

## August 29, 2022

This year we reach a number of important milestones. First, the UB Gender Institute celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! It began as a faculty and graduate student reading group in the 1990s to become the only research institute in the SUNY system devoted to the study of women, gender, and sexuality. 2022 also marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Women's Studies department at UB, which was one of the first in the country. During that same year—1972—Title IX was enacted, which prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive federal funding. Although there is still unfinished business regarding Title IX and the struggle for gender equity continues, this legislation has nonetheless transformed the lives of girls and women. In 1972, for instance, approximately 300,000 girls nationwide played high school sports every year. Today, that figure is three million. For college women athletes in 1971, the scene was grim. Only 15% of NCAA student athletes were women. Today, that number is 44%.

And yet in the midst of all of these important signs of progress, we continue to see our country move backward on fundamental rights including the right to abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, trans rights, and civil rights. With the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v Wade* in *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization* (JWHO), more than 36 million women of reproductive age, and more people who can become pregnant, in 26 states have already lost or will soon lose access to abortion. And those in blue states are not safe either. Although New York has vowed to be a sanctuary state for abortion rights, the Supreme Court in the future could overturn this state law just as we saw them overturn NY's gun licensing law in *NYSRPA v Bruen* this summer.

This grim picture also includes the rise of anti-LGBTQ+ policies at the local and state levels ranging from Florida's "Don't Say Gay" law to the Texas GOP platform. But of the nearly 240 anti-LGBTQ+ bills filed in 2022, the vast majority of them target trans people. Most of these bills eliminate or ban trans people from accessing public life, education, and gender-affirming care.

It is at this critical juncture that the UB Gender Institute will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and I use "celebrate" here advisedly to acknowledge the important work that we do as a community whether it is sharing our published work or engaging in conversations on contemporary issues at one of our events. Now more than ever such connections are needed. To this end, the Provost has increased the UB Gender Institute's budget to include more funds for our research, which will go toward faculty projects, as well as toward an increased investment in our dissertation fellowships. Details will be forthcoming.

To assist with programming during our anniversary year, the UB Gender Institute received a generous Baldy Center Conference Grant for a year-long series of lectures, book events, and panel discussions on the theme of "Social Reproduction: Labor, Social Justice, and the Value of Human Life." The series, which will be in-person

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with a virtual option, will kick off on Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> with Silvia Federici, co-founder of the International Feminist Collective and an organizer of the wages for housework campaign in the 1970s. She will discuss her most recent book *Patriarchy of the Wage*. In 1980, she received her doctorate from the Philosophy Department at UB and the Philosophy has generously agreed to co-sponsor this event. On Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, Premilla Nadasen, Claire Tow Professor of History at Barnard, will speak on her most recent work on social reproduction. Thanks to the English and History Departments for co-sponsoring this event.

We will also continue our *New Books, New Feminist Directions* series for a second year with two exciting events. Katja Praznik (Arts Management) will discuss her new book *Art Work* (Toronto 2021), which demystifies the romantic notion of creating art as an act of love without financial concerns, and looks instead at art as a form of labor. Silvia Federici will offer commentary on Friday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The second book event will feature Miriam Thaggert's forthcoming *Riding Jane Crow: African American Women on the American Railroad* (U of Illinois P, 2022), which highlights Black women's experiences as passengers and workers on or near the American train from 1860-1925. Madhu Dubey at the U of Illinois, Chicago will serve as commentator. This will be a virtual event on Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>.

Finally, our Feminist Research Alliance Workshop continues for its 12<sup>th</sup> season. We have a wonderful line-up of UB faculty from a wide range of disciplines, beginning with Shaanta Murshid (Social Work) on "Transnational Bangladeshis in love, desire, and violence" on Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup> at noon. Other workshop participants include Anne B. Curtis, SUNY Distinguished Professor in the School of Medicine, who will speak on gender disparities in patients with cardiac arrhythmias on November 3<sup>rd</sup> at noon, and Deborah Reed-Danahay, Jean Monnet Chair, Anthropology, who will speak on "Life Stories of Middle-class French Women in 21<sup>st</sup>-century London" on December 1<sup>st</sup> at 12 noon. All will be virtual events.

As you can see, we have an exciting year ahead! To find out more about the Institute, check out our website and join our listserv. I look forward to seeing you at our events this year.

**Carrie Tirado Bramen**

Director of the Gender Institute

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