

# Pembroke Center Associates

## Newsletter

### A Rousing Finish of the Pembroke Challenge for the Center's 30th Anniversary

This fall the Pembroke Center celebrated its 30th anniversary with a dinner and conference on November 4-5, 2011 that included alumnae/i, President Ruth Simmons, Brown's senior administration, faculty, scholars from other institutions, and students. The dinner program commemorated the Pembroke Center's history, celebrated the success of the Pembroke Challenge, and included a conversation about women's leadership and institution building. The conference featured scholars who spent time early in their careers at the Pembroke Center as postdoctoral fellows and a conversation with the former directors of the Pembroke Center.

At the dinner, which drew over a hundred guests, Nancy L. Buc '65, LLD '94 hon. reflected on the historical and emotional ties the Center has to Brown's alumnae and how the Center's work is rooted in the questions Pembroke asked as students and continue to ask today. They questioned, for example, why women had to raise money to build Pembroke Hall, Sayles Gymnasium, and Alumnae Hall when the Corporation refused to do so and why there were hardly any women on the faculty. They asked why strong women who excelled in their fields were derided for their lack of femininity. Buc noted that Pembroke was excited about the founding of the Pembroke Center because they wanted the Center to ask these and other questions in their name. "The Pembroke Center moves us from our own experiences, our lives as anecdotal



Elizabeth Munves Sherman '77, P'06, P'09 accepts a Pembroke Center award from Marie Langlois '64, LLD '92 hon., for her leadership of the Pembroke Challenge.

dotes in the sweep of women's history, to broader epistemologies, to broader theories, that will help explain and help us – and everyone else – understand," said Buc. "We Pembroke are proud to have the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women commemorate and remember us by asking such big questions and doing such big theories that it and we are traveling together all the way to the edge of Sarah Doyle's infinite radius."

Director Kay Warren then announced that the Pembroke Center had far surpassed its initial \$1 million goal and had raised \$1,504,265 to support new interdisciplinary research initiatives through the Pembroke Challenge. The Pembroke Challenge was launched by Elizabeth Munves Sherman '77, P'06, P'09 and David Sherman '79, P'06, P'09 in October of 2010, who pledged to donate \$250,000 if the wider Brown community raised \$750,000.

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## From the Director

The Pembroke Center's 30th Anniversary is a wonderful time to reflect on what the Pembroke Center does and why we do it. Our research agenda, teaching curriculum, archives, and alumnae/i programs make vital contributions to the Brown community, and we hope that you have the opportunity to engage with our work.

The Pembroke Center's research programs – including the distinguished Pembroke Seminar – investigate the human costs and benefits of social change. We help scholars – women and men from the humanities, social sciences, and health sciences – further their work, test out ideas, draw from other disciplines, and take theoretical leaps. This scholarship is often published or presented at conferences, which helps Brown's standing in the academic world. Our research programs bring cutting-edge guest lecturers to campus and provide Brown students with a rich intellectual environment. The scholars who take part in the Center's postdoctoral fellowship program – which provides them with a year of residence at the Pembroke Center early in their careers – add much to intellectual life on campus.

The Pembroke Center's teaching program trains undergraduates in a wide variety of fields to pursue their future professional work and activism with a unique perspective on how gender and sexuality shape societies, cultures, religions, and political discourses. Thanks to the courses, lectures, seminars, and other programs that the Pembroke Center offers, our students take what they learn in the classroom to the broader world, offering insightful social critiques that advance social change not only for women but also for families and communities around the world.

Through the Christine Dunlap Farnham Archives and the Feminist Theory Archives, the Pembroke Center preserves women's history and provides resources essential to understanding the remarkable journeys that women have made at Brown and beyond. The Farnham Archives preserves the history of Brown and Rhode Island women – including their fight for access to higher education. Its holdings illustrate how generations of women experienced the Women's College, Pembroke College, and Brown University through the decades, and what they did after they graduated. The Feminist Theory Archives traces the intellectual history of feminist scholars who transformed their disciplines by insisting that issues of difference – such as gender, race, class, religion, and citizenship – be moved from the margins to a place of prominence in their fields. This archives preserves and documents not only the rise of modern academic feminism, but also the rigorous interdisciplinary work that introduced questions of gender and difference to a wide range of fields.

None of this – the research, the teaching, the archives – could happen without your support. The Pembroke Center Associates produce programs and publications that help the Brown community – especially alumnae/i – engage with the Center's work. Your generosity allows us to extend our reach and secure our future. Thank you for being such a crucial part of the Pembroke Center's story.

Sincerely,



Kay B. Warren  
Director

## The Therapeutic Fix

As part of Brown's Family and Alumnae/i Weekend, the Pembroke Center Associates sponsored a program with Brown faculty to discuss the rise of therapeutic culture in modern America. Debbie Weinstein '93, assistant director of the Pembroke Center, explained that the idea for the program came from considering the response of many politicians who, upon public revelation of their sexual indiscretions, announce that they are going into counseling. "Why should that be the appropriate response?" asked Weinstein. "Questions about what it means to live a good life became, over the course of the twentieth century, increasingly defined in psychological terms."

Lynne Joyrich AM '84, PhD '90, associate professor of Modern Culture and Media, discussed therapeutic culture in the media. She noted that advertisers use therapeutic culture to sell merchandise by tying their products to the goal of self-actualization. "There are therapeutic discourses that fully spread across our media culture today," said Joyrich. "In television there are some obvious places where this happens, like shows that are literally therapy shows, but also 'reality' type shows about interventions, advertising, and fictional shows such as *In Therapy* and *The Sopranos*."

Moderator Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, associate professor of Comparative Literature and Italian Studies, asked the panelists about the relationship between personal happiness and personal responsibility in the context of therapeutic culture. Weinstein responded that critics of therapeutic culture argue that explaining problems in psychological terms has the potential to undercut a sense of personal responsibility. The counterargument is that an emphasis on individual psychology conceals and ignores social and economic inequalities.

Therapeutic culture is acted out on talk shows, such as the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, where guests, audience members, and Winfrey all tell their personal stories. "It brings all the issues Oprah talks about, some people say, to a purely personal level of looking for individual happiness. A lot of what people are talking about has social roots, or economic roots, or political roots that get effaced," said Joyrich. "But the notion that everyone can tell their story also opened up the discourse to different kinds of voices that broke down the standard notions of expertise because everybody can be 'an expert' in their own story."



(L-R): Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, Lynne Joyrich AM'84 PhD'90, Elizabeth Munves Sherman'77, P'06, P'09, and Debbie Weinstein'93

Weinstein also discussed the relationship between clinical therapeutic practice and political activism. "There are some therapists who view outreach to underserved populations or working with particular groups as a kind of political intervention," said Weinstein. She observed that in the first editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), first published in 1952, homosexuality was officially a psychiatric diagnosis. In the early 1970s there was a debate within the profession of psychiatry that led to the removal of homosexuality as a diagnosis from the manual. Weinstein observed that this caused people to raise political as well as scientific concerns about the DSM, as they questioned the legitimacy of a document in which people "voted" on whether something was a diagnosis.

When asked about therapeutic culture and the "Occupy" movement, Joyrich responded that protestors are tying their own personal narratives to political and economic issues and that there have been a lot of critiques of the movement for its lack of a single message. "But that is the message," said Joyrich. "It is not a unified story where people can narrate one story with one solution. It is about the intersection of different people's pain that they experience personally, but that [is also] political." She said that therapeutic culture has allowed the telling of these stories to happen, but it can also close these stories down if they are seen as nothing but stories of personal pain.

## Exciting Developments in the Nanjing-Brown Joint Program



DVD Jacket from the film *Bing Ai*, directed by Feng Yan

Since 2008, the Pembroke Center has played a leading role in the Nanjing-Brown Joint Program in Gender Studies and the Humanities. This innovative research exchange partners the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women, the East Asian Studies Department, and the Cogut Center for the Humanities at Brown with the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Science at Nanjing University. Lingzhen Wang, associate professor of East Asian Studies, directs the program for Brown.

The purpose of the joint program is to bring outstanding scholars from Nanjing University into dialogue with scholars here at Brown about the global future of gender, feminist studies, and the humanities. In December a delegation of scholars from Nanjing University travelled to Brown to take part in Brown's "Year of China" programs. Chengzhou He, assistant director of the Institute for Advanced Studies and professor of English and Drama, gave a talk, "Performance and the Politics of Gender: Transgender Performance in Contemporary Chinese Film," at Brown. A screening of the Chinese film *Forever Enthralled* preceded his lecture. Also in December, Yinxing Hong, chancellor and professor of Economics at Nanjing University, visited Brown and delivered a lecture, "Innovative Development of China's Future Economy."

Looking forward, the Nanjing-Brown program will sponsor a film festival and symposium, "Chinese Women's Documentaries in the Market Era," at Brown. In June, Kay Warren, director of the Pembroke Center, will

travel to Nanjing University as the Distinguished Huaying Visiting Professor and will deliver two lectures. She will be joined in Nanjing by a number of Brown faculty who will participate in an international conference, "Gender, Feminism, and Chinese Studies: Historical & Current Developments."

Please visit: <http://brown.edu/Programs/Nanjing> for more information about the Nanjing-Brown Joint Program.

## Chinese Women's Documentaries in the Market Era

### Film Festival

March 17 – 18, 2012  
Cable Car Cinema  
204 South Main Street, Providence

Tickets: \$3 with Brown ID,  
\$5 General Public

### Symposium

March 21, 2012, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm  
Joukowsky Forum, Watson Institute  
111 Thayer Street, Providence

"Chinese Women's Documentaries in the Market Era" will screen and examine important documentary films by Chinese women directors from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China. The symposium will feature directors and international scholars who will

discuss the role and significance of women's documentary films in articulating different human concerns, critical visions, and visual aesthetics in the rapidly changing Greater China area. Directors confirmed to attend include:

**Tammy Cheung** (*Election*, 2008)  
**Lee Ching-hui** (*Money and Honey*, 2011)  
**Shi Tou** (*Women 50 Minutes*, 2006)  
**Miao Wang** (*Beijing Taxi*, 2010)  
**Feng Yan** (*Bing Ai*, 2007)

These Chinese women directors have made some of the most important and influential documentaries of the past decade on issues relating to the female self, sexuality, social migrations and transformations, and

history. The symposium will explore these and other issues. Scholars to present include:

**Hongwei Bao**, Assistant Professor of Communication, Culture, and Media, Nottingham Trent University  
**Sylvia Lin**, Associate Professor of Literature, University of Notre Dame  
**Tze-lan Sang**, Associate Professor of Chinese Literature, University of Oregon  
**Qin Shao**, Professor of History, The College of New Jersey  
**Louisa Wei Shiyu**, Associate Professor, School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong  
**Lu Xinyu**, Professor of Journalism, Fudan University

For more information and a detailed schedule, please visit: <http://brown.edu/Programs/Nanjing/content/news.html>

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To pay tribute to Liz Sherman's leadership of the Pembroke Challenge, Marie J. Langlois '64, LLD '92 hon., who chaired the Pembroke Center's first endowment campaign, presented an award to Sherman and announced that the Center's Annual Lecture in Gender and Sexuality Studies would be named in her honor. "This challenge Liz's idea and funded through her generosity. She also worked incredibly hard to ensure its success – hosting and attending events, helping to solicit gifts, and raising the profile of the Pembroke Center within the Brown community," said Langlois. "On behalf of all of us here this evening, I would like to thank you for your singular generosity and leadership. Your efforts have opened new avenues of research at the Pembroke Center, and the success of the Pembroke Challenge presents Brown students and faculty with unique opportunities to research the effects of social change around the world."

In accepting the award, Liz Sherman observed that it took a village to make the Challenge a success, and she thanked "the alumnae who blazed the path ahead of me," President Simmons, and Kay Warren. "I would also like to thank all of the people who are involved with the Pembroke Center for making it a world-renowned academic research institution," said Sherman. "It is you who inspire us to think differently about the issues we face in our world today."

To conclude the program, President Ruth Simmons and Alison Bernstein, Director of the Institute for Women's

Leadership and professor of History at Rutgers University, engaged in a discussion titled, "Critical Visionaries: Women Leaders and Institution Building." They explored the relationship between the critical visions of individual women leaders and their efforts to build and transform major institutions, whether academic centers, universities, or foundations. President Simmons and Professor Bernstein discussed how they discovered the drive to be institution builders and agents of change, the challenges they faced, and paths to success. A video of the conversation may be viewed at: [www.pembrokecenter.org/videos.html](http://www.pembrokecenter.org/videos.html).

The next morning, the Pembroke Center hosted its scholarly conference, "Theory on the Move: Three Decades of Critical Feminist Thinking." Former Pembroke Center post-doctoral fellows, now prominent scholars in their fields, discussed the ways in which their research has changed over time and reflected on the theoretical engagements they have pursued at different junctures. The conference also featured a discussion with

former Pembroke Center directors Joan Wallach Scott, Karen Newman, Ellen Rooney, and Elizabeth Weed, who reflected on the three decades of research at the Pembroke Center that has questioned what counts as foundational knowledge in a given discipline and how the production of knowledge is related to the challenges that studies of "difference" present to the academy.



Alison Bernstein and President Ruth Simmons discuss women's leadership and institution building during the Pembroke Center's 30th Anniversary Celebration.

The Pembroke Center is enormously grateful to those who have opened the doors for exciting transnational research at the Center. These new research initiatives will involve faculty and students from the humanities, social sciences, creative arts, and life sciences. In addition to two anonymous donors, the following generous benefactors made gifts in support of the Pembroke Challenge:

Amy Levine Abrams '75

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Marie J. Langlois '64, LLD '92 hon.

Anne Jones Mills '60

Norma Caslowitz Munves '54, PHB '82 hon., P'77, P'80, GP'06, GP'09 and Edward Munves Jr. '52, P'77, P'80, GP'06, GP'09

Claudia Schechter '66 and Bill Schechter

Elizabeth Munves Sherman '77, P'06, P'09 and David Sherman '79, P'06, P'09

Gwenn Masterman Snider '83, P'13

Chiyo Imai Rowe '82 and Stanton J. Rowe

Mary Aguiar Vascellaro '74, P'07 and Jerome C. Vascellaro '74, P'07

Ulla Wilska P'04 and Kari-Pekka Wilska P'04

## Women's Leadership Conference: 120 Years of Women at Brown, May 4–5, 2012

We hope you will join us for a university-wide celebration of women at Brown University. Sponsored by the Women's Leadership Council, the two-day conference will feature faculty lectures, panel discussions, exhibits, and networking opportunities.

The Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women looks forward to participating in the conference and is organizing a number of events, including:

**Leadership for Change through Education Award Presentation to President Ruth J. Simmons** The award honors women in any field who, both nationally and at the grass-roots level, succeed in changing lives by helping others to see the world differently and offering new ways of thinking about seemingly unsolvable problems. The Pembroke Center Associates are thrilled to honor President Simmons for her inspiring leadership at Brown and beyond.

**“Back to Class” talk by Pembroke Center Director Kay Warren** Professor Warren will discuss the “Violence and the Media” course that she is teaching this spring. She will talk about the role of media in shaping perceptions of violent conflict and how the media's role has changed over time.

**Women Activists at Brown: From the 1968 Black Student Walkout to Today** This alumnae panel will discuss the often overlooked role the Pembroke and Brown women played in major student-driven movements for social change, including the 1968 Black Student Walkout and the 1975 occupation of University Hall.

**A Mirror on Humanitarianism** This alumnae panel discussion will examine why development and relief programs have failed to eradicate poverty and inequality despite targeted efforts and billions of dollars in aid.

**Exhibit from the Christine Dunlap Farnham Archives** The Pembroke Center will assist the Brown University Library in mounting an exhibit showcasing Brown women's history.

**Please visit:** <http://wlc120.brown.edu> for more information about the plans for the conference, including registration, schedules, and fascinating details about the history of Brown women.



The Black Student Walkout of 1968 was inspired and initially led by African American Pembroke women.

### Brown Women Breaking Barriers in the Workplace Commencement Forum Saturday, May 26, 2012

The location and time are still to be determined, but if you are planning to come to reunion this year, please be sure to check the Pembroke Center website or the reunion schedule for our forum.

# Linda Pei Grant Recipient Nicole Friedman'12 Studies Aging and Female Health Disparities in the United States

The Pembroke Center is pleased to support Nicole Friedman's research into aging and health disparities among women in various regions and states. The \$1,000 Linda Pei Grant supports student research related to women's empowerment. The grant honors the life of Linda Pei'67 (1944-2007) and is made possible through the generosity of Carol Lemlein'67, P'90, Eric Natwig'69, AM'72, P'90, and the Women's Committee of the Brown University Club of Southern California.

During the month of January, Friedman and fellow researcher Gili Klinger'12 drove from Piedmont, California back to campus, stopping in many states to interview elderly women about the lived female experience in each locality, particularly as it related to aging and health. They travelled with a camera and computer and uploaded filmed interviews and written posts to their blog, *In Conversation: Aging in the States*, which can be viewed online at: [agingacrossthestates.wordpress.com](http://agingacrossthestates.wordpress.com).

Friedman says their research seeks to "better understand what it is like to grow old in the United States." Arguing that state and local governments have far more impact and influence on the day-to-day experience of aging Americans than do federal laws, Friedman's efforts are focused on better understanding female aging and health at the local level. To ground her research, Friedman notes that two-thirds of adults receiving food stamps from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program are female and that women earn only seventy-five cents for every dollar earned by men. She also draws from data that shows that women fare more poorly in life expectancies than men in many counties and that female life expectancies have actually decreased in many locales.



Agnes Dill

As they interviewed elderly women from a variety of backgrounds, they asked: What does it mean to age in your area? Through photographs, videos, and written reflections, their blog offers snapshots of those lived experiences.

"We found many common themes, such as the importance of religion, the perception that traffic is much worse today than it used to be, and an appreciation for family," observed Friedman. "All of the women we interviewed were strongly impacted by their local communities and cultures."

For example, Agnes Dill, a retired educator who now lives at home on the Isleta Pueblo reservation in New Mexico, shared her thoughts about aging and activism. Dill served on the National Advisory Council on Women's Education and the National Advisory Committee for the White House Conference on Aging and is a past president of the New Mexico chapter of the North American Indian Women's Association. Dill spoke about her work to expand programs for the elderly on the pueblos in New Mexico and how important she considers women's leadership to be. She said that growing older (she was ninety-eight years old at the time of the interview) has been good to her because she has been relatively healthy and has many friends.



Mary Jenkins

Mary D. Jenkins is a ninety-five-year-old great-great-grandmother who lives with her granddaughter in Pearl, Mississippi. Eight years ago, she and her granddaughter took a class to become community health advisors, and she still speaks to community members about topics she learned about in that class, such as nutrition and diabetes. Jenkins still drives, and she walks at least a mile per day.

"I hope the interviews themselves have been positive experiences for these women, by allowing them to remember their pasts and share their stories with interested young people," said Friedman. "There is evidence that the process of oral history can be empowering for the subjects, and I hope the women we have interviewed have been empowered or feel positively about our encounter. Through the blog, I hope to share these stories with a larger audience and add new voices to the broader conversation about aging in America today."

Friedman said she was grateful to the Pembroke Center for its support of the research, adding that the grant fully covered gas expenses and lodging in the cities where she and Klinger could not stay with friends or family. Friedman plans to pursue journalism after graduation and has an internship with the Dow Jones Newswires starting this summer in New York City.



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