

PEMBROKE CENTER

Associates Newsletter

Screening, discussion shed light on menstrual equity effort

“A period should end a sentence, not a girl’s education,” says Charlotte Silverman ’22, a Gender and Sexuality Studies program concentrator. In many developing nations, however, inability to access or afford sanitary pads causes girls to use whatever is at hand – often rags, leaves, or ashes – that are both ineffective and pose a high risk of infection. Girls miss school during their periods, fall behind, and ultimately abandon their educations.

Silverman, who learned about this global issue as a member of her Los Angeles high school’s gender equality club, helped found a collaborative effort, The Pad Project, to provide sanitary pads as well as personal and financial independence to women and girls, starting with an initiative in Kathikhedra, India. Silverman and her classmates connected with partner Action India, a women’s rights organization in India, with the help of Girls Learn International, whose mission is to give U.S. students a voice in the movement for universal girls’ education.

That project, which provided nine women with a machine and supplies to manufacture sanitary pads, is the subject of the film “Period. End of Sentence.” which won Best Documentary Short at the 2019 Academy Awards.

Silverman is one of the executive producers of the film, which introduces viewers to the women of Kathikhedra as well as members of the local community, including students, family and friends. When girls, women, and men in the village struggle to answer simple questions about menstruation and what the machine does, the film lays bare how conversations and understanding about menstruation are stymied by the stigma and shame surrounding the subject.

On April 17, The Pembroke Center, together with Brown Motion Pictures, coordinated a screening and discussion of the film and a Q and A with Silverman and Ajeya Deep,



Major gifts create new postdoctoral fellowship, strengthen archives initiative

In January, Shauna M. Stark ’76 P’10, a Pembroke Associates Council member, made a lead gift of \$1.5 million to the Pembroke Center’s endowment campaign in support of postdoctoral fellowships, bringing the campaign more than halfway to its goal of \$3 million. In addition, her \$300,000 gift to the Pembroke Center Archives will fund a three-year assistant archivist position that will enable the Center to curate more women’s history collections on behalf of the John Hay Library.

“Postdoctoral fellows enrich the Pembroke Center’s thriving intellectual community while the archives are an inestimable resource of unique research materials by and about women,” Stark said. “My gift



The Pembroke Center assistant archivist will add critical capacity, enabling faster processing and availability of archival material.

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BROWN UNIVERSITY

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Spring 2019 Pembroke Center Events



Six of the GNSS concentrators at their capstone presentations in Pembroke Hall. There were so many seniors graduating from the program this year that presentations were broken up into two events.

PHOTO CREDIT: HANK RANDALL



At a Pembroke Associates event in New York, geologist Tina Neal '81 spoke about the science of and complex incident response to the 2018 eruption of Hawaii's Kīlauea Volcano.

PHOTO CREDIT: US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



In a March lecture associated with the 2019 Pembroke Seminar, Samia Henni discussed how the French military and government altered Algeria's infrastructure and housing in an effort to maintain colonial rule.

PHOTO CREDIT: HANK RANDALL



Tracy Devine Guzmán discussed threats to indigenous land and water rights in her February talk "Transcontinental Indigeneity: Linking the Americas and the Global South."

PHOTO CREDIT: HANK RANDALL

From the Director

The 2018-19 academic year at the Pembroke Center has been remarkably rich and full, with invigorating public programming and faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and students engaged in critical research and scholarship. Internal developments, made possible by the generosity and involvement of Pembroke Center Associates, will strengthen our archives, our research profile, and our ability to support critical work on questions of difference for years to come.

Students are woven into all that we do at the Center, and I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the vitality of our Gender and Sexuality Studies (GNSS) Program, which offers both an undergraduate concentration and a graduate certificate. This year, 17 concentrators enrolled in the senior seminar, a number that would put GNSS in the top 10 humanities concentrations at Brown. Sixteen made capstone presentations, and five wrote honors theses. This is a testament to the relevance and importance of scholarship examining the construction of gender and sexuality in social, cultural, political, economic, and scientific contexts.

Graduate students are a vital part of the Pembroke Center's teaching mission, and the Graduate Certificate Program in GNSS has one of the most robust participation rates on campus. One of the very first such certificates to be offered, the GNSS certificate is a valuable credential and an opportunity for early-career scholars earning advanced degrees in a wide range of fields to develop methodological and theoretical expertise in gender and sexuality studies. Great credit is due to Associate Director Drew Walker, who directs the GNSS program, and Senior Lecturer Denise Davis for the strength of the program.

With 11 courses offered this year, as well as numerous cross-listed offerings in disciplines ranging from classics

to economics, GNSS students have investigated gender and sexuality across a range of historical, disciplinary, national, and transnational contexts and in forms generated by artists, filmmakers, and thinkers all over the world. Because the Pembroke Center and the GNSS program are inherently interdisciplinary, our concentrators traverse – and synthesize – everything from legal essays to the work of Latin American women documentarians, from African horror films to American public monuments and beyond. It is exciting to think of the ground these students are now breaking, and the discoveries they will make as they go forward in their chosen fields.

Already, we see the impact of GNSS students on campus and in the world, like Charlotte Silverman '22, whose work on menstrual equity is included in this issue. Charlotte is making change and inspiring new conversations about the ripple effects of menstrual equity. This spring, a group of students in a departmental group independent study project organized a three-part course development series focused on helping Dr. Sarah Fox, clinical assistant professor of surgery at the Warren Alpert Medical School, translate a popular freshman seminar into a more widely available lecture course. This will benefit future students trying to make their way through all the competing claims about contraception, media and sexuality, and abortion.

Another undergraduate, Leo Stevenson, will work closely with Denise Davis this summer to revamp and update the Introduction to GNSS course syllabus, with particular attention to decolonizing and intersectional feminisms, trans identities and politics. Leo will do so through the Elizabeth Munves Sherman '77, P'06, P'09 Undergraduate Teaching and Research Award. Confirming the close link between research and teaching, next year Leo will be an undergraduate



fellow in the Pembroke Seminar, which will convene undergraduates, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and senior faculty.

I am grateful for the unflagging support of the Pembroke Center Associates and the vibrant intellectual atmosphere that proceeds from your work and involvement with the center.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg'.

Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg
Director



The 2018-19 Pembroke Center postdoctoral fellows Nicole Gervasio (second from left), Erin Reitz (far right), and Christopher Roberts (second from right), organized “Unlearning Imperial Rights, Decolonizing Institutions,” the Research Roundtable that was the culminating event of Professor Ariella Azoulay’s (far left) Pembroke Seminar. Guest scholars and artists participating included (l-r) Hortense Spillers, Kader Attia, Tiffany Lethabo King, Dean Itsuji Saranillio, Tao Leigh Goffe, and Abena Ampofoa Asare.

PHOTO CREDIT: HANK RANDALL

Archives Initiative Strengthened

Continued from page 1

is intended to strengthen the Center’s impact on our society’s regard for women and communities of difference.”

By establishing a new postdoctoral fellowship, Stark has created an exciting new opportunity for emerging scholars and will help the Center build and deepen its scholarly community.

“The Pembroke Center has been studying and critiquing the idea of ‘difference’ since 1981,” said Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, director of the Pembroke Center. “Postdocs are the backbone of this continually evolving research mission – and their fresh,

interdisciplinary scholarship helps us stay at the forefront of teaching and research year after year.”

Postdoctoral fellows spend a year in residence at the Pembroke Center, pursuing original research, teaching one undergraduate class, participating in the Pembroke Seminar and preparing for their careers within a collaborative, interdisciplinary scholarly community. For the 2018-2019 academic year, three postdoctoral fellows working in the fields of English and comparative literature, art history, and Africology and African American studies are pursuing research



projects that probe how literature can confront genocidal violence, the role of art in the Black Panther Party's outreach and self-representation, and how the memories of Black communities confront and disrupt white supremacist narratives associated with public monuments. The three fellows have taught popular undergraduate courses and participated in Center programming.

"We get so much from our postdoctoral fellows," Stewart-Steinberg said. "New theories, great undergraduate teachers who invigorate the curriculum with new subjects of study, a livelier academic community and a distinguished research profile in the humanities."

The Shauna M. Stark '76 P'10 Postdoctoral Fellowship will advance teaching and research on "difference" with respect to gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, race and ethnicity,

and will be open to scholars working in a wide range of disciplines. That this fellowship has been established just as the Pembroke Center has received record-high interest in such positions points to its critical importance, Stewart-Steinberg said.

"We had more than 130 applications – and applications of extremely high quality – for just three postdoctoral fellowships for 2019-2020," said Stewart-Steinberg. "We on the review committee were struck by how many of those scholars referred to the Pembroke Center Archives, and outlined plans for using them in their research."

The archives are in high demand because of their pertinence to contemporary scholarship across disciplines but also because of the depth of the collections.

The Pembroke Center Archives represent one of the first major efforts by a co-educational American university to purposely curate special collections by and about women. While other universities have just embarked on archival projects to forefront the work and papers of women, the Pembroke Center has been in partnership with the John Hay Library to collect women's history at Brown for 37 years, said Mary Murphy, the Nancy L. Buc Pembroke Center Archivist.

The Center's archives include the Christine Dunlap Farnham Archive and the Feminist Theory Archive. The Farnham Archive documents the history – including oral histories – of women and gender non-binary alums at Brown University as well as feminist practitioners in Rhode Island, spanning from the 19th century to the present. The Feminist Theory Archive collects the papers of feminist theorists and scholars of difference in the United States and internationally, spanning from the 1960s to the present.

Stark's gift in support of the archives will add crucial staffing capacity, enhancing the Pembroke Center's ability to build the archives and make their contents accessible. The assistant archivist will process and catalogue incoming material, and support Murphy, who identifies, manages, and promotes the collections, and works directly with researchers, faculty, and students. The deeper bench of staff will allow the Pembroke Center Archives to offer more



Shauna M. Stark '76 P'10

PHOTO CREDIT: COURTESY OF SHAUNA STARK

instructional sessions for students and more in-depth research services for scholars of women's history.

"I envision the Pembroke Center Archives at Brown University fully representing the lives, aspirations and achievements of women previously invisible to scholars," Stark said. "I am delighted that in the two years since the Nancy L. Buc Pembroke Center Archivist came on board full time, the Archives of the John Hay Library have gone from 8 percent to 25 percent female representation. If women are systematically left out the archives of our country, how will we ever be represented in the history of our country?" ■



Professor of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies Patricia Ybarra spurred a lively conversation during her 2019 Annual Elizabeth Munves Sherman '77, P'06 '09 Lecture in Gender and Sexuality Studies.

PHOTO CREDIT: HANK RANDALL

Pembroke Center Archives make strides, news

In March and April, News from Brown and the *Brown Daily Herald* took notice of the new digital portal that makes women's history collections easy to find, a collaboration between the Pembroke Center Archives and the John Hay Library. Here are excerpts from those news stories:

"Now, just in time for Women's History Month, it's easier than ever for scholars to browse those archives [that aim to preserve and promote women's history, both in Rhode Island and worldwide] on Brown's library website. Rather than relying on boolean search terms to find a needle in a haystack, scholars who are particularly interested in women's history can visit the Brown Library's A to Z Collections portal to access a curated collection of women's archives.

'For the first time, library users can access fully organized and described special collections and manuscripts that are by and about women in a matter of seconds — fully processed, fully organized,' said Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, director of the Pembroke Center. 'This is an important step in bringing more women's voices to the fore in every academic field, from women's and gender studies to history, science and art.'"

"New digital portal brings women's history, feminist theory to the fore"

News.brown.edu

March 27, 2019

Jill Kimball

"Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Florida Atlantic University Lauren Guilmette has used the Feminist Theory Archive for her own scholarly work on the late Teresa Brennan, a feminist philosopher and former professor at the same university, and has accessed both Brennan's published and unpublished papers through the archives, though she did not conduct her search through the new Women portal. 'I found out that lots of other leading feminist theorists have said that they're going to give their papers (to the archive) or already have, which is really exciting because, ... for a feminist philosopher, ... it will become our archive,' Guilmette said. 'It's wonderful to make that material more accessible.'

'Students come and use these collections because (they) are directly connected to history,' said Mary Murphy, the Nancy L. Buc '65 Pembroke Center Archivist, adding that the archival materials are 'just so rich beyond anything that you can use that's digital ... The smell, the feeling of the letters, it's just alive.'"

"Women Collections portal increases access to archives highlighting women"

The Brown Daily Herald

April 12, 2019

Emilija Sagaityte

Screening and discussion Continued from page 1



The 26-minute film documents how residents of Kathikheda struggle to even discuss menstruation.

PHOTO CREDIT: MARTHA HAMBLETT

a communication officer at Action India and project coordinator for The Pad Project. This was the first on-campus showing of the 26-minute film, and the first time Silverman and Deep spoke to a local audience about the project at its center.

Pembroke Center Director Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg moderated the discussion, and asked about the decision to use funds raised by The Pad Project to make a film. Silverman said the group wrestled with the risk of making a film versus investing in another machine.

“We talked about making this a more global conversation, and trying to create something that would reach a wide audience, hopefully resonate with people and inspire a new conversation around this topic,” Silverman said. “I would say that the media response of the film has been really helpful in projecting the issue but also obviously has a very one-sided view. It tends to put the girls in LA in the spotlight and not really talk about the

grassroots action that’s happening behind the whole project.”

Deep pointed out that “Period. End of Sentence.” is the first Academy Award-winning film ever for India, so the response to it was immense in the country.

“You are a social activist working on women’s rights and feminism, talking about equality and inclusion, and the next day you have become a celebrity,” Deep said, describing encountering supporters at the airport waiting to welcome her with garlands.

Both Deep and Silverman said that the momentum provided by the media attention could help the project. Deep said the Indian government could be more apt to listen to the project coordinators about the need for reliable electricity so the machines could run, noting that in poorer localities in India, it is not uncommon to go without power for 18 hours a day. Silverman hopes to push for free tampons and pads in schools in the United States.

Stewart-Steinberg said, “It’s really extraordinary how the production of such a small object, a pad, raises so many other different social issues, including energy supplies, education, distribution, economics, home economies...and of course now with the making of the film, the impact of the media and international collaborations amongst women.”

Deep, who managed the research, development, and program planning with community members that enabled the pad unit to be installed in Kathikheda, emphasized that the way the project confronted the intersecting social and political issues around menstrual equity could be used as a model.

“Governments are responsible for the developing of their citizens,” Deep said. “We are trying to show them how to do it... You can make local products, not depend on big, big companies. Maybe this will help women to develop those entrepreneurial skills to become financially more stable and independent, and also bring in localized small-scale industry. ...Our idea is to make it for women by women.”

Going forward, Silverman said, The Pad Project is working with communities that have expressed interest in installing a machine. At the same time, the nonprofit is changing its approach to training and production in response to feedback from the women who run the cottage industry as well as consumer preferences.

The film, Silverman said, was a great tool, but not the end point by any means. Rather, she said, “It is a catalyst for further action.” ■

■ Watch the full Q and A on YouTube at “Period. End of Sentence. - A Conversation with Ajeya Deep and Charlotte Silverman ‘22” or visit the Videos page on pembrokecenter.org



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