

TO MEET THE MOMENT

WOMEN'S STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER AT 25
BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

Brandeis

WOMEN'S STUDIES
RESEARCH CENTER

“Our vision was to create a center that would invite scholars from outside the university to work with each other and with Brandeis students to produce high-level, groundbreaking work. Since my retirement, every time I enter the WSRC I marvel at how much has been retained of that original vision, and at how much has changed as the new leaders and scholars meet today’s demands and opportunities.”

Shulamit Reinharz, GSAS MA’69, PhD’77

Founder and Director of the Women’s Studies Research Center, 2001-2017

Jacob Potofsky Professor of Sociology, Emerita

TO MEET
THE
MOMENT

Claiming Our Space

“There’s really no such thing as ‘the voiceless.’ There are only the deliberately silenced or the preferably unheard.”

- ARUNDHATI ROY

In the 1970s, as American society reckoned with the rise of feminism, feminist thought was changing academia as well. In the words of historian Marilyn Boxer, it was a time when “merely to assert that women should be studied was a radical act,” yet academics and activists were insisting that women’s contributions and experiences were in fact worthy of scholarly inquiry. Establishing women’s studies as an academic discipline reconfigured systems of power and enabled new modes of knowledge production.

Brandeis University, built on the founding principles of social justice and freedom of expression, supported this emerging field. In 1977, thanks to the efforts of students and faculty, the university joined the 100 other schools in the country with women’s studies programs and established its own, directed for 10 years by the cultural historian Joyce Antler, professor of American Jewish history and culture and of women’s, gender and sexuality studies.

The program’s second director, sociologist Shulamit Reinharz, GSAS MA’69, PhD’77, assembled a 25-member advisory board and established a joint master’s-degree program in conjunction with other departments at the university. She obtained the necessary administrative and crucial financial backing for a full-fledged women’s

studies research center, one in which research, art and activism would converge: “I realized that if people understood what we’re doing and why it’s vital to the world, to the nation, to families and to individual women, they would support us.”

The Women’s Studies Research Center opened its doors in January 2001. Housed in a newly renovated building on the Brandeis campus, the custom-designed center featured workspaces for scholars, a library and an art gallery. As interdisciplinary as women’s studies itself, the WSRC soon became the vital academic, cultural and social space it is today, a place where scholars, artists and students engage in open dialogue, pursue new lines of inquiry and push boundaries.

The center’s three main components, all focused on the exploration of gender and women’s lives, were intentionally designed to generate new knowledge, foster individual achievement and create community.

The **Scholars Program** supports high-achieving individuals from an array of disciplines. These preeminent researchers, educators, poets, novelists and artists work separately and together, often collaborating in unexpected ways. Through a variety of study groups, scholars share works in progress, receive valuable



feedback, and discuss issues relevant to their areas of focus. The center has hosted 232 scholars to date.

The **Student-Scholar Partnership** is a paid internship that pairs Brandeis undergraduate and graduate students with WSRC scholars. Through this selective program, students gain real-world research skills and valuable, lasting relationships with innovative scholars and practitioners who are making meaningful contributions to their respective fields.

Kniznick Gallery makes the WSRC one of the nation’s few women’s studies research centers with its own fully integrated art gallery focused on themes from women’s studies. The gallery presents exhibitions that inspire cross-disciplinary exchange and collaboration to illuminate and extend the center’s scholarship.

The WSRC also cultivates community — not just within the center but across the university and the Boston

metro area — through its lively roster of scholar talks, author salons, panel discussions and performances, all of which are free and open to the public. It is proud to collaborate with the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute and with other related groups at Brandeis.

As much a place as a calling, the WSRC is a living, breathing, evolving hub that is animated by the same values of inquiry and social action, and a reverence for learning, as its home institution. And though it has been bringing distinction to the field of women’s studies, and to Brandeis, for 25 years, now is not the time for complacency. Today, women’s studies and related disciplines are beset by renewed challenges to their legitimacy — and indeed to their existence.

Now more than ever, those who support the WSRC and its mission must unite to reassert its relevance, preserve its dynamism, and secure its future.

Photo: Dan Holmes and Gaelen Morse

Director's Message

HARLEEN SINGH

*Director of the Women's Studies Research Center
Academic Dean of the School of Arts, Humanities and Culture*

I taught my first course in women's studies in 2002. A freshly minted postdoctoral fellow, I asked the class why they were taking the introduction to women's studies. It fulfilled their general education requirement, said most. Reproductive rights, labor rights, the recognition of domestic violence, and much more seemed already secure for that generation in an elite university. My classes were a historical lesson and not necessarily the reality of their present. I imagine teaching that class today and I know that complacency was not an option then and it is certainly not an option now.

The Women's Studies Research Center at Brandeis, founded 25 years ago, brought the ethos of activism into conversation with research and art. A unique environment, built on the interconnectedness of human experience — an insistence on striving for a better world, a need to study and explore different modes of thought, and the recognition that art expresses the big and small of our soul — the center has been home to hundreds of scholars, artists, students and faculty members.

We are supported by a stellar National Board of Advisors who have helped guide and sustain our core mission. With their varied interests and projects, our scholars and alums, who come from near and far, foster vibrancy and a deep, meaningful sense of community. Their engagement with our students adds an intergenerational aspect to the life of the university, a much-needed interaction when our shared histories are neglected, if not forgotten.

As we come together to face the challenges of our present moment, it is imperative that we remember the responsibility of care that is upon us. We have launched a campaign to raise the endowment for the Women's Studies Research Center in celebration of our 25th anniversary. Support for the center today is a show of faith not just in women's studies but also in the power of community. We must preserve the efforts and honor the sacrifice that brought us the right to vote, the right to work, the right of choice over our bodies, and the right to live with those we love.

Photo: Tejees Studios, Chandigarh, India





Giving Is Receiving

For years, Cynthia L. Berenson, G'13, and Rosalie Ripaldi Shane '66 have shown extraordinary generosity toward Brandeis University — much of it in the areas of women's studies and the arts.

Cynthia, a nationally recognized philanthropist, serves on the boards of both the Women's Studies Research Center and the Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies. She and her family have established the Allen/Berenson Distinguished Visiting Professorship in Women's Studies, the Cynthia L. and Theodore S. Berenson Chair of Fine Arts, and the Director's Office in the Women's Studies Research Center.

A practicing artist, Rosalie has served on the board of the Women's Studies Research Center since 2006, and as co-chair (with Diane R. Rubin '81) since 2008. In honor of her uncle and aunt, she endowed the Annual Alfredo and Demitra DiLuzio Concert in the Slosberg Concert Hall at Brandeis University, which features work and performances by WSRC scholars and Brandeis musicians. She and her husband, Jim, also support the curator of the Kniznick Gallery.

*Together, Cynthia and Rosalie serve as co-chairs of the **To Meet the Moment Campaign**. Here are some of the reasons why.*

CYNTHIA: “I remember being seated at a dinner party next to a gentleman who said to me, ‘I don’t understand why universities need women’s studies. Women are academics, we know they contribute.’ To which I replied, ‘There are so many things that women have contributed for centuries that haven’t even been looked at! Women’s studies is necessary.’ By gaining a better understanding of half of humanity, we gain a better understanding of all of humanity.”

ROSALIE: “Exactly. We need the WSRC. It’s a place where meaningful research is being done about women, for women, by women.”

CYNTHIA: “And men feel comfortable there, too!”

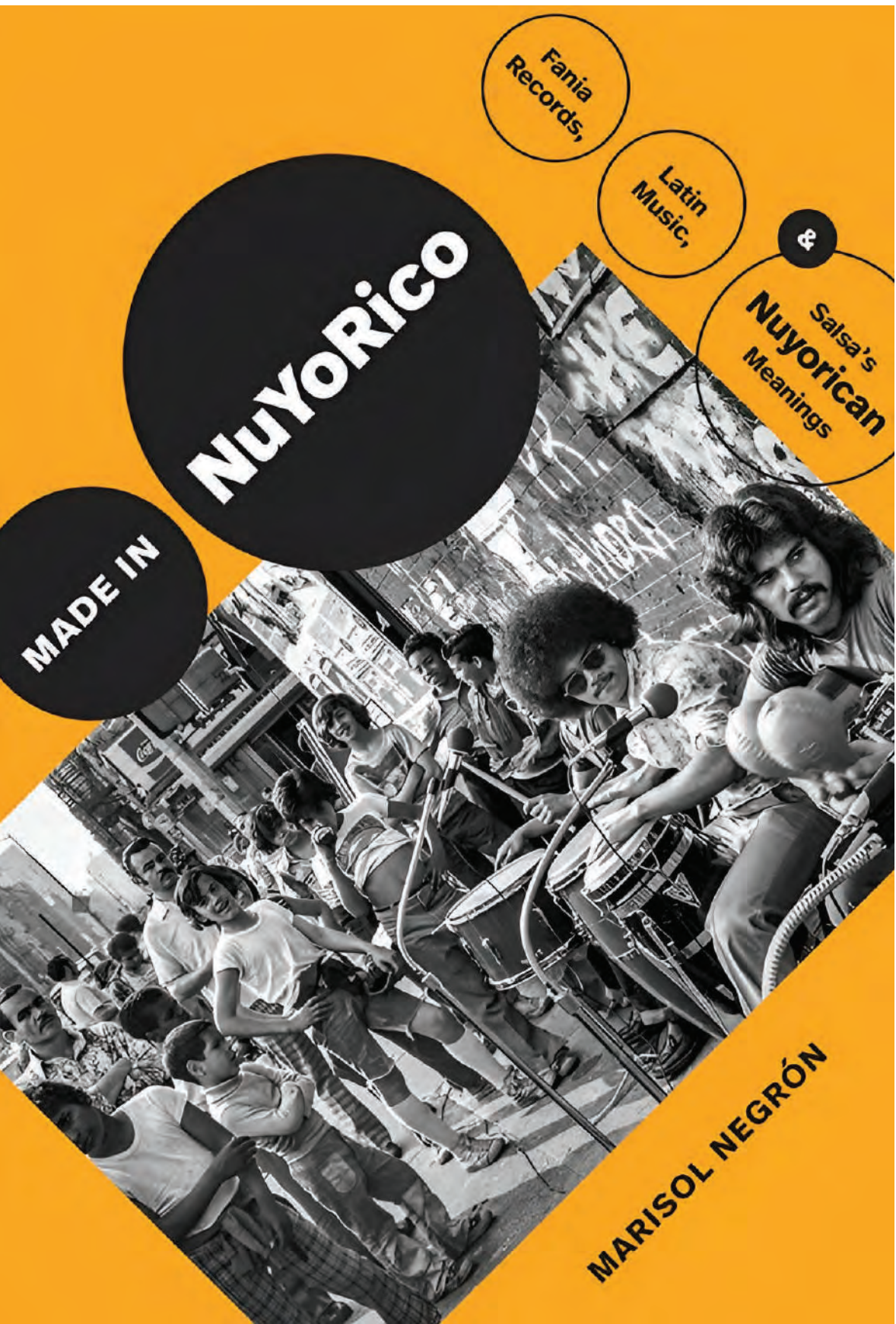
ROSALIE: “The WSRC is such an addition to the university. For a long time, it was one of few places on campus where an undergraduate could work with a prestigious researcher. The student has a front-row seat to the research process — and gets paid! These relationships last beyond the time they work together. They often remain friends even after the young scholars’ graduation.”

CYNTHIA: “Everybody is welcome at the center. People from the community who come are exposed to interesting topics they might not otherwise encounter in everyday life. They don’t have to sign up for a class — they can learn so much just from coming in. The things that happen and are produced here make a difference to our world.”

ROSALIE: “I paint in solitude, which I love. But I also need intellectual stimulation. And wow, that’s what I found at the WSRC. The place fairly crackles with exciting new ideas, stimulating thought, creative talent, and a deep commitment to improving women’s issues. Just by being in that place, I get so much back.”

CYNTHIA: “It’s hard to believe we’re going backward right now. Regaining our rights is going to be another long, drawn-out slog. But I’m not afraid. The genie is out of the bottle, and they’re not going to be able to put us back in again. Women are wise. We’ll figure out a way.”

Cynthia Berenson and Rosalie Shane at the opening of “A Gathering” at the WSRC Kniznick Gallery. Artwork in the background: Orli Swergold, “Antidote,” 2024, Paper pulp on wood, 48 x 42 in. Photo: Elizabeth Ellenwood Photography.



The Work Is Never Done

MARISOL NEGRÓN

*Associate Professor of American Studies and Latino Studies and Director,
Latino Studies Program, UMass Boston
WSRC Scholar*

The WSRC has become home to me. Whether getting my book ready for publication or pursuing ongoing research projects, I find it is wonderful to have a dedicated workspace in a peaceful place where I've had wonderful opportunities to work in community. I've also developed intellectual relationships here and across Brandeis that sustain me.

The center is a vital site of knowledge production. It is a feminist, interdisciplinary space that challenges hierarchies and transforms our understandings of society through programming, support for creative and interdisciplinary projects, and the intellectual development of students. And it strives — successfully — to create a sense of belonging. When I enter, I feel like I am integral to it and its mission. That's not merely inclusive, it's transformational.

Creating a thriving feminist community like this is dependent on bringing together a radically diverse, multigenerational group of women whose work spans

the arts, the humanities, the social sciences, activism and expressive culture. All these women coming together in the center make for an incredibly vibrant community. But such a project is never completed. You can't say, "We did it, we're done." No, it has to be an intentional and continuous project to cultivate a space sustained by the world-making possibilities of feminist, queer, racial and social justice. You always have to be working on it. It's always in process.

At a moment when our basic rights and freedoms are being challenged, we have to look to spaces like the WSRC to remind us how we fought for those rights, why we need them and why we need to keep fighting for them. You can only meet the moment if you've already been doing the work. The WSRC can meet this particular moment because it's been there for 25 years, doing work in programming, in its commitment to justice. The Women's Studies Research Center is what we should be working toward everywhere.

Cover of Marisol Negrón's book "Made in NuYoRico: Fania Records, Latin Music and Salsa's Nuyoricán Meanings" (Duke University Press, 2024)

Network of Support

KATE CLIFFORD LARSON

Award-winning historian and best-selling author of “Walk With Me: A Biography of Fannie Lou Hamer”; “Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero”; “Rosemary: The Hidden Kennedy Daughter”; and “The Assassin’s Accomplice: Mary Surratt and the Plot to Kill Abraham Lincoln”

WSRC Scholar Alumna

In the 1990s, I was working toward a master’s in women’s studies and African American history at Simmons University, and one of my professors, Susan Porter, was a WSRC scholar. We stayed in touch, and when I told her I was working on a book about civil-rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer, she encouraged me to apply to become a scholar. I was accepted, and while that was positive networking for Susan, for me, it was magic.

It was also vital to my work. Having access to all the resources at the WSRC and at Brandeis, even remotely, was just incredible. But it was more than that. There’s great joy in Mrs. Hamer’s story, but also a lot of violence — at one point, she was arrested, beaten and raped in jail. It was very difficult to research that. I was hesitant even to write about it. I had joined the Writing Women’s Lives and Historical Issues study groups. Those women urged me to write the truth. Normally, I never share my writing with anybody, but I felt so supported by them.

I remember vividly building up my nerve to share that painful chapter. I would not have written it the way I did if it hadn’t been for the WSRC.

Women are half the population and always have been. It would be great to know their stories and not just the stories of men, because men don’t do everything. Just think of the artwork that might not be produced, the stories that might not be told without the backing of the WSRC. We need this center to empower younger women coming up, too, to show them paths that will lead to their own work being shared, to their own work becoming their legacy.

Many of us alumnae scholars are still connected online. We get to celebrate each other’s work and accolades. We also encourage each other with our ongoing projects. The WSRC is beyond just a building. It is everywhere.

Photo: Susan Wilson





The Gift of Space and Time

DONNA DODSON

Sculptor and Scavenger for the Heroines of Humanity

Visual Art Fellow, St. Botolph Club Foundation, 2023-2026

Fulbright U.S. Scholar, Q21/MuseumsQuartier, Vienna, Austria, 2022

WSRC Artist/Scholar

The 2022 show I presented in the Kniznick Gallery, “Amazons, Goddesses and Wonder Women: A Fulbright Journey,” was a collaborative project with a professional animator from Lesley University. She and I assembled a team consisting of two WSRC Student-Scholar Partners, Pilar Duvivier ’24 and Cyrenity Augustin ’24, who did a lot of research, as well as students from Lesley, who did 3D animation design work. The project was to translate my wood sculptures into digital avatars for a short animation. The soundtrack was a series of beautiful poems WSRC scholar K. Melchor Quick Hall wrote and recorded about my work. The curator Maya Rubio brought it all together.

That show was a turning point for me. The animation it birthed has since traveled to the World Chess Hall of Fame, as part of my 2024 solo show “Match of the Matriarchs and Other Amazonomachies.” It was also curated into an exhibition called “The Circe Effect,” at Western Connecticut State University and then at the Hotchkiss School. It has inspired more life, animation, and body language in my work. My subsequent wood carvings are much more narrative, animated and daring.

Without a place like the Women’s Studies Research Center, it isn’t possible to do long-term projects with any real intellectual depth or merit. The structure of

the Scholars Program pushes you to write about your intentions, so you are giving yourself deadlines and goals, which keeps you moving forward. That’s balanced with an open-ended approach, where if a project doesn’t land where it started, it’s OK, because accidents and discoveries happen along the way.

We live in challenging times. Artists and curators get told “no” a lot when their ideas are to feature women whom history has forgotten. The research being done at the WSRC helps us meet the moment and make the kind of breakthroughs Brandeis is known for as an institution that is deeply devoted to the humanities and the arts. With the opportunities to collaborate and support each other and venture outside our given area, the creative possibilities are endless.

I know there are other women’s and gender studies departments that have visiting scholar programs, but few if any contain an art gallery or exhibition space. The WSRC’s integration of artists with scholars, the interdisciplinarity, the collegiality, the collaboration, plus the access to Brandeis faculty and student partners — all this makes the center unique. It allows us to do the work we want to do.

Donna Dodson, “Black Panther”, 30” tall, black walnut and colored pencil, 2020

A Space for Women's Voices

MARJAN KAMALI

Best-selling author of "The Stationery Shop," "Together Tea" and "The Lion Women of Tehran"

National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Awardee

American Library Association Rusa Historical Fiction Awardee

Fannie Hurst Writer in Residence, Brandeis University

WSRC Scholar

As an Iranian, I have experience with autocratic regimes that stifle women's voices. I was in Iran during that pivotal time when the government started to change the laws. I was surrounded by intelligent women who were very vocal about their horror over what was happening. I saw how, once the government changed, women's voices were silenced, and so many rights they had fought so hard to gain were taken away. Today, in the country of Afghanistan, we see the government taking away women's ability to be in community. To be able to be in community is seen as a threat because when you're together, you feel far less alone. And it's a way to get stronger.

When I wrote my first novel, "Together Tea" (Ecco Press, 2013), which takes place in part during the 1979 revolution in Iran, I would visit book clubs and people would say, "That's crazy. How could that have happened?" Now when I visit book clubs, people don't

say that. They say, "I get it. I'm scared. I see how this could happen." And I'm sad, because I didn't want my American readers to relate.

For me, the WSRC has always felt like a refuge. I've entered that space during different situations in my life, and I've always felt like it's kind of a home, a safe space, a haven, a place where I know I'll see friendly faces. And it's filled with art, with creative projects. The center supports my work as a novelist by giving me this peace of mind that there is a place I can go where I can feel welcome and do my work. So much of our work is done individually. The center offers us quiet space, but also accountability and the pleasure of sharing. It just makes you feel less alone. If we lose structures that give us that needed sense of community and even safety, we're losing something far more valuable than it seems on the surface.

Photo: David E. Lawrence





Esprit de Corps

EDITH COLEMAN CHEARS, PhD

President and CLO, Mind Over Matter Instruction, Inc.

Fulbright U.S. Scholar, Women's University in Africa, Zimbabwe, 2024-2025

WSRC Scholar

Years ago, when I arrived as a dissertation scholar, I joined the Social Issues study group. Although it is no longer formally connected to the WSRC, we still meet. Being a member continues to be a source of knowledge, valuable mentoring, sisterhood and gratitude. Our purpose is to review each other's current projects and provide feedback. The study group is a real community whose diversity of thought offers a broad range of new perspectives on women's issues. We nurture each other and act as a sounding board in support of each individual project. I have shared chapters of my forthcoming book, which, like my dissertation, examines the slow ascent of women to top leadership and how women can navigate gender bias in the workplace. The feedback is invaluable. There is enormous mutual respect within the group as we have shared in the success of many published works. I currently have the pleasure of being the SI group's organizer and facilitator.

I am skilled in human resource development, and I am passionate about aiding young women and young leaders. Through the Student-Scholar Partnership, I've worked with several phenomenal Brandeis undergraduates. The partnership encourages collaboration and learning by both the scholar and the student. To foster the students'

engagement, I let them take the lead on selecting topics and areas of study for our projects. At the end of each partnership, we enjoy presenting our work to internal and external communities. With much pride, I listed one extraordinary student as the co-author of a module within my upcoming Women's Leadership Experience Training workshop.

WSRC scholars are deeply involved in educating others via their writing, artistic rendering, poetry and plays. Their success is indicated by the multitude of awards and honors bestowed on them. Everyone produces highly significant work, whether it's researching gender-based violence, designing a Holocaust memorial, documenting women's contributions to science, or, like me, investigating what holds women back in the workplace, in both the United States and Africa. These are "now" topics! That is why we have to keep the center going.

WSRC accomplishments have brought great pride and numerous honors to Brandeis. I also have garnered much from my association with every talented WSRC scholar past and present — for whom I have the greatest admiration.

Photo courtesy of Edith Coleman Cheers

Moving the Field Forward

WSRC scholars are curious, socially engaged, interdisciplinary thinkers. They are committed to research that broadens and deepens our perspectives

on women's material, artistic, cultural and intellectual contributions to the world — and to research that brings about change.

NATIONAL INITIATIVE ON GENDER, CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP IN MEDICINE: C-CHANGE

Founded in 2006 by Distinguished Research Scientist Linda Pololi, the National Initiative on Gender, Culture and Leadership in Medicine is currently housed in the Institute for Economic and Racial Equity at Brandeis' Heller School for Social Policy and Management.

Known as **C-Change**, for culture change, the initiative embraces diverse perspectives as it aims to reshape the culture of academic medicine and other higher-

education programs through research and action, and to foster institutional excellence, workforce vitality, and humanistic, affirming, productive, and relational working and learning environments.

The WSRC was proud to host this initiative for more than a decade as it went from strength to strength in its research, fundraising, and impact in the fields of health and medicine.

THE 'ON EQUAL TERMS' PROJECT

"On Equal Terms" was founded in 2007 and directed by Susan Eisenberg, one of the first women in the country to become a journey-level electrician in union construction. A WSRC scholar, Eisenberg is also a poet, author, visual artist, oral historian and policy analyst. "On Equal Terms" draws on research, art and personal testimony to convey and address equity issues for women in historically male occupations, examining how embedded discrimination can undermine inclusion efforts. It originally focused on the construction industry, where women still make up less than 4% of the workforce despite demonstrated capabilities and four decades of affirmative action. Current research focuses on skilled trades jobs where employment is "permanent," in contrast to the contingent nature of construction work.

Eisenberg developed and toured a 900-square-foot mixed-media art installation, "On Equal Terms," combining audio, poetry, found objects, photographs, historical artifacts and 3D mixed media to bring viewers into the experiences of women who work on construction sites. The installation's 2008 launch at the Kniznick Gallery coincided with the 30th anniversary of federal affirmative-action policies that, in 1978, opened construction jobs and apprenticeship programs to women.

In 2018 Eisenberg launched "On Equal Terms: Gender and Solidarity," a digital adaptation of the exhibition. Working with grassroots tradeswomen and union leaders, "On Equal Terms" is developing new content to be added to the online exhibition.

IMPERILED BODIES

The **"Imperiled Bodies: Slavery, Colonialism, Citizenship and the Logics of Gender-Based Violence"** seminar series, sponsored by a prestigious John E. Sawyer Seminar grant from the Mellon Foundation, was co-led by WSRC director Harleen Singh and Anita Hill, University Professor of Social Policy, Law and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and David R. Pokross Professor of Law and Social Policy (and an early Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies faculty member), and ChaeRan Freeze, Frances and Max Elkon Chair in Modern Jewish History. A joint collaboration between the WSRC and the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies department, the seminar explored

the insidious fallacy that gender-based violence is a natural and inevitable facet of the family, state and nation.

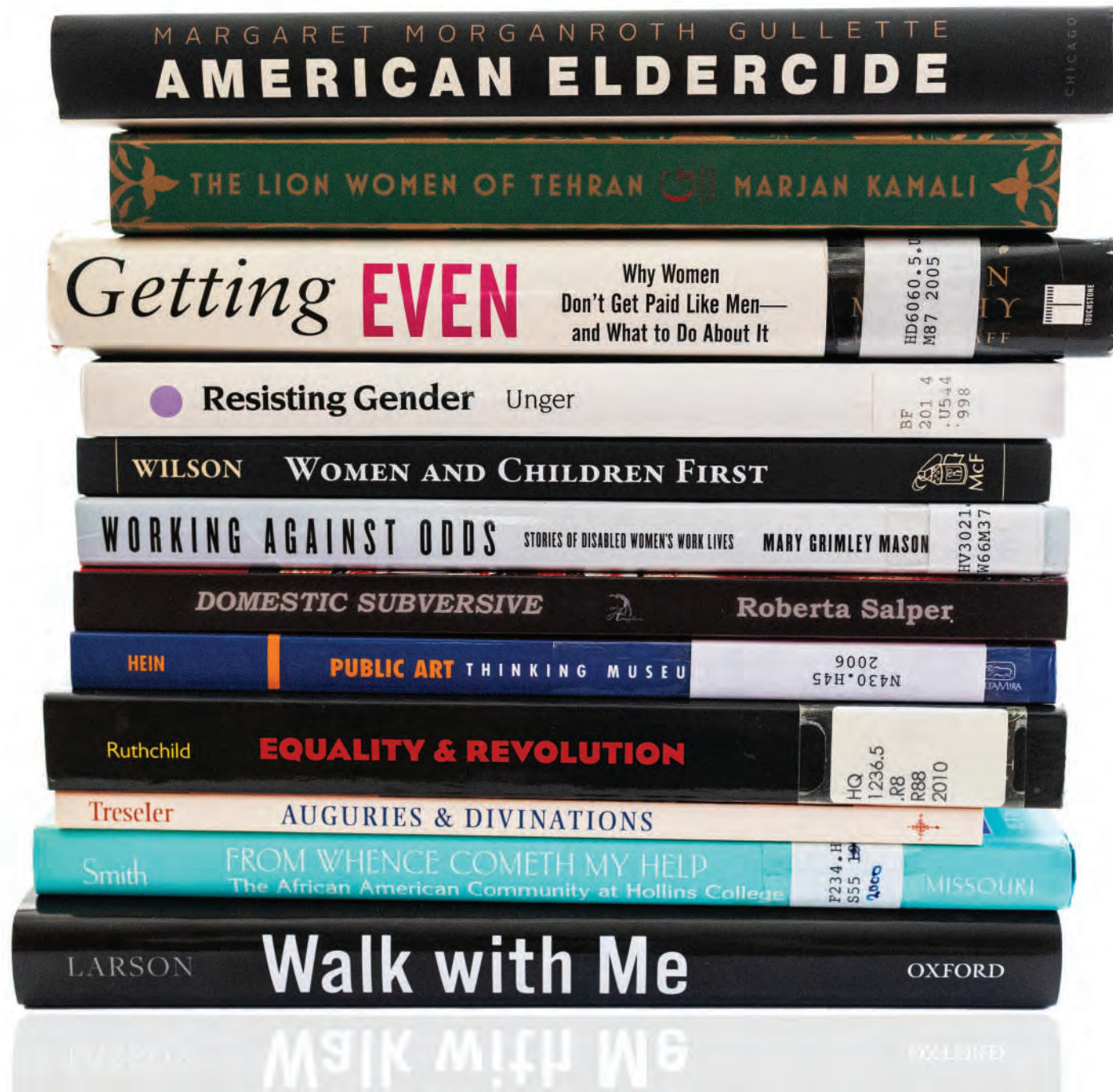
Spanning the 2023-2024 academic year and comprising nine panel sessions and an associated exhibition, the series brought together premier scholars of literature, history, art and law to examine gender-based violence in the United States, Mexico and Central America, Jamaica and Trinidad, India, South Korea and Israel/Palestine from the 19th century on. Coinciding with the 75th anniversary of Brandeis' founding, the seminar amplified the university's social-justice mission and its long engagement with gender-based violence.

(Below) From left to right, University Professor Anita Hill, Professor Sarah Deer (University of Kansas) and Professor Crystal Feimster (Yale University) speak at the Heller School. Photo: Quentin W. Cox



Page-Turners

Whether producing works based in research, reflection, creation or discovery, WSRC scholars are rewriting the world through the power of their words. Here are just a few of the many books WSRC scholars have written over the past 25 years.



Another Way of Responding to the World

Central to the WSRC's mission, the recently renovated Kniznick Gallery has presented nearly 100 exhibitions since it opened in 2001. These thought-provoking, conversation-igniting events have garnered attention in the community and in the press, further burnishing Brandeis' reputation for intellectual and creative freedom and social justice.

TIGER BY THE TAIL! Women Artists of India Transforming Culture

The 2007 exhibition **"Tiger by the Tail! Women Artists of India Transforming Culture"** (right) featured the provocative painting, sculpture, drawing, photography and video art of 17 established artists. While culturally specific, the art had global resonance as it challenged social oppression, gender discrimination, patriarchal aggression and communal violence, and provided new models for women's empowerment. The exhibition's co-curator, Roobina Karode, is now the director of the esteemed Kiran Nadar Museum, the first private, modern, and contemporary museum of art in New Delhi, India.



(Opposite) Photo of books by WSRC Scholars.

Photo: David E. Lawrence

(Top) Gogi Saroj Pal, "Tiger by the Tail," gouache on paper, 1999;

(Bottom) Sonia Khurana, "Bird," video, silent, B/W





Wrongs & RIGHTS

First presented at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the 2024 exhibition **“Wrongs & RIGHTS”** (top left, center left and opposite) showcased 28 works in various media that gestured toward both the intergenerational battle for bodily autonomy and the erosion of rights in America after the June 2022 overturning of Roe v. Wade. The exhibition’s co-curators, Laura Dvorkin and Maynard Monrow, are also curators at The Bunker Artspace, which presents rotating exhibitions of the Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection in West Palm Beach, Florida.

A GATHERING

Gardens, Portals, Protests

“A Gathering: Gardens, Portals, Protests” (bottom left), which opened in the summer of 2025, brought together 14 artists from New England and New York working in a range of materials. Curated by Olivia Baldwin, the exhibition invoked the precarity of the present moment while celebrating care, connection and community. It affirmed art’s capacity to hold complexity and resistance and to act as a regenerative force.

“I see the summer shows as an opportunity to center the Greater Boston arts community while also carrying out ideas related to the center. So often in the art world, there’s a scarcity mindset. I’m interested in how our space can counter that through the work we do.”

-Olivia Baldwin
Rosalie and Jim Shane Curator and Arts Coordinator

(Top) “Wrong & RIGHTS” Installation View. Foreground: Patricia Cronin, “Aphrodite Reimagined,” 2022, Bronze and resin, 30 x 8.5 x 7.7 inches, Behind: Jo Shane, “No. 5, 1990 / 2017,” scrub fabric, artist’s archival abortion instructions, artist’s archival pregnancy tests, Chanel No. 5 perfume 60 x 36 x 5 inches. Photo: Sasha Pedro.
(Center) Michele Pred, “Reproductive Freedom,” 2023. Photo: Sasha Pedro.
(Bottom) Destiny Palmer, “O Rage,” 2025, mixed media, dimensions variable. Photo: Elizabeth Ellenwood.
(Opposite) Foreground: Susan B. Chen, “Vote Plan B,” 2024, ceramics, 15 x 11 x 14 inches. Behind: Andrea Bowers, “Political Ribbons (Brandeis University),” 2024, Silkscreen ink on satin ribbons. Photo: Sasha Pedro.



Empowering Tomorrow

*Women’s studies came of age in the final decades of the 20th century, so nurturing the next generation of thinkers and leaders is a priority of the WSRC. The **Student-Scholar Partnership** offers an unparalleled working experience to young scholars in the field, and a chance for established scholars to provide mentoring and professional guidance. After a qualified student is matched with a scholar, they actively partner on a project in the scholar’s field. Many students say their trajectory has been deeply influenced by the experience, and scholars say they find the mentorship enriching.*

The center also provides **scholarship funding** to enable students to pursue their studies. In 2025, Diana Sola Chacon ’26 received support from the WSRC to fund her summer studies in Mexico and Cuba, where she learned about different public-health systems and their approaches to caring for women, indigenous peoples and marginalized groups.

Inspired by the health challenges and courage of her mother and two grandmothers, Diana is focused on the intersection of women’s physical health, mental health and access to health care.

“Through me, their pain will not be silenced. I dedicate my life to defending patients who lack representation in society while battling against health-care institutions that frequently neglect women, immigrants and low-income patients.”

-Diana Sola Chacon ’26
Health: Science, Society and Policy major

CEAH NGUYEN ’27

Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and International and Global Studies major

Through the SSP program, I partnered with **Susan Eisenberg**, a poet whose work explores feminism in the construction industry. Her project is a virtual exhibition called “On Equal Terms.” I assisted Susan with various tasks, including editing archival videos, transcribing interviews, and writing up memoir stories based on her own experiences working in construction. Aside from the several skills that I developed, I learned about significant moments in the history of women in the construction industry from the perspective of a tradeswoman herself.

The next year, I worked with **Margaret Morganroth Gullette**, the author of “American Eldercide” (The University of Chicago Press, 2024). Her work centers on anti-ageism and is foundational in critical age studies, a cross-disciplinary field that she named. I focused on developing my digital and design skills as I created a website introducing Margaret and her works. While my role was primarily technical, I gained a lot of insights about the intersectionality of gender and age, and received valuable advice on both academic and personal matters through my conversations with Margaret.

At first, I was a bit intimidated to collaborate with these scholars. But we grew close and have continued to stay in touch even after these partnerships concluded. Working so closely with them allowed me to combine my interest in feminism and social justice with new areas that I was less informed about — such as the construction industry and age studies—and to explore how these topics intersect and inform one another. The SSP taught me a lot — not just in terms of practical skills or the topics I worked on, but also to be open and curious about things I’m not familiar with.

Created by WSRC National Advisory Board member David Weinberg in memory of his wife, the **Louise Weinberg Arts Internship** is intended to provide hands-on gallery experience to a third- or fourth-year student whose academic interests lie at the intersection of women’s, gender and sexuality studies, art, art history and/or social justice. The intern works directly with the Kniznick Gallery curator to conduct research, install exhibitions, write about the artwork and assist with media outreach.

MAIA LEFFERMAN ’25

Louise Weinberg Arts Intern

It is difficult to put into words how much this internship gave me. Throughout my time at Brandeis, the Women’s Studies Research Center served as a space where I could escape the stresses and frustrations of the world, appreciate art, and engage in meaningful dialogue with like-minded individuals.

It is rare to find a space that feels so entirely supportive of every part of one’s being. That comes through in the people, the environment and the work itself. When I showed up to work, I was often greeted with a cup of tea and warm conversation. These small acts of care have strengthened me and reflect a culture of thoughtfulness that I now understand is both rare and essential for my well-being. It was an honor to contribute to exhibitions at the Kniznick Gallery, and I will forever be grateful for the opportunity to engage fully with the artistic and curatorial processes. In speaking with artists and visitors, I saw firsthand what I spent all those years studying: that art is a powerful tool of social change.

In this uncertain world, there are few things we can rely on. For me, art is one of those sacred things. It is how I process, communicate and make sense of the world. But the kind of impact I’ve witnessed doesn’t happen on its own. It takes the right people, vision and commitment to create a space that speaks so powerfully to a wide range of experiences.

Maia Lefferman in front of “Polical Ribbons (Brandeis University),” Andrea Bowers, 2024. Silkscreen on satin ribbons, dimensions variable.
Photo: Sam Brower ’25



SCHOLARS

For a complete list of past and current WSRC scholars, visit brandeis.edu/wsrc/scholars-program/

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“I was honored to direct the WSRC in its transition to an institution that fully partners with the faculty and the university. Its collaborative synergy helped me to launch the Cascading Lives project, for which I will always be grateful. The WSRC stands at an exciting juncture, under the dynamic leadership of Harleen Singh and a dedicated board, as it builds the foundation for its next 25 years of innovative interdisciplinary research and art.”

Karen V. Hansen

Director of the Women’s Studies Research Center, 2017-2020

Victor and Gwendolyn Beinfield Professor of Sociology, Emerita

