Annual Report Institute for Research on Women, Rutgers University, 2015-2016

Nicole R. Fleetwood (Director) & Sarah Tobias (Associate Director)

I. OVERVIEW

2015-2016 was a busy and productive year at the Institute for Research on Women (IRW). Our core programming (the seminar, Distinguished Lecture Series and undergraduate learning community) revolved around the theme of "Poverty" and reflected a dynamic range of interdisciplinary scholarship. In addition, we held a very successful Spring Symposium on the theme of "Poverty and Sexuality." Since the distribution of last year's annual report, we also launched three new IRW publications: our *Marking Time: Prison Arts and Activism Resource Guide*, the first edition of IRW's new online journal *Rejoinder*, and *Trans Studies: The Challenge to Hetero/Homonormativites*, a Rutgers University Press book edited by former IRW Director Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel and IRW Associate Director Sarah Tobias. After an extraordinarily generative 3-year term, we said farewell to IRW Director Nicole Fleetwood in June 2016.

We look forward to welcoming Professor Arlene Stein as IRW Director in July 2016. Professor Stein is an accomplished scholar who has been involved in IRW for many years and has a strong commitment to feminist research, collaboration, and activism. She researches and teaches in the areas of sexuality, gender, cultural politics, social movements, and psycho-social studies. She is the author of four books, including *The Stranger Next Door: The Story of a Small Community's Battle over Sex, Faith, and Civil Rights* (Beacon 2001), and *Reluctant Witnesses: Survivors, Their Children, and the Rise of Holocaust Consciousness* (Oxford 2014). She received the Ruth Benedict Prize from the American Anthropological Association and the Simon and Gagnon Award for career contributions in sexuality studies, given by the American Sociological Association. Professor Stein is currently writing a book called *Designing Men: The Rise of Transgender Masculinity*, which is under contract with Knopf, and is coauthoring a guide for social scientists who wish to engage with broader publics.

In other transitions, we hired Stephanie East as IRW's new Administrative Assistant in January 2016. She replaced Colleen Martin, who accepted a position at the Center for American Women and Politics. Additionally, Sara Perryman began working with the institute as Undergraduate Learning Community Coordinator in Fall 2015, replacing Ghassan Moussawi who held the position the previous year. The following report provides a brief summary of IRW's activities and initiatives in the 2015-16 academic year.

II. CORE PROGRAMMING

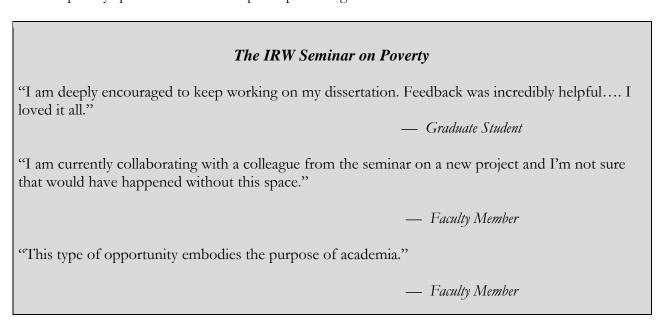
IRW Interdisciplinary Research Seminar

As mentioned above, the theme for IRW's 2015-16 interdisciplinary seminar—and for all of its core programming—was "Poverty." Throughout the year we engaged in a broad conversation about poverty and systemic inequalities from various feminist perspectives, examining how institutions and regulatory systems shape families, kinship, domestic relations, intimacies, and practices of care in the twenty-first century. In addition to the IRW Director and Associate Director, a total of 17 individuals participated in this year's seminar: 7 faculty members, 5 graduate students, 2 Global Scholars (from Brown University and Nottingham Trent University), one staff member, one Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, and one Douglass alumna. Scholars attending the seminar were associated with

the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, the School of Nursing-Camden, the School of Education, and Douglass Residential College, as well as the departments of Sociology (New Brunswick), History, Women's and Gender Studies, and Sociology and Anthropology (Newark). Seminar discussions showcased participants' research on topics as varied as "The Politics of Poverty and the Rise of Brazil's 'New Middle Class'" and "Permanent Supportive Housing as Anti-Poverty Policy for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence."

In addition to presentations by fellows and guest lecturers, the IRW held a workshop on scholarly publishing for seminar members. Led by Mary Hawkesworth (Women's and Gender Studies; former editor of *Signs*) and Peter Mikulas (Rutgers University Press), seminar members learned about the intricacies of publishing in academic journals and how this process differs from publishing scholarly monographs.

Final evaluations by participants praised the seminar for providing a highly productive environment that was simultaneously "supportive, exploratory, and engaged." The collegiality of the seminar prompted a group of graduate students to begin their own dissertation-writing group. Faculty participants noted that the seminar challenged them to rethink the best ways to frame their work in order to reach different audiences. In short, the IRW seminar continues to provide a model interdisciplinary space that enables its participants to grow and thrive as intellectuals.



IRW Distinguished Lecture Series

During the 2015-16 academic year, the IRW hosted talks by six Distinguished Lecturers, esteemed academics from within and outside the University. In addition, we hosted a roundtable with designing the WE—a social impact design firm committed to undoing structural inequalities—as part of the series. The lectures and roundtable attracted audiences in the region of 80-100 people. Each event was attended by faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates from a range of departments including American Studies, History, Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies, Sociology, and Women's and Gender Studies, as well as by members of the IRW's Undergraduate Learning Community, representatives from the Institute for Women's Leadership, and local

community members. We incorporated our events into the Douglass passport program and in consequence many undergraduate transfer students attended our lectures. Faculty teaching courses in several disciplines also encouraged students to attend or brought their classes to the events.

- In *Poverty Wars, 1964 to the Present: From the War on Poverty to the Global Movement for a Living Wage* (September 17, 2015), Annelise Orleck (Dartmouth College) examined the evolution of policies around poverty in the U.S. as it has been shaped from the bottom up by community organizations and welfare rights groups in the 1960s and 70s, and by the global movement for a living wage in the 21st century. Drawing on the experiences of fast food workers, home health care workers, Walmart workers, garment workers in Bangladesh and Cambodia, and berry pickers in Baja California, Orleck explored the interplay between policy-making and grassroots protests.
- In *Defending Human Mobility: The Gendered Face of Poverty and Immigration Law Enforcement in North America* (October 1, 2015), Alicia Schmidt Camacho (Yale University) addressed the profoundly gendered dynamics of current militarized border surveillance and immigration enforcement practices in North America. By examining the migratory circuit that links Central America, Mexico, and the U.S. as an integrated whole, she demonstrated how state policies have made female migrants vulnerable to unprecedented state and criminal violence. This is symptomatic of a broader pattern of state policy that criminalizes poverty and expels insecure populations from the spheres of citizenship and civic life.
- In *The Making of a Transnational Expenditure Cascade: What Happens When Poor Immigrants Return Home to Spend and Give Money* (Thursday, October 22, 2015), Hung Cam Thai (Pomona College) addressed the social and personal sides of monetary flows in the Vietnamese diaspora, focusing on low-wage working Vietnamese immigrants in the United States. He noted that while Vietnamese immigrants generally work in precarious jobs with little stability and live with "insufficient funds," they nevertheless regularly send money back to Vietnam and spend it lavishly when they make return visits. His talk explored this paradox, paying equal attention to immigrants in the U.S. and their family members in Vietnam.
- In *Disparate Outcomes by Design: How America Built High Poverty Neighborhoods Through Redlining* (November 12, 2015), designing the WE argued that structural inequalities in housing, education, income, criminal justice and health are interconnected and rooted in a history of misunderstood policies that include redlining. They discussed their project "Undesign the Redline," which is a visioning framework for addressing the historic transformations of place and race in America. The project seeks to build a robust conversation around the continuing effects of this history on populations denied opportunities for success, and devise multi-stakeholder strategies to generate transformative models for change.
- In *The Radical Potential of Human Rights* (January 28, 2016), Radhika Balakrishnan (Rutgers-New Brunswick) argued that economic and social rights (human rights that include the rights to work, health, food, housing, and shelter) have been threatened by the global economic crisis and yet provide the most compelling basis for an alternative set of policies.

Since a strong state, international cooperation and robust social institutions are necessary preconditions for the full realization of economic and social rights, the critique of human rights as focused on protecting and advancing individual freedoms is inapposite. Securing individual rights demands collective action and responsibility.

- In *The Miracle on Cooper Street: A Case Study of Community Transformation and Engaged Scholarship* (February 11, 2016), Gloria Bonilla Santiago (Rutgers-Camden) discussed the metamorphosis of the LEAP Academy in Camden, New Jersey, from its origins in 1997 as a small charter school housed in modular classrooms to its contemporary incarnation as a comprehensive K-12 school with a full college preparatory curriculum, distinguished by its 100% graduation and college placement rates. Bonilla-Santiago argued that these accomplishments are especially noteworthy since Camden is one of the country's most impoverished and under-resourced cities.
- In *Black Girls and Ethnography Beyond Love and Struggle* (March 3, 2016), Aimee Meredith Cox (Fordham University) emphasized that active resistance as well as political theorizing and practice among Black girls are not new or recent developments. Drawing on over a decade and a half of ethnographic research with young Black women in Detroit, MI and Newark, NJ, her talk addressed the ways Black girls are at the forefront of acts that support and protect their communities while transforming the spaces and institutions that threaten Black life. Their political work occurs every day in spaces we are encouraged to ignore and through practices that are often overlooked or demeaned, and moves beyond a naïve or impotent mandate to love or the imperative to simply survive.

IRW Undergraduate Learning Community

IRW Learning Community on Social Justice and Inequalities

Comments from evaluations

"It's like a huge, supportive intellectual family...even though we discuss serious and difficult topics, everyone's comments and knowledge are valued."

"The collaborative learning environment facilitates highly creative and cooperative ways of interaction."

"I really like the sense of community and honesty...it's refreshing to be able to talk about anything."

"It was one of the most rewarding experiences I've had at Rutgers."

Since the 2007-8 academic year, IRW has pioneered the development of an undergraduate learning community based in a research institute, offering advanced undergraduate students an intimate yet rigorous environment for intellectual growth. With the support of the Office of Residence Life, IRW ran two semester-long learning communities (fall 2015 and spring 2016) led by Undergraduate

Learning Community Coordinator Sara Perryman. Ms. Perryman is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers-New Brunswick, writing a dissertation entitled "Eco-Sensoriums and Geographies of Risk: Detroit, Michigan's Affective Futurity."

Under Sara's guidance, a total of 32 students from a variety of majors, ranging from Public Health and Fine Arts to History and Chemical Engineering, participated in IRW's learning community during 2015-16. Participants attended IRW's Distinguished Lecture Series, gathered to discuss related readings, and worked with mentors (faculty, visiting scholars or advanced IRW graduate student fellows) to develop their own research/activist projects related to the theme of *Social Justice and Inequalities*. In addition, participants met with Women's and Gender Studies librarian Kayo Denda for a research methods class tailored to the learning community's theme and objectives. They also continued their work outside of class by attending a film presentation and discussion of *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs* in the fall semester. In the spring semester students attended a performance of the Livingston Theatre Company's production of *Urinetown* and took a trip to the Feminist Art Wing of the Brooklyn Museum. Evaluations described the Learning Community as more intimate, supportive, and personalized than a regular class, enabling students to pursue research topics they really cared about but were unable to develop in other contexts.

IRW Spring Symposium: Poverty & Sexuality

On April 7, 2016, IRW organized a one-day symposium on the topic of poverty and sexuality. The event brought together scholars and activists from across the nation to inform each other's work, create and develop networks, and generate new projects. We sought to engage poverty as a keyword and to examine it conceptually through various disciplines and methods, with special attention to 21st century notions of scarcity, inequality, gendered labor, and poverty's various impacts on belonging, kinship, and intimacies.

More than 100 students, faculty, and local community members attended the event and witnessed a set of rich and thought-provoking discussions. The symposium featured panels addressing four broad concepts: shelter (featuring speakers Christina Hanhardt, Kevin Schumacher, Rosemary Ndubuizu) currency (featuring speakers Elena Shih and Cynthia Blair), rights (featuring speakers Pooja Gehi, Alyosha Goldstein, and Premilla Nadasen), and expressive practices (featuring panelists Reina Gossett and Modesto Flako Jimenez). Urvashi Vaid, one of the country's preeminent LGBT organizers, delivered the symposium's keynote address.

The panel discussions encompassed a wide range of subjects related to the overall theme of the conference and explored issues related to poverty both internationally (human trafficking, sex work, and poverty in Thailand; gender identity and poverty in Iran) and within the United States (gentrification, policing policy, and LGBT history in New York City; gender and affordable housing policy in 1970s Washington D.C.). The panels themselves also incorporated a range of presentation styles, from formal papers to roundtable discussions and spoken word performance. The keynote speaker described the pervasiveness of poverty in LGBT communities while noting its absence from the agendas of scholars as well as LGBT advocacy organizations. She outlined a range of policy interventions that, if implemented, would combat both LGBT poverty and its associated injustices.

The symposium successfully created conversations transcending sectoral and disciplinary boundaries, providing a broad overview of current work on poverty and sexuality, and identifying areas ripe for collaboration between scholars and activists. Evaluations praised the "heterogeneity"

of the programming and said that the "mix of academic, activist, and artistic voices worked really well." We hope to continue to engage with many of the symposium participants, and develop an IRW publication on the theme of poverty and sexuality in the years to come.

III. OTHER INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMING

A. IRW Publications

Since the distribution of last year's annual report, IRW has launched three new publications. In June 2015 we published our *Marking Time: Prison Arts and Activism Resource Guide* in conjunction with our prison arts project which ran throughout the 2014-15 academic year. This 52-page publication is designed to benefit both incarcerated artists and activists. It comprises of an extensive list of prison arts organizations, as well as a set of resources for incarcerated individuals. Additionally, it includes short articles on the subject of prison arts and activism, as well as poetry and art by incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

In February 2016, we also launched the first edition of our new web journal, Rejoinder, an online forum for feminist, queer, and social justice-inspired work. Building on IRW's innovative, interdisciplinary programming, each edition of Rejoinder will provide a space for intellectual exchange at the nexus of scholarship and activism. The first edition of Rejoinder was intended to complement our Marking Time: Prison Arts and Activism Resource Guide by featuring additional art and writings related to prison arts and activism, with essays on prison theatre, the visual and affective aspects of prison landscapes, and teaching memoir writing in a women's high security prison, as well as poetry and photography. Both IRW's Marking Time: Prison Arts and Activism Resource Guide and Rejoinder web journal were conceived of and edited by IRW Associate Director Sarah Tobias.

Finally, March 2016 saw the publication of *Trans Studies: The Challenge to Hetero/Homo Normativities* by Rutgers University Press. Edited by former IRW Director Yolanda Martínez San-Miguel and IRW Associate Director Sarah Tobias, the book is an interdisciplinary essay collection that originates from IRW's programming during the 2012-13 academic year. The volume brings together leading experts in this burgeoning field and offers insights about how transgender activism and scholarship might transform academia and public policy. Taking an intersectional approach, the book offers examples of cutting-edge activism, research, and pedagogy. In addition to chapters by Yolanda and Sarah, contributors to the book include: Genny Beemyn, Susan R. Rankin, Pauline Park, Lucas Crawford, Valens Keja, Jian Chen, Toby Beauchamp, Nora Butler Burke, Aren Z. Aizura, Mickael Chacha Enriquez, Alexandra Rodriguez de Ruiz, Marcia Ochoa, Jody L. Herman, Sel J. Hwahng, and A. Finn Enke.

B. Demystifying Academia: Preparing for the Academic Job Market

On Wednesday, September 30, 2015, IRW sponsored a new professional development workshop for graduate students designed to demystify the academic job market by examining how the systemic dismantling of tenure and the growth of adjunct and contingent labor have changed it. A panel of three individuals from different disciplines provided advice on how best to approach the job market in this context. This year's panelists were: Gwendolyn Beetham (Douglass Residential College), Deborah Silver (Electrical and Computer Engineering), and Stina Soderling (Women's and Gender Studies). The panel was moderated by Jasbir Puar (Women's and Gender Studies) and Nicole Fleetwood (IRW). The event was co-sponsored by the Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Engineering, and Mathematics and the Women's and Gender Studies Department.

C. Disorientations Working Group

IRW's *Disorientations* working group, led by Professor Allan Punzalan Isaac and Rick Lee (GAIA), seeks to address how gender and sexuality shape developments in comparative race histories, visual and performative cultures, and transnationalism in the study of Asians in the Americas and the Diaspora. During the 2015-16 academic year, *Disorientations* co-sponsored the annual East Coast Asian American Student Union (ECAASU) conference for undergraduate students, held at Rutgers in February 2016. The conference's theme was "Beyond Our Boundaries," and several workshops and sessions addressed the intersection of race and ethnicity with gender and sexuality. The conference team was led by Christian Fernandez (Creative Officer), Vivian Huang (Operations Officer), and Austin Yip (Finance Officer). The event was attended by close to 1000 students representing 79 schools from across the US (primarily from the East Coast) and was a resounding success.

D. Shannon King Lecture and Seminar Visit

On Thursday, February 25, 2016, Shannon King (College of Wooster) visited IRW to talk about his work. In the morning, he joined the IRW seminar for a discussion of his recent book *Whose Harlem is this Anyway?* (New York University Press 2015). In the afternoon, he gave a public lecture, jointly sponsored with the American Studies Department at Rutgers-New Brunswick entitled, "Shaking it in the Morning: Contestation and Congregation in Harlem during the New Negro Era." This lecture explored how black Harlemites responded to whites who flooded Harlem nightspots during the Prohibition era to live out their desire for the "exotic." Finding themselves excluded from clubs in their own neighborhood, King described the ways in which black Harlemites refashioned their own residential spaces to enable play and pleasure in a safe environment.

E. Co-sponsorships

As part of our commitment to collaborating with other units, IRW continued to co-sponsor a large number of events with a diverse spectrum of centers, departments and institutes, including the Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Technology and Mathematics, the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities, the Department of American Studies, Douglass Residential College, and the Department of Sociology. The Director and Associate Director continue to cultivate significant relationships and pursue possible collaborations with many Rutgers units. The range of our collaborative and co-sponsored activities in 2015-16 can be seen in Appendix B, IRW's calendar of events.

IV. FELLOWS AT IRW

During 2015-16, the Institute for Research on Women hosted three Global Scholars and one Mellon Fellow. Our Global Scholars were Simone James Alexander (Seton Hall University), Maria Cecilia Hwang (Brown University), and Elaine Arnull (Nottingham Trent University). Dr. James Alexander joined us in summer 2015 to work on a project entitled Black Freedom in (Communist) Russia: Great Expectations, Utopian Visions, which chronicles the migrations and movements of black Americans, including Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, Angela Davis, and Audre Lorde to (communist) Russia. Ms. Hwang joined us for the 2015-16 academic year to work on a project entitled Mixing Work and Pleasure in Hong Kong: Women's Migration, Sex Work, Border Control, and the Politics of Trafficking. Based on thirteen months of ethnography conducted in Hong Kong between 2010 and 2013, she examines the migration and labor of women sex workers from the Philippines and interrogates how the global

campaign against human trafficking has affected their lives and livelihoods. Dr. Arnull joined us during spring 2016 to work on a project entitled *Constructing an Autobiography: Resistance, Poverty and Transgression: Girls Tell Stories.* Her work explores the concepts of poverty and transgression through the first person narratives of girls and their constructions of self, as told through their use of mobile phones and social media.

This academic year we also continued to host Dr. Maya Mikdashi (Ph.D. Anthropology, Columbia University, 2013) as our fourth and final Mellon Fellow in conjunction with the Women's and Gender Studies Department. Dr. Mikdashi's dissertation, entitled "Sex, Secularism and Sectarianism: Practicing Citizenship in Contemporary Lebanon" explores how economic, religious, and historical phenomena shape Lebanese law, which in turn serves to transform religious and secular Lebanese practices. Her focus is on the practices of strategic religious conversion and advocacy for a secular personal status. In her book manuscript, Dr. Mikdashi focuses on the gendered aspects of these practices to investigate the occurrence of secularism in a Muslim majority country. Her work traverses the fields of queer theory and legal anthropology and raises questions about how feminism, liberalism, secular modernity, and religion are conjoined and disjoined in a legal context. Dr. Mikdashi has been an active participant in the academic community at Rutgers, presenting papers at IRW's seminar and at other venues on campus.

V. Towards 2016-2017

IRW's annual theme for 2016-2017 is "Feminist In/Security: Vulnerability, Securitization, and States of Crisis." Feminist and queer scholarship have challenged and re-conceptualized many of the key assumptions of international security discourse, critiquing mainstream debates and revisiting constructs, including political realism, militarism, post colonialism, and human rights. At the level of the state, feminist and queer scholars and activists have used the concept of security to critically examine a variety of issues, including mass incarceration, profiling, domestic violence, and sex work. During the 2016-17 academic year, IRW will look at questions of international and domestic security from a range of feminist and queer perspectives to try and better understand regional, international, and transnational crises—from Ebola to the spread of ISIS to the mass movement of refugees. Our theme will attract and create interdisciplinary synergy between a strong cohort of faculty and graduate students working in fields including Political Science, Anthropology, Sociology, and Women's and Gender Studies, as well as other departments and programs in the School of Arts and Sciences. We hope that the School of Arts and Sciences will continue to support our infrastructure and programming as we undertake these important endeavors.

IRW Staff 2015-16

Director

Nicole R. Fleetwood, Ph.D.

Associate Director

Sarah Tobias, Ph.D.

Administrative Assistant

Stephanie East

Undergraduate Learning Community Coordinator

Sara Perryman

About the IRW

At the forefront of feminist research for over forty years, the Institute for Research on Women (IRW) advances feminist cutting-edge, interdisciplinary scholarship on gender, women and sexuality. Part of the School of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, IRW was founded in 1974 by faculty and administrators seeking to expand feminist scholarship and activism beyond the university's fledgling Women's Studies program. Today, IRW supports a broad range of programming designed to stimulate research on women and gender within and across the disciplines, throughout and beyond Rutgers. Promoting faculty and student connections and building intellectual community are also central to IRW's mission. Affiliate members of IRW currently include almost 900 faculty, graduate students, and advanced undergraduates drawn from a wide range of disciplines at the New Brunswick, Newark and Camden campuses.