

PEMBROKE CENTER

Associates Newsletter

Sexual Politics and After: Thinking with Kate Millett

To mark the recent passing of Kate Millett, author of the revolutionary text, *Sexual Politics*, and a key figure of feminism's second wave, the Pembroke Center, partnering with Leon Hilton (TAPS), hosted an afternoon panel in February called: "Sexual Politics and After: Thinking with Kate Millett." In the context of today's gender politics, from Stormy Daniels to the #MeToo movement — in which we are all arguably second wavers now! — the country is revisiting the politics of gender and sexuality as they operated in the middle of the last century. At the Pembroke Center, we do so conscious of the contributions and corrections of intersectionality, third wave feminism and more.

Ms. Millett all but invented feminist literary criticism, as Judith Shulevitz wrote in *The New York Review of Books*. In the language of today, Millett's *Sexual Politics* went viral when it was published, selling 10,000 copies in a fortnight. But it had an unlikely beginning: it began as a dissertation, which Millett wrote after she was fired from her teaching position at Barnard College for her role in organizing student protests in 1968. Millett completed the dissertation and passed her defense with distinction (although one adviser complained that reading her work was like "sitting with your testicles in a nutcracker").

For "Sexual Politics and After: Thinking with Kate Millett," four scholars working broadly on gender, feminism



PHOTO CREDIT: HANK RANDALL

Panelist Kevin Quashie speaks with the audience and Victoria Hesford at our February program "Sexual Politics and After: Thinking with Kate Millett"

and sexuality gathered to pay tribute to Millett's work in relation to a range of issues including: feminist celebrity post-1970s, her involvement with psychiatric survivorship and the politics of mental health, her resonance with the work of Black feminist thinkers and poets (particularly Audre Lorde); and her involvement with international feminist solidarity movements (focused especially on her trip to a revolutionary-era Iran in 1979, but also to Ireland soon after). The event yielded a particularly rich and urgent set of conversations about the

legacies of 1970s feminisms and their relevance to current struggles.

The conference featured: **Leon J. Hilton** (TAPS, Brown) on "Kate Millett and the Feminist Aesthetics of Anti-Psychiatry", **Victoria Hesford** (Stony Brook University) on "Kate Millett: A Feminist Spectacle", **Sara Mamani** (CalArts) on "'What Are the Iranians Wishing For?' Millett in Iran, 1979" and **Kevin Quashie** (Smith College) on "The Ecology of a Single Body: Kate Millett and Audre Lorde."

From the Interim Director

EVEN WHEN IT IS ABOUT US, IT IS NOT ABOUT US, OR: WHY WE STUDY INTERSECTIONALITY

This year at the Pembroke Center I co-organized with Tricia Rose of the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity (CSREA), a speaker series on intersectionality. Intersectionality looks at how gender or race alone are not quite adequate to capture the complexities of discrimination and proposes we attend to their crosscutting impacts in combination (including also class, geography, sexuality and more). We invited in three scholars (co-sponsored by CSREA and Pembroke) who considered the politics of intersectionality in the context of:

- (i) sexuality and the racial politics of reproduction in the welfare state (Laura Briggs, UMass)
- (ii) the history of lynching in which numerous women were also the until-now unacknowledged victims of that brutal practice (Shatema Threadcraft, Dartmouth)
- (iii) the promise and limits of intersectionality, as such, as an ever-expanding approach to political and cultural analysis (Jennifer Nash, Northwestern)

I thought of our intersectionality work recently when I read “Race, not abortion, was the founding issue of

the religious right,” by Margery Eagan (*Boston Globe*, Feb. 5, 2018). I was surprised by the article’s claim that abortion was not always a significant issue for conservatives in this country: “In 1971, two years before *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion... the Southern Baptist Convention, supported its legalization,” and its support did not waver through most of the 1970s. Indeed, Eagan notes, “Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority, did not give his first anti-abortion speech until 1978, five years after *Roe*.”

Eagan draws on research by Dartmouth Religious Studies professor, Randall Balmer, who claims that not abortion but rather the politics of segregation mobilized the Right. According to Balmer, the legal case that mattered was not *Roe v. Wade* but rather *Green v. Kennedy*, a 1970 decision that denied tax-exempt status to private Christian schools set up in response to *Brown v. Board of Education*. Called “segregation academies” by their opponents, these schools barred black students and, until 1970, enjoyed tax-exempt status. Opponents of the *Green* decision saw the difficulty of publicly organizing around the protection of race privilege, says Balmer, so several proxies were floated. In the end, Balmer

argues, abortion was chosen as a reliable mobilizing issue for conservatives and the community’s leaders adjusted their positions on the matter accordingly in the hope that their members would be driven to vote, in the name of the “Moral Majority,” for representatives friendly to their schools and agendas.

Eagan thinks this history raises a moral issue. If this is all about race and not gender, then, “How much of antiabortion rhetoric is really about the unborn and how much is a convenient ... cover for white evangelicals to support race-based exclusions?” she asks. And what about the moral inconsistency, pointed out by black evangelical Cornell William Brooks, of those who “wring their hands over the child lost in the womb” but not over “the loss of the child, Tamir Rice” who, at the age of 12, was gunned down by police in Cleveland?

Eagan is not wrong about the morals, but she is probably too quick to accept Balmer’s either-or structure, which assumes the politics are either about gender or race, rather than both, as an intersectional approach would suggest. Beyond that, however, there is also a second political lesson here for those of us who study women, gender and sexuality: *even when it is about us, it is not about us.*

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Balmer's argument reminds me of Kristin Luker's *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, which also argued, 20 years ago, that the politics of abortion were a side-effect. Luker focuses on the quest in the 19th century by American doctors to win "licensing laws that would ... restrict the competition." The competition they wanted to restrict included various "healers," women and enslaved people with reputations for healing knowledge, who often assisted women with "menstrual irregularities 'from whatever cause.'" The doctors, and their organization, the AMA, claimed their scientific education and their modern medical instruments allowed them better access to women's deep interiors. Such claims to specialized professional knowledge helped move abortion out of the home and into the doctor's office, altering it from a frequent and relatively uncontroversial practice (one out of four pregnancies likely ended in abortion back then) to one more morally and politically freighted. It also helped license the doctors' claims to privileged professionalization. Once again, *even when it is about us, it is not about us*.

Notably, in these two examples from the 19th and the 20th centuries, we cannot understand abortion politics without attending to race, class, religion, geography, and gender. We need to think *intersectionally*.

In her famous 1989 article in favor of intersectionality, Kimberlé Crenshaw's aim was quite specific, and lawyerly: to show how black women "experience discrimination in any number of ways," all of them hard to show when courts demand proof of only one wrong at a time and ask: if race is the problem, then why aren't black men bringing suit, too? If gender is the problem, why aren't white women bringing suit? For Black women, Crenshaw argued, subordination is not a "disadvantage [that] occur[s] along a single categorical axis." It is more like "traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions." She explained: "If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination." Or both.

Crenshaw's metaphor of the traffic accident has transformed how scholars of race and gender think about legal discrimination. What strikes me now, in the wake of these two generations of scholarship suggesting abortion was a proxy for other political issues, is how apt Crenshaw's metaphor is well beyond the domain of law. No matter what our position on abortion, regardless of whether we are for or against affordable and fair access to this procedure for

women, no matter what we think about waiting periods and state interests, surely all 21st century women have reason to be concerned when we find ourselves knocked down in the intersection, accidental casualties in a race we did not sign up for: *Even when it is about us, it isn't about us*.

"*Even when it is about us, it isn't about us*" means that when women of all races and backgrounds are just crossing the road trying to get to work, school, home, or a protest march, we may be hit by a speeding car or two or three that we never saw coming. That cars have become this year's instruments of racist and misogynist murder— driven in Charlottesville, Virginia by a white supremacist and, in Toronto, Canada, by a misogynist member of the so-called *incel* (involuntary celibate) movement — makes all the more poignant the power and portability of the key concept of intersectionality in feminist and race studies today.

This is some of the work we have been doing this year at the Pembroke Center. Many of you make it possible with your support. We appreciate it. Thank you.



Sincerely,
Bonnie Honig
Interim Director



Introducing Pembroke Center Development Liaison, Darcy Pinkerton

This spring, **Darcy Pinkerton '14** of Brown's Advancement staff assumed the role of development liaison to the Pembroke Center. Pinkerton was a Gender and Sexuality Studies and Africana Studies dual concentrator (and the 2014 winner of the Center's Joan Wallach Scott Prize for an outstanding honors thesis in Gender and Sexuality Studies). She began working in the Office of Development as a student, where she served as a direct marketing and participation student clerk from 2012 to 2014. Since then, she has played a key role in fundraising efforts on behalf of both the School of Public Health and the Hassenfeld Institute. These experiences, coupled with her educational background and commitment to the Pembroke Center's mission, will serve Pinkerton well as she works with the Center staff, volunteer leadership and colleagues in Advancement to enhance the Center's annual fund, major gifts and planned giving.

The Annual Elizabeth Munves Sherman '77, P'06 '09 Lecture in Gender and Sexuality Studies

APRIL 9, 2018

From Global Climate Change to Racial Profiling: The Politics of Critical Data Studies

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun is Professor of Modern Culture and Media, Brown University

What can social media tell us about climate change models? In a thought-provoking lecture, Professor Wendy Hui Kyong Chun explained that both social media and climate change modeling depend upon the use of computer applications known as proxies, which can be used for analyzing an enormous range of phenomena from paleoclimate models to a person's race, gender and personality. While some privacy advocates have argued for limiting the use of proxies in the face of cases like Cambridge Analytica, Chun argues instead the necessity of proxies for processing massive data while recognizing the limitations of proxies for predicting future events and human behavior.



Professor Wendy Chun delivers the 2018 Annual Elizabeth Munves Sherman '77, P'06 '09 Lecture in Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Sponsored by the Pembroke Center and the Jonathan M. Nelson Center for Entrepreneurship



2018 Commencement Forum *Making Waves: Brown Women Activists*

SATURDAY, MAY 26, 2018 • 11:00 A.M.

LIST AUDITORIUM, 64 COLLEGE STREET

Across the world, innovative women are campaigning for change on fundamental human rights issues like gender and racial equality and government accountability. Hear the stories of three visionary Brown alumnae who are taking on systemic injustices with creativity, courage and passion for social change.

Moderator:

Bonnie Honig, Pembroke Center Interim Director, Nancy Duke Lewis Professor of Modern Culture and Media and Political Science at Brown

Panelists:

Johanna Fernandez '93, Assistant Professor of History, Baruch College (CUNY); Author, Curator and Filmmaker

Rinku Sen '88, Activist, Author, Organizer and Trainer

Jayna Zweiman '01, Activist, Artist, and Co-founder of the Pussyhat Project

Curating the Past

TREASURES IN THE ATTIC

This past autumn, Alumnae Hall entered its ninety-first academic year and underwent a bit of maintenance typical for historic buildings. During an inspection, Mary Murphy, Nancy L. Buc '65 Pembroke Center Archivist, chatted with one of the maintenance workers who asked if she had seen the interesting historical objects in the attic. Intrigued, Murphy turned to Perry F. Brown, Alumnae Hall's custodian, who helped Murphy access the attic, which turned out to house some treasures.

Murphy found copies of the 1965 yearbook, freshman student directories spanning 1954 to 1964, student data on IBM punch cards from 1970 to 1971 and even room guest tickets from 1967 through 1969. Additionally, Murphy discovered a unique collection of clothing, including dresses, tops and skirts, that were likely produced by Pembrokers for sewing lessons or theatrical productions. Based on the garment styles, it is estimated that the clothing was produced between the 1920s and the 1970s.

These materials are now part of the Christine Dunlap Farnham Archive and have searchable finding aids that are available online. The clothing is currently getting a makeover by conservators associated with the John Hay Library and is expected to return to Brown soon. We would like to extend a special thank you to Perry F. Brown and his colleagues from Facilities for all of the work they do to maintain Alumnae Hall, and especially for assisting us with the addition of two more collections to the Christine Dunlap Farnham Archive.



A dress found in the attic of Alumnae Hall likely produced by Pembrokers for sewing lessons or theatrical productions.

Cultivating the Future

2018 GNSS OPEN HOUSE AT PEMBROKE HALL

On Thursday, May 3, gender and sexuality studies concentrators, faculty and prospective students gathered for lunch in Pembroke Hall to celebrate the year's work and welcome new students to the program. Isabel Martin and Zoë Sackman both spoke to the group about their experiences in GNSS and the importance of the concentration to their plans after graduation. "In gender and sexuality studies," said Martin, "you are always aware of your own engagement in processes of knowledge production. As a subject rooted in critiquing mechanisms of power in an intersectional way, GNSS requires an attention to the way in which one's own scholarship interacts with the systems it critiques. I know that as I pursue a career in civil rights law, this framework of internal and external power analysis will be fundamental to my work." Sackman echoed this sentiment: "Gender and sexuality studies invites a consideration of the relationship between theory and reality more than many other areas of critical theory do. In my experience, it emphasizes a grounding of theory in people's lived experiences."



STUDENT RESEARCH GRANT RECIPIENTS 2017-18

The Pembroke Center's competitive research grant program is open to undergraduate and graduate students from any concentration or field. Grants help pay for travel, fieldwork, archival research, equipment purchases, interview transcriptions and other research costs.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

The Helen Terry MacLeod Research Grant



Brigitte Dale '18, History: Radical Actors: The WSPU's Staging of the Suffrage Campaign

Dale's thesis examines representations of the British women's suffrage movement in contemporary media

and historiography, questioning the accepted notion that the suffragettes of the Women's Social and Political Union were "radical." She argues that, although the suffragettes were violent in the latter portion of their eleven-year campaign, it is a mistake to characterize the entire movement as radical based on its militancy. Dale claims that the women's presence in public, not their violence, is what made them radical. In occupying the same streets as actresses and prostitutes, the suffragettes boldly disavowed Victorian domesticity. Historians retroactively characterize the suffragettes as radical because of their violence, but contemporaries did so initially because of their presence in public, Dale argues.

Steinhaus/Zisson Research Grant



Zoe Gilbard '18, History and Public Health: Confining the Unfit: The Eugenics Movement in Early 20th-Century Rhode Island

Gilbard's thesis charts the influence of Progressive Era eugenicists' ideas on

psychiatry at local and national levels, examining race, class and gender within the immigrant-heavy population of Rhode Island. While most historical analyses of eugenics ideas about women and gender focus on sterilization policies and the birth control movement, in Rhode Island, they centered on immigrants, the waning power of the asylum and marriage restrictions. Gilbard explores the use of eugenicists' rhetoric and policy to control undesirable groups in psychiatric institutions. Additionally, she investigates women's involvement in eugenics and how it affected them outside of the traditional narrative of controlling reproduction. This history strives to help historians and contemporary psychiatrists to understand the pervasiveness of the ideology of eugenics and how it lives on in modern therapeutic systems including women's reproductive health, gene therapy and other cutting-edge sciences.

Steinhaus/Zisson Research Grant



Aja Grande '18, Science, Technology, Society: The Pursuit of Pono in Hawai'i Education Politics

Vocational schools in Hawai'i since 1840 have served as designated spaces for raising students to engage at the

local level, in a U.S. democracy and within a global society.

Following a larger tide of conversation in the realm of anthropology, Grande seeks to emphasize how students develop ontologies of decision-making, consumption and waste practices in institutional learning sites. Through the lives of marginalized female figures, Grande's work narrates Hawai'i's educational development to argue how we are each born into the world with a sense of place that leads to an ontology, or a way of being, based upon the spaces we inhabit during early years of formative education.

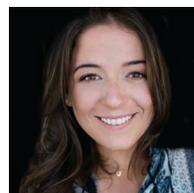
The Barbara Anton Internship Grant



Cleveish Bogle '18, Anthropology, Health and Human Biology: Articulating the Impact of Creative Youth Development Practices and Values on the ¡CityArts! Community: An Engaged Ethnographic Case Study

Bogle's project uses ethnographic methods to investigate the effects of community-building and creative youth development practices of Providence ¡CityArts! for Youth. She investigates the socioemotional outcomes of students in the program, as well as the program's effects on structural agents (e.g. staff, administrators, volunteers, and teaching artists) who participate in and facilitate this youth development work. Bogle analyzes how the structural parameters of community-building and youth development practices influence the development of communal identity and belonging, self-identity formation and expression. Her project expands our understanding of how social engagement and artistic interventions within a social justice framework impact creative youth development practices on the participants, and leaders of, community youth organizations.

The Linda Pei Undergraduate Research Grant



Sarah Nicita '20, Brown/RISD Dual Degree, Cognitive Neuroscience and Textiles: Miao Women: Traditional Textile Craft, Socioeconomic Mobilization and Challenges to Sustainability

Nicita's research project investigates the traditional textile making of Miao ethnicity women in Jishou and surrounding rural communities. Jishou is located within the Hunan province, at the seat of the Miao Autonomous Prefecture and Xiangxi Tujia; 73% of the population belongs to Tujia or Miao minorities. Nicita's advisor, Xinyu Liu, is a Yenching Scholar who is both Miao and Tujia. The research has two main foci: 1) textile making in Miao culture, particularly as it has empowered Miao women, and 2) the tensions of a woman-centric hand-made material culture attempting to survive China's rapid industrialization. Nicita's research also

investigates the relationship between the creation of craft and the creation of community, and the correlation between mastery of craft and increased economic mobility.

Enid Wilson Undergraduate Travel Fellowship



Margot Cohen '18, International Relations: **The Language of Violence: The Normalization of Gender-Based Murder and the Patriarchal State**

Latin America continues to report the world's highest rates of femicide, the gender-motivated murders of women. Over the past decade, eighteen Latin American states have adopted specific femicide legislation following the emergence of a transnational movement. Despite reforms, femicide rates remain staggeringly high. Analyzing the case of Chile, Cohen shows that femicide is situated in the historical, economic and socio-political context of the patriarchal state, which normalizes structural and cultural violence against women. Based on fieldwork conducted in Santiago, Chile, Cohen uses feminist discourse analysis to compare language of the state to that of civil society actors. This thesis contributes to feminist and normative theory on domestic policy implementation by showing discourse as a site where violence and power is reproduced.

Enid Wilson Undergraduate Travel Fellowship



Emily Sun '18, Ethnic Studies: **“The Rock Cried Out No Hiding Place”: Subterranean Bodies and Disoriented Space in Women of Color Performance Art**

Sun's research focuses on women of color's conceptual and performance art. Her thesis develops the “subterranean” as a lens to engage the art of Laura Aguilar, Simone Leigh and Gina Osterloh. Through the subterranean, she explores how these artists' productions alter the ways in which racialized and sexualized bodies become legible in space. From burrowing in the desert to armoring ceramic flesh, from scaffolding to shadows, these artists activate the underbellies of black and brown femininities, questioning how we think about exposure and shelter in dominant Western culture. Sun's project draws upon women of color theories of the flesh, queer of color critique, and post humanist thought.

Enid Wilson Undergraduate Travel Fellowship



Natalie Zeif '18, Education: **Negotiating Sexuality and School Work in South Florida: Anita Bryant's Anti-Queer Teacher Movement**

In 1977, the Miami-Dade County Commission voted to amend a local nondiscrimination ordinance to include protections on the basis of “affectional or sexual preference” in employment, housing, and public accommodations. Afterwards, former pop-singer, Miss Oklahoma pageant winner, and born-again Christian,

Anita Bryant founded Save Our Children to overturn it. Six months later, Bryant's campaign successfully struck it down in a re-vote. Though the ordinance offered protections in all areas of employment, Save Our Children waged an all-out assault on the rights of queer teachers, focusing specifically on the classroom setting. Zeif's research addresses Bryant's presentation of school work and queerness as fundamentally incompatible. A host of primary source documentation published by or about the Save Our Children campaign illustrates how Bryant framed herself as an authority on child protection. Zeif's project aims to understand the construction of gender and sexuality in this fraught context.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Steinhaus/Zisson Research Grant



Daniel McDonald, Department of History: **Mothers on the March: Grassroots Women's Resistance in Military Brazil**

McDonald's dissertation examines how urban residents and grassroots groups in São Paulo negotiated state repression, economic crises and urban problems during Brazil's military dictatorship (1964-1985) and the long transition to democracy (1974-1996). Combining digital humanities with social and urban history, McDonald uses previously unavailable textual sources and interviews to analyze the rights-based politics that emerged among everyday citizens of Brazil's largest metropolis, especially with women's groups in São Paulo's working-class East and South Zones. This dissertation documents grassroots welfare activism that placed São Paulo at the forefront of reimagining citizenship in the decade after Brazil's return to democracy in 1985.

Steinhaus/Zisson Research Grant



Katsi Rodríguez Velázquez, Department of Africana Studies: **Claiming the Anjelamaría Davilá: Black Women in the Decolonization of Puerto Rico**

Rodríguez Velázquez's research focuses on the decolonizing and anti-racist critiques of four Black female Puerto Rican artists: poet Anjelamaría Dávila, novelist Mayra Santos Febres, and Michel and Lydela Nonó of the performance group Las Nietas de Nonó. Dávila's work from the '60s and '70s has been largely left out of the Puerto Rican literary canon and the scarce interpretation of her texts silences her anti-racist critiques. This research uses the metaphor of her “broken memory” (she may have died of Alzheimer's) to disrupt the constant silencing and erasure of Black women's bodies, voices and works in Puerto Rico's national narratives and anti-colonial resistance. Rodríguez Velázquez traces how these artists highlight blackness and anti-colonial thought, exploring how they challenge questions of nationality in Puerto Rico, ways their anti-racist and decolonial critiques contribute to the Black diasporic feminist, and to scholarship on anti-black violence in Latin America, the Caribbean and North America.



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Associate Director Drew Walker and 2018 GNSS graduating Seniors.