

PREFACE

One of the many reasons *Feminist Studies* is read so widely is the contemporaneous nature of the scholarship it publishes. Whether the research is drawn from the complex past or the shifting present, the articles that appear in these pages address social and political issues that intimately and significantly affect women in the United States and around the world, making emphatic yet again that not only is the personal political, but also that the political itself constitutes the experience of the everyday and the personal. This issue of *Feminist Studies* underlines Eva Feder Kittay's urgent description, in her essay in this issue, of the present as a defining moment for feminism, "standing on a precipice, and with it the gains that women have made."

Rhonda M. Williams and Carla L. Peterson's article, "The Color of Memory: Interpreting Twentieth-Century U.S. Social Policy from a Nineteenth-Century Perspective," offers an important contribution to the current national debates on race, the economy, and social policy. The article historicizes the present dismantling of Aid to Families with Dependent Children and affirmative action programs in the context of the formation of a "racialized citizenship" in the nineteenth century. Noting the saliency of such racialized citizenship discourse to "the blackening of gender deviancy" in the attacks on welfare mothers, it argues that welfare reform constitutes a "racialized and gendered class war," in which the histories, narratives, and lives of African American women and families are again occluded, and offers a reasoned and passionate defense for a more just America.

The cluster of essays by Eileen Boris, Kittay, Sonya Michel, Gwendolyn Mink, and Felicia Kornbluh comes from the Women's Committee of 100, a group of prominent feminist activists, scholars, and artists who organized to fight against the destruction of AFDC and "welfare as we know it." In her introduction to this cluster, Boris speaks eloquently to the need to bring together scholarly praxis and political activism. The cluster thus testifies to the immediate urgency of feminist activism in the cause of families with dependent children and also to the usefulness of engaging research in the cause of social welfare in the original sense of the word, in the cause of social good. Speaking

personally and academically, Kittay calls for a reconceptualization of social justice to include the acknowledgment of dependency work and reminds us that not only should women work to raise the glass ceiling but that we should also be mindful of preserving resources for poor women, whose daughters are "our future." Michel traces the history of welfare policy to argue for greater engagement between the feminist researcher and activism, and Mink discusses her frustration with the problem of speaking for poor mothers when "many middle-class women participated on the antiwelfare side." In the final essay in the cluster, Kornbluh, decrying the recent defeats of welfare rights, looks to the National Welfare Rights Organization-inspired political programs of the 1960s for ways to "inform an anti-anti-welfare politics" today.

Continuing the focus on class as a definitive site for women's struggles in the United States, Margaret K. Nelson and Joan Smith's article, "Economic Restructuring, Household Strategies, and Gender: A Case Study of a Rural Community," examines the impact of economic restructuring on the survival strategies and gender dynamics of families. Based on data from a rural, chiefly white, county in Vermont, the article studies the reconstitution of gender in households reshaped by economic restructuring. How do these households "do gender" at such moments of change? As a study on class, gender, and the family, the article offers fascinating evidence on the flexibility of collective and individual economic choices and explanations for differentials in the economic success of households. Examining dual-career couples, the status of women's work, moonlighting, self-provisioning, and other household strategies, the study concludes that the re-creation of gender as difference comes not only from the content of work but also from the nature of the obligations of the different economic activities, which places a higher market value on men's work and provides them with special access and control over resources. Successful strategies lead to the possibility for a renegotiation of gender roles; "bad-job households," however, result in a hardening of gender differences.

Karen M. Booth's article, "National Mother, Global Whore, and Transnational Femocrats: The Politics of AIDS and the Construction of Women at the World Health Organization,"

highlights the complex relationship between women, the nation state, and supranational bodies, such as the World Health Organization. Considered the authority on AIDS worldwide, the World Health Organization's Global Program on AIDS's understanding of who is at risk from AIDS and how best to control the disease has immense consequences for those at risk globally. This essay focuses on the deliberations of the Global AIDS Strategy Team, comprising long-term WHO professionals as well as activists, set up in 1992 to address the issue of women at risk. In exploring the debate within this team between internationalist and globalist understandings of the relationship between AIDS and women, gender inequality, and the nation state; and the eventual victory of the less challenging, internationalist vision, Booth's essay underscores the possibilities and limitations of these transnational efforts. In Booth's analysis, the less interventionist and political understanding of AIDS became the dominant one because it fit with the career interests of the long-term WHO professionals, whom she terms "femocrats." If Gwendolyn Mink's essay on feminist welfare politics draws our attention to the competing interests of different groups of women in the United States, Booth's analysis of the institutional interests of WHO femocrats alerts us to the problem globally.

Lindiwe Zulu's commentary also draws our attention to the relationship between states and women. But speaking about South African women at the dawn of a new era, Zulu, a member of the African National Congress's Women's League, is hopeful about the future. Although she unhesitatingly lists the immense problems of poverty, exclusion, and violence that South African women face—"I strongly believe that only when we are prepared to face the truth will we be able to improve our situation"—she is clear that the foundation for a South Africa, which is more democratic and more inclusive of women's needs, has been laid. Although she is well aware of the enormity of the tasks ahead (as we write this, Winnie Mandela is testifying before the Truth and Reconciliation Committee), Zulu's voice is positive and resolute.

Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich's review essay is a thoroughly spirited, scholarly reading of four books that have received popular acclaim for their attacks on feminism. Analyzing the

rhetoric and arguments in Christina Hoff Sommers's, Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge's, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's, and Katie Roiphe's books, Minnich notes that their techniques of undocumented memories; unspecified "correspondence, memos, and journal entries"; disclaimers; and untheorized positions constitute political actions that do not serve to further legitimate scholarly research. Instead, they result in a creation of a mythic history of women's movements, a political ploy that show these authors "in step with a patriarchy that knows how to reward those who are willing to attack their more agitating sisters."

Bell Gale Chevigny's "Research: A Love Story" provides a funny, complicated, and funnily complicated portrayal of friendship between women, in which gender gets crossed and re-crossed in "Minerva's workshop." Playing off Henry James, playing on the fetishism of costuming, Chevigny's women characters play at being men, to dance tentatively and tenderly around their play with each other, providing us with a refreshing respite from struggle. Becky Gould Gibson's poems, "Studies of the Virgin: Icons in Series," similarly playful, offer six vivid re-creations, more dramatic than iconic, repeating those imaginings of wonder rather than of faith that hover in the paintings of the virgin as "simply a girl," "any one of us." It is such imaginings that must also vivify the struggle for women's rights.

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for the editors