UNESCO/UNITWIN Network: Gender, Culture & Development
at BU’s Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Program

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Participants from Four Continents at Paris Experts’ Meeting of UNESCO Chairs on Gender Equality

39th session
UNESCO General Conference 2017

25th Anniversary!
SPOTLIGHT:
Battle of the Sexes Revisited: The Sexual Harassment Volley of Today

In Boston, the Unbound Visual Arts (UVA) exhibition Battle of the Sexes Revisited: The Sexual Harassment Volley of Today at the Boston Public Library’s Honan Branch Gallery showcased works from Greater Boston, West Africa, and beyond portraying ongoing challenges to achieving gender justice. The #MeToo movement was a leitmotif of the well-attended 2018 events. UVA’s Executive Director John Quatrale was Curator and UNITWIN Director at BU Brenda Gael McSweeney was Exhibition Advisor and Artist. Cosponsors included the Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Program (WGS) at Boston University, Gender and International Development Initiatives of the Brandeis Women’s Studies Research Center (GaIDI/WSRC), and Hubert H. Humphrey Fellows at BU. See Exhibition Catalogue with Curatorial and Artists’ Statements, bios, theme-related links: http://www.unboundvisualarts.org/wp-content/uploads/Printed-Program-Revised-.pdf

Top: UVA Artist Peg Ehrlinger, with Meissa, West Africa
Above: Dr. Mei-Mei Ellerman and Dr. Angela Shpolberg of the Brandeis Women’s Studies Research Center
Left: UVA Executive Director John Quatrale introducing the opening reception program
UNESCO convened a Paris Experts' Meeting of UNESCO Chairs in the field of Gender Equality in 2017. Professor Asha Mukherjee of Visva-Bharati University in Shantiniketan, West Bengal represented our Network. Asha made policy recommendations in the arena of ‘Women’s equal participation and leadership in political and economic domains: research findings on advances, obstacles and way forward strategies.’ Experience shared among eleven UNESCO/UNITWIN Chairs on Gender Equality in research, training and action programs, and advising policy makers is now enriching the UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan 2014-2021, plus feeding into the implementation of the global Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

Saniye Gülser Corat, Director of UNESCO’s Division for Gender Equality and Professor Gloria Bonder, Director of the UNESCO Regional Chair Women, Science and Technology in Latin America co-chaired this flagship gathering. Participants brought diverse experiences and shared strategic work of their universities in Argentina, Burkina Faso, Cyprus, India, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Spain, Turkey and the USA. Next up: two e-books on leadership and social and political participation of women as well as feminist leadership in a new era.
Dr. Catherine ‘Cati’ Connell, Director of BU’s Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program and Co-Coordinator of our UNESCO/UNITWIN Network, has had a stellar year publishing a mammoth number of articles! Contents include issues related to social justice and discrimination based on diverse identities and experiences. They personify the WGS Program theme: “Protest, Resistance, and Social Movements.” Here’s a sampler for which you can explore the articles.


Cati also shared important news about publications by Yoon Sun Yang who was promoted to tenured Associate Professor of Korean and Comparative Literature as well as Joanna Davidson who was promoted to tenured Associate Professor of Anthropology. Yoon Sun Yang’s scholarship uses literature as a tool for investigating how gender and sexuality are implicated in the projects of modernity and coloniality, and does so in new and exciting ways. Her first book, From Domestic Women to Sensitive Young Men, disrupts the taken-for-granted interpretation of female characters in the early colonial Korean literature as outside of the modernization process.

Joanna Davidson specializes in cultural anthropology, centering her research on the Diola peoples of Guinea-Bissau in West Africa through lenses of economic development, agriculture, gender relations, inter-ethnic conflict, and the politics of storytelling. She authored a critically acclaimed book, Sacred Rice: An Ethnography of Identity, Environment, and Development in Rural West Africa.

PUBLICATION: “Suppression of Women in West Bengal”

A leading Bengali newspaper has published an article by UNITWIN Affiliate Jharna Panda that examines the social ramifications of domestic violence through an ethnographic approach. See excerpt from the Bengali version below. The English synopsis by Founding Member of the UNESCO/UNITWIN Network, Chandana Dey (also former Editor for Social Science Press, New Delhi) was entitled "On Domestic Violence in Rural Bengal: No change visible in two decades." Jharna poses provocative questions that help readers think critically about the suppression of women in Bengal through a nuanced lens drawing from her own field research in remote areas. See: https://unitwin.blogspot.com/2017/11/article-on-suppression-of-women-in-west.html

Jharna Panda is a social scientist specializing in field research, studying evolving dynamics of education and health in West Bengal. Research projects have taken her to virtually every corner of the State’s districts.

Chandana Dey has worked as Project Coordinator of the Ahimsa Trust in West Bengal and is committed to furthering grassroots development change. Her work covers many aspects of development in the State.

Jharna talks about the continuing violence women face daily through case studies examining physical and mental torture in their lives. She cites results of a 2008-18 Survey covering 180 villages that shows the same level of violence despite legislation protecting women’s rights.

~ Synopsis by Chandana Dey
SPECIAL EVENT:
25th Anniversary of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme

UNESCO/UNITWIN Network on Gender, Culture & People-Centered Development

Network Coordinator: Dr. Brenda Gael McSweeney
http://www.bu.edu/wgs/networks/unesco-unitwin-at-bu/

Current areas of activity
- Inter-country dialogue: women’s contributions and leadership
- Outreach through e-books and journal articles, exhibitions and special events, library programs and children’s books (Global)
- Cultural resources conservation initiatives (India)

Future Activities to address the SDGs
- Social activism for gender equality and women’s empowerment (West Africa, India, Greater Boston)
- International Women’s Day/Women’s History Month 2018: Boston Exhibition on ending discrimination against women
- Gender perspectives in cultural and historic resources preservation (India, Greater Boston)
- Interdisciplinary interactions on women’s equal participation in educational, economic, and political spheres (Global)

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UNESCO EDUCATION SECTOR

Our UNESCO/UNITWIN Network on Gender, Culture & People-Centered Development was invited to participate at the high level event in Paris for the 25th Anniversary of the UNESCO/UNITWIN (University Twinning and Networking) Programme on October 31st, 2017. Key activities of the UNESCO Chairs and Network Programmes around the globe were presented in a video display at the gathering. Our slide depicts main current activities and future plans of our UNESCO/UNITWIN Network aimed at helping achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, notably gender equality. Anniversary Slide at:
SPECIAL EVENT: BAHS 50th!


At Rt: Sharon Cayley hoisting the Beagle Award that honors her service with BAHS. At Lt: 50th Anniversary photographers Liane Brandon, Fran Gardino, and Eric West. At Top: Bernadette Brewer with ‘Giving Brighton-Allston Women Their Due’ panels.
The Brighton-Allston Historical Society invited Mary Smoyer, a Founder of the Boston Women’s Heritage Trail, as the featured speaker at an April 2018 event titled *Women in Boston’s Public Art*. Mary focused on the stories of six women honored with statues around Boston. She shared action being taken to boost the number of memorials in Boston honoring women. Event cosponsors: UNESCO/UNITWIN Network and GaIDI of the Brandeis WSRC.

**SPECIAL EVENTS**

Chandana Dey, a Founding UNITWIN Partner in West Bengal has long been working on women’s empowerment and food security issues in rural India. Chandana explores the individual impact of the *Manab Jamin* initiative on ‘moving banks’ asset building in districts in Bengal through a narrative about “Saraswati’s Cow.” Chandana writes, “The entire village sat and chose the most deserving recipients. The first animals to be given in each village were cows and goats. An essential part of the livestock development programme is that once the cow has calves the first calf will be given to another person in the village.” Continues at unitwin.blogspot.com

At a 2018 flagship event, GaIDI screened *Nowhere to Call Home: The tale of a Tibetan migrant worker in Beijing* in the presence of Director Jocelyn Ford, an award-winning international filmmaker and journalist! Debates followed with students, faculty, and community social activists. Cosponsors included the BU-based UNESCO/UNITWIN Network and Unbound Visual Arts. Story continues at: https://unitwin.blogspot.com/

At right, clip from Brandeis/WSRC poster.
SPECIAL EVENT:
Humanitarian Action in Lebanon

Above: BU student Ashray Mohan examining a well and pump at the informal settlement; his team worked on water quality and quantity.

Message from Dr. Carrie Preston: “A group of seven BU students traveled to Beirut for a 3-week summer school dealing with the Syrian Refugee crisis from an interdisciplinary perspective. Faculty for the school included Professor Muhammed Zaman from Biomedical Engineering, myself, and colleagues at Johns Hopkins University and the American University in Beirut. The goal was to bring groups of students, including engineers, health practitioners, humanists, and social scientists to help develop solutions for refugee camps in Lebanon” – a step towards sustainable people-centered development.

Students walking next to an open sewage pit in the Bekaa Valley. One of the student teams worked on waste and sewage.
On the occasion of the 5th Anniversary of Unbound Visual Arts – a UNESCO/UNITWIN Affiliate – Danielle Legros Georges, Poet Laureate of Boston, dramatically shared readings of her poetry in November 2017. Work of UVA artists was on display, and UVA’s Founding Members were honored – including President Ruth Rieffanaugh, Executive Director John Quatrale, plus Board of Directors/Council of Advisors Members Susan Loomis-Wing, Christine Winship, Louise Bonar, Brenda Gael McSweeney and Karen Smigliani.

At right, Poet Laureate Danielle Legros Georges
Photo credit: Priscilla Harmel

RECOGNITION AND SPECIAL EVENTS:
* 5th Anniversary of Unbound Visual Arts with Poet Laureate
* Nicole Rizzo Awards
* Raffi Freedman-Gurspan Awards

Nicole Rizzo, UNITWIN Research Assistant, was awarded the College Prize for Excellence in English at Boston University, May 2018, as well as a certificate attesting to her nomination for the 2018 Undergraduate Student Employee of the Year award, also in May 2018. Her work was highlighted in a feature in BU Today, April 2018. (Photo courtesy Nicole)

Rafael “Raffi” Freedman-Gurspan, earlier of our BU/WGS community – also Outreach and Recruitment Director for Presidential Personnel and Senior Associate Director for the Office of Public Engagement with President Barack Obama – was a featured speaker at the United State of Women Summit in Los Angeles in May 2018, with Special Guest Michelle Obama. The workshop at which Raffi spoke was titled La Lucha Da Energía (The Struggle Gives You Energy): Our Experiences as Trans Women of Color and the Journey Toward Liberation. In September 2017, BAGLY (Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Youth) honored "the legendary Raffi Freedman-Gurspan, the first trans woman to ever work for the White House and alumna of the The Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth." (Photo courtesy Raffi)
Aminata Kiello - Lions Clubs in Africa

Message from Aminata Salamata Kiello, UNITWIN Member from Burkina Faso and Niger: “After being President four times of the Lions Club Niamey LANTANA in Niger, President of the Presidents’ Council, and Zone President, I recently received the distinction of ‘Companion de Melvin Jones.’ This year I am President of the Membership Commission (recruitment, retention), an important post in the sense that we are aiming for a very big goal: that Africa should attain a membership enabling it to become a Constitutional Area!”
NEWS: Faneuil Branch Library in Action!

The dynamic Friends of the Faneuil Library (FOFL) became our latest UNESCO/UNITWIN Affiliate in 2017, and teamed up with Oak Square Brighton Faneuil Branch Librarian Dorothy Keller & Staff plus the community to host amazing events non-stop! An illustration is below of the Faneuil Gallery Exhibits – by photographer Michela West also an FOFL Board Member. More: https://unitwin.blogspot.com/2018/01/you-are-invited-michela-wests-upcoming_17.html

Michela West’s "Power in Pink" Exhibit at the Faneuil Gallery January to March 2018 was inspired by the Women's March of January 2017. Her photo "Amy" on the Bigelow St. side of the Faneuil Library.

At the Funky Auction June 2017: rt, Faneuil Branch Librarian, Dorothy Keller; lft, Ronni Komarow, Faneuil Gallery Coordinator; far left, Rep. Kevin Honan with Mike O’Hara of the 57 Readers & Writers

L to R: Dorothy Keller, Ronni Komarow, a visitor to the Aug. 2017 outreach event in Oak Square, former FOFL President Maria Rodrigues. Top rt: Charismatic and beloved Dorothy at her July 2018 farewell gathering as she moves on after 50+ years of dedicated, outstanding service to the community with the Boston Public Library!

Just published is the 5th volume in Mina Mauerstein-Bail’s series of books for children that showcase diversity and tolerance, titled *Max & Voltaire: Meet a Wise Old Bird*. Set in Aix-en-Provence (France), Max and Voltaire and their furry pals meet a wise old bird and learn about the life of Cézanne, following one’s dreams and elder wisdom. Mina’s Book One, *Max and Voltaire: Getting to Know You*, is available in French as *Max et Voltaire: Faisons Connaissance*. Visuals courtesy Mina. More at: http://www.maxandvoltaire.com
**NEWS**

**Dr. Diane Balser**, BU/WGS Co-Director of Undergraduate Studies attended International Women’s Day 2017 events in Copenhagen focusing on women’s rights around abortion, the sexualization of women’s bodies, and violence against women. In 2018, she led a workshop in Stockholm that addressed in particular women's feelings around sexual exploitation. Diane shared with us that Sweden also has an active #MeToo movement. In July 2018, Diane was in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa, and met with women to learn about issues they are facing in their countries and how they are impacted by global issues such as sexual violence, inequality, poverty, and women's health. She brought women tools on how to both think about change and also give women emotional support. Local communities that are part of Reevaluation Counseling hosted Dr. Balser.

**Vrinda Varma**, former Fulbright-Nehru Research Scholar at WGS, successfully defended her Doctoral Thesis in April 2018 on issues of the “Construction of Women's Identities and Food Narratives” in Kerala, India. Vrinda pursued her Doctoral Research at BU’s WGS in 2016 on a Fulbright-Nehru Grant. (Photo courtesy Vrinda)

**Dr. Barbara Gottfried** of BU/WGS, also Co-Director of Undergraduate Studies, was the speaker at a BU Alumni Association event in Cambridge, Massachusetts in February 2018. She examined a short history of American masculinities, where notions of masculinity come from, and the pressures of/resistances to rigidly policed expectations of masculine performance. Her recent teaching at Boston University includes courses on “Women in Popular Fiction” and “Women, Race and Gender in the Mass Media.”
Dr. Shahla Haeri, a Founder at BU of our UNESCO/UNITWIN Network, has a forthcoming book titled *The Unforgettable Queens of Islam: Succession, Patriarchy, Gender* about Muslim women rulers, women who have contested rules of dynastic succession in medieval Yemen and India or stood for election in modern Pakistan and Indonesia. Following the trajectory of the political ascent of Muslim women rulers, Shahla explores the paths to power and authority taken by four women from across the Muslim world. Shahla’s newest project is tentatively called "Iranian Women's Engagement with Civil Society". (BU Photo)

Dr. J. Keith Vincent, Chair of BU’s World Languages and Literatures Department has a forthcoming work entitled “Purple and White: Sōseki and Shiki’s Genji” in the Norton Critical Edition of The Tale of Genji. This piece will also be a chapter in his next book, *Shiki and Soseki: from Haiku to Novel*. (BU Photo)

In the Global Literature in Libraries Initiative, BU’s Dr. Roberta Micallef writes: “European men and women fantasized about, wrote about and painted Middle Eastern, especially Ottoman/Turkish, women for decades. Ottoman and Turkish women were not silent passive participants in this conversation. They wrote back. Some participated in the stereotypes abounding about them and others fought them, but all of those who participated in the dialogue revealed keen insights about themselves and those observing them. Furthermore, some traveled to Europe and America, pursuing their own illusion of the West and life in the West and wrote about what they found.” Posted August 2017; more at: [https://glli-us.org/2017/08/02/ottomanturkish-womens-autobiographical-narratives-19th-to-early-20th-century/comment-page-1/](https://glli-us.org/2017/08/02/ottomanturkish-womens-autobiographical-narratives-19th-to-early-20th-century/comment-page-1/)

Roberta continues to explore these themes; a forthcoming book will also include work by BU’s Professor Sunil Sharma. (BU photo)
UNESCO/UNITWIN Network: Gender, Culture & People-Centered Development at BU’s Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Program (WGS)

UNESCO/UNITWIN at Boston University’s WGS
Dr. Catherine ‘Cati’ Connell – Director, WGS
Dr. Brenda Gael McSweeney – UNITWIN Director

+ Highlights Team:
Publisher + Editor-in-Chief Brenda Gael McSweeney
Editor Nicole Rizzo

We congratulate all participants in the UNESCO/UNITWIN Network on Gender, Culture & Development for their compelling contributions, January 2017 – August 2018. Our Network aims to share and exchange realities of the field among academics, students, activists. Every effort has been made to credit substantive and creative content herein; we welcome necessary additions or amendments for further acknowledgment.

Right: Ebony statuette from East Africa

More information at: www.unitwin.blogspot.com
http://www.bu.edu/wgs/networks/unesco-unitwin-at-bu/
www.equalityburkina.blogspot.com