“Feminism taken into account, is also feminism undone” writes the famous British feminist scholar and teacher, Angela McRobbie, in her book, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, first published in 2009. Two clear examples of Hollywood films contending for the Best Film award in this year’s Oscar’s race, *Gravity* and *Captain Phillips*, brought home to me the full force of McRobbie’s observation.

In *Gravity*, the heroine, played by Sandra Bullock, has achieved the pinnacle of career success as a medical engineer who is a Mission Specialist on her first space mission aboard the Space Shuttle Explorer. Feminism has been “taken into account”—as here we have a woman on par with her male colleagues in what used to be a male-dominated field. However, the film is also “feminism’s undoing” by showing us a woman who is utterly alone, in Space as on Earth. She has no family, no partner waiting for her on planet earth, and we learn through conversations she is forced into by a much more likeable, warm and funny Lt Matt Kowalski (commander of the expedition)—that she lost her daughter to a playground accident, while she herself was on the road, driving.

Certainly one could argue that the film presents us with a woman singularly focused on her work passions, with no need of a love interest (the Clooney character dies 20 minutes into the film so there is no possibility of a hetero romance developing there)—nor does she have any children to care for, or parents to look after in their old age. Does this constitute a feminist utopia? I think not. Rather—much as her “masculine” name, Ryan, suggests—this feminist heroine is also the undoing of feminism insofar as she represents the high personal costs and the risk of a loss of “femininity” as the price of achieving feminist goals, understood to be of a very individualist nature.

By contrast, in *Captain Phillips*, our hero, played by Tom Hanks, is warm, generous, caring and compassionate, concerned about the fate of others beside himself, possessing all of the virtues of the “new man” extolled by feminists—yet without having foregone any of the traditional masculine qualities of command and control of his “men” aboard the ship he is Captain of. Most importantly, we see him as a happily married “family man” with a loving and supportive wife and kids back home, who await anxiously his safe rescue and return from the Somali pirates who have kidnapped him. In the opening scenes of the film, we see his wife (played by Catherine Keener), packing his suitcase, getting up at the crack of dawn to drive with him to the airport, playing the ideal housewife. Here, feminism has been accounted for by showing us a man who treats his wife as a loving partner, who has imbibed some of the ideals of a “kinder, gentler” masculinity envisioned by second wave feminists.

But these feminist insights and achievements are dismissed or “undone” by the narrative of a contented stay-at-home wife who makes her husband happy by playing a traditional role, and the larger framework in which this domestic tale is embedded, which is one of US Imperial Might ruling the Seas according to its own terms, and with our hero as the Empire’s faithful servant.

*(Continued next page)*
March Events for Transfeminisms: New Frontiers, New Challenges, New Solidarities

Monday 3rd - Flag Raising 12 PM
Student Center: WMGSS/ GLQS Annual Student Essay Award winners announced.

Tough Chicks 1PM Cohen Lounge

Tuesday 4th - Body Beautiful: Weekly Tea, Talk and Discussions of Beauty 1-2pm SC 421

Wednesday 5th - New Jersey Women’s Network Lean-In Luncheon 12Noon, SC Formal Dining Room (RSVP)

Cycle Breakers: Weekly Healthy Relationships 2:30-3:30pm, SC 421

Thursday 6th - Body Beautiful: Weekly Tea, Talk and Discussions of Beauty 1-2pm SC 421

Friday 7th - International Women’s Day (Celebration March 25)

G.O.N.E: BDSM, Gender, and Sexuality 1-4 Dickson 114

Thursday 20th - “Conversations on Faith and Spirituality” The Real Mulan and Other Women Warriors 1-2:15p.m., SC Center for Faith and Spirituality Suite 112

Friday 21st - G.O.N.E: Inclusion of Transwomen 1-4 Dickson 114

Tuesday 25th - Transfeminisms: New Challenges, New Frontiers, Speaker Panel 5:30 8:00 Cohen Lounge, see pg 5 for speakers’ bios

Wednesday 26th - Made for

More Speaker: America’s Next Top Model. A Feminist Critique with Contestant Leah Darrow 7:30pm UN 7th floor

Thursday 27th - “Conversation on Faith and Spirituality” The Iconology of Mary 1-2:15pm SC Suite 112

Vagina Monologues - 27th and 28th 7pm, Memorial Auditorium, General Admission $15, MSU Community $10

Program Change: Fall 2014

The new program will merge the WMGSS Major and the GLQS minor, and engage with current scholarship and new developments in the field, towards an integrated major that incorporates LGBTQ and transnational content into its core. The program will continue to highlight the history and the struggles of the women’s and feminist movements, while at the same time aspiring to move beyond identity-based politics through deeper engagements with the queer and transgendered movements. Issues at the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, class, age, disability, ethnicity, and nationality, and other marginalized positions, will become a central priority in the revised curriculum, bringing a stronger inter-disciplinary focus to the program. Professional development will also be highlighted in the program, so that our graduates leave the program with the adequate knowledge about the many career options that lie ahead for them, and the required skills to succeed in an increasingly competitive workplace.

Keep a lookout for student and faculty information sessions about this change in Fall 2014!

Continued from front page

In our contemporary historical “post-feminist” moment then, which is also the moment of neo-imperial and neoliberal globalization, what are the challenges for those of us who believe that Feminism is not a dirty word, that its ethical imperatives for social, economic, racial and sexual justice for women, men, gay, straight, queer and transgendered people across the world are important to fight for, and that the battles are far from over? What new solidarities must be imagined? To help highlight these questions, we have chosen for Women’s History Month this year, the theme, “Trans-Feminisms: New Frontiers, New Challenges, New Solidarities.” We at the Women and Gender Studies and LGBTQ Program are excited to welcome in March a fabulous list of speakers who include Barbra “Babs” Siperstein, first transgender member of the Democratic National Convention; Professor Abena Busia, Director of Women and Gender Studies at Rutgers University who is a widely-published poet and scholar of Ghanaian background and who works on feminist coalition-building between African diasporic and African-American communities in her writing and teaching, and Selly Thiam, a journalist trained at Carnegie Mellon and CUNY, who has served as independent reporter for National Public Radio and the Smithsonian Museum of African-American History, producing stories on international issues and immigrant communities. She is currently directing an ongoing four-year project documenting the plight of gay and lesbian Africans for an oral history archive called “None on Record: Stories of Queer Africa.” Mr. Ayad Akhtar, Pulitzer prizewinning playwright, will also join us for a conversation about Gender, Ethnicity, Sexuality and Islam in post 9/11 USA on April 8, discussing his novel American Dervish as well as his prizewinning play, Disgraced.

Join us for these exciting events! Come salute the student winners of our annual essay award competition at the Women’s Herstory Month flag raising ceremony on March 3rd in front of the Student Center! These events, as well as student and faculty highlights, our Fall course offerings, information about our student-run club (G.O.N.E) and other matters of interest to our campus community and beyond, are listed in more detail in the pages of this newsletter, put together by the new WMGSS student assistant Jo Landau.

Finally—stay tuned later this term for an announcement of a name change to our Program and other curriculum revisions which I believe will make our Program ever more exciting for students of all backgrounds and interests!

In solidarity,

Dr. Fawzia Afzal-Khan, Director
**From the Faculty**

**Cynthia Eller** will be presenting a paper on “Mothers and Mother Goddesses, Ancient and Contemporary” at the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI) conference in Athens, Greece in May 2014. The Motherhood Initiative, based at York University in Toronto, Canada. MIRCI does groundbreaking work both in scholarship and activism through its companion organizations Mother Outlaws, The International Mothers and Mothering Network, Young Mothers and Empowerment Forum, The Motherhood Studies Forum, and its publications through Demeter Press and the Journal of the Motherhood Initiative. Look them up! ([www.motherhoodinitiative.org](http://www.motherhoodinitiative.org))

**Jill Hersh** is going to be starring in a great production of a play. It is called "Standing on Ceremony: The Gay Marriage Plays" a series of one acts to be performed at Montclair Unitarian Church in April. She is also participating in the Vagina Monologues at MSU this Spring.


**Maughn Gregory** recently submitted an article to the journal *Educational Theory*: “Structuring Classroom Dialogue: the Case of Same-Sex Marriage.” The article includes an argument for recognizing marriage as a civil right and talks about the kinds of considerations students could use to determine whether same-sex marriage qualifies, in their own classroom discussions of the issue.

**Fawzia Afzal-Khan** has two pieces of writing published this year. The first is an article called "Feminist Mediations: The Sacred and the Secular in the Work of Three Pakistani Female Singers" in the new interdisciplinary journal *Performing Islam*, pp 67-88, Vol 2 No 1 (Intellect Books, UK), which highlights the ways in which Pakistani Muslim female singers have resisted patriarchy and extremism through their music. The second article focuses on her recent trip to Cuba, called "Socialismo o Muerte: Unforgettable Cuba" published in Countercue. Find it by going to this URL, or find it on the WMGS tumblr: [http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/01/28/unforgettable-cuba/](http://www.counterpunch.org/2014/01/28/unforgettable-cuba/)

Last November, Fawzia was also awarded the Award for Outstanding Service by the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund.
**From the Students**

**Chelsea Durocher**, a WMGS minor, is President of the MSU Smile Station which is "making compassion cool" for our campus and the nation's generation of college students. The MSU Smile Station is a student-based volunteer organization whose mission is to end loneliness both on and off campus. They hold weekly open-mic WorldChanging Compassion Coffee House each Wednesday from 9-11pm in Cafe Diem. The goal is to provide an all-inclusive, non-judgmental "safe space" for students on campus to come for unconditional acceptance and to make friends. To extend their mission even further, the MSU Smile Station has adopted two local nursing homes and a psychiatric facility and link their members, called forever-friends, to unvisited residents. They are ending loneliness in our community by creating forever friendships and visiting these residents in need. The missing link in wellness and recovery is friendship, and this organization is changing this campus, our local community, and the nation. Please join us for the **Compassion Comedy Concert** in April, featuring various artists and comedians, in Memorial Auditorium. All proceeds go to The Turn A Frown Around Foundation, Inc. A 501-C3 non-profit that creates Smile Stations nationwide in effort to End Loneliness one friendship at a time.

**Suzanne Joblonski** is a WMGS major, and as of February 10th, 2014 has become employed as the Student Services Specialist at DIAL, Inc; the independent living center serving Essex and Passaic County residents with disabilities. In October 2013, she earned a Professional Parent Advocate certificate from the New Jersey Parent Caucus. In addition to taking courses at Montclair, she is pursuing a policymaking course offered by the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities.

**Leah Stone** is a senior with a double major in Sociology and Women’s and Gender Studies and a minor in African-American Studies. She is currently also President of Femvolution, a Student Government Association-funded club. With Femvolution going from a discussion-oriented group to a direct action organization, she is now heading a campaign that focuses on changing the current legislation which requires transgender and intersex persons to go through sex-reassignment surgery (which is actually a series of intensive surgeries) before they can change the gender listed on their birth certificate. The working title for the campaign (now in its early stages) is the “Trans Identity Campaign.” At a recent meeting of NJUS (New Jersey United Students), this campaign received overwhelming support, and is now part of the larger NJ HELP campaign (Higher Education Legislative Package), which means that members of NJUS will be supporting this initiative in multiple NJ college campuses. When asked about her time in the Women’s and Gender Studies program here at MSU, Leah made it clear that being part of the program has helped her in her work outside of the classroom. “It helps to have a director with experience in direct action organizing,” she says, making reference to both Dr. Fawzia Afzal-Khan’s experiences, and the fact that in many institutions, the Women’s Studies departments and programs focus on academic rather than activist feminism, even to the point of stagnating in recycled second-wave ideals and racially-irrelevant radicalism. Leah has said that she is grateful to have found the WMGS folks to be a diverse group. Her parting thought was that “It is important to apply the things you learn to create systemic change.”

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**Gender Owns No One**

The WMGS/GLQS student club

**Meeting Date** | **Topic**
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March 7 | BDSM, Gender, and Sexuality
March 21 | Inclusion of Transwomen
April 4 | Women in Science
April 25 | Human Trafficking

**Friday 1:00-4:00 Dickson 114**

Student-led discussions
A Journalist trained at the CUNY J-school, Selly has worked for NPR and the Smithsonian, producing stories on African-American History. This semester she is helping to produce profiles of prominent New Yorkers. She has traveled widely in Africa, recording stories and documenting abuse for an oral history archive called “None on Record: Stories of Queer Africa.”

Professor Abena Busia, the current Chair of the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies at Rutgers Newark, is co-director and co-editor of the groundbreaking Women Writing Africa Project, a multi-volume anthology published by the Feminist Press at CUNY. She is the current board Chair of the AWDF - USA, a sister organization to the African Women’s Development Fund which is the first and only pan-African funding source for women-centered programs and organizations. She teaches courses in African American and African diaspora literature, colonial discourse, and black feminism.

The first elected transgender member of the DNC, “Babs” has dedicated her life to fighting for the inclusion of transgender people not just in the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community, but in the greater political scheme. She is currently on the Board of Trustees for Garden State Equality, as well as a small-business owner and veteran.
DID YOU KNOW?

⇒ There are now 17 states in the USA, plus Washington D.C., which recognize Marriage Equality. Congratulations New Jersey for being one of them!

⇒ The USA ranks dead last for maternity leave out of all developed nations, with federal laws stating that 12 weeks of unpaid leave are the maximum one can take without being considered for job termination.

⇒ On January 23rd, the parliament of Morocco voted in favor of repealing a law that allowed rapists to avoid prosecution by marrying their victim.

⇒ The word for oppressive systems which interact (such as patriarchy and colonialism) is “kyriarchy,” pronounced key-EE-ar-key.

⇒ The South Korean branch of IBM gives extra points in the hiring process to members of the LGBT community.

⇒ In the US alone, 1 in 5 trans persons have been discriminated against when trying to buy a house or rent an apartment.

⇒ The relatively obscure superhero Antman got a Hollywood movie recently; Wonder Woman has yet to star in her own.

⇒ The first Muslim girl superhero has been created by Marvel: Ms. Marvel is Kamala Khan, a nerdy and quirky 16-year-old Pakistani-American girl.

⇒ The new TV show “Transparent” is the first show to have a trans character in the lead, even though the actor playing her is not trans.

⇒ In Women’s Olympic Figure Skating, the backflip was made illegal because many people believed that it was too dangerous for women to do. Surya Bonaly proved them wrong in the 1998 Olympics by doing a one-bladed backflip, and is the only person in both men’s and women’s figure skating who has been able to do this.