sight, including the filmmaker.) Nonetheless, viewers who are drawn into the women's stories may well find themselves sympathizing with this standpoint as Xiazi and others face returning to Phoenix Bridge for all-but-arranged marriages or minimally-paying jobs in bleak provincial factories. The length of *Out of Phoenix Bridge* reflects the care and dedication Li Hong put into the project, but it raises a pedagogical issue, especially for introductory undergraduate courses; at two hours, and with very little contextual information about China or the floating population in general, it would be best used in short sections

with accompanying readings. But the content is uncommon and thought-provoking, and not to be missed.

If I had to pick a single documentary that shows in one sitting what life in contemporary China can feel like, however, I would choose *Night Girl*. The film ostensibly shows another side of Beijing: its subject, 17 year old Han Lin, is a born and bred Beijinger whose job is to perform Britney Spears-esque group dance routines in a sophisticated disco. Like Li Hong, director Yingli Ma chose her subject astutely: Han Lin is mature, bright, and fully aware of the contradictions raised by her line of work even as she chooses to evade facing them. Her family history is clearly marked by the major events of the 1949 revolution, the Cultural Revolution, and the reform era – in her interviews with Han Lin's parents and grandparents, Ma leaves the camera rolling during poignant and telling silences, helping viewers fill in the blanks on their own. Han Lin's father has become a casualty of the reform era – out of his state job, he has been reduced to a humiliating night watchman post in a trendy sneaker store. One has little need for translation watching his face as he waits for the fashionable clerks to close up shop for the night so that he can lay out his cot and guard the merchandise.

On one hand *Night Girl* opens a door to the new world of social ills that Yang sees re-emerging in post-reform China – Han Lin has an older married boyfriend (a hyper-trendy DJ) and she talks frankly about drug use. It relates, in concise and immediate fashion, what might be lost in the Chinese government's immense push for growth – the Han family's house, for one. But on the other it shows simple but affecting moments of life among

(Continued on page 9)

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Papers:

"Medieval Domesticity: Homes, Housing, and Household."

**25th annual conference of the Center for Medieval Studies, Fordham University
March 12-13, 2005 at Fordham's Lincoln Center Campus in New York City.**

"Domesticity" encompassed a wide variety of meanings in the middle ages, from private family and household life-including the creation of personal identities and the role of gender and class within networks of family, friends, and neighbors-to the administrative power base of kings and other rulers, centered in the household offices that evolved into units of the state. The home at the heart of domestic life can also be envisioned in different ways: as a house and its contents; as a collection of dwellings; as the location of work and the center of the family economy; and as a place of refuge or state of mind. We invite papers from medievalists interested in exploring the representation of these mul-

tiiple meanings of domesticity in texts, images, and architecture. We are especially interested in papers that cross disciplinary boundaries in examining domestic "values," the literary and material cultures of domesticity, the gendered dimension of domesticity, and the role of domesticity in the public sphere. Participants will include Jane Grenville, P.J.P. Goldberg, W. Mark Ormrod, Sarah Rees-Jones, Felicity Riddy, and D. Vance Smith. Please send abstracts and cover letters by Oct. 18, 2004 to: The Conference Committee, Center for Medieval Studies, FMH 405B, Fordham University, Bronx, NY, 10458. Phone: 718-817-4655, fax: 718-817-3987, email: medieval@fordham.edu.

Call for Presentations

2006 OAH-NCPH Annual Meeting

Washington, D.C.

April 19-22, 2006

Our America / Nuestra America
The ninety-ninth Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians and the

twenty-eighth Annual Meeting of the National Council on Public History will be held jointly at the Hilton Washington Hotel in Washington, D.C., April 19-22, 2006. The program committee invites proposals from all practitioners of American history or related disciplines. The program theme Our America/Nuestra America invites participants to explore the many meanings of "America" for people living in North America and beyond. In addition to proposals that explore the conference theme, we welcome submissions that explore other issues and themes in American history.

Proposals should be submitted electronically beginning October 1, 2004, at <http://www.oah.org/meetings/2006/>. Complete session proposals must include a chair, participants, and, if applicable, one or two commentators. All proposals must include the following information:

1. a complete mailing address, email, phone number, and affiliation for each participant;
2. an abstract of no more than

500 words for the session as a whole;

3. a prospectus of no more than 250 words for each presentation; and

4. a vita of no more than 500 words for each participant.

Each participant is required to register online and update his/her biographical and presentation information. Questions about electronic submissions should be emailed to the meetings department (meetings@oah.org).

All proposals must be received no later than January 15, 2005 at the above website. All participants must register for the meeting. Participants who specialize in American history and support themselves as American historians are also required to be members of the OAH or the NCPH. Participants representing other disciplines do not have to be members.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

On May 15th, 2004, **Karen Offen** was awarded an honorary doctorate in humane letters at the University of Idaho commencement ceremonies. The U. of I. was her undergraduate institution. Karen also had the following articles published since 2003: "Challenging Male Hegemony: Feminist Criticism and the Context for Women's Movements in the Age of European Revolutions and Counter-Revolution," in *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Sylvia Paletschek & Bianka Pietrow-Ennker (Stanford University Press, 2004), 11-30; notes, 340-345; "Intre istorie si

feminism. Interviu cu Karen Offen," *Observatorcultural* (Romania); at <http://www.observatorcultural.ro/arhivaarticol.phtml?xid=6684>; "Des modèles nationaux (1900-1945)?" in *Le Siècle des féminismes*, ed. Éliane Gubin et al (Paris: Les Éditions de l'atelier, 2004); and "Pionnière de l'histoire des mères et de la maternité: La contribution de Yvonne Knibiehler," in *Femmes, Familles, Filiations: Société et Histoire. Études réunies par Marcel Bernos et Michèle Bitton en hommage à Yvonne Knibiehler*. Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 2004. In July, Pro-

fessor Offen gave the keynote address at a conference on Civil Society and Gender Justice at the Wissenschafts-Zentrum Berlin in Germany. In addition, her article, "French Women's History: Retrospect (1789-1940) and Prospect," (published in *French Historical Studies*, Fall 2003) won the Eisenstein prize of the National Coalition of Independent Scholars for the best article published in 2002-2003. Finally, she has been selected for the 2004-2005 editions of *Who's Who of American Women* and *Who's Who in American Education*.

Merna Forster's book *100 Canadian Heroines: Famous and Forgotten Faces* will be published by The Dundurn Group in October, to coincide with Women's History Month in Canada and the 75th Anniversary of the Persons Case. The book includes a foreword by The Right Honourable Kim Campbell, Canada's first female prime minister. Merna also developed a new educational website: [heroines.ca](http://www.heroines.ca), A Guide to Women in Canadian History (<http://www.heroines.ca>) (<http://www.heroines.ca>)).

NEW MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR, CONTINUED

(Continued from page 3)
work takes me.

As membership coordinator of the CCWH, I intend to build on the great work that Christine Anderson has done. Not only will I be in touch with current members and ask you to renew your memberships, but I will be reaching out to the CCWH's affiliates to foster even stronger relationships and to broaden our membership base. Moreover, women's historians are everywhere and are teaching women's history in many creative and exciting ways. I want to encourage women working as independent scholars, archivists, museum curators, filmmakers, secondary teachers, graduate students, as well as

two and four-year college professors to join the CCWH.

We are teaching and making history in small communities, in rural areas, in big cities and in the suburbs, in the United States and around the world. We are participating in global discussions and demonstrating how gender, race, class, sexuality, region, and age shape access to power and significantly influence change over time. I intend to continue building the membership to reflect the rich diversity of voices that write, teach and make history.

Finally, the field of women's history is full of teachers, researchers, writers and practitioners who have done so much to make the field what it is today. I encourage senior scholars to

continue to actively cultivate the discipline by introducing your graduate students to the CCWH. Women's historians are doing important work. The next generation must be ready to contribute through scholarly writings, and more, they must be able to not only sustain but grow the field. They must also be ready to participate in and shape the broader social, political and cultural debates that surround and affect us.

The CCWH offers a truly valuable forum for women's historians - experienced and new - to meet and share ideas, to tap into valuable resources, and to build professional and social relationships. For those who are already members, thank you for your continued

commitment to the field of women's history and the CCWH in particular. Please stay with us and renew your memberships. For those who are not yet members, I hope you will join us!

For those interested in CCWH membership, membership renewal, or for membership-related questions, please contact:

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FILM REVIEW, CONTINUED

(Continued from page 7)
family and friends that will easily connect with students. *Night Girl* has even less of a visible authorial hand than *Out of Phoenix Bridge* - there is no voiceover narration - and likewise would require introduction through supplementary materi-

als. But the appeal of the unmediated voices in both these films is so strong and so rare that the additional step is absolutely worth it. Both Li and Ma's films ably meet and expand Mayfair Yang's mandate to show the world through Chinese women's eyes.

Film information

Through Chinese Women's Eyes. A film by Mayfair Yang. 1997. 52 min.
Out of Phoenix Bridge. A videotape by Li Hong. 1997. 120 min.

Night Girl. A film by Yingli Ma. 2001. 45 min.

Available from Women Make Movies (See Special Offer Below)

SPECIAL OFFER FOR CCWH MEMBERS FROM WOMEN MAKE MOVIES

Women Make Movies is the leading non-profit, educational distributor of independent films made by and about women. Our more than 500 titles are used extensively by educational, cultural, and community organizations to inform their communities about important issues affecting women today. As a feminist organization, we know the importance

of distributing films and videos that critically examine subjects such as violence against women, racism, sexism, homophobia and reproductive choice.

In recognition of CCWH's continued support and advocacy on behalf of women, WMM is very pleased to announce a **SPECIAL OFFER**

for CCWH members. Beginning in September and running through the end of December, we are offering a special package of 5 videos for \$495 -- that's just \$99 for a single title, a savings of over 60% -- plus \$40 for shipping and handling. (*Please note that this offer excludes new releases and must include video purchases

made in five.)

If you wish to place an order, please visit our website at www.wmm.com which contains additional information and other special offers. If you have any questions or want programming assistance, please feel free to contact our distribution staff at orders@wmm.com.

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