



The WC staff said goodbye to friend, mentor and coordinator Heather Weaver on Oct. 18. She is now the assistant director of student activities for campus programming at Arcadia University.

## New director hired for Women's Center!

By Christine Tucker, '08

This month, Lehigh University appointed a new Women's Center Director. **Dr. Rita Jones** will officially step into the position on January 14, 2008.

Rita will leave her current position as the Coordinator and Assistant Professor of the Women's Studies Program at the University of Northern Colorado. In connection with the student-run Women's Resource Center, she has coordinated programming efforts that are similar to those run by Lehigh's Women's Center. She has created and assisted with events such as a "Women in Spirituality" panel discussion and a monthly book-reading group. In addition, Rita is a member of the SAFE (Sexual Assault Free Environment) Committee and is the faculty advisor for the Feminist Alliance. Rita received her B.A. in English from Albertson College of Idaho, and her Master Degree and Ph.D. in English from Washington State.

Rita made strong connections with Lehigh students and staff. She showed she shares the Women's Center's commitment to creating a safe, equitable, empowering environment for women at Lehigh. Her enthusiasm and experience will help the Center build upon its amazing foundation. We are thrilled to welcome Rita to the Lehigh community!

## A word from the editors

By Marjan Maghbouleh, '08, and Jess Wren, '08

The semester so far has been a crazy one, as the Women's Center experienced a major changeover not only with the departure of our previous director, **Kristin Handler**, but also with the farewell to our beloved coordinator, **Heather Sterner**. In the meantime, **Michelle Issadore** has been doing a fantastic job of holding down the fort on her own as assistant director.

But we're thrilled to announce The Women's Center will once again have a permanent director after the hiring of **Dr. Rita Jones!**

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### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- Gender issues in Argentina
- Dinner date with the Women of Color Alliance
- Break the Silence takes on Orlando
- Lucy Gans' art exhibit, "In Our Own Words"

## Meet the Staff

**Michelle Issadore**  
Assistant Director

**Sharnette Ragland**  
Interim Coordinator

**Divya Arunachalam** '09—Intern, WOCA Co-Coordinator, Publicity Coordinator

**Alisha Gonzales** '09—BEAlliance Co-Coordinator, Student Athlete Mentors project

**Nina Granberry** '08—WOCA Co-Coordinator

**Anna Ingoglia** '10—Vagina Monologues Co-Producer

**Britney Izzi** '08—BEA, Women's Health Initiative

**Marjan Maghbouleh** '08—*Women's Word* Editor, Gender and Violence Group Co-Coordinator

**Elisa Pennetti** '10—BEA Co-Producer

**Nicole Perry** '09—Women's Center Programming

**Emily Rojer** '11—WOCA Co-Coordinator

**Liz Roth** '08—WOCA (studying abroad)

**Casey Ryan** '09—Gender & Violence Group Co-Coordinator

**Christine Tucker** '08—*Origyns* editor

**Jessica Wren** '08—*Women's Word* editor, BEA

## From the editors

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Rita was selected after a rigorous application and interview process. And although she won't officially start her new position at Lehigh until January, we're thrilled to know the Women's Center will soon have a new leader!

Speaking of new staff, we'd also like to welcome **Sharnette Ragland** to the Women's Center. Sharnette took over Heather's position as coordinator of the center, and her short time at Lehigh has already brought smiles to the faces of many members of this community. We appreciate her hard work and adaptability. Being coordinator is no easy task, and Sharnette really dove into the job.

On October 29th, the Women's Center staff met with **Brett Sokolow**, presenter of "**What if the Plane Blew Up?**" Sokolow attended our staff meeting before presenting to an auditorium full of students, staff and faculty later in the night. His program addressed bystander intervention — the idea that it's just not good enough to stand around and say you are against sexual assault. You have to get up, open your eyes and do something about making it stop.

With that said, happy November! Enjoy the newsletter and let us know what you think.

## Speaking for the silent

By Maggie Barr, '08, Break the Silence member

Voices carry. But while the words spoken in **Lucy Gans'** installation "In Our Own Words" were only at a soft whisper, they could be heard for miles.

Of the 400 mounted archetypal masks dyed, painted or glazed in varying earthy hues that made up her installation, 10 also contained tiny speakers hidden behind them that played the recorded voices of domestic violence survivors.

Walking home from Zoellner Arts Center after seeing her masterpiece, I felt for the first time less impacted by the visual component of an exhibit (which is generally the primary component) than by a verbal one. Gans' installation left not just an imprint in my mind but also a resonant ringing in my ears that lingered long after I left the gallery. But that was her intention. When it comes to constructing a piece of artwork centered around spreading awareness of social issues like domestic violence, perhaps the best way for a sculptor to really affect viewers is by tapping as many of the senses as possible — to make them experience a sensory overload. This way, overwhelming the corporal spills over into overwhelming the mental so that we as observers can truly understand the devastating dual physical and emotional effects that domestic violence has on such women as those behind the masks. But these survivors were not just sharing seven hours worth of personal stories. Some of the voices stated various statistics intended to debunk common myths concerning sexual assault held in our society. Others recited their own poetry.

Gans proved that spreading awareness about a social concern as pervasive as domestic violence

# Break the Silence breaks into Orlando

By Michelle Issadore, assistant director

On Oct. 20, six **Break the Silence** members (**Chris Diggs, Alex Milspaw, Chris Morrin, Ben Evans, Noelle Amos** and **Suzu Hyslip**) and I left Bethlehem for the **2007 National Conference on Sexual Assault in Our Schools**. This year was particularly exciting since Lehigh had two presentations on the schedule. Alex Milspaw presented her senior thesis findings on campus rape culture and was also selected to sit on the closing keynote panel. Chris Diggs and I presented on heterosexism in sexual violence prevention education.

While I'm usually impressed by students' level of engagement, critical thinking, and professionalism, these students surpassed my high expectations. They attended sessions by well-known presenters at institutions with established programs and were able to articulate insightful questions and comments. They were able to utilize their training and continuing education in ways that showed how well-rounded they are as advocates.

We will be sharing our feedback with the rest of Break the Silence in an upcoming meeting. But for anyone with questions about stalking, pornography, the history of rape, men's education, alcohol, morality and humor, survivors of color, violence against women in popular culture, the "nice guy" acquaintance rape profile, masculinity, faculty education, or fraternity education (just a few of the sessions we attended!), be sure to ask any one of us. The mission of conferences is to continue to develop in our work, to network, and to feel energized by others doing what we do. I think the seven of us would agree that we are raring to go!



Break the Silence members taking a break from the conference.

# Gender issues abroad: Living in Argentina

By Liz Roth, '08

The women of Argentina are as diverse as the nation's topography.

In Buenos Aires, a city with one of the world's highest number of plastic surgeries, women feel the constant pressure to fixate on appearances. Set against the backdrop of conservative Argentine Catholicism, explicit porn magazines line the shelves of street kiosks and Playboy-worthy signs hang above lingerie stores and appear in newspaper ads. Only to further encourage this preoccupation with outward appearance and the objectification of the female body, Argentina was also ranked third in the world for having the most beautiful women. Although this unrealistic, high-sexed image is rarely the reality for women here, it is portrayed as the ideal, and there is not much resistance to it.



Study abroad students with Argentine women

The extreme end of this female image in Buenos Aires is portrayed on billboards, in politics and on television. Argentine celebrities and talk show hosts are masked by face-lifts, colossal implants and orange tans. Nothing presents a better image of this unfortunate reality than the popular television show entitled *Patinando por un Sueño*, a nauseating version of American Idol on ice skates. Actress/model/strippers team up with professional male skaters and learn a skating routine in less than a week. Clad in rhinestone thongs and boob tassels, they clumsily pirouette through the air, exposing all of their glory in a series of spread eagles and camel spins. In my opinion, this program is the height of female degradation, but to most Argentines, it is weeknight, family entertainment. These are the moments when cultural sensitivity is challenging.

Outside of Buenos Aires, there is a less recognizable and much less valued face of Argentine women. These women, known as *campesinas*, live in the vast, rural areas of Argentina and lead an arduous lifestyle. Many live in extreme poverty without running water, electricity or decent healthcare. They wake with the rooster and work on their land, tending to the plants and animals. To add to the burden, *campesinas* also bear the responsibility of cooking, cleaning, sewing and caring for children.

During my rural homestay in the northern town of Cafayate, I lived with an elderly woman and her husband who together raised 12 children. Although well into her seventies, Teresa continues to work as she has done all her life. She wears hand-sewn dresses and decorates her house with tin can flower vases. She

chases wild goats out of her yard and wrings chickens by their necks with her bare hands. At one point, I watched in disbelief as this tiny woman carried a metal table on her head up a mountain. Not only was I mesmerized by her dignity and strength, but also by the lack of frivolity in her life. In a part of Argentina that is wrought with poverty and lacking in many basic necessities, the people possess a true richness of life.

An even more invisible female face of Argentina is that of the indigenous Mapuche women in the Southwest. Much like the North American natives, the Mapuche community is struggling to regain its footing after being stripped of its land and resources by Spanish *conquistadores* hundreds of years ago, as well as by more recent European immigrants. In the quaint, touristy town of Bariloche, famous for its skiing and mouth-watering chocolates, there exists a less glamorous neighborhood, hidden from most visitors. Mapuche descendants live on unpaved roads in small, rundown shacks unequipped for the brutal winters. Once a people of the land, they no longer have vast territory to farm or raise animals nor other steady sources of employment. The existence of the Mapuche community in Bariloche is invisible to tourists; their shanty towns are erased from the map, and their extreme poverty is hidden behind a façade of snow-capped mountains and Swiss chalets.

But Mapuche women are making huge strides for the betterment of their communities. They have organized weaving and knitting cooperatives as a way to bring in money. They have also constructed, and now run, nursery schools and soup kitchens. One organization in particular, La Asociación de Recicladores Bariloche was started by a group of women during Argentina's economic crisis in the 90s. They work everyday at the city dump, picking and sorting recyclables from the trash and selling them to a recycling company in Buenos Aires. Even standing waist deep in smelly trash, these women carried their pride and dedication to improving the lives of their people.

It's impossible to sum up all Argentine women into one image. Diverse cultures, ethnicities and living conditions result in a broad range of women through the country. It is unfortunate that the face most visible and glamorized to the outside world has undergone many plastic surgeries. In Argentina, the bimbo on ice and the lingerie model trump the women tirelessly working their lands and fighting to preserve their cultures.

## Gans exhibit

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through an artistic alternative like sculpture is just an effective vehicle as any. Her installation did a superb job of getting spectators to not only recognize the problem but also talk about it among the murmurs of the recorded voices. As a member of Break the Silence, I felt torn between focusing my attention on listening to the survivors' voices or to the conversations being held by spectators, astonished by what they had just heard. Hopefully, these discussions by now have increased in decibel level and have been carried into other settings.

To Gans, one purpose of art is to push us to think about things, especially what is disturbing. Because you have to get really close to the masks in order to hear the voices behind them, she forces you to concentrate entirely on them, thus directing all your senses in their direction.

In a panel on domestic violence held in mid-October Gans discussed whether her installation should be considered as art or activism, or both. After all, isn't artwork at its source an expression of some salient issue or concern? If the installation was purely about the art aspect, she would've called it, "In My Own Words." If it was purely about activism, she would've called it, "In Their Own Words." "Our" is meant to imply her, them, us. As women we all become one united force against abuse and assault in all its ugly forms.

# November 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13 Crossing Over: The Immigration Debate, 5:30 p.m. Location TBD	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Thanksgiving WOMEN'S CENTER CLOSED	23	24
25	26	27	28 Church and State: Religion and politics Location/time TBD	29	30	

## Dinner date with WoCA

By Emily Rojer, '11

On Wednesday, Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>, around 5 p.m., the tension in the Women's Center was high. Divya Arunachalam and I, the two co-coordinators of the Women of Color Alliance, were wondering how many people were going to come to our first event.

Divya and I have been holding planning meetings since the beginning of the semester, thinking of ways to better serve the minority women population here at Lehigh. Although both of us are women of color, we wanted to give Lehigh women events and programs that *they* needed, not just what we thought they would need. That meant we had to get in touch with minority women for every ethnicity, grade and class.

In order to reach the broadest group possible, we worked in association with the director of the Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs, Alta Thorton. Ms. Thorton provided us with invaluable resources and knowledge. She was, in fact, the person who mentioned an old, similar group led by the Multicultural Office, Exhale. Exhale is a group in which women of color can gather and discuss with administrators any problems or difficulties they are having. Ms. Thorton felt, however, that the need of minority

women here at Lehigh may have changed in the past few years, and she wanted more feedback.

Many hours from many people went into the planning of this dinner discussion. Divya worked hard during her office hours at the Women's Center to make the colorful flyers advertising the dinner discussion, and we both researched catering options, eventually ordering a New York-style buffet dinner. Ms. Thorton provided an e-mail list of members in Exhale, and Michelle Issadore, the assistant director of the Women's Center and advisor of WoCA, assisted in organizing meetings and overseeing the planning of the dinner discussion.

Although we weren't sure what to expect, the night went off smoothly. No masses of people came, but those that did come covered a broad spectrum and had a lot to contribute to the conversation.

We discussed stereotypes affecting women of color on campus, body image issues and interracial dating. The discussion never faltered and the atmosphere was relaxed and very open. All of the women, in a survey collected at the end of the reception, indicated that they would like to come to future WoCA events. Divya and I have reviewed the feedback and already begun planning our next event. It will be dealing with body image issues as they pertain to minority women, and we are very excited to see the turnout, especially as it will be featuring a multimedia presentation.

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