

# PEMBROKE CENTER

## Associates Newsletter

### Confronting Stigma in the Fight for Reproductive Rights

“Without access to contraception, the typical woman would have approximately ten children,” asserted Nancy Northup ’81, P’16. “Childbirth and pregnancy are dangerous. They are both a natural part of life and necessary for the continuation of the species, but also can kill a woman.”

Northup is President and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights and spoke on campus during Brown’s Family Weekend for the Pembroke Center Associates’ event, “A Pivotal Moment for Women Worldwide.”

Northup presented a “10,000-foot view” of the state of reproductive rights around the world to the audience of students, parents, physicians, and alumnae/i gathered in Pembroke Hall.

“Over 300,000 women died last year, in connection with pregnancy and childbirth,” said Northup. “Your lifetime risk of dying due to pregnancy has to do with the obstetric care you get and how many times you go through pregnancy and childbirth. The more pregnancies, the greater the risk.”

“The lifetime risk of death in Chad today is 1 in 15. In Norway, it is 1 in 15,000,” she continued. “That is the difference between whether you have access to obstetrics care and whether or not you have good policies in place for reproductive health and rights.” Northup added that there are 42 million abortions performed around the world each year and about half of those are in countries where abortion is not legal and is largely unsafe.



PHOTO CREDIT: HANK RANDALL

Nancy Northup ’81, P’16, President and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights speaks at the Pembroke Center during Brown’s Family Weekend.

Because one in three women in the United States has had an abortion in their lifetime, Northup posited that a number of women in the room have had an abortion. “I’m not going to ask you, right now, if you have had an abortion, to raise your hand. Nor am I going to ask you if you have been a partner of someone who has had an abortion, because it is stigmatized and it is not something we talk about. That is partly what leads to the difficulty of the political debate that goes on in the United States, as well as the debate that goes on in the courts,” explained Northup.

#### THE STATUS OF WOMEN

“So here we are, thirty-three years after the founding of the Pembroke Center, and we are still talking about gender and women and our status in the world,” observed Northup. “The continued low status and discrimination against women worldwide is stunning. Young girls are sold into marriage and girls are not allowed to finish primary school. Son preference is so strong in some states in India, for example, that for every 1,000 boys, there are only 820 girls because of sex-selective abortion. Women are sold as commodities and used as weapons of war.”

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## From the Director

The Pembroke Center has a distinguished history in the research and teaching of women. As such, it made its national and international mark by not limiting its work to women only, but instead choosing to open its horizon to think about women in broader contexts. In doing this, it chose wisely.

From its very beginning, the Center decided on an edgy mission: dedicated to women and feminism, it nevertheless rejected easy or comfortable positions; instead, it challenged simple identifications. The Center made this its mission by working with the idea of “difference” – thereby opening its doors to other exclusions: those of gender, race, class, all of which are global differences that criss-cross East and West, North and South. As a Center that exists in an elite academic institution, it also has participated in the challenge and negotiation between disciplinary boundaries. To this end, the Pembroke Center remains committed to work at Brown with all those departments, centers, programs, and institutions (including hospital units) that further this cause of thinking about “differences.”

What, concretely, does this mean today?

It means that the Pembroke Center will always be loyal to the cause of women. It also means that the Center will think laterally, reach out to other causes, and be enriched by this experience. In itself, this is not a new direction for the Pembroke Center. We remain committed to the Center's original mission while not being burdened by it. We will embrace new forms of feminism in a world that often has no space for them. We will reach out to a new generation of women and men and support these smart and

innovative young thinkers who right now have increasingly less, not more, institutional support. The strength of the Pembroke Center is that it is capacious enough to incorporate a broad range of projects and concerns. The Pembroke Center supports cutting-edge thinking about issues of gender and difference and places itself at the vanguard of critical theory.

We draw our strength from the commitment of the Pembroke Center Associates. Your generosity allows us to think big, take risks, and support a new generation of scholars – whether they be undergraduates, graduates, postdoctoral fellows, or new faculty.

Thank you.

Warm wishes,



Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg  
*Director*

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PEMBROKE CENTER FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH ON WOMEN

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# Confronting Stigma Continued from page 1

She argued that it is not just “somewhere else” where the contested nature of women’s empowerment still exists. In the United States, the issues of women’s access to reproductive health care are front and center in the culture wars and in the legal wars. She noted that in a ruling to strike down an aspect of Texas’s sweeping anti-abortion law, the District Court said, “Abortion is the most divisive issue in American history since slavery.”

Northup framed today’s battles about reproductive rights within the context of how women’s quest for equality has advanced in recent decades: “I decided to think back to 1977, when I first stepped onto this campus as a freshman. Of course, much has improved for women in the United States since 1977. There wasn’t one woman serving in the United States Senate. No woman had ever held the title of president at any Ivy League School. Today, we have women presidents at Brown, Harvard, and the University of Pennsylvania. In 1977, there were only ten tenured women on the Brown faculty, and in fact, the only women professors I had in college were for women’s history courses. Today, there are 132 tenured women on the Brown faculty.”

Despite such progress in other areas, Northup said that new waves of restrictions at the state level are shutting down clinics, closing essential services, and harming women. The restrictions take many forms. In 2013, North Dakota enacted a ban on abortion as early as six weeks – before many women know that they are pregnant. Other laws single out reproductive health care providers for burdensome requirements designed to shut down clinics under the false pretext of health and safety.

In previous decades, Northup observed that opponents to safe and legal abortion physically attacked clinics and murdered doctors and clinic workers. Their new strategy, she said, is to pass pretextual health and safety regulations. She argued that these state regulations are “designed to accomplish by the pen what could not be accomplished through brute force: the shutdown of facilities providing essential reproductive health care to women in this country.”

“Opponents of reproductive health and rights are seeking to make an end-run around public opinion and the Constitution itself,” argued Northup. “They have resorted to obfuscating the true agenda . . . They claim these laws are about defending women’s health and well-being and improving the safety of abortion care, but they are wolves in sheep’s clothing, advanced by politicians and not doctors.” Northup noted that the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists have gone on the record against many of these laws, decrying political interference in medicine and the doctor-patient relationship and making clear that the restrictions at issue do not advance women’s health.

The big question, as Northup sees it, “is whether the Supreme Court is going to see through these pretextual laws, call them the sham that they are, return strong protections to women’s access to abortion services, allow clinics to be open, allow medicine to guide the practice of medicine and not politicians.” The Supreme Court also could decide to let the foundation of *Roe vs. Wade* crumble.

## WHY ARE WE STILL FIGHTING THIS FIGHT?

“*Roe vs. Wade* had been decided by the Supreme Court four years before I started college and we thought it was behind us,” said Northup. “We’ve seen the huge advances of women in the United States, and we are seeing the advancement, internationally, of the protection of reproductive rights as fundamental human rights. But we seem to be stuck here.”

Northup suggested that many people at Brown could help explain why. “The political scientists can explain about how the issue of reproductive rights has been used as a wedge issue in politics. The religious scholars can unpack the fundamental differences of religious belief that drive some of this debate. The Gender Studies folks can fill us in on the issues of punishing women and discrimination.”



Brown student asks a question of Nancy Northup.

Northup argued that stigma and the issue of silence continue to be barriers to securing reproductive rights. “People don’t talk about their abortion experiences. People don’t talk that much about their contraceptive experiences, even though most women like me will spend, maybe, three years of their life, maybe five, either trying to get pregnant, being pregnant, or recovering from a pregnancy. They are going to spend 35 years of their life trying not to get pregnant.”

“I would encourage you to talk about why you came here today. Why do you care?” she asked. “I know we can’t leave this fight to the lawyers. What the people of the nation eventually care about in terms of their constitutional rights is what people find meaningful, what people share with others,” said Northup. “What the Supreme Court said twenty-two years ago, in the last showdown case, was that it is the promise of the Constitution that there is a realm of personal liberty which the government may not enter. So, we need to talk about that, share our views about that, and if you believe it, do it, because you can’t protect rights you don’t talk about.”

To view the video of the program, please visit: <http://www.brown.edu/research.pembroke-center/videos>

# Exploring the Legacy of *Louise Lamphere v. Brown University*



Brown University Anthropology Department Faculty, 1970–1971.

To mark Brown's 250th anniversary, the Pembroke Center will re-examine *Louise Lamphere v. Brown University*, the landmark class-action case that in 1975 charged Brown with sex discrimination and set in motion a chain of events that changed the face of the university.

An assistant professor of Anthropology and the only woman in her department when she was hired in 1968, Louise Lamphere was denied tenure in 1974. The Anthropology Department claimed that her scholarship was theoretically weak. Lamphere claimed she was the victim of sex discrimination and argued that the small number of women on the Brown faculty was evidence of a larger pattern of discrimination. After unsuccessfully pursuing an internal appeal process, on May 10, 1975, Lamphere brought suit in U.S. District Court.

Under the leadership of a new President, Howard Swearer, the University settled the case before trial, entering in September 1977 into an historic consent decree designed "to achieve on behalf of women full representativeness with respect to faculty employment at Brown." Brown agreed to set up an Affirmative

Action Monitoring Committee charged with overseeing the processes by which all departments would achieve gender equity in hiring and tenure decisions and with helping to set goals and timetables for increasing the number of women at all levels of the faculty. The Affirmative Action Monitoring Committee was in existence from 1978 until 1992 when, by mutual agreement, the consent decree was vacated. During this period the proportion of women on the Brown faculty increased dramatically.

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## DURING THIS PERIOD THE PROPORTION OF WOMEN ON THE BROWN FACULTY INCREASED DRAMATICALLY.

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On March 5, 2015, the Pembroke Center will open an exhibit, *The Lamphere Case: The Sex Discrimination Lawsuit that Changed Brown*, exploring in detail the Lamphere case and its consequences for Brown. Based on extensive archival research and oral histories with key participants, the exhibit paints a vivid

picture of how and why Brown changed during a key moment in its history and of the feminist activism that drove that change. The physical exhibit will be installed in the first and second floors of Pembroke Hall from March 5 through Commencement weekend.

Several other events complement the exhibit. On the evening of March 5, President Christina Paxson will host a public roundtable, *Breaking the Glass Ceiling*, with women who have been presidents of major universities. Participants include Drew Gilpin Faust, President of Harvard; Shirley Tilghman, former President of Princeton; and Nan Keohane, former President of Wellesley and Duke. They will discuss the social changes, including feminism, that have allowed women finally to become leaders of major universities and the challenges women still face in these key leadership roles.

On March 6, 2015, the Pembroke Center will host a one-day conference, *Feminist Change and the University*. Linking past and present feminist concerns, the conference will open with a conversation between Louise Lamphere and Amy Goldstein '79, a reporter for the *Washington Post*, about the case and its aftermath. Later panels will focus on the way feminist scholarship continues to change what students study, how knowledge is made in the contemporary university, and the challenges and possibilities facing current and future generations of women at Brown.

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# Save The Dates: Women's Leadership and the University

THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2015

3:30–5:00 PM:

***The Lamphere Case: The Sex Discrimination Lawsuit that Changed Brown***

**Exhibit Opening and Reception**

Pembroke Hall, 172 Meeting Street

The exhibit runs through

Commencement Week. Pembroke Hall is open Monday – Friday, 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM during the spring semester.

Pembroke Hall also will be open during Commencement Weekend.

5:30 PM

***Breaking the Glass Ceiling***  
**Panel Discussion Hosted by**

**President Christina H. Paxson**

Salomon Center for Teaching, De Ciccio Family Auditorium, Main Green

*Panelists:*

- Drew Gilpin Faust, President, Harvard University
- Shirley M. Tilghman, President Emerita, Princeton University
- Naneerl O. Keohane, President Emerita, Duke University

FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2015

9:30 AM–5:00 PM

***Feminist Change and the University***  
**Academic Symposium**

Pembroke Hall, 305, 172 Meeting Street

Conversation with Louise Lamphere, moderated by Amy Goldstein '79

Roundtable with Brown Faculty:  
Current and Future Challenges

- Sherine Hamdy, Anthropology
- Françoise Hamlin, History, Africana Studies
- Bonnie Honig, Political Science, Modern Culture and Media
- Diana Lipscombe, Neuroscience
- Amanda Lynch, Geological Sciences
- Karen Newman, Comparative Literature, English

Keynote Addresses

- Wendy Brown, Political Science, University of California, Berkeley
- Evelyn Hammonds, History of Science and African and African-American Studies, Harvard University

SATURDAY, MAY 23, 2015

11:00 AM

***Alumnae in Academia***  
**Commencement Forum**

Pembroke Hall, 305, 172 Meeting Street

Alumnae panel of university and college professors discuss the challenges faced by women in higher education and their paths to securing tenure.

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*Support for exhibit and events provided by: Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women, Pembroke Center Associates, Brown University's 250th Anniversary, Office of the President, Creative Arts Council, Brown University Library, John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage*



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BROWN UNIVERSITY

# Seed Grants Supporting Faculty Research Collaborations

In addition to offering fellowship opportunities through the annual Pembroke Seminar, the Pembroke Center awards research grants to Brown faculty and students. Our faculty research program provides seed funding for new transnational research collaborations. This program is made possible by the generosity of alumnae/i donors who contributed to the Pembroke Challenge, led by former Council Chair Elizabeth Munves Sherman '77, P'06, P'09. We are pleased to share the supported projects for the 2014–15 academic year.

## ANDEAN PROJECT

In recent years, scholars in many disciplines have produced an outpouring of work on the histories and societies of indigenous people in the Andes (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile). This upsurge in interest is due in part to the extraordinary growth of indigenous ethnic mobilization, cultural florescence, and political parties in the Andean nations, which have engaged scholars throughout the social sciences and humanities. But there has been too little conversation between the disciplines.



Traditional Aymara ceremony in Copacabana, on the border of Lake Titicaca in Bolivia.

With sponsorship from a Pembroke Center Seed Grant, the Center for Caribbean and Latin American Studies, the Humanities Initiative, and the Dean of the College, an interdisciplinary group of Brown professors and students have formed the Andean Project. Co-led by Laura Bass, associate professor and chair of Hispanic Studies, and Jeremy Mumford, lecturer in History, the group is hosting a series of lectures and public performances, both academic and of general interest. Also being planned is a workshop for sharing and critiquing work-in-progress by faculty and students. The lecture series explores topics such as “The Rise of Ethnic Politics in the Andes,” “Indigenous Women and World Politics in Ecuador,” and “Atrocities against Afro-Colombian Communities: Killings, Disappearances, and Forced Displacement on Colombia’s Pacific Coast.”

## BLACK WOMEN AT THE GRASSROOTS OF POLITICS IN JAMAICA



The Hannah Town Cultural Group leading a vigil for people who have died violently, as part of the “Letters from the Dead” research and performance project, Kingston, Jamaica, 2014.

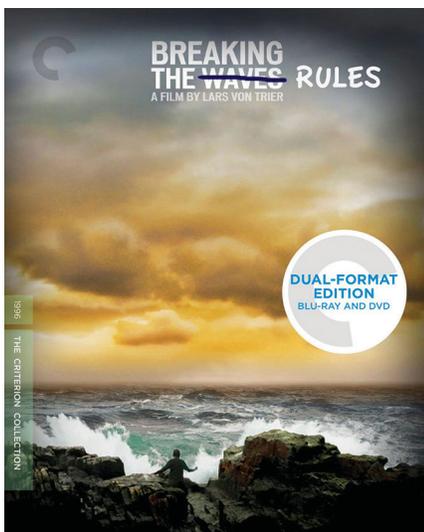
This interdisciplinary collaborative project focuses on women’s participation in struggles against forced land evictions, arts-based activism, and the contemporary Rastafari movement in Jamaica. Keisha-Khan Y. Perry, associate professor of Africana Studies, and Brown University doctoral students Shamara Wylie Alhassan and Nicosia Shakes organized a seminar, “The Political Context of Social Movement Activism in Jamaica.” The seminar laid the theoretical groundwork for foregrounding women’s experiences in political thought and praxis in Jamaica and the broader Caribbean.

Four invited speakers began the conversation with formal presentations. Anthony Bagues, professor of Africana Studies at Brown, explored the political history that differentiates the theorization of revolution, rebellion, national protest, and community-based mobilizations. Jermaine McCalpin, assistant professor of Government at the University of the West Indies at Mona, focused on democratic regimes, trust in civil society, and media-based political protests. Hume Johnson, assistant professor of communication at Roger Williams University, discussed the different forms of protests and black women’s participation as civil and uncivil actors. Maziki Thame, assistant professor of Government at the University of the West Indies at Mona, focused on creole/brown nationalism in a socio-historical context and how claims to modern blackness allow some Jamaicans including the current female Prime Minister to rise to power. The research collaborators also gave shorter presentations on their planned summer research in Jamaica in relation to the ideas discussed by the invited

scholars. Local scholars in the area working on related themes in the Caribbean also participated in the discussion.

The transnational research seminar and dialogue incorporated the use of Skype so that scholars located in Jamaica could participate. The presentations and discussions provided scholars with new knowledge of the Jamaican political context to deepen their understanding of how and why black women organize and lead social movements. The seminar was also a significant space to begin to formalize ongoing collaborations between the University of West Indies Mona and Brown University and formed the beginning of a transnational working group aimed at expanding the scholarship on race, gender, and class in social movements in the Caribbean.

## BREAKING THE RULES: GENDER, POWER, AND POLITICS IN THE FILMS OF LARS VON TRIER

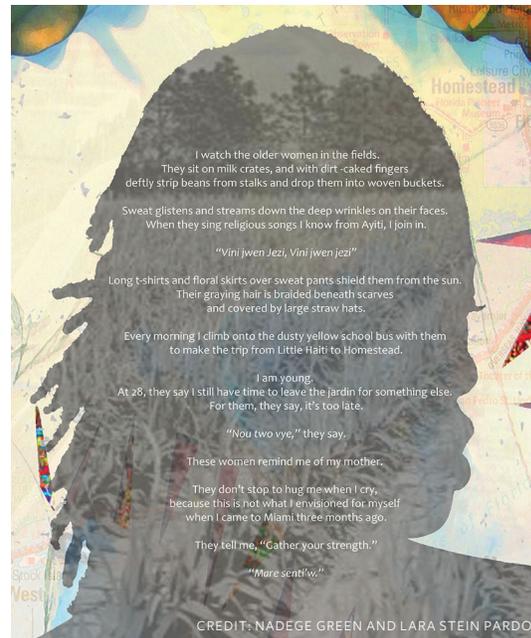


Lars von Trier's films – including *Melancholia* (2011) and *Nymphomaniac* (2014) – are unsettling, urgent, and often controversial. His films raise questions about gender and violence, the politics of the foreigner, the disabled and the immigrant, conditions of work in neoliberal economies, marriage, morality, and more.

Co-directed by Bonnie Honig, professor of Modern Culture and Media and Political Science and holder of the Nancy Duke Lewis Chair, and Anthony Cokes, professor of Modern Culture and Media, the project organized the screening of a number of von Trier's films and hosted a conference in Pembroke Hall November 6-8, 2014. The Brown community joined an international group of scholars at the conference to think specifically about the films of von Trier and about film as a political and aesthetic technology. The conference brought together scholars from all over the world who work at the intersections of classics, women's, gender, and sexuality studies, racial politics, political science, philosophy, humanities and communications arts, and film studies. Scholars worked not only to generate political commentary on von Trier's films but also to develop new work in political, literary, film, feminist, or critical theory. Project

organizers have invited scholars to submit papers for a special issue of the online journal, *Theory & Event*, an interdisciplinary journal with a reputation for cutting-edge theoretical and political inquiry.

## WRITING THE UNDERCOMMONS



Tie Your Waist, and Gather Your Strength, *Digital Print*, 11x17 inches, 2012.

This working collective of scholars, led by Rebecca Carter, assistant professor of Anthropology and Urban Studies, and Courtney Martin, assistant professor of History of Art and Architecture, is exploring the problems of humanism and humanness across several interrelated fields, including anthropology, Black studies, geography, history of art and architecture, literary studies, and women's and gender studies. Through collaborative and interdisciplinary engagements developed through thinking, research, and writing, members are generating and sharing primary research pertinent to both their discrete disciplines and to wider concerns of humanistic study. Topics of interest include aesthetics and cultural production, diaspora, feminism, gender, (collective) memory, representation, social survival and sustainability, and space, place, and geography.

The group is working to advance and broadly disseminate their research findings, to develop new courses to offer to Brown's students, and to create related pedagogical tools, teach-ins, and other collaborative forums for learning and exchange. Scholars are organizing a public symposium at which members will present their work to the larger community. The Pembroke Center is pleased to host group member Kimberly Brown as a visiting scholar this academic year. She is participating in this project and working on her second book project about documentary photography and black subjectivity. While at the Pembroke Center this year, Brown also is participating in the Pembroke Seminar, "Aesthetics and the Question of Beauty."



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