

SMC GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES DEPARTMENT

FALL 2016

ISSUE 9

LETTER FROM THE GWS CHAIR:

The fall semester has gone by so quickly that, although Issue 9 is the fall issue, I say welcome to winter and South Bend's first snows of 2016.

In solidarity with Stacy Davis who is happily on sabbatical, we have had used this semester to do less and focus fully on each event. In October, Dionne Bremyer read her essay, "Treading Water" to a full audience (standing room only) in Welsh Parlor. The depth of the questions after the reading marked one of the deepest conversations on race that such a large campus contingent has had. In November, Professor Jamie Wagman moderated a panel discussion on the experience of transgendered persons in South Bend. The honest sharing prompted thoughtful responses from students and faculty alike.

Professor Jamie Wagman, Sister Amy

Cavender, C.S.C. and I attended the National Women's Studies Conference in Montreal, November 10-13, to begin interviews for the next GWS-POSC joint appointment. We are in the midst of that search now and will include the results of our search in the next newsletter. Coming as it did, just after the presidential election, there was much conversation about uncertainty and the concern of vulnerable populations at the conference, on our campuses, and in the whole country. All GWS faculty continue to educate for justice and understanding and support our students in their learning.

We have four senior majors researching and writing their comprehensives this fall and three more who are double majors. There are nine seniors on track to complete the minor. Early next semester we are planning a "What's-

involved-in-the-GWS Major" information sharing session and party to support juniors and sophomores. Having the event in Decio Commons (Spes) will hopefully also present in a public way just how much fun we have when we do feminism and engage in the serious play of women's and gender studies.

Blessed holidays to all and thank you for the support I have received this semester. As an interdisciplinary department, we share life-giving energy in class and at meetings, and, in hope, we labor to create a more just and happy future.

All the best,

Phyllis Kaminski, Professor

Religious Studies

Interim Chair of Gender and Women's Studies

Mark your calendars!

We are having a Gender and Women's Studies meeting for majors on January 26th at 4 p.m. in Decio Commons – come to hear about the requirements for the major and internship experiences, and enjoy pizza with friends.

Review of the Film *Growing Up Trans*

The PBS documentary, *Growing Up Trans* (2015), explores the lives of several young children in the process of transitioning. The film highlights the struggles and triumphs that each of the children face throughout their unique transitional experience leading up to puberty. The film emphasizes the individual relationships that the children each have with friends, family, and classmates, including those that are both accepting and unaccepting regarding their transition. For example the father of 16 year-old John, demonstrates his disapproval by continuing to call John by his birth name, as well as referring to him with undesired pronouns. However, the mother of 13-year old Ariel, accepted her daughter's identity from the beginning and allowed her to move schools in order to avoid bullying and give her a fresh start.

Despite differences in opinion regarding names, pronouns, and overall acceptance, each of the families worried about the medical aspect of the transitioning process. The film featured the Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, which provides comprehensive care in their specialized sex and gender development center. While this clinic presents cutting edge research for gender non-conforming youths, there are still many unknowns within this line of medicine. This leaves the children and their parents with concerns about the risks and long-term side effects associated with this treatment, and many

advocate for their children's desires to move forward with the process as they get closer to puberty, as well as support and trust that their child is making the right decision.

For most of the kids in the film, the transitional process begins with puberty blockers, which delay the onset of puberty and give the children and families more time to decide what the next best medical option is. After this, most transgender youth move forward by receiving hormone injections that begin to irreversibly alter some of the physical aspects of sex. As seen in the documentary, Testosterone shots induce the growing of facial hair, changes in skin, and a change in muscle mass as well as body fat. The film also articulates just how emotional the process of transitioning is, and emphasizes the importance of physical, emotional, and social support throughout the journey.

Despite the several medical options for transgender youth, there are still some biological barriers that hormones and surgery cannot change. For example, Ariel expresses emotional pain of knowing that she will never be able to give birth to her own child. Overall, the majority of adolescents in the film express joy and gratitude for not only the recent advances in the medical field that widen their options to move forward with transitioning, but also the support and love they receive from their families and friends. However, similar to other lived

experiences, each person's transition is unique and involves varying feelings. Isaac, age 19, does not express regret for his choice to move forward with top surgery and testosterone shots, but wonders if he would feel differently if he had gone through puberty as a female. This offers a unique perspective on the many different experiences that young gender non-conforming people have with their transition.

Ultimately, *Growing Up Trans*, does a great job of offering important and real insight into the lives of transgender youth, while educating people of the difficulties, successes, and emotions associated with the transition process.

-- Co-written by Gender and Women's Studies majors Julia Sturges and Kayla Zellmer



“Treading Water” reading

The faculty of the Gender and Women’s Studies department were honored to co-sponsor with the English department the public reading of Dr. Dionne Bremyer’s essay “Treading Water,” which had been published in the summer edition of the *Missouri Review*. The reading drew many students and faculty and staff members, and the reading was also part of the President’s Committee on Multicultural Affairs’ Community Dialogues. The essay is also published on LitHub here:

<http://lithub.com/living-with-racial-battle-fatigue/#>

GWS department hosts transgender panel for Transgender Awareness Week

On Thursday, November 17th, Saint Mary's College's Gender and Women's Studies department hosted a transgender panel to bring more awareness and education to students in honor of Transgender Awareness week. Meghan Buell, a local activist and the Executive Director of TREES, a Transgender Resource, Education and Enrichment Services non-for-profit, spoke about her own journey coming out and transitioning in the Midwest. Cole Hirschy-Kinsey, another local activist and mentor-at-large to transgender men, discussed coming out to his peers, family members, and loved ones. Cole also runs a support group for transgender men at the LGBTQ Center of Mishawaka. GWS major Kylie Garabed also spoke on the panel, discussing her research seminar paper on transgender college students' rights. Members of the audience also asked the panelists questions about their activism and future work.

PROFESSORS KAMINSKI AND WAGMAN ATTENDING THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S STUDIES ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE IN MONTREAL IN NOVEMBER

