

The College of Humanities Newsletter

Message from Humanities Dean Elizabeth A. Say



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Alum 1981

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In my last "Message from the Dean" I spoke of the looming budget crisis and the resulting problems facing the CSU. I also reflected on the hopeful glimmers we can look to in even the dreariest of times. Without doubt, the past academic year has been a difficult one and academic year 2010-11 doesn't look significantly brighter. I would be lying to you if I said I did not have some discouraging moments. But I was able to gain some perspective on these when I attended the screening of Prof. Lopez-Garza's film (discussed below). As I watched the women chronicled in this documentary I was struck by their courage and their determination as they faced seemingly insurmountable challenges, and was reminded yet again of what a privileged life we lead here at the university. Yes, we are facing daunting budget cuts. And yes, many programs that we value as part of the academic life have been temporarily suspended. But—due in large part to sage leadership and thoughtful planning—CSUN will weather this fiscal storm and will continue to provide educational opportunities to students in this region. Inside this issue you will find stories about innovative courses where our students are encouraged to think about real tragedies that human communities have faced and the lessons that can be drawn from such moments in history. You will read about the CSUN Women's Center as it continues, after 27 years, to provide community and inspiration to the students we serve. And you can celebrate with us as CSUN is recognized as a leader in teacher preparation with the receipt of a multi-million dollar federal grant.

Humanities professor chronicles the struggles of formerly incarcerated women in her documentary "When Will the Punishment End?"

Dr. Marta López-Garza, Professor, Chicana/o Studies & Gender and Women's Studies Department, has spent the past five years on a passion project, a documentary on the reintegration of formerly incarcerated women into their local communities titled, "When Will The Punishment End?" The main objective of the film is to chronicle the challenges formerly incarcerated women face as they attempt to rebuild their lives, reunite with their children and families, and find housing and employment.

The motivation for this project was Dr. López-Garza's concern over the alarming increase in the number of women in prison. The number in state and federal prisons has increased nine-fold, from 12,300 in 1980 to 112,498

in 2006 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2008). Equally concerning is what happens when they are released. In 2002, a total of 16,787 women were transferred out of the prison system and returned to their home communities.

Factors which facilitate successful reentry include safe places to live, recovery programs, and education. The main barriers to successful reentry into society are the lack of employment opportunities as well as cuts in social service programs. Other barriers include the fear, discrimination, and prejudice exhibited on the part of potential employers, landlords, service providers and the general public. Finally, regressive laws and policies prohibit ex-offenders from even being considered for employment, housing and social services.

The film documents the political awakening of many of the women and the efforts of All of Us or None, an organization of the formerly incarcerated, to advocate for fair policies and laws and employment opportunities. The documentary serves as an educational tool, not only for family and community members, but also for the larger society: to better inform prospective employers, service providers, elected officials and policy makers.

Thus far the film has been screened at the Community Coalition in downtown Los Angeles, the College of Humanities Film Festival, and also on March 16 at the CSUN Noski Auditorium when a standing-room-only crowd viewed the film, followed by a panel discussion with four of the women featured in the documentary (Susan Burton from New Way of Life in Watts, Monica Stel from Harbour Area Halfway Houses in Long Beach, Kim Carter from Time for Change in San Bernardino, and Dr. Marilyn Montenegro).

Dr. López-Garza plans to write a book using research gathered, create a website, and to submit the film to festivals and to national media outlets such as PBS.

— Submitted by Joshua Einhorn

"TIMES CHANGE,
ADDRESSES
CHANGE, NAMES
CHANGE,
STUDENTS
CHANGE, AND EVEN
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BUT SOME THINGS
ARE QUITE
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HUNGRY FOR A
CAMPUS
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PERSONAL
CONNECTION AND
FOR AN
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CIVIL SOCIETY."

Some things remain

Imagine this for a moment, if you will... from 7:00pm – 9:00pm Monday through Friday, during the hot summer Northridge months, students come to your office to hang out, get advice from and connect with their peers, and access resources and referrals for concerns such as emergency housing, employment, sex discrimination, legal aid, child care needs, and so on. In 1973, one brave faculty member, Dr. Margaret Vernallis, allowed what was then a small vision with a big heart to operate out of her office for the summer months.



From left to right: Karen Medina, Juliane Perez, Dorian Adams-Wilson, Martha Barber, Shira Brown

Students in a CSUN speech class titled "Women as a Rhetorical Force" discovered a need to create a Women's Center on campus. At the time, their main goal was the Center itself, but their underlying objective was to unite women. They had a hunch, if you build it, they will come. And so they did! In 1974, the CSUN Women's Center officially opened its doors to a burgeoning community of students eager to connect to one another and create change.

Thirty-six years later, it is evident those students were onto something. Times change, addresses change, names change, students change, and even faculty change, but some things are quite consistent: students are hungry for a campus community, for academic support, for personal connection and for an opportunity to positively contribute to a civil society. And so from the small office in the Administration Building to Etiwanda Ave. to Plummer St. to Halsted St. they went. From the Women's Center to the Women's Resource Center to the Women's Research and Resource Center they went.

Here we are now, 36 years, 4 addresses and 3 name changes later, and I ask myself, has anything really changed? I am often asked, do we even need a Center like this anymore? And I cringe at the thought of it disappearing. Not because I was a student volunteer in 2000, not because I was the student Director in 2001, and not even because I am the Faculty Director now, but because as long as 1 in 4 women are sexually assaulted we need a Center like this. As long as women struggle to find fair employment, affordable housing and access to child and health care, we need a Center like this. As long as men contend with a system that perpetuates violence, we need a Center like this. As long as discrimination and exclusion exist, we need a Center like this. And so, I simply say, "yes," of course there is still the need for a Center like this on our campus, and in our community.

So, while it appears superficially that a lot has changed, clearly, some things remain.

Come see what we are doing over at the Women's Research and Resource Center about that.

For more information visit us on the web at:
<http://www.csun.edu/ws/WRRRC.html>

— Submitted by Shira Brown

College of Humanities shares in \$8.4 million federal grant awarded to CSUN

In April 2010, the U.S. Department of Education announced that CSUN was awarded a Teacher Quality Partnership grant. During this funding cycle, "CSUN

is the only university in California to have earned this extremely important and prestigious federal grant," according to Dr. Michael Spagna, Dean, Michael D. Eisner College of Education.

This project addresses the critical shortage of qualified special education teachers prepared to serve learners in high-need schools through a partnership between the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and the Colleges of Education and Humanities at CSUN. The specific project objectives are to: 1) Recruit a total of 150 promising special education teachers (30 each year for five years). 2) Develop and implement a model, 18-month credential/M.A. teaching residency program that (a) incorporates the new California special education standards emphasizing diversity and English learners, technology integration, and collaboration; (b) provides a concentration in language and literacy; (c) implements a one-year apprenticeship alongside experienced and trained special education mentors; and (d) creates a data-driven professional community of learners which promotes evidence-based practices and enhanced academic student achievement. 3) Enhance teacher retention through a two-year induction program that includes support in high-need schools and participation in teacher inquiry groups with mentors, examining pupil learning.

Faculty from the College of Humanities, Drs. Evelyn McClave, Sharon Klein, and Rosa Furumoto, will serve on the language and literacy workgroup under the leadership of the Project Co-director Dr. Sue Sears. These faculty members will be responsible for developing the language/literacy concentration along with Dr. Sears. They have been selected for the project because of their expertise in linguistics, language development and literacy and involvement in serving pre K-12 students in high-need schools. The language and literacy workgroup will develop and revise courses for the credential/master's degree, and design and implement professional development activities including a web-based module and workshop in language/literacy.

— Submitted by Joshua Einhorn

Teaching the Holocaust

The Holocaust was a watershed event in human history. Even as time passes, questions continue to perplex us. How could it have happened? What motivated the perpetrators? How did ordinary citizens behave? What lessons, if any, have we learned? Why are other genocides still occurring?

These issues are raised and discussed in the California State University Northridge graduate course Teaching the Holocaust and Genocide Studies. The purpose of the course is to teach current and future teachers how to teach the facts and lessons of the Holocaust accurately and sensitively, and how to relate these lessons to modern day genocides such as Rwanda and Darfur. The course originated in the College of Humanities and is cross listed in Jewish Studies and History.

The State of California mandates the teaching of the Holocaust and historical genocides in public school education. CSUN treats this mandate seriously, and has deemed this graduate course an academic priority. The course has received generous, consistent funding from The "1939" Club.

Most of the students in the course are currently teachers. Others are studying to become teachers at the level of middle school, high school and college. Students create new, curricular materials. One future college instructor created a PowerPoint presentation on the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Another student (a future museum professional) developed a curriculum in which high school students create a museum exhibit. Another student created a middle school curriculum using literature on hidden children.

Visiting Holocaust scholars are an important aspect of the course, as are first-hand accounts from survivors. These firsthand accounts are in turns grueling and enlightening.

Students of the course are connecting theory with the insights gained from practice. They are being prepared to engage fully in professional, personal and community life:

"This course furthered my professional goals. By learning methods of teaching the Holocaust I am better prepared to apply that knowledge in the classroom."

"I have discovered from my class on the Holocaust that study must be met with action."

"The course has given me a heightened awareness of bigotry and racism in the world and the need to educate others in tolerance and personal responsibility."

— Submitted by Joshua Einhorn

A flood of support

Hurricane Katrina was one of the five deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States. It was the sixth-strongest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded and the third-strongest hurricane on record that made landfall in the United States. Katrina formed on August 23 during the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season and caused devastation along much of the north-central Gulf Coast. In Louisiana, the federal flood protection system in New Orleans failed in more than fifty places. Nearly every levee in metro New Orleans breached as Hurricane Katrina passed east of the city, subsequently flooding 80% of the city and many areas of neighboring parishes for weeks. At least 1,836 people lost their lives in Hurricane Katrina and in the subsequent floods, making it the deadliest U.S. hurricane since 1928. The storm is estimated to have been responsible for \$81.2 billion in damage, making it

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the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history.

Following the tragic Hurricane Katrina in 2005, many CSUN students felt that not enough was being done to help families in their efforts to rebuild their homes, their communities, and their lives. CSUN Hillel took the lead and established a program in which students could spend their spring break doing something meaningful, helping to rebuild homes in the Gulf Coast. Rick Talbott, Associate Professor in Religious Studies, joined the effort. In 2008 he was a "scholar in residence" on the trip and, in 2009, he created a service learning course in which nine Religious Studies majors joined 18 other CSUN students on the Alternative Spring Break trip.

Although the hurricane ripped through the Gulf Coast years before, in 2009 many cities were still struggling to clean up the devastation that remained. Last spring, when the CSUN students arrived in the Ninth Ward, one of the poorest sections in New Orleans, they were greeted with a harsh reality: large portions of the area were filled with abandoned and rotting houses. Condemned houses were marked with large painted red circles with an "X" in the middle. Also painted onto the houses was the number of people and pets that died in the house. Water marks could be seen as high as the roofs of the houses.

The house the students worked to repair last spring was the home of an elderly woman in her 80's. She was still not able to live there. When she came by and saw the team of students painting, replacing wood paneling, and cleaning brick she became very emotional. Her gratitude touched the lives of the students, and made a lasting impact. Their consciousness level has been raised. Many have pledged to continue service learning projects, making community service a core value in their post-academic life.

One homeowner from a previous year was so grateful for the help he received he thanked the students Louisiana style, by cooking up and serving a huge pot of crawfish!

— Submitted by Joshua Einhorn

The Mission of the College of Humanities is to create a community of learners who...

Explore and value the diversities of cultures, thought, perspectives, literatures and languages of humanity;

Critically reflect on and analyze multiple dimensions of human identity and experience;

Contribute to scholarship and creative production and innovation, and

Act as responsible global citizens committed to principles of freedom, equality, justice and participatory democracy.

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