

*Friends of the*

# PEMBROKE CENTER

## Newsletter

## Cheryl A. Wall papers expand community of collections centering Black feminist thought

A trove of scholarship on African American literature and efforts to diversify university curricula



CHERYL A. WALL (1948-2020) WAS THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS ZORA NEALE HURSTON DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY AND A LEADING SCHOLAR OF AFRICAN DIASPORA AND AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE. SHE WAS DESCRIBED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES AS A CHAMPION OF RACIAL DIVERSITY BOTH IN THE CURRICULUM AND THE CLASSROOM.

The papers of [Cheryl A. Wall](#), who was a scholar of African American and African diaspora literature, the Harlem Renaissance, and Zora Neale Hurston, are now available for researchers through the Pembroke Center's Feminist Theory Archive (FTA). Wall left her collection of papers to the FTA in the name of the [Black Feminist Theory Project](#), which emphasizes the centrality of Black feminist analytics and works to enhance the visibility and accessibility

of Black feminist discourse on and well beyond Brown's campus. The Pembroke Center is honored to preserve, promote, and make available Wall's work, and is grateful to Camara Epps, Wall's daughter, who worked closely with the archives after Wall's passing on April 4, 2020.

Wall was the Board of Governors Zora Neale Hurston Professor of English at Rutgers University, where she dedicated much of her almost 50-year career advocating for racial diversity in the curriculum and in universities as a whole. She pushed for the inclusion of Black authors in literature courses and established a requirement at Rutgers that all English majors complete a course in African American literature. Wall was also co-principal of a Ford Foundation-funded initiative called "Reaffirming Action: Designs for Diversity in Higher Education," that examined the strategies higher education institutions successfully employ to enhance racial and gender equity. Readers and researchers can gain insight into how these efforts unfolded through the handwritten notes, correspondence, and meeting packets within the collection.

In addition to work on Zora Neale Hurston and the Harlem Renaissance, Wall's extensive body of scholarship includes articles on Gloria Naylor, Gwendolyn Brooks, Jessie R. Fauset, June Jordan, Alice Walker, Lucille Clifton, Toni Cade Bambara, and many others. Her books include [Women of the Harlem Renaissance](#) and [Worrying the Line: Black Women Writers, Lineage, and Literary Tradition](#).

Wall's work also extended to the theater. She was the founding chairwoman of the board of [Crossroads Theatre Company](#) in New Jersey, whose mission includes a commitment to literary works that examine the African American experience as well as a celebration of the artistry of the African diaspora. Crossroads was the first African American theater to receive a Tony Award® (in 1999) in the category of Outstanding Regional Theatre in the United States. Wall's work on this board is well documented in the collection through meeting agenda, correspondence, and handwritten notes. [Access the collection online.](#) ■

# From the Director



As I sit down to write to you, I am filled with a familiar feeling of gratitude – that the Pembroke Center has such staunch friends and supporters – as well as a feeling that I regret has become familiar in the months that have passed since March of 2020: a disquiet and concern for your wellbeing as the [COVID-19](#) pandemic continues. I hope you all are well, and I encourage you to be in touch with us at the Pembroke Center.

We would love to hear from you, and we hope that you will take advantage of our programming, whether it is listening to how others have experienced the pandemic via our COVID-19 series in the Pembroke Center Oral History Project or joining us for events like the February 5 panel on the award-winning book “Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria, 1830-1930” by Judith Surkis ’92, a professor of history at Rutgers University and a member of the Pembroke Center Advisory Council.

The fall semester at the Pembroke Center was active, despite the challenges and changes wrought by the pandemic. The Pembroke Seminar has been the site of lively discussions and lectures, and all of our students continue to impress with their seriousness of purpose and adaptability to what we all hope are temporary changes to the way we teach and conduct programming. We have hosted excellent public lectures and discussions, including the October panel “Black Women and the Vote.”

Moderated by Pembroke Center Advisory Council member Tanya K. Hernández ’86, P’20, the panel was a wonderful and timely discussion during this historic election year. If you missed it, watch the panel and Q and A [here](#).

We are all looking ahead to the spring and summer semesters with hope and determination. The Pembroke Center is offering six GNSS courses, and will host highly influential and important scholars and theorists like Judith Butler and Daphne Brooks, among others. [The Pembroke Center Archives](#) continues to expand and deepen collections by and about women, and [differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies](#) has wonderful issues forthcoming.

With gratitude and best wishes in this new year,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg".

Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg  
*Director*

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*Administrative Assistant*

# A New Name for Pembroke Center Friends and Supporters

Since its founding, the Pembroke Center has enjoyed and been strengthened by the advice, support, and engagement of its broad and dedicated community of alumnae/i and friends. The many ways this community participates in the work of the Center have enhanced our ability to carry out our intellectual mission and public humanities programming, and to enlarge conversations about gender and difference in a way that trains a keen eye on the historical record while opening up possibilities for the future.

We are pleased to announce two related name changes that we believe more accurately describe our community: the Pembroke Center Associates, who support the Center's mission by making annual gifts to the Pembroke Center, will now be known as **Friends of the Pembroke Center**, and the Pembroke Center Associates Council will be known as the **Pembroke Center Advisory Council**. These changes are intended to reflect the inclusiveness of our community and to dispel any confusion arising from the terms "Associate" or "membership." The Pembroke Center is open to all, and greatly strengthened by all of you who have shown and continue to show your support for our work.

We thank the members of the Nomenclature Committee, who in the fall of 2019 were charged with studying questions regarding the Pembroke Center's membership and fundraising terminology and recommended these name changes. We are grateful to Committee Chair Leora Tanenbaum '91, Emily Coe-Sullivan '99, Barbara Dugan Johnson '83, Marcia Ely '80, Yvonne Goldsberry '82, Ulle Holt '66, Sophie Waskow Rifkin '07, Victoria Westhead '83, and Donna Zaccaro '83 for their work.

We also thank you, our friends and supporters, for all that you do. Whether you have attended or participated in an event, contributed an oral history to the Pembroke Center Oral History Project or a collection of papers to the Pembroke Center Archives, or generously supported our students, faculty and researchers through annual gifts or Pembroke Center campaigns, we simply would not be the same without you.

Anne Buehl '88  
*Chair, Pembroke Center Advisory Council*

Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg  
*Director, Pembroke Center*



BERNADETTE AULESTIA '94, P'23 AND SARA CRUTCHFIELD CLARKE '89 PARTICIPATE IN THE 2019 PEMBROKE CENTER COMMENCEMENT FORUM "VOICES CARRY: BROWN WOMEN IN MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT."



CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT : PEMBROKE CENTER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS JOHANNA FERNANDEZ '93, JASMINE WADDELL '99, VICTORIA WESTHEAD '83, P'17 '19, AND MARY AGUIAR VASCELLARO '74, P'07.

## “Pure Joy”

Astronaut Jessica Meir '99 on her trajectory from Brown to the International Space Station



ON FEBRUARY 13, 2020, JESSICA MEIR '99 SPOKE TO BROWN STUDENTS VIA A LIVE VIDEO DOWNLINK FROM HER POST AT THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION.

What kind of path does one take to become an astronaut? What is it like to enter the International Space Station for the first time? (Spoiler alert: for **Jessica Meir**, it was “pure joy.”) The Pembroke Center Oral History Project in November added an oral history by Meir, who graduated from Brown in 1999 with an AB in biology and went on to be part of the first all-women spacewalk in October 2019. You can [stream the interview](#) and read the [transcript](#) at the Pembroke Center Oral History Project site.

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“...I think in looking at this achievement, this historical milestone, I hope that it’s those generations that came before us that are truly the ones to revel in it, to enjoy it, and to be proud of that moment because it’s their work that got us there, you know, those early generations at Pembroke, for example, that were the pioneers and the forerunners...”

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At Brown, Meir worked at Miriam Hospital under a Rhode Island Space Grant and then participated in the Space Life Sciences Training Program through the NASA Kennedy Space Center. She went on to earn a master of science degree in space studies from International Space University in 2000 and a doctorate in marine biology (diving physiology) from Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego in 2009. After an extensive application process, Meir was selected by NASA in 2013. She most recently served as flight engineer on the International Space Station for Expeditions 61 and 62, during which she and Astronaut Christina Koch made their historic all-women spacewalk. Meir spoke with Assistant Archivist Amanda M. Knox on October 27, 2020. ■

## Advancing Research on Gender in a Global Context

This fall, the Pembroke Center awarded three grants to outstanding Brown students who are exploring questions of gender, difference, and power in the Caribbean, the Middle East, Africa, and the United States. One award-winning project takes a fresh look at a familiar psychological experiment’s origins in Trinidad, taking into account the impact of colonialism’s power dynamics on its findings, while another explores how contemporary constructions of womanhood in Ghanaian Christian communities affect perceptions of returnee women in its capital city. The third project uses community-engaged storytelling to intervene in the typical media portrayal of Syrian Muslim refugees in the United States as either objects of sensationalized suffering or political threats.

Due to the protracted uncertainty regarding the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to maintain the health and safety of the Brown community through restrictions on all University-sponsored international and domestic travel, grants were awarded only to projects that could be completed locally.

The Pembroke Center awarded Steinhaus/Zisson Pembroke Center Research Grants to Brown graduate students **Jenny Dolan**, a PhD candidate in American studies, and **Deborah Frempong**, a PhD candidate in anthropology as well as a Graduate Student Fellow in the 2020-21 Pembroke Seminar “[Narrating Debt](#).”

The grants, honoring Beatrice Bloomingdale Steinhaus’33, P’60, P’65, GP’87, GP’91 and Gertrude Rosenhirsch Zisson’30, P’61, P’63, GP’91, support undergraduate and graduate student research on any topic related to the work of the Pembroke Center. Preference is given to research on women’s education, health, community activism, philanthropy, and economic status, and women’s rights and well-being in the United States and in developing countries around the world. Graduate students are awarded up to \$2,000 grants for their projects.

The Pembroke Center awarded the Linda Pei Undergraduate Research Grant to **Clare Boyle**, a comparative literature concentrator. First awarded in 2008, the Linda Pei grant supports an undergraduate research project related to issues of women's empowerment such as gender equality in the workplace, access to reproductive health care, and women's political leadership. The grant offers up to \$1000 for research support.



**Clare Boyle '20.5**  
*Comparative Literature*

**“TO STEAL A DREAM”**

“To Steal a Dream” asks who gets to define identity, and what happens when how others see you isn't how you see yourself. This project is an ongoing collaboration between Boyle and

Providence high school student named Lina, whom Boyle met and worked with through the Brown Refugee Youth Tutoring and Enrichment program. Lina fled Syria with her family at age ten and lived in Jordan before being resettled in the United States. The project's final form will be a multimedia website combining seven podcasts of Lina narrating her transnational journey with collages of her photos and memories from each place she has lived. “To Steal a Dream” constitutes a critical intervention into media representations which position young, female refugees, Muslim women in particular, as perpetual victims in need of saving. In creating the project, Boyle is building on research she undertook as an Undergraduate Fellow in the 2018-19 Pembroke Seminar “What Are (Human) Rights? Imperial Origins, Curatorial Practices and Non-Imperial Ground.”



**Jenny Dolan**, *Graduate Student*  
*Department of American Studies*

**“CONSTRUCTING  
WILLPOWER: THE ORIGINS  
OF THE MARSHMALLOW  
EXPERIMENT”**

Jenny Dolan's dissertation is a cultural history of willpower. Her project tracks the changing meanings and uses of willpower throughout the twentieth century U.S. and explores willpower's relationship to gender, race, and middle-class formation. In the chapter “Constructing

Willpower: The Origins of the Marshmallow Experiment,” Dolan asks: how did willpower become a scientific fact? Psychologists agree that the most famous willpower experiment—the marshmallow experiment conducted at Stanford University by Walter Mischel and his colleagues—inaugurated the modern study of self-control. Mischel, however, conducted his first willpower experiments on Black and East Indian children in Trinidad during the 1950s, so Trinidad ought to be considered the birthplace of scientific willpower. Analyzing the experimental protocols that enabled willpower to emerge as an object of empirical knowledge, Dolan argues that Mischel did not discover in Trinidad a universal feature of human cognition called willpower. Rather, willpower was crafted by and through empire and the unequal power relations of colonialism.



**Deborah Frempong**, *Graduate student*,  
*Department of Anthropology*

**“GENDERED MOBILITIES:  
FAITH, BELONGING AND  
SPATIAL GEOGRAPHIES  
OF RETURNEE WOMEN  
IN ACCRA”**

Debbie Frempong's project looks at returnee women's modes of belonging through their reintegration experiences in Accra, Ghana, connecting questions about transnationalism, belonging, gendered subjectivities and Christianity. It asks: what do returnee women's experiences reveal about gender, religion, and belonging in contemporary Ghana? And what is the significance of widely circulating discourses and representations that situate returnee women as figures of modernity? Consequently, it explores how the gendered politics of reintegration produces and mediates ideas of modernity and (post) colonial subjectivities. In doing so, it offers alternative ways to conceptualize the relationship between religion and belonging, looking at how social rupture, continuity and de-territorialism offers various opportunities for local and global forms of practice that coalesce, oppose or exist alongside each other. This project adds to these conceptualizations by highlighting the ways in which Accra's religious landscape and returnee women's cosmopolitan feminisms collide. By exploring these questions through the lens of belonging, it endeavors to show how returnee women create new communities and spatial geographies of care. ■

# New Resource: A History of Women of Brown United

Just in time to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Women of Brown United, the Brown University Library's Brown Digital Repository has made available [A History of Women of Brown United \(1970-1991\)](#), compiled by Mimi Pichey '72.

Women of Brown United (WBU) was a women's liberation group, founded at Brown in September 1970, that advocated for equal representation of women in faculty positions, laid the groundwork for a women's studies concentration and a women's center, and called for the addition of medical practitioners dedicated to women's reproductive healthcare on campus, among many other efforts.

"WBU exploded with a bang in 1970 and morphed in the mid-70s after the Sarah Doyle Women's Center was founded in 1975 and took on many of the roles that WBU had been serving," Pichey said. "I

participated in the founding and first year of Women of Brown United, and that experience profoundly shaped my life."

Pichey said she had always intended to write a history of the group, and saved many of the documents from the organization's first year, taking them with her through various moves over a decade and a half. The founding of the Pembroke Center in 1981 and the establishment of the [Pembroke Center Archives](#) enabled Pichey to donate her BWU papers to the [Christine Dunlap Farnham Archive](#) and house them at Brown's John Hay Library.

WBU endured as an organization on campus until the early 1990s, and the history includes a narrative of its founding, a chronology of its events and activities, and records of its members' advocacy on numerous issues, ranging from admissions policies to domestic violence. Included in the history are sections on the founding of the [Sarah](#)

[Doyle Center for Women and Gender](#) and the establishment of the [Sojourner House](#), a shelter for women and children who were victims of intimate partner violence.

"The history draws primarily on the WBU files in the Christine Dunlap Farnham Archives, supplemented by articles from [The Brown Daily Herald](#) as well as some interviews that I conducted over the past few years," Pichey said. She added that friends who were her contemporaries at Brown reviewed the history.

Pichey invites former members of WBU to add their recollections or suggest edits to the history by sending her an email at [Mimi@Pichey.net](mailto:Mimi@Pichey.net).

*For more information on WBU, see also the Sarah Doyle Center for Women and Gender records (collection number: OF-1ZSA-1). ■*



**Boom Towns:  
Finance and  
Literature in Latin  
America**



**Introduction to  
Gender and  
Sexuality Studies**



**Sex and Money: The  
History of Paris since  
1750**



**A Gender  
Perspective  
on Women  
and Enterprise**



**On Both Sides  
of the Lens: Latin  
American Women  
Filmmakers**



**Reproductive Health:  
Science and Politics**



Spring and  
Summer 2021  
Gender and  
Sexuality Studies  
program courses

# Events

Keep up to date with our events on our [homepage](#). For videos of past events, like our [Black Women and the Vote panel](#), see our [YouTube playlist](#). More videos will be added regularly!

**THE END OF SEXUALITY:**  
FEMINIST THEORY, BODY TALK AND THE BIOLOGICAL CONUNDRUM

A PEMBROKE CENTER VIRTUAL LECTURE

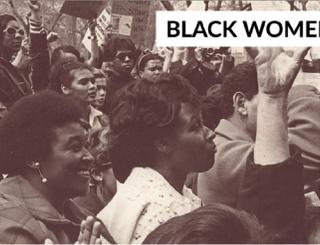


**Anne Berger**  
Professor of French Literature and Gender Studies at Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis University & Professor of French Literature at Cornell University

Tuesday  
September 22,  
2020



**BLACK WOMEN AND THE VOTE**  
A PEMBROKE CENTER VIRTUAL PANEL



**Francoise Hamlin**  
Associate Professor of Africana Studies and History

**Juliet Hooker**  
Professor of Political Science

**Emily Owens**  
David and Michelle Ebersman Assistant Professor of History

Moderated by Tanya K. Hernández '86, P'20, Archibald R. Murray Professor of Law, Fordham University School of Law

Co-sponsored by the Pembroke Club, the Inman Page Black Alumni Council, & the Brown Women's Leadership Council



**REVISITING 'IS FEMINISM A BAD MEMORY?': ON BEING AFRAID AND BEING DISTURBED**



**Griselda Pollock**  
Professor of Social & Critical Histories of Art  
Director of the Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory & History  
University of Leeds

Tuesday, December 1, 2020  
12pm  
[pembrokecenter.org](http://pembrokecenter.org)



**VALUE OF LIFE:**  
INSURANCE, SLAVERY, INCARCERATION

A PEMBROKE CENTER VIRTUAL LECTURE



**Michael Ralph**  
Associate Professor in the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University

Tuesday, Nov 10  
@ 1pm



CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES  
middleeastbrown.org



Friday, November 13, 2020  
12:00pm – 1:30pm  
Virtual Event  
Registration required

A collaboration between CMES, the Brazil Initiative, and the Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies

**Writing Queer / Queer Writing:**  
Diasporic Dialogues between the Middle East and Brazil

WRITERS  
FROM BRAZIL:  
**Natalia Borges Polesso**  
**Cidinha da Silva**

FROM THE MIDDLE EAST:  
**Raphael Khouri**  
**Saleem Haddad**

BROWN UNIVERSITY HOSTS  
**Nadje Al-Ali**  
Center for Middle East Studies  
**Jeremy Lehnen**  
Brazil Initiative




## [Complicating Beauty: A Look at How Women Look](#)

Tuesday, January 12, 2021

Distinguished Brown alumnae and faculty explore the idea of beauty: how and why it changes over time; the unique role of the beauty pageant; and the ways that society's morphing definitions of "a beautiful woman" collide with race, class and gender.

## **"Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria, 1830-1930": A Conversation with Judith Surkis '92**

February 5, 2021

Panelists Nadje Al-Ali, Jennifer Johnson, Emily Owens, and Joan Wallach Scott will discuss the award-winning book by Judith Surkis '92. Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg will moderate.

## **Black Feminist Theory Project/Shauha M. Stark '76, P'10 Out of the Archives Lecture with [Daphne Brooks](#)**

February 25, 2021

