imposing evidence

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOPHIA SMITH COLLECTION

Issue 11 · December 2008 · Smith College Libraries
Greetings from the Director

The resounding theme of the last couple of years has been GROWTH! Thanks largely to support from the Ford Foundation, our stacks are bursting at the seams. We have added seventy-seven choice collections of women leaders, many of them representing previously under-documented races, ethnicities, social classes, and sexual orientations.

These new collections, plus additions to existing ones, occupy 1,150 linear feet, the equivalent of 144 standard four-drawer file cabinets. To put that into perspective, this brought the total number of collections to 628 and total volume to 9,600 linear feet.

Thanks to our recent donors, it will be possible for scholars in decades to come to research far more inclusively and thus to write more accurate history.

The SSC’s Web presence has grown dramatically, too. We’ve digitized many more documents and posted them online where they are now available anytime to anyone with an interest. From links on our Web site’s home page you can connect to:

- online finding aids for all 456 collections open to research, including the massive new inventory for the Records of the YWCA of the U.S.A.
- transcripts of fifty in-depth interviews from the Ford-funded Voices of Feminism project. They document Native American, African American, Latina, Asian Pacific Islander, working class and grass roots activists, and lesbian feminists.
- transcripts of twenty-six Population and Reproductive Health Project oral history interviews. Mounted thanks to grants from the Brush and Hewlett Foundations, the interviews chronicle the international movement to lower birth rates, aid in development, and improve women’s health in developing countries.
- an on-line exhibit chronicling the experiences of YWCA international workers, featuring excerpts from the personal papers of five American women who worked across the world for the YWCA of the U.S.A. Their personal documents describe in intimate and informal ways, the impressions, ideas, and activities of American women exposed to radically different cultures.

These new additions help fulfill the promise we make to donors who agree to share their papers—to extend the reach of their words beyond the academy and to the widest possible public. Watch for more online resources in 2009.

There is loss alongside all the growth, however. Since the last issue, we bade a final farewell to an unusually large number of generous donors and supporters: Dolores Alexander, Kathleen Bell, Ellen-Fairbanks “Taffy” Bodman, Cary Herz, Agnes Lauga, Suzanne Steinem Patch, Frances Rich, Bob Schulman, Alida Walsh, and Marianne Walters. Their legacies endure, but we miss these friends of women’s history.

— Sherrill Redmon
Voices of Feminism

Five years ago in these pages, SSC Director Sherrill Redmon announced the launch of the Voices of Feminism Archival Development Project (VOF). The Project set out to address our ever-more acute awareness that the materials in our stacks told only part of the story of women working for social change in this country.

Materials that find their way to archives have tended to be papers created by people of privilege who have a sense of the importance of their lives and work and who are familiar with archives. Much rarer are the records of those who, in the words of VOF Director Joyce Follet, “live at the crossroads, where economic and sexual and racial systems converge.” The paucity of such raw materials has meant that our understanding of history is skewed. Without the stories of these women, the fraction of evidence that is preserved is taken for the whole and narratives of the past are distorted.

The SSC hired public historian Joyce Follet in 2001 to assess the SSC’s collection development needs. Clearly underrepresented in our stacks were sources that document the lives of women of color, lesbians, working-class, and radical women in movements for social change. Joyce concluded that the only way to diversify the SSC’s holdings would be a concerted, focused collection development effort.

As we were developing a new collecting policy, Gloria Steinem called to ask if the SSC might like to partner with her on a proposal to the Ford Foundation. Gloria was especially interested in finding ways to bring to light the many unsung heroines she knew had played a vital role in the women’s movement. The extraordinary synchronicity of the SSC’s needs and Gloria’s aim combined to generate the Voices of Feminism Project which has been funded generously by the Ford Foundation.

As VOF Director, Joyce modeled the project on work she had done earlier for the State Historical Society of Wisconsin which combined oral history interviews with preservation of papers. Relying on Gloria and a staff of oral historians with different areas of expertise—labor history, the old left, reproductive justice, the history of sexuality—VOF staff developed a long list of potential interviewees. Gradually they honed the list to those who were older, had not already committed their papers to other repositories, and whose stories would either fill gaps in the SSC’s holdings or bring critical alternative perspectives to its existing subject strengths.

Because we were keenly aware that some women are savers and some are not, oral history offered us an alternative means for capturing the work of the non-savers. VOF oral historians did extensive preparation for each interview, often surprising narrators with little-known details about their lives. Conducted over two days, the five- to six-hour interviews frequently sent narrators digging into their own files for facts and photographs to confirm dates and clarify details. Reproductive health advocate Luz Rodriguez reported that the experience caused her to look at her “things” in a whole new light. “Now it’s not just annoying clutter I can’t bear to throw away, but documents that are of value to someone.”

Knowing that archives like the SSC value their papers helps activists to see that what they do reverberates beyond their own day-to-day struggles. Women accustomed to thinking of their activism as simply what needed to be done often come to acknowledge their roles as agents of social change. Anti-poverty organizer Michaelann Bewsee put it this way, “I still feel so surprised that we would be approached by you guys about doing this…. [I]t’s definitely an honor and it values the work of low-income people, and that feels important and that doesn’t happen all that often.”

As the Project proceeded, more and more names of individuals and organizations emerged, building an intricate web of connections and relationships. Some of those relationships have resulted in additional commitments of papers for the SSC. In other cases, a new awareness of the value of papers and records has led to their preservation in other archives across the country.

VOF staff have now completed fifty-nine oral history interviews and the SSC has received commitments of dozens of new collections of personal papers and organization records. We are eternally grateful to all the generous VOF narrators and collection donors for entrusting their stories and papers to us. Having records of their work secure and available for research helps historians, teachers, journalists, and filmmakers to see patterns as well as the persistence and diversity of their activities. Our next challenge is to find support for readying these exciting new resources for research.

You can read the transcripts of many of the VOF oral histories on the SSC’s Web site along with accompanying biographical information and descriptions of related papers.

—Maida Goodwin
The following excerpts and most of the illustrations in this issue came to the SSC as part of the Voices of Feminism Archival Development Project.

**Luz Alvarez Martinez** was born in 1943 to Mexican immigrant parents in San Leandro, California. Her father was a carpenter, and the family spent summers in farm-worker camps harvesting crops. After completing high school, Martinez married and had four sons, combining childrearing with community support for farmworker organizing.

In the late 1970s Martinez studied to become a nurse midwife. She became involved in the Berkeley Women’s Health Collective, helping to establish its women of color clinic. Inspired by the health activism of African American women, especially the First National Conference on Black Women’s Health at Spelman College in 1983, Martinez co-founded the National Latina Health Organization in 1986, the first national organization by and for Latinas working on health issues. Martinez was active in early efforts to form and sustain multiracial coalitions among Latina, Native American, Asian Pacific American, and African American women beginning in the late 1980s. In 1997 she became a co-founder of the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective.

The following excerpt from the Martinez Papers is from the article “Raising Health Issues For Latinas By Latinas” announcing the founding of the NLHO. It was published in *Organizers’ Notes* in January 1988:

> “The concept of self-help is one of the strengths of our organization. Our group will give women the attention we have never gotten; it will give us a place where we can feel safe enough to tell our own story… what has been causing our stress and affecting our health…. We will be sharing with each other our heavy burdens and our concerns, allowing ourselves to verbalize things that we may have thought no one else would understand. Listening to each other, supporting each other and knowing that we are not alone will help us to get a better understanding of our situations. It is through our own knowledge and empowerment that we can bring about changes in our health.”

**Linda Stout** was born in 1954 to tenant farmers in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. Her Quaker upbringing combined with the racism she observed firsthand working in local mills, drew her to activism for social change. After moving to Charleston, South Carolina, Stout participated in various women’s groups, yet she felt shunned for her class background. Eventually Stout found a comfortable home in the peace movement. She organized Friends Meetings in Charleston, offered military draft counseling services, started a peace group, and began to see connections between military spending and poverty. Family crises took Stout back to North Carolina where she founded the Piedmont Peace Project, a low-income, multiracial organizing venture that makes connections between local, national, and international issues.

Among the materials in Stout’s Papers is the text of a speech Stout gave at Radcliffe College, circa 1993, when she was a public policy fellow. This excerpt describes some of the work of the Piedmont Peace Project:

> “[W]e had to deal a lot with racism within our own membership. Half of the workers were people of color and we had to talk about how we have been taught to look at each other. How as long as we kept separated by race, we could not build a strong enough group to win our goals. We also had to deal with folks’ racism and prejudices towards folks outside of our community, or in this case people who are foreigners…. [T]hat’s a real problem in our communities, partly because that’s what people are taught. For instance, when we first started organizing, you would always hear millworkers say, “Well, you know, I’m out of a job and it’s cause of
“In the case of the Procter Silex workers we began to educate them about the Mexican workers,—mostly women who are incredibly oppressed and working in horrible conditions that are totally destroying their health. One of our members who worked at Procter Silex,…she said, “well, you know, used to when I saw a Mexican, I just wanted to run them down in my truck,” but she says, “but now I know that they’re poor people, just like me, trying to feed their children.” She has learned where to address her anger. A lot of times, our work is just running the anger into the right direction.…”

Born in 1951, Anita Stroud grew up in public housing in Baltimore. As a teen in the late 1960s, she helped start an underground student group to protest institutionalized racism at her high school and became a community worker with the Black Panther Party. This activism cost her a high school diploma. She changed her name to Nkenge Touré after joining the Black Panther Party and giving birth to her second daughter.

Touré moved to Washington, D.C. in the early 1970s where she joined the staff of the D.C. Rape Crisis Center. As the Center’s general administrator and director of community education, Touré became a pioneer in anti-rape organizing and advocated for addressing all forms of violence against women: psychological, cultural, racial, economic, state, physical, and sexual. As a founder of the National Black United Front, she defended women’s rights within nationalist politics. In 1982 she and Loretta Ross co-founded the International Council of African Women (ICAW) to prepare African-American women to participate in the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women held in Nairobi, Kenya in July of 1985.

In this excerpt from her VOF oral history interview, Touré describes the Conference:

“Another major issue for the feminist movement itself was the definition of feminism. Many of us had long held that the definition of feminism was too narrow and constricting, that it was not broad and inclusive enough to bring in others, that there were women in other parts of the world who had different perspectives about feminism, who were sort of including different things....

“Women from Cuba, Nicaragua, were talking about the fact that, you know, immigrant issues were not really a part of what the feminist movement in the United States was looking at. That many of the issues...that affected women of color and communities of color, were... not on the agenda for action under the traditional prevailing definition of feminism.... That it was basically abortion rights, not reproductive justice and reproductive rights.... It was ERA. It was violence against women, and it was...lesbian rights. And that was pretty much the platform for the feminist movement and women of color were like, no, no, no. That’s not enough. You all ain’t the only women and these ain’t the only issues.... And so it was an educational process for them to go and hear women from all over

Native Women's Reproductive Rights Agenda

“Empowerment Through Dialogue”, a historical three-day meeting was held in Pierre, South Dakota, on May 16, 17, and 18, 1990. More than 30 Native Women, representing over eleven (11) Nations from the Northern Plains came together in a collective decision making process to form a Reproductive Rights Coalition. Their efforts resulted in an Agenda for Native Women’s Reproductive Rights.

Pamphlet published by the Native American Women’s Health Education Resource Center, circa 1990. NAWHERC Records
the world say, Oh, hell, no. Your definition of feminism is not broad enough. It is not radical enough to really challenge the system in the ways that it needs to be challenged....

“So the conference was an extremely important conference, and the things that came out of that conference reverberated on and on and on.”

Michaelann Bewsee (b. 1947) grew up in a working-class Catholic family in Springfield, Massachusetts. A single mother at the age of 19, Bewsee moved to Boston where she did clerical, factory, and waitressing work while searching for personal, spiritual, and political moorings. She was a foot soldier for the ERA and cooked for the Black Panther Party’s free breakfast program. Bewsee struggled with poverty in these years, and, against her will, Michaelann’s parents took custody of her daughter. In the mid-1970s Michaelann and a partner homesteaded in Maine. Bewsee returned to Springfield in 1977, pregnant with a second daughter. After a few years on public assistance, she began work as a decisional trainer with prison inmates.

She became involved with the Hampden County Peace Coalition (1980–83), the Communist Labor Party (1981–85), the Rainbow Coalition (1983–89), and the McKnight Neighborhood Council (1980–86). She also joined a few other women on public assistance to protest welfare policies. In 1985 their efforts led to the formation of Arise for Social Justice, where Bewsee remains a key leader.

Arise is a grassroots “poor people’s rights organization” whose purpose is “to learn to speak for ourselves to advocate for positive changes in the treatment of poor people and in the welfare system.” Most members are women who are or have been on welfare and who come from diverse racial, ethnic and educational backgrounds. The group aims to educate, organize, and unite poor people to know and stand up for their rights, to educate the community to its common interest in economic justice for poor people, to educate low-income people about and encourage their participation in the political process, and to promote self-esteem among low-income people.

In the excerpt from her VOF Oral History Bewsee describes some of the techniques Arise employs to encourage a deeper analysis of the roots of social problems.

“We have one committee that deals with incarceration, addiction…. No matter what the larger social and political and economic reasons….ultimately, you know, it’s a personal struggle to figure how to deal with addiction....

So, say we’ll have a woman who says, If I hadn’t gone to jail, I’d still be using. Jail saved my life. I don’t understand why we’re so down on prison, because if it hadn’t been for being incarcerated—so, that’s her experience. Her experience was that she had to be completely removed from her environment in order to start to loosen the grip of addiction. So that’s a truth for her....

We have a game that we play called the Why Game. So, if a woman is to say, Well, if I hadn’t gone to jail, I would still be addicted, [we say] Why? Well, because jail was the only place I could go. Why? Well, because there aren’t these other places that I could go. Why? You know, and you just go and you break it down, break it down, break it down. And then the light bulbs start to come on.”
In recent years, generous gifts and college programs have allowed the SSC to offer Smith undergraduates a variety of opportunities to explore careers in archives and related fields through internships.

A 1998 bequest from Margie Heath Fraenkel (Smith '25) provided funds to help raise the SSC's profile. Fraenkel interns have rendered invaluable assistance in enriching the SSC's Web presence, helping to maintain the Web site, create new online exhibits, and preparing collection inventories for mounting on the Web. Working closely with Digital Resources Archivist Margaret Jessup, this year's Fraenkel Intern, Carolyn Baldwin ('09) was instrumental in getting the massive finding aid for the YWCA Records on the Web and helping us devise ways to aid researchers in navigating the complex guide. Carrie's final project was to help design and mount our forthcoming Web exhibit, "The Power of Women's Voices" which features selections from the Voices of Feminism Project.

Two undergraduates have taken advantage of the College's Praxis internship program to explore their interests in history and archival work. The Praxis program, launched in 1998, makes funding available for every Smith undergraduate to experience at least one paid internship. Melody Sabine ('07) spent the summer of 2006 working on the 45 feet of historical photographs in the YWCA of the U.S.A. Records. Melody's interest in international relations was particularly invaluable when it came to arranging and describing the extensive photographic record of the YWCA's international work. After graduation, the SSC's Studwell Fund made it possible for us to hire Melody to "finish off" the YWCA photographs. Jane Mead von Salis ('48) and her archivist daughter Susan von Salis ('79) established the Studwell Fund in 2004 to help the SSC ready its holdings for research.

Adrian Comly's ('08) Praxis internship took her to New York City where she surveyed the file cabinets, closets, and hidden corners of the offices of the Ms. Foundation for Women and prepared their records for transfer to the SSC. Working closely with MFW's Caroline Hotaling and SSC staff via email and telephone, Adrian organized, listed, and packed the Foundation's historical records and worked with the staff there to develop guidelines for ongoing records management and future transfers to the SSC.

For many years, the SSC has been awarded an internship through the College's On-Campus Internship Program (OCIP). Aspiring archivists accompany us on donor visits, do reference work, process collections, and design exhibits. Last year's OCIP Intern, Corey Borenstein ('07), got a taste of the present and the past when she worked on the records of the women's professional and literary organization Sorosis, founded in 1856, and Arise for Social Justice, a local grassroots advocacy organization, founded in 1985. This year's OCIP Intern, Julia Clark ('11) is getting a crash course in both the ERA Campaign and the challenges of audiovisual materials' preservation as she works on the records of the Equal Rights Amendment Campaign Archives Project, a mid-1980s oral history and documentation program.

Our newest internship is the brainchild of Professor Susan Van Dyne, Chair of Smith's Program for the Study of Women and Gender (SWG). Eager to facilitate use of some of the SSC's newer Voices of Feminism collections, SWG established an internship for one of its majors to help us prepare collections for classroom use. Our first SWG Intern, Erin Molloy ('09), spent the summer of 2008 working with Maida Goodwin to arrange and describe the papers of lesbian photographer, filmmaker, and activist Joan E. Biren and reproductive justice organizer and human rights educator Loretta J. Ross.

—Maida Goodwin

Adrian Comly '08 and Caroline Hotaling of the Ms. Foundation for Women sorting through the Foundation's records, summer 2007.
Heartfelt thanks to these special friends of the SSC who made generous monetary contributions since our last issue.

Nancy Veale Ahern (Smith ’59)
Marilyn Bender Altschul (Smith ’44)
Carolyn Dwight Bain (Smith ’44)
Ford Foundation
Raymond Fredette
Sarah Thomas Gillett (Smith ’60)
Vida Simenas Grayson (Smith ’57)
Christine Hannon
Daniel Hoffheimer
Mayotta Southworth Kendrick (Smith ’44)
Margaret E. Mahoney
Jane Mansbridge
Kristina Kiehl and Robert Friedman
Leona A. Lefkowitz
Barbara J. Love
Sally Lunt
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Ms. Foundation for Education and Communication
Ms. Foundation for Women
The New York Times Company Foundation
Elizabeth A. Nichols (Smith ’90)
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Frances Garber Pepper (Smith ’62)
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Smith College Program for the Study of Women and Gender
Silvana Solano (Smith ’83)
John Stauffer
Monica F. Toomey (Smith MSW ’08)
Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund
Susan von Salis (Smith ’79)
Jane Mead von Salis (Smith ’48)
Phoebe Dent Weil

Donors to the AIAW Title IX Women’s Sports Governance Fund

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L. Leotus Morrison  Charlotte West
Marina Morrison
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National Association of Collegiate Women Athletic Administrators

“Dear Diary—Do I even have any dirty little secrets?”

“If you ask me, you’re a masochist”

“Commies, curmudgeons and queers! Oh my!”

If you’d like a set of the SSC’s six new bookmarks, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Susan Barker, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA 01063.
Snapshots

The SSC celebrated its 65th birthday in 2008 with an exciting two-day conference highlighting recent acquisitions and the opening to research of the YWCA of the U.S.A. Records. Speakers emphasized the importance of preserving the historic record for effective activism and accurate history.

This past year SSC staff made a record number of presentations to Five-College classes and other groups, both on-campus and off. Some 534 students from thirty-six classes in a variety of disciplines came to Alumnae Gym for introductory orientation sessions. Other guests ranged from a class of Holyoke public school fifth graders to the International Women’s Writing Guild.

SSC staff took our show on the road, too. In May Kelly Anderson chaired a panel about oral history at the Archives, Libraries, Museums, and Special Collections Conference at the City University of New York Graduate Center. Sherrill Redmon moderated a panel of VOF interviewers and narrators at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women in Minneapolis in June. Panelists were Kelly, former SSC staffer Kathleen Banks Nutter, and Loretta Ross. Maida Goodwin recounted YWCA history at the YWCA Annual Conference in DC in May and its North East Regional Council in June. She also gave a presentation on the Hale Family at the Hale Undergraduate Conference in Rhode Island in July. Sherrill introduced the SSC to the Smith Club of Minneapolis and made a presentation on diversifying archival holdings to the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference in Chautauqua, NY.


**Sophia Smith Collection Fact Sheet**

- **Size of holdings:** 9,600 linear feet
- **Number of collections:** 628

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2007–09 Grierson Fellowships


Nicole Eaton, Brown University · Women’s History and Women’s Rights: Gender and Collective Memory in American Feminism, 1848–1998

Susan Goodier, State University of New York Institute of Technology · Reward or Punishment? Suffrage and Women’s War Work during the Great War, 1914–1918

Michael E. McGuire, Boston University · Comrades in Crisis, Critics in Peace: American Non-governmental Organizations, the Reconstruction of France, and Franco-American Relations, 1914–29

Robin K. Payne, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill · Love and Liberation: Second-Wave Feminism and the Social and Cultural Meanings of Romantic Love


2007-09 Bain Fellowships

Joan O. Epstein, Eckerd College · In Tune with Nature: Musicians Gertrude Smith and Dorothy Smith Dushkin

Lisa Pace Vetter, American University · Webs of Power and Influence: Political Theory and the Origins of American Feminism

Shannon K. Withycombe, University of Wisconsin-Madison · Miscarriage Experiences in Nineteenth-Century America

2007-09 Travel Grants

Jennifer L. Ball, Clarkson University · Contraception within the fields of gender history and the history of sexualities

Susan Bandy, Semmelweis University, Budapest · The “Woman Question,” the Female Body, and the Quest for Autonomous Self-Definition in Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Women’s Literature

Agatha Beins, Rutgers University · Print publications and feminist activism in the 1970s

Lyz Bly, Case Western Reserve University · Breaking Waves: Second Wave Radical Feminists and Third Wave Riot Grrrls

Jo Butterfield, University of Iowa · Imagining Women’s Human Rights: International Feminist Activism, Gender Politics and the Birth of the Cold War

Julie A. Golia, Columbia University · Advice Columns and the Making of the Modern American Newspaper, 1895–1955

Midori Green, University of Minnesota · Sec’s Appeal: the Secretary in American Popular Culture, 1900–1964


Benjamin A. Kahan, University of Pennsylvania · Modern American Celibacies, 1886–1969

Holly M. Kent, Lehigh University · “All Reform Depends upon You” Femininity, Authority and the Politics of Authorship in Antislavery Women’s Fiction, 1821–61

Ronnie D. Lankford, Jr., Independent Scholar · The Belle Curve: The Revitalization of Female Singer-Songwriters at the Turn of the 21st Century

Grace V. Leslie, Yale University · U.S. Women’s Transnational Activism, 1925–1975

Norah H. Lind, Virginia Commonwealth University · Behind the Artist’s Eye

Julia L. Mickenberg, University of Texas at Austin · The New Woman Tries on Red: Russia in the American Feminist Imagination, 1905–1945

Voichita Nachescu, Rice University · Becoming the Feminist Subject. Consciousness-raising Groups in Second Wave Feminism

Kirsten Swinth, Fordham University · Bringing Home the Bacon and Frying It Up Too: A Cultural History of the Working Mother in America, 1950–2000


Rebecca Tuuri, Rutgers University · White Gloved Agents of Change: The Activism of Wednesdays in Mississippi

Andrea Walton, Indiana University · Women Academics, Trustees, and Donors in Higher Education: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives
Smith College does not discriminate in its admission policy, programs, or activities on the bases of race, color, creed, handicap, national/ethnic origin, age, religion, sexual orientation, or disabled veteran/Vietnam-era veteran status. Nor does the college discriminate on the bases of race, color, creed, handicap, national/ethnic origin, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation or disabled veteran/Vietnam-era veteran status in its educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletic and other school-administered programs, or employment practices and programs. In addition to meeting fully its obligations of nondiscrimination under federal and state laws, Smith College is committed to maintaining a community in which a diverse population can live and work in an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and mutual respect for the rights and sensibilities of each individual, regardless of differences in economic status, ethnic background, political views or other personal characteristics and beliefs. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Director of Affirmative Action, College Hall #3, 413-585-2141.

Look for these recent books using SSC materials:

Ad Women: How They Impact What We Need, Want, and Buy by Juliann Sivulka, Prometheus Books, 2008


But One Race: the Life of Robert Purvis by Margaret Hope Bacon, State University of New York Press, 2007


Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887–1937 by Karen Ellinghaus, University of Nebraska Press, 2006

Women Physicians and the Cultures of Medicine edited by Ellen More, Elizabeth Fee, and Manon Parry, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008