Rethinking Reconciliation After Mass Violence
What Healing Means for Survivors of Genocide and War

Weapons of Mass Instruction
Racialized Toxins, Lead Panics, and Maternal Soldiers of Empire

Hyper-White / Hyper-Black
Analyzing Race and Gender in Film

Spring Edition 2009
Vol. VII, Issue 2
WORDS FROM THE DIRECTOR:

The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly

The CRG is one the newest academic centers on the U.C. Berkeley campus, and we can thus chart progress—or lack thereof—toward our core goals in a short time frame. Looking at recent weeks and months, there have been a few positive developments but also some distressing, even ugly, trends.

On the “good” side, the fact that a majority of the American people saw fit to elect a person of color President of the United States last November was both remarkable and historically important. Since his inauguration in January, President Obama has appeared on television daily, almost always impressive in his grasp of complex issues and in his eloquence and calm demeanor. This should have positive long term consequences for the self-image and commitment to education by people of color. Also positive is the fact that a significant portion of the President’s stimulus package addresses issues important to women and people of color. In particular, support for public K-12 schools and higher education will help to alleviate some of the drastic cuts in education spending at the state and local levels.

While these efforts are important and commendable, it must be recognized that the current deep recession effects people of color disproportionately. Most lower income people have almost no cushion if they lose their jobs or have to face foreclosure. Also, people of color and women are often the first people fired when a company decides to downsize. These unequal and unfair burdens must be addressed via basic reform of our economic system, not just by temporary palliatives.

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In our own home state, circumstances have been especially dire for people of color. For many months in 2008 and early 2009 a small group of mostly rural legislators in Sacramento refused to sign off on the 2008-2009 state budget, thus causing major dislocations to our K-12, CSU and UC systems. Unlike any other state, California requires a 2/3 vote of the Senate to approve even 1 penny of funding support for education. This means that a small minority of anti-education diehards can hold up state budget approval almost indefinitely.

The more reasonable majority of senators, in order to avoid a total collapse of state services, finally had to agree to a viciously anti-education budget, which puts almost all state funding reductions on the backs of our state’s public school children. Since the vast majority of children of color in California attend public schools, the draconian anti-education policy impacts them the most. The goal of equal educational opportunity for all, regardless of race or gender, will be much harder to achieve, since denial of a decent education in pre-school and grades 1-6 tends to scar an entire generation of kids, and is very difficult to overcome in later years.

In our own case at Berkeley, it will be hard to achieve a fair balance of African American, Latino/a, Asian and white students within future student bodies, given the increasing disadvantage experienced by children of color in California’s public schools.

CRG forums, symposia, and research projects should explore and describe ways in which people of color, poor people, and women have to bear an unequal share of pain in the current economic situation, and we should be cognizant of deleterious long-term outcomes, especially because of denial of equal educational opportunity.
It is a well documented fact that racial minorities in the United States have been historically underrepresented with regard to access to employment opportunities, educational outcomes, and many other social aspirations. However, according to Susan Ivey, a professor in the UC Berkeley/UCSF Joint Medical Program, an area where minorities have become disproportionately overrepresented is in a rising number of health problems that are particularly pronounced along racial lines.

Among the statistics that Professor Ivey notes: incidences of diabetes type-2 are more prevalent amongst non-whites, with Asian-American Pacific Islanders reporting the highest rate of new cases; 41 percent of African Americans have hypertension (a risk factor for strokes and heart disease), as compared to 27 percent of whites; and the rate of HIV/AIDS cases reported among African Americans is nine times that of whites.

As alarming as these figures may appear, the actual disparities in the overall health status of minorities may be even higher. Ivey cites the tendency for minorities to underreport health issues, limited outreach due to language barriers, and a paucity of reliable data sets for specific ethnic populations to support this hypothesis.

Ivey identifies improving access to care providers and insurance, as well as patient and physician communication, as instrumental to any efforts to address the inequities in minority health status. She notes that while progress has been made, there is still more work to be done.

Julian Chow, a professor of Social Welfare, continued the forum by discussing the impact of welfare reform on Asian Americans, and their access to and use of social services.

Chow described how the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 has adversely impacted immigrant participation in welfare. Welfare recipients are now faced with new work requirements and sanctions, including a five-year time limit on receiving public assistance.

Asian immigrants and refugees, Chow argues, are more likely to be disqualified from public benefits. He notes that while Asian make up 8% of the population receiving public assistance, they also represent 37% of those disqualified from benefits.

A major contributing factor is language. 90% of Asians immigrants on welfare speak little to no English. That, combined with limited education, job skills, and the complexity of the welfare application process result in many of them losing their benefits. To combat this, Chow recommends the creation of programs where language and job-skills are simultaneously addressed.

Currently, Chow is examining how county level contextual factors may influence access to welfare.
Thirty years ago, the brief, but brutal regime of the Khmer Rouge ended. Between 1975-1979, upwards of two million Cambodians would lose their lives as a direct result of the regime’s violent and radical program of social upheaval.

Today, three-quarters of the population is too young to remember or have had direct experience of these events. However, the psychological trauma and emotional scars of this period of history linger on in the collective memory of a now-aged generation of survivors.

Professor Katharya Um, Ethnic Studies, has conducted ethnographic field work around the lives of elderly women survivors. Many of the women she studied were in their sixties, and as such were also survivors of Colonial French rule, and WWII Japanese occupation.

Um argues that in the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge era, and despite an increased amount of discussion concerning women’s issues, very little is known about the complex experiences of women over the decades of war and political turmoil. This is significant because women have played an important role in shaping Cambodian society prior to, during, and following the Khmer Rouge. Women have served as both victims and perpetrators of the Khmer Rouge genocide. The realities of war were a daily part of their lives, with women cooking meals and raising children even as their husbands came back from the battle field. Many were captured and imprisoned as well. Women were also a prominent force in leading communities, and an integral force in the peace building process long before foreign bodies such as the U.N. intervened.

For Cambodian women survivors, the struggle for spiritual and emotional healing has competed with an ongoing battle against poverty and violence. Some fundamental questions that emerge from this examination include: the meaning of reconciliation, and perhaps more poignantly, what relationship does it have to forgiveness? In other words, must one precede the other in order for healing to occur?

According to Harvey Weinstein, a clinical professor in Public Health, a greater understanding of, and sensitivity to, the trauma experienced by survivors of mass violence and genocide is needed to truly reconcile individual and communal wounds.

Based on his research examining the root causes of genocide in over eleven post-conflict countries including Bosnia, Rwanda, Albania, Iraq and Sierra Leone, Professor Weinstein argues that there is presently a gap between what policy and law makers identify as measures of reconciliation for a nation, and the psychological and emotional needs of individual survivors. Weinstein questions traditional conceptions of ‘national healing,’ in light of the fact that nation states are artificially bounded constructs of law, and not people. In other words, steps commonly taken to promote peace, closure, and national healing, such as legal trials, memorials, or reparations, often do not address the societal level factors that lead to the conflict in the first place. Nor do these forms of reconciliation tangibly help the true victims of war crimes—the survivors.

In summary, Professor Weinstein believes that the processes of individual healing and social reconciliation are far more complicated than are presently conceptualized. He proposes an ecological model of social breakdown to understand the complex, interrelated levels of state, community, forensic, legal, individual, familial, and social responses to interventions. The key to social reconstruction he argues, is societal transformation, and unless policy makers possess a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena, any healing is superficial, and the cycles of violence will recur.
The Fall 2008 forum series concluded with graduate student presentations by Ariane Cruz and Petra Raquel Rivera, doctoral candidates in African Diaspora Studies.

Ariane Cruz began by sharing her current research examining mass-media depictions of African female sexuality. Specifically, she builds upon the work of the late Walter Kendricks, a literary scholar and author of *The Secret Museum*, by exploring how pornographic images have been used to characterize and depict the role that African females and their sexuality have played in American cultural consciousness. Cruz examines racialized, female depictions in sexually explicit pornographic publications such as *Hustler*, *Penthouse*, and *Playboy*, as well as less obvious works such as *National Geographic*, which she suggests, “featured gratuitous displays of the naked, unclad black body in the guise of research.”

For Cruz, pornography presents a unique window for tracing the evolution and boundaries of black female mainstream inclusion. It is also closely aligned with her scholarly interests on visual culture and the black female body.

Petra Rivera continued the talk by discussing the wide-spread controversy and uproar created in Puerto Rico over *perreo*, a popular dancehall move closely associated with the musical genre, *reggaeton*.

For months, media headlines were dominated by heated debates and discussions about the moral degradation of Puerto Rican youth. Congressmen, social workers, and psychologists alike were enlisted to analyze, debate, and discuss the licentious nature of young women dancing provocatively in videos.

Rivera believes that the uproar over the *perreo* dance underscores an element of racial discord within the Puerto Rican national identity. She argues that it is the inherent blackness of the *perreo*/*reggaeton* culture that critics respond to, even moreso than to charges of miscegeny. As evidence, she contrasts the positive media coverage at the height of the anti-*perreo* campaign afforded to the Ms. Universe pageant, a competition which makes no pretense of objectifying women.

A major goal of Rivera’s research is to understand how race and society become mutually constitutive in politics and society.
A theatrical film release arguably succeeds only so far as its characters resonate with the viewing public. A successful film can reach an audience numbering in the tens of millions. As such, films represent important cultural markers that can provide insight into not only the values and beliefs of individual writers and directors, but into the collective, cultural-consciousness of segments of, and society as a whole.

Professor Linda Haverty Rugg, Scandinavian, opened the Spring Thursday Afternoon Forum series by discussing how conceptions of ‘whiteness’ as a social norm are constructed and disseminated through media forms such as film.

According to Rugg, whiteness is a shifting, protean category that establishes the cultural standards of American society. One means by which the normalcy of whiteness is maintained, she suggests, is through the creation of hyper-white characters. These fictive caricatures personify stereotypes that cultural critics, comedians of color for example, might use to negatively frame whiteness, such as overt effeminacy, politeness, sexual repression, or even violence.

One example Rugg cites, is the character Jerry Lundegaard from the Coen brothers’ film, Fargo. Lundegaard stands far beyond what is considered “normal” for a white male. He is too nervous, anxious, and emasculated. An example from the opposite spectrum of whiteness in the same film, is Gaear Grimsrud, here depicted as a cold-blooded, remorseless Norse killing-machine.

By establishing these extremes of whiteness, Rugg argues, hyper-white characters reify the cultural sanctity of characteristics that might otherwise become targets for ridicule or social criticism. For example, it becomes acceptable for the average white person to be somewhat effeminate, polite, or sexually repressed, so long as he or she does so in moderation. It also justifies the prevalence of whites in position of dominance (cultural, economic, political, or otherwise) so long as that power is not abused.

Professor Linda Williams, Film Studies, concluded the Spring forum by discussing Sweet Sweetback’s Baaadasssss Song, a movie written, musically scored, produced, directed by, and starring Melvin Van Peebles in 1971.

Widely acknowledged as the forerunner of the blaxploitation genre, Sweet Sweetback has been interpreted by cultural historians as an attempt to explicitly challenge two stereotypes of blackness that up until that time had become the norm for black characters depicted...
in film: the asexual, emasculated, and submissive “Uncle Tom” of Harriet Beecher Stowe fame; and the miscegenistic threat of the pelvis thrusting, gyrating “black buck” of the post-Civil War reconstruction, as prominently portrayed in the film, “Birth of a Nation.”

Sweetback, the film’s titular protagonist, is portrayed by Van Peebles as a virile symbol of black masculinity and sexuality. According to Professor Williams, he is the Anti-Tom and Anti-Buck, a sexually empowered black male who is openly the object of female—black and white alike—desire and lust. However, throughout his many sexual encounters over the course of the film, Sweetback himself displays no outward signs of physical pleasure or enjoyment. Williams interprets this display of restrained potency as a statement against the black-buck stereotype. She sees in early blaxploitation the most honest and direct challenges to miscegenation myths: as virile and potent as he is, it is the white characters who are obsessed with Sweetback’s sexuality, and not the other way around.

Perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of the film for black audiences of the time was its ending. Hounded and persecuted by the police (for a crime he admittedly commits), most moviegoers would have expected a tragic ending, with Sweetback caught and imprisoned, or worse, shot and left for dead. Instead, the defiant Sweetback gets away—thanks in part to his prodigious virility—to live, fight, and (presumably) make love for another day.

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y do people who interact with one another end up sounding similar to each other as well? For scholars of linguistics, such a deceptively simple observation unfolds into a theoretically rich examination of cognitive, physiological, and psycho-social mechanisms that may illuminate the very basis of human thought and behavior.

Molly Babel presented some preliminary results from her current dissertation study, which examines how racial biases and perceptions of a speaker’s physical attractiveness influence phonetic imitation. Her study found that, indeed, racial bias did appear to predict subjects’ degrees of phonetic imitation. She also found that women are more likely to exhibit phonetic imitation if they found the speaker attractive, and that the reverse was true in the case of men. The more attractive a male rated a male speaker, the less they were likely to imitate them.

Some socio-linguistics scholars believe all human actions are deliberate. Babel’s research challenges this notion of pure intentionality by providing some evidence of automaticity.

According to recent studies released by the Pew Research Center, African Americans are more distrustful of law enforcement officials than whites. This may not be surprising, given the high incarceration rates for blacks, as well as studies which suggests that police officers are more likely to associate crime with blacks than other races.

But what does it mean to be black and a police officer? Black police officers are often perceived as outsiders in black communities because of their institutional roles. They may also find themselves further removed economically because of salaries that are well above the average of the poorer black neighborhoods they patrol.

Trevor Gardner, Sociology, suggests that black officers harmonize their conflicting ethnic and professional identities by adopting and navigating between racial narratives. In opposition to Maxine Waters’ position that racial identities are adopted situationally, Gardner would like to argue that racial identities are in fact constant, and that what changes are the narratives that accompany them.
O
n Wednesday, November 19th, the Center for Race & Gender, in conjunction with the UC Berkeley Department of History, convened a special gathering to celebrate the election of the first African American to the office of President of the United States of America.

Students, faculty, and community members from around the Bay Area came together to commemorate the moment, and to reflect on how far we, as a nation, have collectively advanced in terms of race and gender relationships. Faculty panelists discussed a number of issues ranging from the emergence of Asian American and Latino/a electorates to the prominent role that Michelle Obama played in legitimizing Barack’s perception amongst African American communities.

Along with heartfelt expressions of jubilance and celebration, the panelists openly, and at times soberly, acknowledged that the work toward a truly equitable America had only just begun. On this day at least, in the hearts and minds of those in attendance, that brighter tomorrow suddenly grew more within reach.
Shades of Difference is an edited collection that was inspired by, and grew out of the Center For Race & Gender conference, Hierarchies of Color. It addresses the widespread, but little studied social phenomenon of colorism—the preference for lighter skin color, and the ranking of an individual’s worth according to skin tone.

An interdisciplinary array of scholars from across the country contributed to this volume, providing a diversity of intellectual perspectives into the the social, cultural, and economic implications of skin color. Their work covers a broad range of societies and historical periods, and looks at how skin color affects people’s opportunities in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and North America.

To celebrate the publication of the book, University Press Books, Stanford University Press, and the Center for Race & Gender hosted a book reading on March 4th, 2009. Audience members and a panel of authors mingled together in an intimate setting to exchange thoughts and ideas.

Featuring Contributions By:

Taunya L. Banks  
Professor, Law, University of Maryland

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva  
Professor, Sociology, Duke University

Maxine L. Craig  
Associate Professor, Women’s Studies, UC Davis

David R. Dietrich  
PhD Student in Sociology, Duke University

Evelyn Nakano Glenn  
Professor, Ethnic, Gender & Women’s Studies, UCB

Angela P. Harris  
Professor, Law, UC Berkeley

Tanya K. Hernández  
Professor, Law, George Washington University

Trina Jones  
Professor, Law, UC Irvine

Verna M. Keith  
Professor, Sociology, Florida State University

Aisha Khan  
Assoc. Professor, Anthropology, New York University

Joanne Rondilla  
Ph.D. Candidate in Ethnic Studies, UC Berkeley

Christina A. Sue  
Asst. Professor, Sociology, Univ Colorado, Boulder

Edward Telles  
Professor, Sociology, UCLA

Lynn M. Thomas  
Assoc. Professor, History, University of Washington

Charis Thompson  
Assoc. Prof, Gender & Women’s Studies, Rhetoric, UCB

Jyotsina Vaid  
Professor, Psycholinguistics, Texas A&M
The Brooklyn, New York based civil rights activist Sonny Carson once noted that the schoolhouses he attended were like prisons, and that the prisons themselves were posing as schoolhouses—metal bars ran down the windows of both. Various authors such as playwright George Bernard Shaw, sociologist Michel Foucault, and even the band Pink Floyd have drawn similar comparisons between institutions of learning and institutions of incarceration.

Professor Daniel Perlstein, Education, evoked these and other powerful images in his discussion about the relationship between institutional structures such as schools and prisons, and how they have contributed in part to shaping the African American male identity.

Perlstein discussed the case of Jeff Fort and Eugene “Bull” Hairston, the two founders of the Blackstone Rangers (later known as the Black P. Stones), a Chicago-based African American gang that would serve as the inspiration and organizational model for other national gangs such as the Crips. Interestingly enough, Fort and Hairston first met one another in a juvenile correctional facility. Perlstein suggests that instead of eradicating their delinquency, their time at St. Charles actually served to reinforce it. Specifically, it brought them into contact with other similarly disaffected and disenfranchised youth, a phenomenon again, not unlike that of prisons. Additionally, the strict, regimented systems of discipline and control they were subjected to while at “school” would provide the foundations for their future, organizational enterprise.

Is the successful African American academic identity a precursor or product of academic achievement? Professor Na’ilah Suad Nasir, jointly appointed in African American Studies and Education, concluded the CRG Thursday Forum by examining the academic trajectories and personal identities of black high school students.

According to Nasir, educational researchers to date have limited their inquiries into understanding whether or not possessing a “black identity” is a help or hindrance in school. She argues that such an approach greatly oversimplifies the issue. For one thing, it neglects the role that contexts such as school and society play in shaping individual identity. Furthermore, it ignores the widespread prevalence and influence of social stereotypes. Nasir believes that a more generative approach may be to explore what types of black identities support or hinder schooling, and just as importantly, how they are shaped and influenced by the contexts the students are situated in.

Nasir presented the case of Victor, a student at a Northern California high school campus which had been divided between a sub-section of college-bound students, and those who were allowed to become marginal. The effort to improve the school had created spaces of exception, so that a minority of students enjoyed Advanced Placement coursework and extracurricular activities in the very same building as students who were left to fail. In this way, the academic identities available to students were already filtered by the limited number of academic opportunities provided them by school policy makers.

Victor’s story further exemplifies how students caught at the boundary between these two worlds can be funneled in either direction. Victor began with an academically oriented identity, and was placed into an Advanced Placement history course. However, because his prior classes had not sufficiently prepared him, he failed the class. This failure would eventually prevent him graduating, and lead him to adopt a school adverse social identity.
Undergraduate Grant Winner Presentations
Jaimee Comstock-Skipp & Eva Holt-Rusmore

On March 19th, 2009, the Center For Race & Gender was pleased to honor and recognize the scholarly contributions of Jaimee Comstock-Skipp and Eva Holt-Rusmore, both recipients of CRG undergraduate grant rewards.

Jaimee Comstock-Skipp, Near Eastern Studies, traveled to Cairo, Egypt, where she analyzed artistic shifts in 19th-century visual representations of the Sultan Hassan Mosque. She argues that the gradual movement from objective depictions by European colonial artists, from static architectural renderings and paintings that emphasized structural forms, to more personalized, highly subjective representations of individual figures and scenes from daily life, provides important insight into the evolving relationship between colony and colonizer.

Eva Holt-Rusmore, ISF Studies, traveled to Freetown, the urban capital of the African nation of Sierra Leone. Her two months of field-work involved interviews and participant-observation of female, survivor-victims of the 11-year long, civil war which ran from 1991-2002. Holt-Rusmore seeks to better understand the patterns of social marginalization and reintegration that occur amongst female, post-conflict survivors of violence, genocide and rape.

The Center for Race and Gender commends the scholarly efforts of these two promising undergraduate students, and warmly encourages others with research interests related to the topic of race and gender to apply for grants.

Weapons of Mass Instruction
Professor Mel Chen, Sociology
Funie Hsu, Education

In 1901, three years after the U.S. defeated the Spanish in the Philippines, the first wave of a new breed of American soldiers arrived on the newly annexed lands aboard the ship the U.S.A.T. Thomas. These men and women, enlisted from the halls of academia instead of the barracks, would collectively become known as the “Thomasites.” They carried with them new weapons of conquest: the English language, and the mandate of the white man’s burden to “educate” and “civilize” the primitive world.

According to Funie Hsu, Education, these “maternal soldiers of empire” furthered the agenda of U.S. conquest and occupation by imposing linguistic discipline and the punishment of mandated English instruction in the schoolhouse. Their work served as an ideological counterpart to the physical conquest of the Philippine resistance forces in the battlefields.

In her research, Hsu, examines how education had been conscripted as a tool for justifying the marginalization of native populations as racialized, gendered and classed subjects of the American empire. She argues that the policy for mandated English instruction in colonial Philippines, infantilized the discourse involving native Filipinos, by transforming them into primitives without language who were ill equipped for self rule.

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### Fall 2008 Graduate Student Grant Awards Recipients

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CRG Fall 2009 Grants Program

The Center for Race and Gender (CRG) at the University of California Berkeley, announces the availability of grants of $100 to $1,000 to fund undergraduates and $100 to $2,000 to support graduate students for research or creative projects that address issues of race and gender.

ELIGIBILITY: Applications can be submitted by any Berkeley undergraduate not matriculating at the end of the semester or any student enrolled in a graduate program at UC Berkeley. Applications are particularly sought from students working in areas where race and gender issues have not previously been of major concern as well as areas where they have been more central. Proposals that support dissertation or thesis research are strongly encouraged.

GRANT PERIOD AND USE OF FUNDS: Grants will be awarded for a period of one year for graduate students and six-months for undergraduates from the start date. Funds may be used for direct costs related to the proposed project, such as travel to archival or ethnographic research sites; supplies and services, and equipment rental. Funds may not be used for equipment purchase, stipend, living expenses, conference attendance, or educational travel. Grant payments will be in the form of reimbursements for expenses.

APPLICATION PROCESS: Find downloadable forms and application requirements at:
http://crg.berkeley.edu/programs/grants/undergrad.html
http://crg.berkeley.edu/programs/grants/graduate.html

APPLICATION DEADLINES:
The Fall 2009 Undergraduate Grant application deadline will be October 7th, 2009 at 3 p.m.
The Fall 2009 Graduate Grant application deadline will be November 2nd, 2009 at 3 p.m.
Awards will be announced within two weeks of each deadline. Direct inquires to centerrg@berkeley.edu.

Spring 2009 Undergraduate Student Grant Awards Recipients

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CRG Grants Program Funding Student Research
Karl Britto is a joint appointed professor in the French and Comparative Literature departments, and is an affiliated faculty member of the CRG. His interests and expertise includes Francophone literature, particularly that of Vietnam; the way the body has figured into colonial projects; and technologies of bodily ordering. “Something like fingerprinting was developed in a colonial context”, he says, and was used for anthropologic classifications as well as a means of surveillance by the state. “I’m interested in what I don’t see to be an entirely coincidental rise of these two spheres...”

Britto’s passion and drive stems from his personal upbringing. He revealed hearing about anti-colonial resistance and struggle because his mother’s family was very involved in the anti-colonial resistance movement in Goa (a Portuguese colony until the 1960’s). In fact, his mother had been forced into exile before Karl was born. Britto muses, “The whole field of studies I am engaged in is in some sense very personal for me” though there has been some “displacement to another country’s colonial history.”

Growing up in the Middle East, a variety of languages populated Britto’s milieu, including French. But when he moved to the US and went to high school, he realized that French was constructed quite differently here. Indeed, it was not until graduate school, when he began studying the emerging field of Francophone Literature, that Britto would recoup a deep relationship with the language and discover the exciting theories and topics that have shaped his academic career.

In his first book, *Disorientation: France, Vietnam, and the Ambivalence of Interculturality* (2004), Britto addresses questions of identity: national affiliation, political, gender, religious, and other intersections. This project held the aim of expanding the Francophone studies canon, which had predominantly been on Africa and the Caribbean. He says that in Vietnamese literature, one of the big questions that came up was the role of women, especially vis-à-vis cultural identity, “whether there should be French or Vietnamese education, allegiance to the traditional Confucian family structures... it’s really an enormous question.” He notes, “At the same time, there is an enormous amount of colonialist literature going on. Fiction, but also ethnographic texts, manuals for colonial officials, many of which present a particularly racially inflected vision of Vietnamese populations that are gendered in various ways.”

The ways race, gender and sexuality intersect in these texts is always very close to the surface. Laughingly, he says, “there are some really crazy passages...” One that will be seared into his memory forever relates to an excerpt from a colonial military officer’s writings, where the author describes with such palpable anxiety, the Vietnamese population, and in particular, the Vietnamese men with long flowing hair and clothing, who do not fit into the gendered categories of the colonialist viewpoint. The officer concludes the passage by stating, “After you’ve spent some time looking at these men, you’ll feel the need to scrub your vision clean by looking at the nearest colonial soldier riding nearby on a horse, his saber beating against his thigh!”

Another theme that emerges in the literature, Britto muses, is a constant anxiety from the threat of interracial relations or miscegenation. The breakdown of categories is incredibly threatening, especially to the colonial project itself, which depends on a set of hierarchies that needs to maintain a distinction between colonized and colonizer.” This topic is closely related to Professor Britto’s current research on bodily technologies, and what strikes him as how the status of cultural in-between-ness frequently becomes mapped onto the body for Vietnamese writers. Whether it is the mixed race child, or mixed cultural status, there is a way that bodies become racialized and minds, thought, and even consciousness itself is inherently French. His research helps explain the complicated ways that race and gender play out. By identifying the bodily mechanisms through which oppression is carried out, he contributes a fresh perspective on intersectional scholarship.

Tamera Stover, Sociology
Professor Chana Kronfeld, Hebrew, Yiddish, & Comparative Literature
Hovering at a Low Altitude: The Collected Poetry of Dahlia Ravikovitch
Translated by Chana Bloch & Chana Kronfeld (W.W. Norton, 2009)

In poems about fathers and daughters, men and women, kings and their subjects, the precarious position of women and the plight of Palestinians under the Occupation, Dahlia Ravikovitch articulates the painful asymmetries of power. The extraordinary stylistic range of her poetry reveals her mastery of the verbal art.

From Publisher’s Note

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Professor Mel Chen, Ethnic Studies, concluded the forum with a provocative discussion on the widespread, media induced panic in 2007 over the amounts of lead found in products such as petfoods, seafood, and perhaps most prominently, children’s toys made in China.

Images of toys being manufactured by rows Chinese assembly-line workers were frequently juxtaposed against images of healthy, white children playing. As a result the toys became perceived as health threats, and were associated with and interpreted as Chinese. The ensuing lead panic resulted in the transformation of a hithertofore inanimate toxin, into a highly charged, racialized subject. While not disputing the toxicity of lead, Chen observes that despite three decades of trade relationships, China was only now conspicuously identified as the primary source of the contagion. The not-so hidden message is implicitly clear: these racialized products of an emerging threat to American capitalism, are also a threat to (white) America’s youth.

Chen notes with some irony that the already limited media coverage detailing more widespread and damaging effects of lead products such as paint on American minority children, faded from the national discussion entirely. Furthermore, no mention was made at all about the health and environmental risks associated with the manufacturing of and disposal of U.S. products containing lead such as batteries and electronics. She argues that black children and foreign nationals are absent from these images because of a need to tie threats to U.S. sovereignty and xenophobia to an external polarity.

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Thank you and Farewell, Daniel & Tamera!

The Center for Race & Gender would like to bid a fond and warm farewell to two of our long-time staff members: Daniel Paredes and Tamera Stover.

Daniel has worked as the Center’s undergraduate research assistant for the past 5 years. Next fall, Daniel will be a student in the graduate department of Urban Planning at UCLA. Tamera has been with the Center as a graduate student researcher for the last 2 years. She will be leaving to concentrate on completing her PhD in Sociology, as well as to pursue her interests and desire to teach at the graduate level.
CRG Faultlines Call for Contributors

The Center for Race & Gender invites students, faculty, and scholars of race and gender to contribute artwork, photos, or stories to the Faultlines newsletter. For more details please contact the editors at rng2@berkeley.edu

CRG Dissertation Writing Group

The CRG sponsors an interdisciplinary dissertation writing group. We welcome graduate students from the Humanities, Social Sciences, and other fields who share a common scholarly interest in the study of Gender and Race. The purpose of the group is to support and encourage members to start, continue, or finish their dissertations. Each member is asked to submit a chapter draft that the group discusses and critiques. Please contact Alia Pan at acypan@berkeley.edu for any inquiries.

Thursday Afternoon Forum: Call for Speakers

The Center for Race and Gender cordially invites faculty members and graduate students interested in sharing and discussing their work to submit presentation proposals for our bi-weekly Afternoon Forum Series. Any research project dealing with the nexus between race and gender is welcome.

Please submit an abstract of 300 words and resume to rng2@berkeley.edu with the subject line: “Forum Call for Submissions.” General questions may be directed to centerrg@berkeley.edu or (510) 643-8488.