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Letter from the Director

We at CRWG/CoE are having another exciting year. The CRWG/CoE has many things to be proud of over the past year in our efforts to improve women's lives. We have a number of new community based projects, training and research programs as well as international collaborations. The "Women Teaching and Learning for Change" (WTLC) program is expanding its parent involvement work with Latina women writers and researchers to partner with the new Little Village-Lawndale High School. Our CoE "beauty salon project" has received additional funding from Johnson and Johnson to continue working with African American salon owners about breast and cervical cancer awareness. The WISE program has been able to give out scholarships this past year to encourage young women to study science and engineering. I was honored by the State of Illinois, Treasurer Judy Barr Topinka with the "*Woman Making a Difference-Healthcare Trailblazer*" award and Claudia Morrissey won the "Woman of the Year" award from UIC's Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Women.



The importance of all our work is even greater now, given the worsening political situation. Last year after the November Presidential election, I wrote to you as the newly appointed director of the Center for Research on Women and Gender about our efforts to promote multidisciplinary activities to improve the lives of women and girls. I also wrote to you of my fears for the CRWG/CoE and for all of us involved in work related to improving the women's lives. Unfortunately many of these things are coming true.

We struggle now with the nomination of a new Supreme Court justice who clearly threatens reproductive freedoms for women. We spoke of continuing decreases in federal funding for women's health research and for social programs for women and children and of the increasing presence of politics over science related to decisions about women's health.

As predicted, once again the Federal Drug Administration's (FDA) decided not to offer emergency contraception (Plan B) as "over the counter" after 2 independent scientific panels recommended they do so. After 28 months of debate, the FDA indefinitely postponed its ruling on whether women should be allowed to buy the "morning-after pill" without a prescription-despite assurances that it would act by September 1. Their decision to embark instead on a new regulation-writing process is nothing more than a stalling tactic. This is but another frightening example of politics trumping science at the FDA. (See the CoE page for more on this topic.)

In addition, just in this past year, several women's health studies previously supported by federal dollars have been denied government funding needed for completion. Although this relates to research funding in general, three major studies related to menopause and alternatives to hormone therapy have been denied continued funding. These studies are vitally important, particularly in light of the results of the Women's Health Initiative and the fact that millions of women are now using alternative therapies to treat menopausal symptoms, despite limited efficacy and safety data. The scientific research community is being badly hurt and health advocates agree that this reflects a growing trend since our government is funding a war instead of funding research.

I also wrote to you about the New Pioneer Awards recently awarded by the National Institutes of Health and that not one woman scientist was among the nine recipients. My colleagues and I wrote a paper entitled "NIH Pioneer Awards: Could the Selection Process Be Biased Against Women?" We sent the paper to the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and received extremely positive reviews. However, the journal editor decided not to publish the paper, as it was "too political". Our disappointment and frustration was great as we felt that, despite our positive reviews, we were silenced by politics. I am happy to tell you that the *Journal of Women's Health* had the backbone and fortitude to publish this article in Fall of 2005.

It is easy to lose hope and I often do, but these assaults must create a sense of urgency to work harder rather than to despair. And so in this effort, the CRWG continues to work to improve the lives of women and girls through our numerous projects and programs, many of which you will read about in this issue of the newsletter. As always, we continue the struggle and look to the future with hope.

Alice J. Dan Dissertation Award Winners

The Fourth Annual Alice J. Dan Dissertation Research Awardees have been announced. Each year a review committee at the Center for Research on Women and Gender selects one or more awardees from a pool of submissions by UIC doctoral students from a range of disciplines. Selection is based on the dissertation's potential to contribute to research on women and/or gender, the originality and significance of the research to the major field, and feasibility of completion. The award is named for Alice J. Dan, director emerita of the CRWG who retired in 2001 after serving as director since the Center's inception in 1991. Dr. Dan continues to serve on the CRWG's faculty advisory board and the dissertation award review committee.

This year the award was given to two UIC doctoral students. Each of the two awardees listed below will receive \$1,500 to assist with completion of their dissertations. In addition to the award winners, five applicants received honorable mention.

Applications for the 2006 awards will be accepted in the spring semester. Check the CRWG web site, <http://www.uic.edu/depts/crwg>, for application details and/or information on how to make contributions to the dissertation fund.

Award Winners



Yingyu Chen, PhD(c) from the Department of Criminal Justice will be completing her dissertation entitled, "*Reporting Behavior of Female Victims of Violence: Sexual Assault versus Physical Assault.*" This research will primarily examine factors affecting reporting decisions of female rape victims compared with female physical assault victims, in order to ascertain whether rape reporting is unique. Researchers have pointed out that physical assault is more likely to be reported to police than rape/sexual assault because it lacks the stigma of rape/sexual assault. The comparison between rape reporting and physical assault reporting has implications for policy making and future research.

Nicole Warren, PhD(c) from the Department of Maternal-Child Nursing is finishing her dissertation aimed at understanding the challenges faced by rural midwives in Mali, West Africa. Specifically, the project attempts to understand how midwives experience a unique combination of professional and traditional responsibilities and how this impacts their work as first-level maternal health providers. The long term goal is to use these findings to design initial training and continuing education interventions that are more sensitive to the specific challenges rural midwives face as first-level maternal health providers.



Honorable Mentions-Listed Alphabetically

Wendy Beth Bostwick, PhD(c), MPH, *Sexual Identity, Stigma and Alcohol Use Among College Women.*

Michelle Choi, PhD(c) *Barriers to Seeking Mental Health Services Among Korean American Immigrant Women.*

Lorri L. Glass, PhD(c) *Help Seeking Pathways of African American Women who have been Victims of Serious Non-Sexual Violet Crime.*

Nidhi Sharma, PhD(c) *Muscling In: Women Lobbyists in Washington.*

Carol A.M. Smith, PhD(c), RN, *Lesbian Women Who Abuse Their Female Intimate Partners.*

Featured Article

The featured researcher for this issue of BRC is **Sharon Mastracci, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor in the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs. In the following essay, Dr. Mastracci describes the trajectory of her economic and policy research on the gendered dynamics of employment and training policies in the United States work force. – The BRC editors



The 2005-2006 academic year is my fourth year at UIC's College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs (CUPPA), and I've done nothing but engage in fascinating projects that continue to challenge me as a scholar, pique my curiosity about work and working, and allow me to expand my research agenda on policy and gender dynamics of work.

In scholarly terms, I position myself as a labor economist who specializes in employment and training policies that deal with the gendered dynamics of work. Affirmative action policies are characterized in the policy literature as redistributive policies (as against regulatory policies, for example) because these policies redistribute opportunity to those who tend to lose out in the absence of government intervention. In redistributive policy analysis, I apply economic theory and theories of the policy process to examine employment and training policies that target specific populations, with particular attention to labor market institutions. This Institutional perspective has allowed me to produce findings and policy recommendations that are based in sound empirical analysis that does not assume away relevant contextual factors such as gendered expectations of childrearing responsibilities, or gendered stereotypes about aptitudes and abilities.

My research on programs designed to increase women's participation in high-skilled, high-wage technical occupations where women are disproportionately under-represented has resulted in policy recommendations applicable in various economic conditions and political environments. That research is detailed in my recent book, *Breaking Out of the Pink Collar Ghetto: Policy Solutions for Non-College Women* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004) and in my 2005 *Review of Radical Political Economics* article. In my book, I found there to be very positive (and statistically significant) effects of rather modest redistributive policy interventions from the U.S. Department of Labor to increase the numbers of women in non-traditional occupations like carpentry, construction, and similar trades. The policies targeted the ways women and men hear about job openings and training opportunities to expand women's networks and increase their chances of getting the same kinds of information that anyone else would. Moreover, the policies targeted the gendered nature of training programs that are shaped by stereotypes about women's work and men's work. The policies tried to get at many aspects of work: training, applying, hiring, and retention.

In addition to my research activities, I have been consulted to develop recruitment and retention strategies to increase the numbers of women in technical jobs where they are under represented. As part of my Great Cities Institute Faculty Scholarship (2003-04) I worked with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD), a Milwaukee-area special district, to develop their workforce diversity plan and investigate the institutional and personal networks used by job seekers and public sector employers in selected technical fields. This project was incorporated into my fall semester (2004) course "Managing Workplace Diversity." Its inclusion helped illustrate the theoretical frameworks on diversity management that we discussed in class. Some students in this class developed recruiting and training materials and presented their findings before MMSD in December 2004. I also testified before MMSD's governing commission on April 11, 2005, at which time the agency's affirmative action hiring plan was approved.

Most recently, my colleagues Julia Melkers, Eric Welch and I have received NSF funding for a research project through which I will further develop my work on policies to increase women's participation in jobs where they are under represented. Our three-year research project, for which I am a co-Principal Investigator, aims to investigate the social networks women and minorities develop to negotiate careers in science and technology occupations in which they are under represented. This project expands my earlier research on non-traditional occupations for women by examining not only skilled trades where women are under represented, but also highly-skilled engineering and scientific fields like Physics, Mathematics, and certain Engineering fields. In my earlier research on crafts and skilled trades, I found the lack of communication and information networks to be very important in explaining women's under representation in those fields. Expanding this work to occupations that require many years of formal education will help determine the extent to which my earlier findings can be generalized across occupation types and skill sets.

¹The book was listed in "Booknotes" in the May/June 2004 edition of *Public Administration Review*. Its media coverage has included a page-length feature in the *Chicago Tribune*, as well as highlights in the *Gannett News Service* and the *Christian Science Monitor*. I have presented results at several conferences, and was the featured speaker at Hampden-Sydney College's Department of Economics in Virginia, presenting to area community college and school board members.

Featured Community Partner: Project Exploration's Sisters4Science

New WISE Community Partner: Project Exploration's Sisters4Science

Project Exploration, founded in 1999 by paleontologist Paul Sereno, Ph.D. and Executive Director Gabrielle Lyon, is a non-profit science education organization working to make science accessible to the public, and especially to urban youth and girls. The Sisters4Science program targets middle and high school girls in a weekly after school program that combines science exploration with leadership development.

The UIC Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) program has partnered with this community group in several ways by providing both in-kind donations of girl-specific health materials and financial support through the WISE Neighbor Grant fund. In May 2005, students who attended the Sisters4Science end-of-year "Showcase of Knowledge" event at the Chicago Children's Museum were invited to join GEM-SET, the WISE mentoring program that targets 13-18 year old students in the Chicago region.

Students from Triumphant Charter School and the Young Women's Leadership Charter School participated in the Sister4Science after school programs during the 2004-2005 school year. The Nettelhorst School will be added to this list of participating schools during 2005-2006. Participating students commit to exploring science and leadership opportunities both within their school walls and beyond.



Photo: A. Patel ©Project Exploration S4S doing teamwork to reach their goal at the 2005 Leadership Retreat in Lake Geneva

Paige is a Sister4Science student who graduated from Triumphant Charter School in June. In September, she will be attending the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences. Reflecting on her experiences as part of this innovative program, Paige credited Sisters4Science with "broadening my outlook" and providing "enriching experiences." One of her favorite activities was the

Leadership Retreat at Lake Geneva, WI. Laurie Parker, Ph.D., a chemist from the University of Chicago and the facilitator for the retreat, designed the weekend to challenge the participants mentally, physically, and socially.

In addition, Paige attended the Chicago Herpetological Society's Reptile Fest, one of the nation's largest educational reptile shows held at the University of Illinois in April 2005. Paige will expand her "hands-on" experiences even more by participating in the Project Exploration Junior Paleontologist program during summer 2005 in Montana. To learn more about this program visit the Project



Photo: E. Vecchione ©Project Exploration Camille and Paige making friends at Reptile Fest!

Exploration web site at <http://www.projectexploration.org/jps.htm>.

All of these programs demonstrate how Sisters4Science enacts its goals, namely: to create a safe space for girls to explore science and develop leadership skills, to expose girls to the wide variety of roles played by women in science, and to improve girls' overall school performance by developing goal setting, decision making, and communication skills. Co-founder and Executive Director Gabrielle Lyon stresses that the program strives to create a learning environment that engages these girls on many levels, improving writing skills and communication skills as well as exposing girls to role models. The Sisters4Science participants keep journals to reflect on the program. One student mentioned in her journal that prior to Sisters4Science, she had never met someone who had completed graduated school. More role models are needed as the program expands into new schools. If you would like to be part of the Sister4Science programming and share the excitement of this girl-driven program, where girls are given a voice to design a science-based program around their needs, contact Manager of Youth Programs Conor Barnes at (773)834-7623 or cbarnes@projectexploration.org.

WISE Travels

by Veronica I. Arreola

The UIC WISE program was on the move in June. Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts was the site of the annual Association for Women in Science meeting. I represented the program at the working meeting. We spent 24 hours discussing the issues that still surround women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. We heard speakers from industry, government, and other WISE programs. It was an inspiring meeting that gave me the opportunity to meet other women and men from around the country who are working on the same issues that UIC WISE is addressing. Child care, and especially infant care, was discussed, as were other life-friendly options that campuses can offer to make the living and learning environment better for women, mothers and everyone else on campus,

The UIC WISE program was also highlighted at the 2005 National Organization for Women conference in Nashville, Tennessee the first weekend of July. I spoke on a panel that included Eleanor Smeal and Jan Erikson from the Feminist Majority. The panelists discussed Title IX and how this federal legislation has helped women and girls gain entry into the world of sports and educational areas that traditionally have been seen as men's arenas. Before Title IX, medical and law schools could limit the number of women admitted; today women almost outnumber men in medical and law schools. Threats to Title IX were also discussed, the most recent being the Department of Education's "clarification" on sports equity rules that allows colleges to administer an emailed survey to gauge interest. This emailed survey would count non-respondents as uninterested students.



I met a lot of new people at the meeting and also took photos with some of our most respected feminist leaders, such as Martha Burk and Dolores Huerta. The conference was very exciting as it was an election year for NOW. Kim Gandy's slate won the election and she started her second term as President on August 1st.

What's Up with WISE?

Pre-College Outreach

WISE continues to break down the university walls by taking programming out into the community to reach the pre-college WISE women of the future. With funding from a generous grant from Motorola foundation, events have been sponsored at the Adler Planetarium, Liberty Baptist Church, and Museum of Science and Industry, and Shedd Aquarium. The Motorola Foundation WISE Neighbor grants also provide support for community-based events focused on expanding girls' interest in science, engineering, and technology. The WISE Neighbor grantees for December 2005 are: Alternatives, Inc. in Chicago, Girl Scouts of Centerville Council in Bloomington, IL, Girl Scouts of Chicago-Troop 368 in Chicago, Neighborhood Technology Resource Center in Chicago, Perspectives Charter School in Chicago, Umoja Student Development Corporation in Chicago, and YWCA Lake County in Waukegan, IL.

In October WISE hosted a luncheon at Adler Planetarium honoring the WISE SBC Access to Excellence Scholarship recipients. Pictured from left to right are the scholarship recipients: Asna Mairaj, Suemayah Abu-Douleh, Laura Munteanu, and WISE Outreach Coordinator Sarah Shirk. Scholarship recipients Charmi Shah and Alexandra Szymanski were unable to attend. Congratulations to all!

For more information about upcoming events, please visit www.uic.edu/orgs/wise, or www.GEM-SET.org. If you have an idea for an activity or field trip, send your suggestions and we'll try to incorporate them into future events.



On Campus Student Activities

The Fall semester has been a great success. The World of WISE Choices, our monthly career seminar series, has presented on the topics of graduate school, neuroscience, and engineering to a combined audience of 60 students and staff. The encouraging statistic is that our audiences are now averaging 20% men! This signals that WISE is addressing the issues that all students want to know about and that our events are welcoming to everyone. WISE also inaugurated programming for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows. Caterpillar and the UIC Office of Career services addressed our graduate students on the finer points of the job hunt including resume building and interview tips. In October WISE and the College of Engineering held a luncheon for women post-doctoral students. It was a packed house in 1000 SEO. The UIC representative for the National Post-Doctoral Association also made an engaging presentation.

WISE has added three graduate assistants to the staff. Karima Russell (Mechanical Engineering), Ruth Czarnecki (Mathematics), and Manya Khan (Public Administration) have come on board to work on the growing WISE agenda. The additions were necessary due to WISE being awarded or partnering in three grants. The US Department of Education through the Women's Equity Education Act, awarded WISE a 4-year grant to tutor and coach high school girls in mathematics. The Illinois Board of Higher Education awarded WISE a 2006 Higher Education Cooperation Act Grant to partner with the College of DuPage in easing the transition of transferring for women in STEM majors. WISE is one partner in the awarding of a 5-year \$2 million National Science Foundation grant to increase the retention of underrepresented students of color and women in STEM majors.

We are looking forward to the spring semester! We are also looking forward to Fall 2007 when the WISE Wing will occupy an entire floor in a soon-to-be-built residence hall at Roosevelt Road and Halsted Street. We invite you to check out our website www.uic.edu/orgs/wise after the New Year as we unveil a new look!

Faculty Support

The WISEST (Women in Science and Engineer System Transformation) initiative, which aims to promote gender equity among faculty at UIC, is beginning to have a real impact on campus. The I1 Department Facilitators made several recommendations to the Provost that have been realized. In particular, Deans must now include progress towards gender equity as part of their annual reports, and UIC will be undertaking a needs assessment to gauge interest in expanding UIC childcare to include infant care. We have just submitted a proposal to NSF that, if funded, would allow us to accelerate these gains. The WISEST Leadership seminar series continued this fall with visits by Dr. Sue Rosser and Dr. Cathy Middlecamp.

If you would like to help us with any of our projects, please contact the office at wisueic@uic.edu.

Center of Excellence in Women's Health

UIC's Center for Reproductive Health

In 2003, UIC's Center for Excellence in Women's Health (CoE) launched a family planning residency training program, the Center for Reproductive Health (CRH). Dr. Allison Cowett recently succeeded Dr. Melissa Gilliam as the clinic's director. The CRH continues to offer its full scope of reproductive health services, including birth control counseling, birth control services for medically complicated patients, medical abortion up to nine weeks of pregnancy, surgical abortion up to 14 weeks of pregnancy, treatment of missed miscarriage up to 14 weeks of pregnancy, pre and post procedure counseling, and emergency contraception.

The clinic also serves as an instructional rotation for 3rd year OB/GYN residents, with one resident rotating through the clinic for a time period of six weeks. Each resident is taught how to perform abortions up to 14 weeks of pregnancy as well as medically indicated abortions up to 22 weeks of pregnancy. In addition, a family medicine resident spends a month-long rotation in the clinic. The CRH has seen a barrage of interested medical students shadow throughout the year, coordinated by UIC's Medical Students for Choice chapter. CRH has recently increased its hours to further its goal of providing safe, confidential, and comprehensive care for women as well as serving as a training center for all medical professionals.

Patients and providers can call 312-413-8553 Monday through Friday, 9am-5pm for appointments and information.

Teen Dating Violence Grant

The UIC Center of Excellence in Women's Health has been taking part in a collaborative effort with the UCLA, Harvard, and Drexel Centers of Excellence to raise awareness about dating violence within the medical community. The grant, "Evaluation of Health Profession Students Participation in Delivery of Negotiation Skill Building Curriculum in Adolescents" trains medical students on how to prevent dating violence. It also gives participating students the opportunity to implement what they have learned with adolescents.

On Monday, March 28, 2005 UIC held a training session for approximately 17 medical students and 4 social work students with a trainer from the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women (LACAAW). Participating students receiving training about several aspects of dating violence, including the roots of violence in a relationship, adolescent behavior, and prevention techniques. They are now in the process of visiting adolescents at the Young Women's Leadership Charter School as well as various student groups through Access Community Clinics and Pilsen Neighbors Community Council. It is hoped that through this partnership participating adolescents will learn how to identify dating violence, explore the effects of dating violence, and practice alternatives to using power and control in a relationship.

2nd Annual Women's Check-Up Day Health Fair

The Monday following Mother's Day is National Women's Check-Up Day. This day provides the perfect opportunity to encourage moms, aunts, sisters, spouses, and best friends to visit a health care professional in order to receive preventive services and screenings. Many of the leading causes of death among women -- including cancer, heart disease, and stroke¹ -- can be successfully prevented or treated if the warning signs are caught early enough. Thus a reminder from loved ones to get a regular health check-up is one of the nicest gifts a woman can receive. National Women's Health Week and National Women's Check-Up Day are nationwide observances coordinated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to promote awareness of the measures women can take to prevent fatal and debilitating illnesses.

The UIC Center of Excellence in Women's Health celebrated National Women's Health Week with our second annual National Women's Check-Up Day Health Fair. The Health Fair was held on Monday, May 9, 2005 in the UIC School of Public Health. The free health fair for women on campus and in the community offered health screenings and health information on a variety of topics of interest to women of all ages. Ninety women attended the health fair to obtain information and services including blood pressure and blood glucose testing, cancer awareness, reproductive health, disabilities resources, and healing touch. The CoE could not have been successful without the support of UIC's Maternal and Child Health Program, the Mid-America Public Health Training Center, and the UIC School of Public Health, as well as over 30 volunteers from across campus and from community organizations in Chicago.

The 2006 National Women's Check-Up Day Health Fair is tentatively scheduled for Monday, May 15, 2006. For more information about the National Women's Health Week at UIC, please contact Kris Zimmermann at 312-413-4251 or kzimme3@uic.edu.

Staff Changes

The CoE bids farewell to Melissa Gilliam, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and co-director of the CoE Research Core. Dr. Gilliam left UIC in June, 2005 for a position at the University of Chicago.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration. *Women's Health USA 2004*. Rockville, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004.

Center of Excellence in Women's Health

Susan Wood Visits UIC

Susan Wood, PhD is the former assistant commissioner for Women's Health and Director of the Office of Women's Health at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. She resigned from her position earlier this year in protest of the administration's refusal to approve over-the-counter (OTC) status for Plan B, a form of emergency contraception. The CoE and CRWG were honored to host a presentation by Dr. Wood entitled, "Women's Health at the FDA: Evaluating the Evidence" held on November 16, 2005 at the UIC School of Public Health.

Dr. Wood believes that Plan B should be "common ground" among those concerned about women's health, because it prevents unintended pregnancy, does not cause abortion, and prevents the need for abortion. Barr Laboratories, which produces Plan B, applied for over-the-counter status in 2003. Plan B is most effective in preventing pregnancy when taken soon after unprotected intercourse. OTC status would make this contraceptive more accessible to women and decrease the amount of time between unprotected intercourse and the taking of this medication, thus, reducing unintended pregnancies.

Dr. Wood pointed out that Plan B is a very safe drug and has few side effects. Within the FDA, the various committees that reviewed this drug universally agreed upon its safety. Plan B contains a hormone that is the same hormone found in many oral contraceptives. These hormones have been used safely by women throughout the world.

A common misperception about Plan B is that it is an abortifacient, i.e., that it can cause an abortion. This claim is often repeated by those who are opposed to women's access to Plan B. Dr. Wood stated that Plan B will not cause an abortion. In fact, Plan B is sometimes prescribed to women to help them carry a pregnancy to full term and to prevent a miscarriage.

Dr. Wood explained the two year process in which Plan B received approvals at all levels of the FDA, and the ultimate decision by the Commissioner to again delay final approval of Plan B. She noted the many ways in which the approval process for Plan B deviated from standard procedures in the FDA. For example, the reviewers who examined the data on Plan B and approved it for OTC status were shut out of the decision-making process. Dr. Wood argued that the decision to delay Plan B was not made on scientific grounds, and that she could no longer stand by quietly when women's lives were at stake.

Over 200 were in attendance at the talk, including students, staff, faculty members, visitors from off campus, and members of the media.



Above: Susan Wood speaking at UIC, November 16, 2005.

Expanded Women's Health Initiatives in Illinois

Governor Rod Blagojevich declared July 2005 "Healthcare Month" in Illinois in an effort to promote health among Illinois families. Among the new legislation and initiatives were several efforts to advance women's health through clinical services and research.

Among the changes:

- Insurers must now cover breast cancer screenings earlier than at age 40 and they must cover ovarian screenings for at-risk women.
- The Penny Sevens Breast and Cervical Cancer Research Fund has been expanded to include funding for ovarian cancer research. (There is a new scratch-off lottery ticket to help pay for this, but I wasn't sure whether or not to include that.)
- The 2006 budget will allow an additional 56,000 women, men and children enroll in the FamilyCare and KidCare health insurance programs for low income residents of Illinois.

The state has also launched a new website that will help women know which insurers cover contraceptives and report a problem with getting a prescription filled. The site can be accessed at: <http://www.contraceptives.illinois.gov/>.

Women Teaching and Learning for Change

One of the aims of the CRWG's Women Teaching and Learning for Change (WTLC) program is to develop projects in which women who have taken on the role of community writers and researchers through WTLC project become the teachers of women from different communities and cultural groups.

This goal is coming to fruition at the new Little Village/Lawndale Multiplex High School (LVLMS). Parent writers from Telpochcalli School, a predominantly Latino immigrant school in Little Village, and the National Teacher's Academy, a predominantly African American school in the Near South Side, have begun a parent writing workshop with CRWG researcher Janise Hurtig at the new high school. The writing workshop at the LVLMS is bilingual. Participating parents come from South and North Lawndale, write and share stories based in their experiences as parents, workers, and family members raising their children in Chicago, and find common truths in the process. The first magazine from that workshop will be published early in 2006.

The LVLMS is a natural partner for the WTLC program. In the first place, the multiplex of small schools is, as it proclaims, a truly **multicultural school**, with a predominantly Latino and African-American student population. According to the LVLMS,

multiculturalism in education is built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity. It recognizes the role schools can play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society conscious of identities as defined by ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and economic status. Art and culture are key to the history and character of communities and to guiding learning that reflects and affirms the inherent multicultural nature of every aspect of our society, community and individual.

In the second place, the LVLMS is truly a **community school**. Its grounding in and sense of responsibility to the communities it serves is based in its history. The school came into being as a result of a four-year-long community struggle to acquire a new high school to address the overcrowding and poor academic quality of existing neighborhood high schools in Little Village (South Lawndale) and North Lawndale. The struggle culminated in a resident/parent hunger strike. The educational demands of the residents represented by the hunger strike have been integral to the formation of the school as a multiplex of innovative small schools, through a process of school-community-university planning. Each of the four small schools comprising the multiplex are community schools, in several ways. To begin with, the community itself is considered a central source of resources for learning as well as a topic of investigation and understanding. Moreover, each school considers parents and community residents to be co-educators of the school's students. WTLC will be an integral part of the development of the LVLMS as a community school. Beginning in January 2006, the WTLC will serve as the community partner with the Multicultural Arts School in running its **Center for Community** – a unique model for an intergenerational community school – supported by CPS and the Polk Brothers Foundation through the Campaign for Community Schools initiative.

In August of 2005 an initial link between the LVLMS school and the parent writers (all mothers and grandmothers!) at Telpochcalli School – some of whom have children attending or planning to attend the LVLMS school – was initiated with a dinner, public reading, and exchange of ideas between the Telpochcalli parent writers and the participants in the hunger strike. We are delighted to take advantage of this issue of CRWG's BRC to share the writings that the Telpochcalli mothers read to this group of resident activists with BRC readership. The writings appear on the following pages in Spanish and English.

Women Teaching and Learning for Change

HISTORIAS Y MEMORIAS / STORIES AND MEMORIES

del / from the

**Taller “Padres como Escritores” Convivio / “Parents as Writers” Workshop Gathering
17 de agosto / August 17, 2005**

El contraste

Verónica Morales

Desde que llegué a esta comunidad hace cinco años he sentido el cambio de donde yo vivía en otro estado de este país, en cómo es de diferente una escuela primaria comparado con una escuela pequeña comunitaria como Telpochcalli. Para mí fue maravilloso descubrir que en esta escuela trabajan mucho con las artes, por ejemplo: el dibujo, la pintura, el teatro, la música, los trabajos manuales, el baile folklórico. La creatividad de cada estudiante se refleja en cada trabajo artístico. Es muy gratificante ver esos trabajos terminados.

En donde yo venía la escuela era muy normal. No tenía casi nada de arte. La mayoría de los estudiantes eran asiáticos y anglosajones y pocos niños mexicanos. La función de la escuela era que trabajaba para tres tipos de razas. Esa era la gran diferencia. Cuando en una escuela hay estudiantes de diferentes países y comparten el arte de cada país, es muy poco lo que se logra de cada uno de ellos. En cambio, aquí en esta escuela nos dan la oportunidad de expresarnos con más libertad a padres e hijos y preservar nuestra historia, nuestros raíces y nuestras tradiciones y cuidar que no se pierdan.

También aquí reciben a nuestros hijos cuando son recién llegados de nuestros países latinos, sin saber nada de inglés. Aquí se les enseña el idioma inglés y se les va integrando poco a poco al sistema educativo de este país. Felicito a las personas que tuvieron esta gran idea de tener una escuela comunitaria y cuidarla para que nadie nos la venga a cambiar.

Segamos trabajando todos juntos en comunidad y agradecer a los educadores y demás personal para que otras escuelas tomen el ejemplo y que se transmita a otras culturas del mundo.

The Contrast

Verónica Morales

Since I came to this community five years ago I have felt the change from where I lived in another state in this country, how different a primary school from there is, compared to a small community school like Telpochcalli. For me it was marvelous to discover that in this school they work a lot with the arts, for instance: drawing, painting, theater, music, crafts, folk dance. Each student's creativity is reflected in each work of art. It is very gratifying to see those works completed.

Where I came from the school was very normal. It didn't have almost any art. The majority of students were Asian and Anglo Saxon and there were a few Mexican children. The function of the school was to work for three types of races. This was the great difference. When there are students from different countries in one school and they share the art of each country, there is very little that they can accomplish with each one. In contrast, here in this school they give parents and their children the opportunity to express ourselves with more liberty and to preserve our history, our roots, and our traditions and to take care that they are not lost.

Also here they receive our children when they have recently arrived from our Latin countries, without knowing any English. Here they teach them the English language and they begin to integrate themselves little by little into the educational system of this country. I congratulate the people who had this great idea of having a community school and taking care of it so that no one comes along to change it.

Let all of us in the community continue working together and thank the teachers and other personnel so that other schools follow this example and so that it is transmitted to other cultures of the world.

Un cambio para mi barrio

Rebeca Nieto

A veces salgo a caminar por las calles de mi barrio que es La Villita. Veo con tristeza cómo están de sucias las calles y me pregunto, “¿Cómo es que estas personas no pueden barrer el frente de sus casas? ¿Quizás por falta de tiempo? ¿O es que no se ponen a pensar qué bonito sería que todos barrieran el frente de sus casas, como hacen allá en México?”

Yo recuerdo que mi mamá se levantaba muy temprano todas las mañanas a barrer. Me gustaba ver como cada persona iba saliendo a regar y barrer, pues era muy lindo respirar el aroma a tierra mojada y ver cómo las personas se daban los buenos días. A mí me gustaría que todos los residentes de mi barrio limpiaran así, para que nuestro barrio diera una buena imagen, pues es muy triste ver basura y botellas de cerveza por donde quiera.

Quizás hace falta que la gente tome más conciencia y tome acción de limpiar el frente de sus casas para que estén más limpias las calles, como en los suburbios tan bonitos que se ven todos bien limpiecitos. Así cambiarían el aspecto que da el barrio de La Villita.

A Change for My Neighborhood

Rebeca Nieto

Sometimes I go out walking along the streets of my neighborhood, which is Little Village. I see with sadness how dirty the streets are and I ask myself, “How is it that these people don't sweep in front of their houses? Maybe because they don't have enough time? Or is it that they don't consider how nice it would be if everyone swept in front of their houses, like they do in Mexico?”

I remember that my mother got up very early every morning to sweep. I liked to see how every person went out to water down and sweep the street. It was very lovely to breathe the aroma of damp earth and watch how people would say good morning to each other. I would like it if all the residents of my neighborhood would clean in this way, so that our neighborhood would present a good image, because it is very sad to see garbage and beer bottles everywhere.

Maybe what is needed is for people to become more aware and take action to clean in front of their houses so that the streets will be cleaner, like they are in the suburbs, which look so pretty with everything looking so clean. This way it would change the image that the Little Village neighborhood presents.

La costura de mi mamá

Abel Angeles

Había sido un día de Tianguis en el barrio y mi mamá llegó con unos retazos de tela que había comprado para hacer unas camisas a mis dos hermanitos. Llegaba muy emocionada por el trabajo que iba a realizar. No había dinero suficiente para comprar ropa a cuatro hijos, de manera que mi mamá les hacía ropita, por cierto muy bonita porque tenía buen gusto para combinar colores y telas, aunque jamás había estudiado costura. Realmente no sé como aprendió a hacerlo, pero le gustaba mucho coser, y le quedaban muy bien. Ella decía que lo hacía a lo lírico. No tenía una cinta de medir ni usaba patrones. Sólo tijeras, la tela, el hilo al color y su máquina que mi papá le había comprado en abonos con mucho sacrificio, y a la que le tenía que pedalear para que cosiera. La cuidaba mucho, la limpiaba, la aceitaba y no dejaba que le hicieran ni un rasguño. Era como su tesoro. De esa manera ayudaba a mi papá a vestir a sus hijos e hijas.

A mí me gustaba ver cómo hacía su trabajo. A veces me recargaba sobre un lado de la máquina para ver, cómo hipnotizada, el subir y bajar de la aguja. Nunca aprendí cómo lo hacía pero me gustaba verla sentada, apurada en su labor y la satisfacción de terminar las camisas a las que no le tenía que hacer ningún arreglo cuando mis hermanos se los medían. Además, eran camisas que nadie más tenía iguales.

No aprendí cómo coser de ella, pero aprendí el gusto por la costura. Ahora yo puedo hacer mis propios modelos con patrón y los instrumentos necesarios, una máquina industrial que me regaló mi esposo el 10 de mayo, y a la que, como mi mamá, yo aprecio y cuido mucho.

Ahora cuando viene a visitarme, le hago algún vestid. Ella se pone muy contenta porque le busco una buena tela y bonita como a ella le gusta.

My mother's sewing

Abel Angeles

It had been a day of Tianguis in the neighborhood and my mother arrived with some scraps of cloth that she had bought in order to make some shirts for my two brothers. She arrived very excited about the work that she was going to do. There wasn't enough money to buy clothes for four children, so that my mother made their clothes, certainly very pretty because she had a good sense of combining colors and cloths, although she had never studied sewing. I really have no idea how she learned to do it, but she really enjoyed sewing, and the clothes fit well. She said that she did it by improvising. She didn't have a measuring tape, nor did she use patterns. Only scissors, cloth, colored thread and her sewing machine that my father had bought her used, after a lot of sacrifice, and which she had to pedal so that it would stitch. She took great care of it: she cleaned it, oiled it and didn't allow it to be scratched. It was like her treasure. In this way she helped my father clothe his sons and daughters.

I loved to watch how she worked. Sometimes I leaned over one side of the machine to watch, as though hypnotized, the rise and fall of the needle. I never learned how she did it but I liked to see her sitting there, hurried in her labor and the satisfaction of finishing the shirts so that she wouldn't have to make any adjustments when my siblings put them on. Also, no one else had shirts like these.

I didn't learn how to sew from her, but I learned the pleasure of sewing. Now I can make my own styles with a pattern and the

necessary instruments, an industrial machine that my husband gave to me as a gift on May 10th and which, like my mother, I appreciate and take great care of.

Now when she comes to visit me, I make her a dress. she is very pleased because I look for a good and pretty cloth that is the kind she likes.

El taco

María Contreras

Hace ya varios años que dejé de ejercer la profesión que yo estaba estudiando y trabajando a la misma vez. Ahora que estoy asistiendo al taller de escritura, siento una gran motivación para volver a la escuela a terminar mi carrera. En todo esto lo que más recuerdo es a mis alumnos a los cuales les impartía clase de preescolar. Los niños eran de edades entre los 3 a los 5 años. La clase era de edades mixtas, ya que en este pueblito era la primera vez que se impartieran clases de preescolar.

Fue una época dura para mí. Una beca pagaba la mitad de mi universidad pero la otra mitad no la pagaban, pues la otra mitad mi padre me la costeaba. Esto era un poco difícil ya que había más de mis hermanas estudiando y como ustedes saben cuando una familia es grande es muy difícil que se le pueda dar estudios a todos a la misma vez. Pero yo opté por pasar un poco de comodidades ya que veía cada día lunes esas pequeñas y hermosas caritas llenas de entusiasmo para aprender algo de lo que se partiría en esas clases.

Recuerdo a una niña que muy temerosa se acercaba a mí y me decía, "Maestra, le traje esto." Era un taco de frijoles. Pienso que ella me lo daba de todo corazón. En realidad nunca le pregunté a la mamá si ella me lo mandaba o salía de la niña regalármelo. Hasta estos momentos recuerdo todas las cosas que me llevaban esos niños, pero de lo que más me acuerdo es la ternura con la cual la niña me daba el taco.

The Taco

María Contreras

It has been several years already since I stopped practicing the profession that I was studying and working in at the same time. Now that I am attending the writing workshop I feel a great motivation to return to school to complete my degree. What I most remember about all that are the students to whom I taught preschool. The children were between the ages of 3 and 5. The class was of mixed ages since in this village it was the first time that preschool had been taught there.

It was a hard time for me. A scholarship paid half of my university but they didn't pay the other half, so my father contributed the other half. It was a bit difficult since I had other siblings studying and as you all know when a family is large it is hard to give an education to all of them at the same time. But I opted for passing up some comforts, since every day on Monday I saw those beautiful little faces full of enthusiasm for learning something that was taught in those classes.

I remember a girl who approached me very fearfully and said, "Teacher, I brought you this." It was a bean taco. I think she gave it to me in all sincerity. In reality I never asked her mother if she had sent it to me or if the girl had decided to give it to me herself. To this day I remember all the things that those children brought me, but what I remember most is the tenderness with which the girl gave me the taco.

Viewpoints

Fair Trade

(Not an article about coffee, though certainly fueled by)

By Sarah Hendrica Bickerton

Ms. Bickerton is a PhD candidate in the Sociology Department and a Graduate Research Assistant with CRWG's WISEST program.

An unfortunate habit I have noticed we in Chicago have is “blue state” superiority: namely, laughing at the seeming “backwardness” of other cities/states; how ‘behind’ they are in terms of cultural plurality, in terms of the rights of minorities. But, who are we to sit in judgement of things that are occurring elsewhere? We, who only just had Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual (LGB) equality placed in Illinois law earlier this year, after a decades long war, when anti-discrimination state legislation passed finally in January? And even so, one notices the conspicuous lack of T – for “transgender” -- in that acronym.

Our own campus, UIC, is fairly indicative of the incoherencies and contradictions of LGBT pushes for equality in this country more generally. While we have had an established office of GLBT concerns, student groups, a chancellor’s status committee, and anti-discrimination policies long prior to those of the state, LGBT *relationships* might as well be non-existent as far as official recognition is concerned. Simply put, we do not have domestic partnership (DP) benefits. These include such basic provisions as: extension of sick leave, bereavement leave, tuition waiver, access to wellness programs, access to employee assistance programs, and use of university libraries, recreation services, and childcare facilities. It appears as though, while LGBT individuals have begun to make headway, LGBT relationships are still stuck in no-man’s land, even here in Chicago.

This should be inconceivable. In 1995 the Senate at our sister U of I campus in Urbana voted to expand the coverage of DP benefits to include both same- and opposite-sex partners, and in 1997 all three U of I senates passed a resolution stating that they were in favour of providing DP benefits to U of I employees. That same year, the city of Chicago was granted the right to define partners independently of Illinois’ definition of spouse (Champaign county has a similar right). Moreover, the UI system has had a non-discrimination policy in place for over a decade, including sexual orientation and marital status.

Yet, in the past few years the only major changes to the situation for partnered LGBT UIC employees has been the introduction of a reimbursement system. This works via the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for a DP’s health services. Hardly a guaranteed payment. Further, because it is a payment, it is subject to state and federal taxes as income. Not precisely what one would describe as ideal, or even remotely so. While there are rumours that changes in the AFCSME benefits contract for Illinois state employees might mean a change at UIC, such a change has not yet materialised.

Comparing UIC to other institutions in the Midwest, it is notable that the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, the University of Minnesota, Indiana University, Purdue, the University of Iowa, Michigan State University, and at least five other tertiary education institutions in Illinois all offer DP benefits of different levels. Across the country 289 colleges and universities offer DP benefits, and all but two of the Big Ten universities offer similar benefits. Also, back in 1996 Lafayette College surveyed 23 of the comparison institutions (including Amherst, Oberlin, and Vassar) and found that 95% of them offered DP benefits.

One only has to look as far as the University of Wisconsin to see the consequences of not providing benefits similar to the above institutions. Earlier this year the Dean of Students for UW-Madison, Luoluo Hong, quit. While Hong’s resignation was hardly a blip in terms of university employment nationwide, it was her reason for quitting that caused her to receive national media attention: She was frustrated with the state’s denial of DP benefits for university employees.

Hong, herself straight and married -- arguably giving her action more credence and clout than an LGBT employee might have had -- stated that she was sick of watching some of Wisconsin’s brightest faculty members and administrators walk out the door, and tire of losing job candidates because of the lack of health insurance coverage for their partners. The final straw, Hong said, came when Wisconsin lawmakers in May voted against providing DP

Viewpoints

(Continued)

benefits to UW employees, rejecting calls from school officials that they needed the benefits for recruitment and retention.

Hong's resignation brought nation wide attention to UW, contributing to the school's inability to entice highly qualified staff and faculty. Moreover, the fact that Hong was a straight, married woman brought certain follow-on consequences to the fore, such as the loss of non-minority employees who do not wish to be in an environment lacking diversity and acceptance for their friends and loved ones. As Hong's action makes clear, the provision of DP benefits is no longer an issue that can be marginalised through the characterisation of merely affecting a small minority. Does UIC want to be seen in a similar light? Given that competition for top faculty is tight nationally, when one adds in the current budget demands on the U of I system, this is hardly a defensible strategy.

But one shouldn't argue for basic rights on the basis of the sky falling (or, at least, not solely on that basis). Aside from the matter simply being one of fairness ('Equal Pay for Equal Work' is not just a call for women alone, after all), such provisions are a mainstream business practice. In the private sector, one in every four companies of over 5,000 employees provides health benefits. (It bears noting that this is also a sector of society with which universities compete in order to attract employees.) Such provisions not only provide for more competitiveness and productivity, they are attractive to progressively-minded people. The increasing numbers of women and young people in the workforce (two groups that statistically tend to be progressive) lend such benefits considerable weight. Further, DP benefit provision ensures that the best people for the jobs are hired. Moreover, despite the anti-LGBT opinions of a disappearing minority, these provisions are hardly "special rights" as such opinions claim. Encouraging a diversity of opinions (as well as a diversity of personnel on campus of course), and taking a side for or against none, is considered a highly positive stance by most people.

Finally, while the basic civil right of marriage for LGBT people is a necessary goal, it is still a long way off, despite its inevitability (regardless of the rhetoric of those who oppose us). But UIC cannot wait for this day. Aside from risking its competitiveness in the academic community in this country and internationally, UIC needs to place itself at the forefront of the large, and ever-increasing, numbers of those universities that recognise the simple fairness of equality of benefits for ALL of their employees.

It is, after all, a fair trade.

¹ *Domestic Partner Benefits Update (02/15/1999)*, UIC Chancellor's Committee on the Status of LGBT Issues, OGLBTC Website

² *Securing Domestic Partnership Benefits at UIC: Fact Sheet*, UIC Office of GLBT Concerns

³ *American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees*

⁴ *NIU University Benefits Committee Minutes, November 18th 2004*

⁵ *Memo Regarding DP Benefits/Insurance for the State of Illinois (April '05)*, UIC Office of GLBT Concerns

⁶ <http://www.365gay.com/newscon05/06/061505wiscBens.htm>

⁷ *Arguing the Case for Domestic Partnership Benefits*, The NGLTF Domestic Partnership Organising Manual <http://www.nglftf.org>

⁸ <http://insidehighered.com/news/2005/06/16/wisconsin>

⁹ *UW-Madison being one of the two Big Ten universities that does not, UI Urbana-Champaign the other.*

¹⁰ <http://www.365gay.com/newscon05/06/061505wiscBens.htm>

¹¹ *Arguing the Case for Domestic Partnership Benefits*, The NGLTF Domestic Partnership Organising Manual <http://www.nglftf.org>

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Also, as I mentioned above, the U of I system is bound by its own antidiscrimination policies in this matter.*

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