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**WINTER  
2006**

*News from the  
WILL Program  
of Westhampton  
College at the  
University of  
Richmond  
for its alumnae  
and friends*

# WILL NEWS

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The WILL program has a new assistant director! After an extensive national search, Dr. Melissa Ooten joined the WILL team in mid-August. She grew up in the mountains of eastern Tennessee and moved to Williamsburg, Virginia, six years ago to attend graduate school at the College of William and Mary. She studied and taught contemporary U.S. women's history, and recently defended her dissertation on the how issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality have historically influenced governmental film censorship decisions in the US. After a few years of teaching both history and women's studies courses, she is very excited about teaching WGSS courses and immersing herself in all things WILL-related. Please join me in welcoming Melissa Ooten!

I am also happy to announce that Ms. Karren O'Connell, the amazing administrative assistant of WILL, has gone full-time as the administrative assistant of the Westhampton College Dean's Office, dividing her time between WILL and College Programming and Leadership Development. And I have been promoted to Associate Dean of Women's Education and Development. Finally, while missed, former assistant director Dr. Elizabeth Sheehan has taken a position as Associate Dean of Students for Student Life and Programs at nearby Randolph-Macon College where she supervises student activities, Greek life, and the community, diversity and justice center. You are welcome to contact her at esheehan@rmc.edu. According to Liz, she most enjoys "using the vast imperial power of my office to stage events like a debate about free speech on campus." We appreciate her many contributions to the WILL program and to the University of Richmond and wish her well in her new position.

*Holly Blake, WILL Director*

## MESSAGE FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Hello, everyone, and happy 2006! I'm thrilled to be the new assistant director of WILL; Holly and Karren have welcomed me with enthusiasm and patience as I continue to learn the ins and outs of the WILL Program and the University of Richmond. I am continually impressed with every WILL woman that I meet. Both in and out of the classroom, WILL members never fail to amaze me with their intellectualism, activism, and enthusiasm for all the work they are doing on this campus and within the larger Richmond community. As assistant director, I look forward to meeting you when you find your way back to campus as alumnae, and please keep me posted on what you are doing so I can let others know via the newsletter. I hope to hear from you in the coming year.



The assistant director takes a fall into the sky after defending her dissertation.

*Melissa Ooten, WILL Assistant Director*



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## 2005-2006 WILL/WGSS SPEAKER SERIES

The series' theme for this year is *Whose Science, Whose Knowledge? Science, Power and Social Identity*. The series features scientists, philosophers, and activists who engage with issues surrounding how gender issues and science affect each other.

To start the series, we welcomed **Evelynn M. Hammonds**, who spoke on *The Return of Biological Race: Science and Politics in the 21st Century*. A fiercely intelligent and witty speaker, Hammonds was appointed to one of the two task forces created at Harvard University, where she teaches and researches, after Harvard's President Lawrence Summers made some unfortunate remarks about the (in)ability of women to perform and excel in scientific fields of study. By the time of Hammonds' arrival, she had been appointed the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity at Harvard. Her talk discussed the historical antecedents of the scientific debates on race and their connection to broader debates about the relation between biology and society in America. Hammonds also set the stage for the series' other three speakers by noting that they are all her teachers and mentors.

In December, we welcomed **Evelyn Fox Keller**, one of the first women to contemplate the complex intersections of gender and science. A renowned professor at MIT, Fox Keller spoke on *Innate Confusions: Nature, Nurture, and All of That*. Distinctions between innate and acquired, between nature and nurture, may constitute a scientific "folk biology" based on the brain's genetic programming to create such oppositions. If so, questions about nature vs. nurture are not only highly charged but subject to intrinsic confusion. Fox Keller spoke on whether it is then possible to address, let alone answer, the nature/nurture debate scientifically.

In the spring, we will welcome the following speakers. All events are free and open to the public, so please join us. Call (804) 289-8578 for more information.

### NANCY TUANA

*Thursday, February 9, 2006, 4:00pm, Brown-Alley Room, Weinstein Hall.*

Nancy Tuana specializes in science studies, feminist philosophies, and epistemology. She is currently working on a book entitled *Philosophy of Science Studies* which investigates the methodological and conceptual changes in the philosophy of science from the 1950's to the current period. Tuana will speak on *The Speculum of Science: Knowledge and Ignorance in the Field of Women's Bodies*. Her talk will examine the science of women's health and sexuality through the lens of the U.S. women's health movement. It looks at how feminist activists uncover the ways women's bodies have been ignored, reclaim knowledge that has been denied or suppressed, and develop new knowledge freed from the confines of traditional frameworks.

### SANDRA HARDING

*Thursday, April 6, 2006, 4:00pm, Brown-Alley Room, Weinstein Hall.*

Feminist philosopher of science Sandra Harding has written several books, including the groundbreaking *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* from which the series derives its title. This work examines theories about how the sciences work and sets forth a well-grounded case for recovering the alliance of science with projects to advance democracy. The Director of the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, Harding teaches and researches feminist and postcolonial theory, epistemology, research methodology, and the philosophy of science. Harding will speak on *Women, Science, and Democracy*. Harding will explore what kinds of goals for the sciences are currently proposed by global women's groups both North and South.

## WILL CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

On March 24, 2005, the WILL program hosted a dinner in honor of its 25th anniversary. The dinner drew more than 175 guests to the Robins Pavilion of the Jepson Alumni Center. Guests included the 1980 founding WILL faculty/administrative team, WILL alumnae spanning the classes of 1984 to 2004, faculty and staff mentors of WILL students, current WILL faculty/staff and students, and President Cooper.

The event highlighted the many ways the WILL program encourages students to connect classroom learning to their lives outside of the classroom through internships, activism projects, volunteer activities and involvement in cross-campus initiatives such as College Town. Academic excellence was celebrated, not only in WILL students' coursework in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, but also in their success with the Richmond Quest, their University honors, and their graduate and professional school plans.

To give you a sense of the evening, we have included excerpts from various alumnae who spoke at this remarkable event.

### ALLISON KIMMICH

**Executive Director, National Women's Studies Association; Former Assistant Director of WILL**

Allow me to make a confession: I am here tonight as a WILL true believer. My slot on the program is titled "the power of women's studies," but to some extent I am here to speak about the power of WILL, the ways that WILL and women's studies have developed in tandem to create a holistic educational experience at the University of Richmond, and the way that WILL offers a model for women's studies education nationally.

The WILL program and the field of women's studies share a common history. Women's studies began as an outgrowth of the civil rights, feminist, and student movements of the 50s, 60s, and 70s, and had its roots in efforts to democratize education, and to represent people, voices, and experiences that had been overlooked in traditional curricula. "Where are the women?" would be a way to characterize the field's driving question in this era...



Nicole Cavadini, Kelly Billig, Rebecca Previs – Members of the Class of 2005

Women's studies today has entered a new stage of growth and maturity. When I began my doctoral program in women's studies at Emory, the field was untested, and some within the field and many outside of it raised questions about the value or legitimacy of a women's studies Ph.D. In the eight years since I completed the Ph.D., seven new women's studies Ph.D. programs have been established, for a total of 10 women's studies doctoral programs in the United States.

Today my peers are assistant and associate professors in women's studies and other departments across the country, many of them serving as women's studies department chairs and producing the field's latest scholarship. The National Research Council is launching a new assessment of higher education programs, and it will include women's and gender studies programs



*Seated, left to right: Paul Loukides, William E. Cooper, Warren Hopkins, Orin Smith*  
*Standing, left to right: Nora Loukides, Kathleen Rohaly, Stephanie Bennett-Smith, Jane Hopkins*



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for the first time. “Where are the women?” has given way to “How does gender intersect with race, class, sexuality, and national identity?”

Women’s studies is here to stay, yet for all of its new theoretical complexity, studying the relationship between theory and practice remains a key element of the field. However, WILL is unique, and uniquely successful, in requiring students to examine the relationship between theory and practice in systematic and structured ways over four years both in and out of the classroom. To those of you sitting here, this sounds disarmingly simple. You are WILL supporters, students, and alumnae, and you understand how WILL works.

But few women’s studies or student services programs can accomplish alone what women’s studies and WILL have achieved working together. From the internship program to the speaker series to the WILL student organization, and even the book drive tonight, WILL requires students to test out their ideas in real life settings, and to bring that experience and those ideas back to the classroom for re-examination. This is a powerful, dynamic, and life-altering way of learning.

Although I have been with the National Women’s Studies Association for only six months, I have spoken with women’s studies faculty and women’s center staff in Texas, Ohio, and Wisconsin who wanted to learn more about the WILL program or were attempting to launch WILL-like programs on their campuses. People quickly understand what makes the WILL model unique, and how it can transform and enrich women’s studies education for their own students.

In fact, I am convinced that WILL has much to offer the field of women’s studies as we think ahead to the program’s next 25 years, and the future of feminist education nationally. I hope we can find ways to advance and broaden the replication efforts already underway. Holly and I have begun to talk about how we might collaborate on such an endeavor. Whatever the outcome of those conversations, however, I have to conclude as I began: I am a WILL true believer!

## **KIM DEAN**

*Director of Programs, Partnership for the Future; WILL Class of 1997*

I joined WILL in my first year at the University of Richmond, with no real feelings toward Westhampton College. While I identified as Black and Christian, I did not identify with being a woman. WILL provided me with the opportunity to learn more about myself as a woman and to realize the value of a single-sex education through Westhampton. At the time, I never thought WILL would become a part of me, but it did. WILL broadened my view of feminism and feminists, and I now include myself in that category. It also allowed me to have some of the most honest conversations I have ever had on this campus about the concept of being a minority and being in a position of privilege – and realizing that at times, I have occupied both positions. The analytic understandings gained in WILL continue to shape my views of romantic relationships, friendships, work, and the world at large. I say Happy 25th Birthday, WILL, and I hope I’m around to celebrate your 50th.

## **LAUREN LUMSDEN**

*WILL Class of 2005*

I made the decision to join WILL first semester of my freshman year. Like so many other good things in my life, it happened by accident. I took a Women and Science class because I thought it would fulfill my science requirement. I was wrong, it didn’t fulfill a science requirement, but it was an integral first step in fulfilling what I wanted out of my college education. It was this class where I experienced the initial restlessness that I think people new to Women Gender and Sexuality Studies experience. It was this overwhelming and yet exciting and gratifying feeling about there being so much out there that I didn’t know I didn’t know (which, for me, was probably more than other



**WILL 2005 seniors Cara Pugliese and Lauren Lumsden**



**Stephanie Bennett-Smith, Pat Harwood, Jane Hopkins, Kathleen Rohaly and Holly Blake**

Sexuality Studies classes, especially WILL senior seminar, we take the theory and the history-based lessons and apply them on an individual level... I just feel so very lucky — assuming luck is, like my mom says, when preparation meets opportunity — I feel so lucky to know and understand the concepts of privilege, or to know it's okay to eschew stereotypical gender roles within marriage, or to know, in a more general sense, that I have so many choices and that, whatever choice I make, I have these remarkable women behind me... So, here I am reaping the benefits of one of the most amazing organizations on this campus. Here I am because of the women in WILL and I'm so thankful.

## **LISA GRAY SWABY-ROWE**

*Maryland Department of Motor Vehicles, WILL Class of 1993*

What has WILL given me? WILL gave me the theoretical foundation to support my desire to be free of strict gender role expectations in my personal life and marriage. So much so that I married a true partner who is secure enough to support me in all of my professional pursuits while taking on the role of a stay-at-home Dad.

WILL gave me a framework for expressing and honoring the various passions in my life. It also reinforced the importance of reaching back to mentor and guide younger, less experienced women within and outside of my ethnic community.

Because of WILL, I'm passionate about equal access to education and social justice for all. I'm also deeply committed to doing my part in eradicating all forms of prejudice and discrimination by "thinking globally" yet "acting locally."

It is fitting that the 2005 National Women's History Month theme is "Women Change America." For it is amazing and powerful women like Leslie Stahl, Maya Angelou, Suzanne Jones, Daryl Dance, Tina Cade, Patricia Harwood, Holly Blake and the many faculty, staff, alumnae, and students that have changed me and UR—this little piece of America that is home to such a phenomenal program.

For all this and more, thank you WILL and Happy 25th!

people). All the women in my nine-person class spoke highly of WILL, so I wrote my essays, I had my interviews — and both my interviewers, Annie and Liza, ended up being my best friends (to this day, we still talk about how awkward and nervous I was). To make a short story longer, I wasn't accepted. Just kidding. I was. All the WILL members in my class brought me a rose, and even though I went back to my dorm many times throughout that day, I carried it with me all day long.

The support I have since gotten from my friends in WILL has been incredible. They have educated me — formally and informally, the latter I feel being just as valuable as the former — and they are always there, to discuss anything really. In all my Women's Gender and



**Speakers at WILL 25th Anniversary Dinner, left to right: Allison Kimmich, Kim Dean, Lisa Swaby-Rowe and Cammie Whisnant**





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## CONTINUED CONNECTIONS WITH THE APPALACHIAN WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

This summer, I spent nine weeks in Clinchco, VA, working with the Appalachian Women's Alliance for my WILL internship. The Appalachian Women's Alliance Clinchco Center was opened in the fall of 2004, and serves as a community center, a place for the education of the Clinchco community, and a safe space for women to come to share and learn from each other.

The Appalachian Women's Alliance, a network of women and girls from Appalachian communities, is an activist organization that works to raise consciousness and self esteem, to educate and empower, and to work collectively toward a common vision. The Alliance brings together black, white and Native American women of diverse age, income and sexual identity to challenge issues of economic oppression, racism, heterosexism and violence against women in Appalachia. The alliance celebrates Appalachian women's diverse cultures and supports grassroots organizing through a journal, an annual festival and traveling caravans that reach out to women in isolated areas.

WILL is excited to be building an ongoing relationship with the Appalachian Women's Alliance. As women challenging racism, sexism, and poverty, the Alliance has much to teach University of Richmond students about the reality of what they learn in class. As an intern with the Alliance, I had the opportunity to help develop and expand this relationship. In addition to experiencing firsthand the challenges and issues WILL students discuss in class, I had the unique position of being able to bring a different awareness back to the campus, as well as open the door for other women to intern with the Alliance.

My time in Clinchco was extraordinary. It is a series of experiences that I will grow and learn from for years to come. During my stay, I worked on several projects for the center and the community. The largest and most exciting was the design, creation, and completion of a community mural in the center of town. The design incorporated scenes from the historic town of Clinchco, alongside scenes of life in Clinchco today. There was also a large section that we named "the kids' wall" which was divided into sections for children to paint their own designs. By the time we finished, the entire town had at least put their handprint on the tree. My helper Whitney said it best when she told her friend, "Won't it be neat when we are grandmothers and can show our kids and grandkids what we painted on the wall? Because it's going to last forever."



Amy Bradshaw, Intern, and Edna Gulley, Grassroots Fundraiser & Director of the AWA's Clinchco Center



Clinchco, Virginia community members completing the kid's wall mural

*Amy Bradshaw, WILL Class of 2007*

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## **WILL BOOK DRIVE – AN ENORMOUS SUCCESS**

Students in the WILL program decided to commit to one activism project as a group. Reflecting their knowledge and understanding that “knowledge is power,” students, with the support of the director and assistant director, decided to lead a book drive for Fairfield Court Elementary School, Richmond, VA, and for the Resource Center of the Appalachian Women’s Alliance in Clinchco County, VA. Many hours of work later, this year-long project resulted in 2000 dollars to buy new books, which we did, and hundreds of gently used books. Both organizations deeply appreciated the books which will be put to good use.



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## **FILM NOTES – TREMBLING BEFORE G-D (2001)**

Directed and produced by Sandi Simcha DuBowski

During the 2005-2006 academic year, the Tucker-Boatwright Film Series at the University is inviting a series of documentary filmmakers to campus to screen a variety of recent documentary films that explore a range of complex social and cultural issues. In early November, the series welcomed filmmaker Sandi DuBowski and his 2001 documentary, *Trembling Before G-d*.

*Trembling* explores the lives of gay or lesbian Hasidic and Orthodox Jews through a series of personal stories seamlessly chronicled in the film. All of the individuals we meet in the film face intense dilemmas surrounding their religious devotion and their homosexuality. Woven together, these dialogues provide a frank look at what it means, on a day-to-day basis, to struggle to practice one’s faith within religious communities that fundamentally reject one’s sexuality. Rather than hearing from a series of “talking heads,” we instead get a real glimpse into how individuals make spaces for themselves within these faith traditions by viewing how they interact with their local religious communities and their families, and how they articulate their personal belief systems.

Despite sometimes excruciating accounts of family alienation and lack of community or local religious support, the film is refreshingly humorous at times in a manner that further highlights how these stories are deeply personal – and very human. Filmed over half a dozen years, DuBowski seeks to explore the meaning of religious identity, tradition, and practice in the modern world in *Trembling*, and the result is simply spellbinding. His film asks difficult questions, and humanizes what can too often become abstract discussions surrounding individuals’ religious and sexual identities. The DVD extra, *Trembling On the Road*, provides a particularly compelling account of how the film has been received in various faith communities and traditions worldwide. For anyone interested in fostering a productive dialogue about these issues, viewing a truly compelling film made with much understanding toward all views involved, or simply watching an engaging vignette of personal stories with much social consequence, *Trembling* is not a film to be missed.

*Melissa Ooten, Assistant Director of WILL*



## KEEP IN TOUCH

WILL's 25th anniversary has been a powerful reminder to all of us at WILL of how many alumnae the program now has, across this country and in other countries as well. We want to stay in touch with you so that you can remain part of this community. If you have changed your phone number or email recently, please let us know by contacting Dr. Melissa Ooten at [mooten@richmond.edu](mailto:mooten@richmond.edu). And please let us know of other WILL alumnae you are in touch with who did not receive the WILL News.

WILL News is published twice a year to share ideas and information with WILL graduates and others interested in the University of Richmond's WILL program. We welcome letters, e-mails and other submissions.

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