

Wednesday, January 26, 2011

Singing, Writing, Legislating Kinship: Decolonizing Desire in the Caribbean, Britain and the U.S.

This panel examines instances of singing, writing and legislating toward reconfigured kinship models for particular non-normative 'others' in the Caribbean, Britain, and the U.S. Reading Mayra Santo Febres' work, Roberts analyzes transgender racial identities in a critique of heteronormative family life in the Caribbean. Jha scrutinizes the role of old Indian film songs as a site of postcolonial diasporic nostalgia and resistance among some British Asians. And finally, Rohrer critiques homonormative and homonational desires to legislate gay marriage in the U.S.

Featuring talks by BBRG Scholars-in-Residence:
Nicole Roberts, Judy Rohrer, Meeta Rani Jha

Queering Race: Analyzing Gender Identity in *Sirena Selena vestida de pena* by Mayra Santos Febres

Nicole Roberts

Puerto Rican writer Mayra Santos Febres interrogates queer geographies in much of her writing. Her first novel, *Sirena Selena vestida de pena* is set in the heterosexualized space of the Caribbean island of the Dominican Republic. Ultimately though she presents Puerto Rico as a place of resistance for gays and transgender subjects through an interrogation of perceptions of gender identity. In this paper, I will first discuss the novel and then present an analysis of the connection between gender, race and sexuality. I seek to demonstrate that the novel is as much a critique on heteronormative family life in the Caribbean as it is a commentary on how sexuality and race can be "performed" thereby presenting a space of resistance.

Homonormals, Homotionals & Healthy Children: Prop 8 and the 'Importance of Being Ordinary'

Judy Rohrer

Election 2008. Barack Obama's victory is heralded as the climax of civil rights for Black Americans at the same time the passage of California's Proposition 8 is grieved as an enormous unexpected set back for gay and lesbian civil rights. Following this framing, much has been said about what happened with Prop 8. This paper moves away from a narrow focus on rights, exploring state interest in producing proper citizens through the regulation of kinship. I begin with this larger framework briefly discussing governmentality and biopower. I then focus on the No on 8 campaign through the analytic lenses of homonormativity and homonationalism. My contention is that this type of critical analysis helps deepen our understanding of the complex machinations of governmentality and biopower in the production of proper (gay) citizens.

Bombay Cinematic Song Practices and the British Asian Diasporic Melancholia

Meeta Rani Jha

Bombay film songs are part of South Asian collective psyche and are integral in forming a globally popular Diasporic aesthetic. In this paper, I begin by exploring the desires of British Asian interviewees to understand their migrant parent's loss of home by an affiliation to songs representing separation, pain and loss. The shared pleasures of melancholia, marginality and nostalgia in song practices generated intense emotional affiliations. I examine these attachments by elaborating on three concepts – mourning, melancholia and nostalgia. I argue that the painful emotions associated with Diasporic melancholia need not only lead to ethnic insularity, rather they can be used by postcolonial subjects to delve into memory and history in practices of signification to produce cultural knowledge that challenges symbolic power relations.

Organized by: Beatrice Bain Research Group

Thursday, January 27, 2011

**Critical Subjectivities & Sites of Resistance in Caribbean Studies
A Poetics of Delicacy: Queer Caribbean Oral History and the Politics of Inclusion**

Prof. Nadia Ellis, English

Richie Riley, a Jamaican dancer who migrated to London in 1948, decided to be interviewed for a gay history project in London in the 1980's. Over the course of a fascinating two hour interview Riley never identifies as gay, resists the interviewer's attempts to have him discuss his movements in well-known gay locales of post-war London, and describes his late Scottish wife as his only love. Nevertheless, I argue, Riley's testimony functions as a queer text, signaling his keen understanding of the variety of exclusions to which he is subject and registering his non-normative affections in a variety of ways. One of these ways is what I call his "poetics of delicacy," an aesthetic and political structure to be found in Caribbean queer testimony more generally. To explore the implications of this mode of queer auto-narration, I turn from Riley to queer subjects in the Caribbean more than thirty years later--subjects I interviewed in Jamaica in June 2009. With reference to scholars of queer subjectivity from Eve Sedgwick to Philip Brian Harper I consider the challenges that Caribbean queer oral history poses to discourses of inclusion and visibility, as well as the pleasures of devising reading strategies to perceive the fullness of putative silences in these testimonies.

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**'There are no sharks in the sky': Caribbean Identity & Black Positionality in *Cualquier miércoles soy tuya*, by Mayra Santos Febres**

Dr. Nicole Roberts, Beatrice Bain Research Group

Undeniably, much critical attention has been paid to the debate surrounding identity in the Caribbean and indeed it must be noted that Caribbean Cultural Studies is today an area which seeks to legitimise the narration of experiences by those who have lived such. My interest in this paper lies specifically with the representation of identity in the Hispanic Caribbean and on the ways in which contemporary Hispanic Caribbean narrative is a site in which constructions of alterity highlight the re-imaginings of identity. In *Consuming the Caribbean*, Mimi Sheller argues that the Caribbean is constantly caught up in a "politics of the picturesque." Arguably then, how the Caribbean frames itself is of paramount importance.

In this paper, I make a close critical reading of the novel *Cualquier miércoles soy tuya* [Any Wednesday I'm yours] by the Afro-Hispanic Puerto Rican writer Mayra Santos Febres. Set in contemporary Puerto Rico, the novel is a sort of fiction noir which recounts the transient life of the urban underworld in San Juan and in which two murders take place. My analysis aims to construct possible critical positions for Blacks in popular Caribbean culture and to suggest ways in which these can be viewed as sites of resistance. Throughout the novel, Santos Febres chronicles the experiences of the Caribbean people but perhaps most importantly she also presents Caribbean identity through defiant and at times compromising acts.

Organized by: Center for Race and Gender

Co-sponsored by: Beatrice Bain Research Group

**Wednesday, February 23, 2011**

**Rebellious Daughters Play Baseball and "Woman Up" Democracy**

This panel makes visible two very different groups of rebellious daughters, who refused to be limited by gendered structural barriers to individual fulfillment and social justice. Girls and women played baseball, not softball, even though they were boxed into a "separate but equal" version of the U.S. national pastime. As second-class citizens, U.S. Progressive-era feminists created woman-friendly activist spaces outside and inside the state, so they could discredit the ideological twins of masculinized limited government and private charity. By unraveling gender-biased narratives of American exceptionalism, these rebellious daughters help us understand how to engender democracy, as they extend the practice-theory of democracy beyond electoral politics into daily life, sports, work, and relations across a variety of borders.

**America's Baseball Underground: Invisible Women in America's National Pastime**  
**Jennifer Ring**

Professor of Political Science and former Director of Women's Studies

University of Nevada, Reno

BBRG Affiliated Scholar

This talk explores the mystery of American girls' and women's invisibility in the "national pastime." While Americans insist that "girls can't play baseball" and have made it very difficult for them to have access to the game, girls and women have played since the early nineteenth century, continue to play wherever they can find a team and a game, and some have gotten good enough to play on the US Women's national team in international competition. How can there be a "national team" with no access to the "national game"? How do we understand the paradox of women who challenge one of the most sacred boundaries in American culture, nonetheless embracing the nationalistic honor of being a part of "Team USA"? The answer may involve discarding some scholarly and political preconceptions, and abandoning some traditional categories of analysis. This talk is an effort to tell their stories.

### **Destabilizing the Neoliberal Narrative of U.S. Democracy: Progressive-era Feminist Tools**

Wendy Sarvasy  
BBRG Affiliated Scholar

Wendy Sarvasy argues that because Progressive-era feminists interconnected engendering and socializing democracy, the completion of their engendering democracy project can aid us in re-socializing U.S. democracy. She explores *how* their insights help us move beyond three contemporary critiques of neoliberalism to re-imagine social democracy. Brown argues that neoliberalism represents a new political rationality that the state applies as it shapes citizens into individualistic, rational calculators. Fraser analyzes how neoliberals with their emphasis on the freedom of the market have co-opted the feminist goal of economic independence for women through paid work. Harvey and Brown point to the ways in which neoliberalism as ideology or rationality undermines democracy, both thin and thick.

Organized by BBRG: Beatrice Bain Research Group

**Wednesday, March 9, 2011**

### **National Imaginary and Darkness: Race and Gender in Italy**

This panel engages ideas of whiteness, otherness and gender in Italy. Two Italian scholars present their historical and cultural analyses, offering post-colonial critiques of hegemonic race and gender as formations evolving from the late 19th century, to the fascist era, to contemporary Italy.

#### **Italian Masculinity between the White and Brown 'Other'- Gaia Giuliani**

Dr. Gaia Giuliani is a political Scientist from Bologna, Italy. Her areas of expertise are post-colonial, gender and queer theory. She is currently a post-doc visiting scholar at the Transforming Cultures Research Centre, of the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia.

#### **Images of Whiteness and Mobility in Contemporary Italy – Cristina Lombardi Diop**

Professor Cristina Lombardi Diop is Associate Professor of Italian Studies at The American University of Rome (currently visiting faculty at UC Berkeley). She has published essays on gender and Italian colonial literature, African-Italian autobiographies, Mediterranean and Atlantic diasporas, space, race, and migration in journals such as *Italian Culture*, *Romance Language Annuals*, *Afriche e Orienti*, and *Interventions*. She is currently at work on a book-length monograph on the memory of Italian colonialism.

**Moderator:** Laura Fantone, Beatrice Bain Research Group

Organized by Beatrice Bain Research Group on Gender (BBRG)

Co-Sponsored by: Department of Italian Studies, Center for Race and Gender, Center for the Comparative Study of Right Wing Movements

Wednesday, March 16, 2011

## **The Many Faces of Inter-Country Adoption**

Presenters:

Catherine Ceniza Choy, Associate Professor, Ethnic Studies, UC Berkeley

Riitta Hoegbacka, Scholar-in-Residence, Beatrice Bain Research Group, UC Berkeley

Sarah D. Macdonald, PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, UC Berkeley

The numbers of inter-country adoptions increased rapidly towards the end of the 1990s and in the 21st century, the flow of children being from the global south to the global north. The United States still figures as numerically the biggest country of destination, although relative to population size, some Scandinavian and Southern European countries have even higher numbers. Whereas a lot of scholarly attention has been directed at the Western adoptive family and at the psychological and linguistic adjustment of adoptees, it is increasingly acknowledged that the scope of focus needs to be widened. This panel addresses ‘the other sides’ of Western adoptions from abroad. Catherine Ceniza Choy analyzes the factors at play when the United States became the biggest destination of Asian adoptees from the 1950s onwards. Riitta Hoegbacka presents the perspectives of birth mothers from South Africa, and Sarah Macdonald investigates the role of adoption agencies in facilitating the growing number of transnational adoptions to the United States.

Individual abstracts:

**“The Hong Kong Project”: Race and Rescue in Early Chinese International Adoption History** Catherine Ceniza Choy

This presentation features an earlier history of Chinese international adoption from Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s, which has been overshadowed by the more recent phenomenon of Chinese international adoption that began in the 1990s. It also links this earlier history of Asian international adoption to the discourses about and the policies related to the resettlement of refugees. While, at first glance, the pairing of adoptees and refugees may appear odd, the histories of Asian international adoption and Asian refugee resettlement in the United States share several similarities. These include the emergence of these phenomena primarily from the historical contexts of the chaotic aftermath of war, the migration of Asian adoptees to the United States under the auspices of refugee policies, and several discursive similarities such as the objectification of Asian adoptees and refugees by scholarly studies and the mainstream media as objects in need of rescue by the United States. As an increasing number of white Americans expressed interest in international and transracial adoption, their adoption of “full-blooded” Chinese children presented social workers with another problem of race: assessing racial tolerance among potential adoptive parents and their communities.

**Maternal Thinking in the Context of Stratified Reproduction: Perspectives of Birth Mothers from South Africa** Riitta Hoegbacka

Although research has established that most children in intercountry adoption have birth mothers or other kin, they have remained ‘invisible’. Drawing on interview data with 32 black birth mothers, this presentation analyzes the circumstances of giving a child up for adoption as well as the sentiments and beliefs of the mothers. It investigates the cruel tradeoffs between the survival of the mothers themselves or their other children and the luxury of investing in the lastborn infant. However, contrary to research showing lowered levels of maternal commitment in such circumstances, most of the birth mothers remain emotionally involved, would want information on the children and expect them to return later. The presentation concludes by analyzing some possible reasons for this and its significance for adoption practices.

**Altruism and Professionalism: Agency Promotion in Materials for Prospective Parents** Sarah D. Macdonald

While the majority of transnational adoptions to the United States are completed with the assistance of adoption agencies, there is a marked absence of attention to agencies within existing adoption research. This presentation investigates the important role that adoption agencies play in the transnational adoption market and offers an analysis of the ways that agencies frame their involvement in transnational adoption to prospective parents. Drawing on textual analysis of over 250 websites for private, non-profit adoption agencies and promotional materials from a small subset of these agencies, this presentation will demonstrate how agencies invoke ideas of both altruism and professionalism in defining their purpose and attracting prospective parents.

Panel organized by: Beatrice Bain Research Group  
Co-sponsored by: Ethnic Studies and Department of Sociology

**Wednesday, March 30, 2011**

**America's Baseball Underground: The Invisible Women Who Play the National Game**

*Center for the Study of Social Change Speaker Series:*

**Jennifer Ring**, Professor of Political Science and former director of Women's Studies, University of Nevada, Reno

"Girls can't play baseball!" and America has the folklore to prove it. From the taunt "You throw like a girl" to the assumption that every girl with a bat in her hand is a softball player, American culture has excluded half the nation from the sport historically associated with American national identity. Racial exclusion in baseball has been acknowledged, if not entirely rectified, but no injustice is perceived in giving American girls and women a "separate but equal" version of the national pastime. Jennifer Ring explores the historical and sociological rationales for women's exclusion from baseball in her book, *Stolen Bases: Why American Girls Don't Play Baseball* (University of Illinois Press, 2009) and discovers that contrary to her own assumptions, as well as those of American popular culture, American girls and women *do* play the game, and have done so since the mid-nineteenth century. Her lecture explores the misconceptions about women's baseball, and includes interviews with the U.S. Women's National Baseball Team upon their return from the Women's World Cup Baseball Tournament, (summer of 2010) in Venezuela.

Professor Ring's book, *Stolen Bases: Why American Girls Don't Play Baseball*, will be available for sale and signing at this event.

Sponsored by The Center for the Study of Social Change  
Co-Sponsored by BBRG: Beatrice Bain Research Group, the Department of Gender & Women's Studies and the Li Ka Shing Foundation, and the Sociology Department

**Friday, April 15, 2011**

**LGBTQ Youth Talk Back: Some Thoughts on Resistance and Ethnography**

**Featuring Cindy Cruz**, Assistant Professor of Education, University of California, Santa Cruz

Also with **Colette Auerswald**, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, University of California, San Francisco and Director of Research Training, University of California, Berkeley-University of California, San Francisco Joint Medical Program

This ethnography begins in a large urban metropolis in the US, where I compiled the stories and testimonios of 43 LGBTQ homeless youth between the ages of 14-21. In this research I found that LGBTQ street youth stories, despite their broken and fragmented narratives, often connect their life experiences directly to the health and condition of their own bodies. It is this queer homeless body that is centered in a story of resistance, as these bodies are highly restricted and contained by teachers, doctors/paramedics, social workers and the police. Despite the containment of their bodies, these LGBTQ street youth consistently create spaces that move them away from the tropes of infection, contamination, and deviant sexualities that are inscribed onto the bodies of queer youth. Using the framework of resistance from the work of Maria Lugones (2003), this essay argues that researchers must develop new abilities to see and acknowledge resistance in these tight spaces. The trope of contamination and irresponsibility intersect many of the experiences of LGBTQ street youth--the discourse of infection, excessive sexualities, and the strategies of survival sex--in ways that implicate not only LGBTQ street youth, but also other marginalized bodies.

Sponsors: Societal Issues, Institute for the Study of, Center for Urban Ethnography, Center for the Study of Sexual Cultures, Race and Gender, Center for, Anthropology, Department of, Young Queers United for Empowerment, Sociology, Department of

**Tuesday, April 19, 2011**

**Gender and 'the Violence of Everyday Life' in Palestine**

BBRG Panel

**Abstract:**

Due to the ongoing Israeli occupation, violence has become a normalized and integrated way of life for Palestinians. Palestinian women pay a high price in this enduring struggle for the liberation of Palestine. Structural and systematic violence created by the colonial regime permeate every aspect of Palestinian life. Women consistently compensate for the absence of men who are either imprisoned in Israeli jails, dead, or suffering from physical and psychological injuries: while women, on the one hand, experience the burden of maintaining “demographic weight,” they also end up becoming solely responsible for providing for their families. This panel examines the multitudinous ways in which occupation, and thereby violence, permeates Palestinian life with profound impact on traditional gender roles and ever-increasing demands on Palestinian women. Ayesha AlRifai demonstrates how the network of biopower technologies of Israeli governance over Palestinians in East Jerusalem causes systematic spaciocide, negatively impacting Palestinian women’s daily lives. Diane Tober explores the impact of occupation on women and gender roles by drawing connections between occupation, domination of space, and the hegemonic intrusion into the Palestinian domestic sphere in the West Bank. Samar Habib examines the remedial and radical power of queer politics, and Palestinian lesbian activism inside the green line.

**Convenor:** Paola Bacchetta

**Discussant:**

Rabab Ibrahim Abdulhadi, PhD  
Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies  
Associate Professor of Race and Resistance Studies  
Senior Scholar, Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Initiative  
College of Ethnic Studies  
San Francisco State University

**Speakers:**

**Palestinian Women of East Jerusalem: Carrying the Burden of State-sanctioned Spaciocide**

Ayesha AlRifai

**“The Land is My Blood”: Gender, Identity, and Meanings of Space in Palestine**

Diane Tober

**Queer politics, Palestine and Palestinian Lesbian Activism Inside the Green Line**

Samar Habib

Sponsor: Beatrice Bain Research Group (BBRG)

Co-sponsors: Townsend Center Working Group on Muslim Identities and Cultures, The Department of Women and Gender Studies and The Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Initiative at San Francisco State University

**Wednesday, April 20, 2011**

**Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right**

**Jennifer Burns**, Assistant Professor of History, Corcoran Department of History, University of Virginia

Professor Burns will speak about her recently published book, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (Oxford University Press, 2009), an intellectual biography of the controversial novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand. Worshipped by her fans, denounced by her enemies, and forever shadowed by controversy and scandal, Rand was a powerful thinker whose views on government and markets shaped the conservative movement from its earliest days. Drawing on unprecedented access to Rand's private papers and the original, unedited versions of Rand's journals, Professor Burns offers a groundbreaking reassessment of this key cultural figure, examining her life, her ideas, and her impact on conservative political thought.

Organized by: Center for the Comparative Study of Right-Wing Movements

Co-sponsored by: the Charles and Louise Travers Department of Political Science, the Beatrice Bain Research Group, the Department of Gender and Women's Studies, Undergraduate Political Science Association and the History Department