

# Sociology Department Newsletter

Newsletter for the Alumni and Friends of the Department of Sociology, Grinnell College - Spring 2007

GRINNELL COLLEGE



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## Kesho Y. Scott Gives Lilly Lecture

### "Choosing to Walk in the Footsteps of Heroes"

Good morning. I will exploit my own life story to tell you a story of how I came to say: I have found my vocations by "Choosing to Walk in the Footsteps of Heroes."

I was born in 1953 of teen parents. Mama was sixteen and daddy was a year older and had to go to work in the factory. In fact, they were married in "shotgun" style for reasons that seemed like a family secret for as long as I can remember. Shotguns and family secrets were abundant in my family and were part of their "biography" as a group of "want to be anything but Negro" blacks. They were conscious that they were not like other blacks. "Not being like other blacks" is a mantra because it suggests we do something different to be different and that is a family calling of some kind.

The root of the word vocation in Latin is the word for voice. And, in finding my own vocation or vocations, I had to be aware first of the voices in the family in which I was born.

So I piece together an idea here that vocation begins with voices from our families. In my case, it was a strange mixture of violence and love. At times in my life, I thought of those voices as baggage and at other times, those were the very voices that informed my judgments and choices. But at no time did I choose to let those voices alone determine who I was and how I acted.

This same message I teach in my diversity trainings: we all have cultural baggage. Some of that "stuff" is the kind of cultural capital so necessary for being able to write a complete sentence and knowing who you can trust outside of your community. But my family mantras were not just songs repeated with little value but were sometimes poetic tools for guidance and strength in a confusing and overpowering world.

The world and "Amerika" whose legacies of racism, sexism, classism, and ethnic violence had it own voices. My first heroes were my grandparents and parents who helped me make

sense of the "official narrative" of the United States of America. From the basal readers, "Dick and Jane," to the compromise of 1820 that made slaves 3/5th of a person for voting purposes, to why my family loved the Pittsburgh Pirates because the Detroit Tigers didn't have any black players. My family also got involved in the personal lives of the characters from the "Edge of Night" or the "Search for Tomorrow" --- by the way, these were Soaps in the 50s and 60s.



I can hear my grandparents saying: "Baby, she should leave him. She really loves someone else. He just doesn't understand her. Poor child..."

The same grandparents who taught me about life under Jim Crow and why Emmett Till was killed and the need to stand up to discrimination, the way Adam Clayton Powell from New York, Barbara Jordan from Texas, and Congressman John Conyers from Michigan --- voices in the system to fight for us --- did. They also taught me about life choices from the Soaps, from a context where everyone was employed, white, and there was no such thing as domestic violence.

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By the time I was coming of age, against the backdrop of the 1967 Detroit riot, the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King

**Editor's Note:** Dr. Kesho Scott was invited to give this speech for the Lilly Faculty Lecture series on "Journeys to Vocation." The talk occurred on April 19, 2007 in Herrick Chapel, Grinnell College.

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## Kesho Scott Gives Scholar's Convocation

(Continued from page 1)

and Robert Kennedy, and the 1969 attack on the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California and in Detroit, I had a different context. My context was critical, and I made the choice to listen to other voices.

Those voices were the political voices of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, Maulana Ron Karenga of the Pan African Congress, and the Black Panther voices of Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Seale, and Huey P. Newton.

Political voices of James Lee Boggs from the Black Workers Party, General Lee Baker from the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and Reverend Cleave from the Republic of New Africa.

Political voices of Stokely Carmichael, Eric Williams, Robert Allen, H. Rap Brown, and Robert Williams, who fled to China.

Political voices of Modebo Keita and Ernie M. Kalimoto from the People's Action Committee and revolutionary women's voices of Angela Davis, Elaine May, Kathleen Cleaver, and As-sata, all associated with the Black Liberation Army.

Some of the voices I listened to came from other countries: Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana, Amilcar Cabral from Guinea Bissau, Jomo Kenyatta from Kenya, Senghor's "Negritude" and Diop's "African roots of western civilization," both from Senegal, Walter Rodney from Guyana, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara from the Cuban revolution, Mao Tse Tung from China, V.I. Lenin from Russia, Franz Fanon from Martinique, Julius K. Nyerere's African Socialism from Tanzania, and all I could read about Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC).

I chose to read a different set of bibles: *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, *Capitalism and Slavery*, *Black Nationalism in White America*, Mao's *Red Book* and Nkrumah's *Black Book*, *State and Revolution*...and so many more. These were the books of my theoretical world and of my political heroes. I read them in a world that I was helping to create, with my local political activist heroes in Detroit. These were certainly not the books I was reading to get a "so-called" education in college.

These Detroit voices taught me to politically define an enemy of the people, how to determine a local problem, how to make a flyer, how to recruit a cadre, how to organize study circles, how to get someone out of jail, how to shoot a gun, and how to turn a political line into political action.

In essence, they taught me that my judg-

ments and ability to make a principled decision were the most important ingredients in my character, regardless of the organization, the particular leaders, or the turmoil and dynamics of the moment.

I sang Curtis Mayfield songs every day when they banned them on the radio:

"We're a winner and don't ever let anybody say...we can't make it cause a feeble's mind is in our way....no more tears do we cry...cause we have finally dried our eyes...and we are moving on up....moving on up... Lord, have mercy...we are moving on up."

Or...\*War\*...Edwin Starr..."what is it good for....absolutely...nothing."

Or, the Last Poets.... "I love niggers...niggers are me...but there is one thing...I do not love about niggers.....Niggers are scared of Revolution!"

And, I danced my butt off...to James Brown's "Say it loud...I'm black and I'm proud....say it loud...I'm black and I'm proud."

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I choose a political vocation in two senses of the word vocation: One was to embrace the voices that I heard and the other one was to project a political voice in a professional career as I was a teacher in a local community college. I married but I did not become a housewife, I became a person who engages other people's political ideas, and beliefs in a political manner and I got paid for it. I think they call that teaching and research and being a public intellectual.

My Black Nationalist revolutionary days scared my parents, as it did the black men I loved. As I got older and more political, I began to look at my personal experiences through political lenses. Now there were voices in those revolutionary movements calling out to me about what kind of woman I should become.

By the late 70s, some of those voices came from my family: My grandmother said "Straighten your hair," "Be a lady" and "Stay Yvonne." My mother, who had an Afro now and listened to Miriam Makeba's South African Click Song, said "Be Kesho, go to Africa but get married." And new voices came from outside my "politics" and from other communities of resistance.

And my "black sisters in the revolution" had ideas far from revolutionarily justice and equality when it came to their relationships with men. They wore African clothes and made babies and often were abused. I bailed out. My voice told me to get the hell out and

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# Department Chair Notes

by Kent McClelland

One focus of energy for the Sociology Department this year has been the hiring of two new faculty members to begin in August 2007. In both cases, we have hired dynamic, exciting young sociologists who bring curricular and ethnic diversity to our department, and we are very pleased with the outcome of these searches.

David Cook Martín has been hired in a tenure-track line after a special search to fill a position vacated by Luis Fernandez, when he left at the end of the 2005-06 school year. Cook Martín has a Ph.D. in sociology from UCLA and is currently completing a two-year postdoctoral position at UC Irvine. He will teach a special topics course next year on international immigration and a seminar called "Citizenship Matters," as well as introductory sociology and research methods courses. He is engaged in a long-term historical comparative research project on

migration between Europe and South America, and he comes to Grinnell with research grants in hand that will fund several student research assistants. David, who is from Argentina originally, brings a family to Grinnell, including his wife Claudia, and two school-age boys, Nicolas and Gabriel.

Betsy Erbaugh has been hired in a two-year term position to replace first Susan Ferguson, who takes a year-long sabbatical leave in 2007-08, and then Kesho Scott, who takes a year-long sabbatical leave in 2008-09. Erbaugh is currently completing her Ph.D. in sociology at the University of New Mexico and is writing a dissertation on "Queering Anti-Violence Politics: LGBTQ Community Organizing to End Intimate Partner Violence." She will be teaching a special topics seminar on queer theory next year, as well as courses on gender and society, introductory sociology, and research methods. Betsy will be bringing a new baby with her, due in June, when she comes to Grinnell this summer.

Department  
News...

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## Alice Gates '97 Returns to Grinnell

by Chris Hunter

The Sociology Department was honored to host an alumna in the spring semester as a Wilson Program Practitioner. While on campus, Alice Gates talked with a number of classes, including Kent McClelland's "Conflict and Conflict Management" course and Chris Hunter's "Organizing for Social Good" seminar. She also spoke in a public session on career issues in community organizing and bridging the activist/academic divide.

Alice graduated from Grinnell in 1997 with a major in sociology and a Gender and Women's Studies concentration. She was elected to Phi Beta Kappa as a junior, and she received the Lori Schwab Memorial Prize for contributions to community service. Alice also was the one student in her graduating class to be awarded the President's Medal for outstanding scholarship and leadership.

While a student, Alice studied abroad in the Center for Global Education's Program on Women and Development, which took her to Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala. She became intrigued by her class readings on liberation theology and by her experiences with Christian-based communities organized by local residents in which they discussed their own struggles and the Bible, and by Zapatista communities, which were being organized in opposition to neo-liberal economic forces.

After graduating, Alice was able to return

to Guatemala as a Human Rights Observer, working for a year with returned refugees. She then returned to the United States to continue her activism, spending seven years in the Portland, Oregon area helping to organize disenfranchised people, including migrant farm workers, recent immigrants, and low-income mothers trying to improve their kids' schools.

Currently, Alice is enrolled as a graduate student in the joint Sociology Ph.D. and Masters of Social Work program at the University of Michigan. In her "spare" time, Alice also has become involved in a new nonprofit organization, the Washtenaw County Worker Center, which wants to provide a safe space for low-wage immigrant workers to organize for improved labor conditions.



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# Our Feminist Legacy

by Karla Erickson

On May 2nd, the University of Minnesota will publish a book that is very important to me and to my co-editors. Since 1999, I have been working with my graduate advisor and friend, Jennifer Pierce (Associate Professor of American Studies, University of Minnesota) and my fellow graduate student and friend, Hokulani Aikau (now Assistant Professor of Indigenous Politics

at the University of Hawai'i) on an edited anthology of feminist narratives entitled *Feminist Waves, Feminist Generations: Life Narratives from the Academy* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007). Together, we were interested in telling a more nuanced story about how feminism has grown and transformed in the academy over the last three decades. We co-authored the introduction, and each of us has written our own feminist narrative of how we first encountered feminism, what it means to us to be feminist scholars and teachers, and how we view our own biography in relation

to generations of feminists in the academy. My chapter is entitled "On Taking Feminism for Granted" and reflects on the ups and downs of identifying as a feminist and looking for an intellectual and political home in the 1990s.

This project has empowered and energized all of us co-editors. In 2000, we sent out a request for submissions that produced a rich medley of feminist narratives. Methodologically, personal narratives have the potential of providing the kind of detail that is often missing in synthetic historical accounts. Narratives can bring to light new or untapped perspectives on broader historical processes and phenomena that may undermine, refute, or contradict dominant views. *Feminist Waves, Feminist Generations: Life Stories from the Academy* focuses on feminist generations in the academy through the lens of movement and mobile trajectories. We use feminist generations as a reference point for the timing of one's entry into graduate school, and feminist waves as a metaphor for the movement and relocation of theories, politics, methods, and ways of knowing across time and place. We argue that thinking about feminist waves as movement highlights the variations within generational groups as well as the continuities between them.

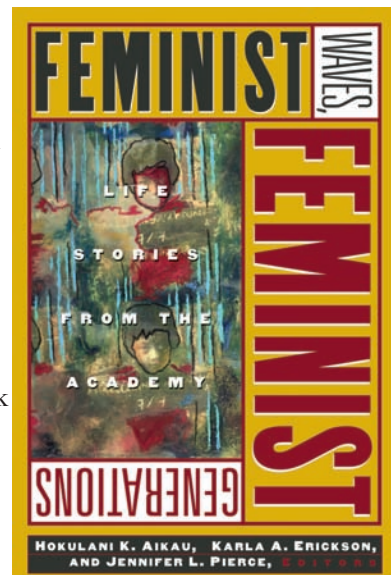
The scholars who have contributed to the volume range in age from 20-60 years old. They are trained in diverse fields including History,

Sociology, Anthropology, Queer Studies, American Studies, Women's Studies, English, and Political Science. They were born in various countries and raised in disparate circumstances. What the contributors share is as interesting as the ways in which these scholars differ: They have each, at some point, found themselves a part of a feminist community within the University of Minnesota. We hold place constant in order to examine how ideas, people, and resources come together and inform one another across and within generations of feminist scholars in the academy. We use these life stories from three decades of feminist scholars from the University of Minnesota as a case study of feminist generations more broadly. As such, we use the local to address our broader theoretical and conceptual questions.

I am proud of this book because I think it qualifies as a "good read." It challenges us to think about the social organization of knowledge, the value of feminist institutions and networks, and the always provocative interplay of biography and history.

I think it will be both inspiring and enlightening for the next generation of feminist scholars, many of whom I am lucky to work with and teach here at Grinnell. I also hope that the book

will operate as an invitation to other feminist scholars to reflect on their own intellectual biographies and feminist trajectories. I think undergraduates students also will enjoy the book for the insights provided by the range of feminist stories that are brought together here. It is important to me that as we teach and learn through feminism today that we are keenly aware of how our current work is situated in a legacy of risk and courage, disappointment and pain that has brought feminism into the lives of individuals and into the enduring institutions of higher education.



## Chris Hunter

My life over the last two years has focused on teaching, service on the Executive Council, and volunteer involvement on the board of directors of Mid-Iowa Community Action. I have lived what we often discuss in my seminar on nonprofit organizations: how work in nonprofit settings drains our time and emotional energy, even as it energizes us.

The Executive Council at Grinnell College, for those who don't know or have forgotten, is the elected body of faculty who advise the President on policy issues and faculty hiring. My two years as Social Studies Division chair have been interesting but tiring. In a similar way, my work as chair of the board of MICA

has been rewarding, since we are doing good work with low-income families; but also challenging and emotionally draining, since we have been figuring out how to split off part of the organization so that each part can do its work more effectively. Both experiences, though, do provide lots of immediate examples for class discussion!

Still, I am looking forward to the end of the spring semester, when my term on the Council and my time as chair of MICA end. Judy and I then look forward to going to London in the fall, where I will be teaching in Grinnell-In-London and Judy will be on leave.

## Faculty Update...



## Kent McClelland

Neil MacKinnon, Peter Burke, Jan Stets, Clark McPhail, and John Skvoretz, along with several of their students and collaborators, as well as Fararo and McClelland—a virtual who's who of sociologists who have helped to establish this newly emerging subfield of sociological theory.

McClelland's contributions to this volume include an introductory overview of control systems thinking in sociology, written with Fararo, and a chapter on "Understanding Collective Control Processes," which further develops the perspectives introduced in his earlier theoretical articles and applies the theory to two empirical cases, a communal conflict between Muslims and Hindu farmers in Bangladesh and observations of French families interacting in a fun-house hall of mirrors.

Kent McClelland is co-editor, with well-known theorist Thomas J. Fararo, of a new book called *Purpose, Meaning, and Action: Control Systems Theories in Sociology* (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006). The book brings together twelve previously unpublished articles written by sociological researchers whose research programs build on a number of recently developed sociological theories, all with strong conceptual links: Perception Control Theory, Affect Control Theory, Identity Control Theory, and Generative Structuralism.

Contributors to the book include noted sociologists David Heise, Lynn Smith-Lovin,

## Susan Ferguson

Another year has sped quickly by. Gillian began kindergarten. Alana turned three years old, and I am wanting time to slow down so I can savor their early childhood even more.

My work has been rich and fulfilling with several book projects, teaching workshops, and more consulting work. This past year, I completed the American Sociological Association's Departmental Resource Group's training, which enables me to do external reviews of Sociology Departments around the country. Being an external reviewer is a privilege, but I also find the task compelling. I learn so much from observing different sociology programs. I also enjoy leading teaching workshops for other sociology faculty at our professional meetings. The most recent was a Teaching Workshop for High School Sociology Teachers at the Midwest Sociological Society meetings in Chicago.

In November, the first book in a series I am editing on Families in the 21st Century was published. Karen Secombe (Portland State University) wrote *Families in Poverty* (Allyn and Bacon, 2007). Later this year, the second book, *Global Families* by Meg Wilkes Karraker (University of St. Thomas) will be published. The fifth edition of *Mapping the Social Landscape: Readings in Sociology* (McGraw Hill, 2008) came out in March.

The highlight of this past year was returning to my alma mater of Colorado State University, where they were celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Women's Studies Program. As an early alumna of that program, I received the first Karen J. Wedge Award for "outstanding contributions as a Women's Studies alumna who combines academic and activist feminism as a vehicle of social change." I am honored.



## Student News...

# Off-Campus Experiences of Some Sociology Majors

Compiled by K.T. Mineck

### Allison Berger '08 in Ecuador:

This spring I am studying abroad in the cities of Quito and Tena, Ecuador. I am learning through an organization in Quito called CI-MAS, or the Center for Investigations of the Environment and Health. Through my study abroad program, I am pursuing my interests in medical sociology and the sociology of global development. For the first half of the semester, I am taking classes and going on field trips to investigate the social



and economic aspects of global development. One of my main interests here is the impact of the flower industry on women's reproductive rights and health. To experientially learn about this topic, our class toured a flower plantation and interviewed an indigenous farmer about his view of the plantations. We also have learned a lot about the clash between the government and the impoverished members of the informal economy and found out how officials have "cleaned up" Quito's Old Town by kicking out street vendors, raising rent, and restructuring city parks to appeal more to wealthy tourists. During the second half of the semester, I will have an internship assisting in the obstetrics and gynecology department of a poor public hospital in Tena, Ecuador. After my internship, I plan to write a comparative paper on the differences between Western and Indigenous methods of childbirth. Taking classes with Ecuadorian professors and having an internship in rural health have come together to provide me with a global perspective of sociology.

### Sara Thomas '08 in Northern Ireland:

We were negotiating a dispute over a Protestant political march when one of the Protestants put an orange in the middle of the mediation table; a blatant threat. As Americans, only a few among us realized the symbolism of the fruit sitting between us, that had this interaction been a real mediation session and not a role-play, negotiations would have immediately terminated. In Northern Ireland, where I have been studying for the past two months, the color orange represents the Orange Order, an army of British loyalists and, in the eyes of Catholics, a history of inequality.

Last year in my Sociology of the Body class with Professor Ferguson, we learned about the significance of clothing and jewelry as a form of self-expression. In Northern Ireland, clothing and jewelry have completely different implications than they do in the United States. Last year, a past program participant wore an orange-tinted tie into a pub and was approached and threatened by former members of the Irish Republican Army (the IRA) because they thought he was a British supporter. Had he not had an American accent, his decision to wear that single color could have caused a brawl. Here, things that are obsolete in the United States become crucial pieces of information that pinpoint loyalties and reveal political biases. In Northern Ireland, there are Catholic crosses and Protestant crosses, Irish colors and British colors, Nationalist symbols and Unionist symbols, and even young children know the difference. Everything is segregated into Catholic and Protestant: sports (hurling vs. cricket), schools

pronunciation of the alphabet ('h' can be aych or haych), and surnames (Doherty can be 'Dorty' or 'Do-her-ty'). Even cities' names depend on which community you ask. I live in Londonderry, Derry, the Foyle, or the Walled City, depending on whom you ask. My host family lives in Derry; they are Republicans, meaning that they want a united Republic of Ireland. My co-worker lives in Londonderry; she is a Unionist who wants to maintain allegiance to London Westminster. People who do not wish to reveal loyalties or take sides live in the Foyle or the Walled City. The city itself is divided into two sides, city-side (Catholic) and water-side (Protestant). A statue of two men reaching out their hands, but not touching, marks the bridge connecting the two sides, a perfect representation of the peace-process in Northern Ireland.

At this point, both parties have called a ceasefire and there is an election in March, which may allow power sharing between the two main opposing political parties. But a lack of violence does not equal peace. Peace building is a painfully slow process; it must address historical contention and distrust in order to integrate people who have spent their lives hating one another. "Peace-walls" separate sections of Belfast, the capitol, and any suggestion of removing the 20 foot "peace-walls" causes an upsurge of panic. These communities have refused to interact with each other for a century. They have demonized one another and laid blame for all their trials on each other's shoulders. So the task becomes re-attributing human qualities to the enemy, but where do we begin?



### Chris Neubert '08 in Sri Lanka:

Any student of sociology at Grinnell College will admit that it is very difficult, at times, to fully embrace abstract sociological theories. The course load at Grinnell can sometimes leave students questioning whether or not sociology is applicable in many contexts. The opportunity to study abroad, then, provides a unique way for students to take many of the theories that are taught in the classroom and apply them directly to a real world experience. For me, this opportunity arose last semester, when I spent four and a half months in the city of Kandy, Sri Lanka.

From the moment I stepped off the plane in Bandaranaike International Airport, it was clear that Sri Lanka was going to be a fascinating study in sociological contrasts. The airport itself still shows damage from a rebel attack five years ago that occurred during one of the darker periods in Sri Lanka's ongoing civil war. The civil war, a twenty-year conflict between the Sinhalese population of most of Sri Lanka and the Tamil people in the north and east, has come to dominate life in Sri Lanka. Ethnic tensions have become common in Sri Lankan society and these tensions manifested themselves in many varied ways throughout my time in Sri Lanka.

Perhaps the most significant sociological effect of this conflict was the marginalization of groups that were not directly involved. For the most part, after twenty years, a war that was once a battle for independence has become a fight between an irascible government and an elitist group of rebels. As a result, many people in Sri Lanka feel out of touch with their leaders, Tamil or Sinhala, and disenfranchised from important decision-making processes. This marginalization led me to my ultimate research project: a sociological study of how grassroots development works to empower and liberate oppressed populations.

The first group that I worked with was a small farmer's cooperative in a small village in the mountains of central Sri Lanka. The village, Illukkumbura, had suffered at the hands of government officials who unwittingly declared an important part of the lands they required for survival a conservation zone. One decade later, when I arrived to begin my research, Illukkumbura was still struggling to find new crops to replace the agriculture they had lost, and local middlemen were taking the crops they were growing and paying below-market prices. To combat this system of exploitation, the local villagers had formed a "tomato society," which essentially usurped the role of the intermediaries and allowed the

farmers to receive a fair price for their goods. While small organizations like this one only occasionally affect change on a global or even international level, my research led me to conclude that these very groups are an essential component in the people of Sri Lanka participating in an ongoing resistance to systems of exploitation.

The second organization that I researched was engaging a population in Sri Lanka whose entire history had been one of oppression. The Satyodaya Centre for Social Research and Encounter was founded in 1972 by Father Paul Caspersz, a Jesuit Marxist, to support the empowerment of a group of Tamils who were brought to Sri Lanka by the British over 100 years before. These "plantation Tamils" lived in a state of perpetual indentured servitude, ignored by both other Tamils and the Sri Lankan government. After the government repeatedly failed to recognize their right to citizenship and fair treatment, Father Caspersz founded Satyodaya to resist the oppression that is lived on the tea plantations every day. The Satyodaya Center does this by engaging local community-based organizations on the plantations, and facilitating the needs of these groups to support the people. Satyodaya also serves to navigate the complex institutional relationships that exist on the plantation, and it seeks to promote the interests of the workers at all times. Ultimately, the conclusions of my research provided me with something that is hard to find in the secluded campus of Grinnell College --- the realization that real solutions do exist to some of the greatest social ills in the world today. On my last day in Sri Lanka, my friend and the current administrator of Satyodaya gave me some advice that I will not soon forget: "Remember, when you go back to your home and your school, that there is a Satyodaya here in Sri Lanka, and a people in need of help." When theory gets too daunting and cumbersome, it is useful to remind myself that there are places and people where theory is not some abstract concept, it is a reality that is lived and experienced every day of their lives.

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## Mentored Advanced Projects (MAPS)

by Eszter Csicsai

During the summer, Jenny Weber '07 and I worked with Professor Karla Erickson on a project initially called "Laboring at the End of Life." At first, we had proposed a joint paper on formal and informal caregivers to those who are dying. In the midst of our separate literature reviews and research, however, the three of us parted ways somewhat. My paper, called "A Living Will: Building the Personalized Dying Experience," was about dying in a postmodern moment. I concluded that it is up to the dying individual to create a satisfying dying experience in light of all the factors that have built one's life. I also argued that caretakers of the dying should be sensitive to the dying individual's agency in this matter. In the shift from the modern to the postmodern moment, the dying experience was greatly changed.

Jenny's paper was called "Near Death Experience: Relationships, Community, and the Self in Later Life," which focused on the effects of American culture on the aging process. Individuals experiencing decline in later life often find themselves in institutions, and the social implications of such transitions sometimes trump the physical changes that come with aging. The value placed on individualism, independence, and control in American society

can make the process of aging and decline very uncomfortable and alienating, but the ability to form unique and unexpected bonds with caretakers and family members at the end of life remains.

Over the summer, we did many things to increase our body of knowledge about death and dying. We conducted a phone interview with Sandy Aguirre, the director of a hospice in Texas; we took a tour of the Mayflower retirement homes here in Grinnell and spoke with employees and residents; and of course, we did a great deal of reading and film-watching. I enjoyed the research process, and it was satisfying to follow my own interests to narrow my lens. We had a great deal of autonomy in this project, but Professor Erickson was very helpful in offering guidance when we felt

overwhelmed by such a large body of work to explore. In April, the three of us presented our separate papers at the Midwest Sociological Society meetings in Chicago.



Eszter Csicsai



Jenny Weber

### Off-Campus Experiences of Some Sociology Majors

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#### Madison VanOort '08 in India:



My semester in Madurai, India influenced my sociological perspective primarily in two ways: through my daily experiences and through my independent ethnographic research. On a

day-to-day basis, it was hard for me to articulate how I felt about India. I could never say that I liked India more or less than America; it was simply different. There were certain aspects

of the culture, such as the food, the arts, and the unabashed hospitality that I absolutely loved. However, some aspects of the culture shocked and disgusted me, including the caste system, the rigid gender roles, and almost complete lack of a waste management system. One of the high points of the program was having numerous one-on-one conversations with lower-class Indians during my independent ethnographic research project. Influenced by earlier studies on cross-cultural death practices, I decided to investigate people who worked in cremation sites and cemeteries in Madurai. My research unveiled a field of work dominated by caste and gender norms that continuously thrusts many of its employees into inescapable cycles of poverty and discrimination. My study abroad experience was dually challenging and rewarding, but all I know for certain is that I want to go back.

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# Students Integrate Sociology with Other Academic Studies

by Kate Morley

Of the 80 declared sociology majors, 26 are pursuing a second major or an interdisciplinary concentration. The double majors range from biology to Religious Studies to Spanish, and the concentrations from Gender and Women's Studies to Environmental Studies. "I feel that it is easy to combine sociology with other majors" comments Rachel Allison '07, a sociology and French double major. "Sociology is an extremely transportable discipline that can enhance the study of any other discipline, no matter how dissimilar."

Like Allison, Mark Wilcox '09, a sociology and chemistry double major, has positive comments about his experiences. Wilcox, who hopes to pursue a career in medicine or in chemistry, recognizes that his sociological training will be beneficial in any context. "I will be better equipped to lead a life of activism, regardless of my future profession, because of my degree in sociology" he says. Likewise, Sarah Smith '07, a sociology and theater double major, has received very encouraging feedback on her double major. "Having a double major has also allowed me to get an internship using both of my majors . . . my supervisors love the fact that I have doubled in what seem to be two very different academic areas."

Many students feel that the sociology major is particularly conducive to interdisciplinary study. "The Sociology Department has been amazingly flexible in terms of course offerings" notes Anne Bernier '07, a sociology and psychology double major. "I think the Sociology Department in general is very accommodating towards double majors

and the major itself really works well with a lot of other majors."

Chris Neubert '08, a sociology major concentrating in Global Development Studies, has integrated his academic pursuits with his study abroad experience. "I chose to concentrate in Global Development Studies (GDS) because I felt that the GDS courses would be able to enhance my sociology major in a way that best suited me. I absolutely love all of the classes I have taken for my concentration . . . I probably would not have taken some of my most favorite classes, or even traveled to Sri Lanka, had it not been for GDS."

While students seem overall pleased with their choice to double major or concentrate, scheduling can prove tricky. Students who are enrolled in both sociology and natural science courses sometimes find that their lab schedules conflict with seminar offerings. Furthermore, the additional requirements leave little time for elective classes. "I think I have not taken as many classes outside my majors as I would have with only one major" observes Smith.

Overall, though, sociology majors seem pleased with the choice to expand their academic horizons. Eszter Csicsai '07 eloquently sums up the common sentiment surrounding double majoring: "I majored in sociology and art history. I have found them to make a dynamic combination . . . It is fascinating to examine how culture is 'created,' presented, and consumed within museums both from an art historical and from a sociological perspective. It has always seemed that both departments have been interested in and supportive of my experiences in the other. This double major has served me well."

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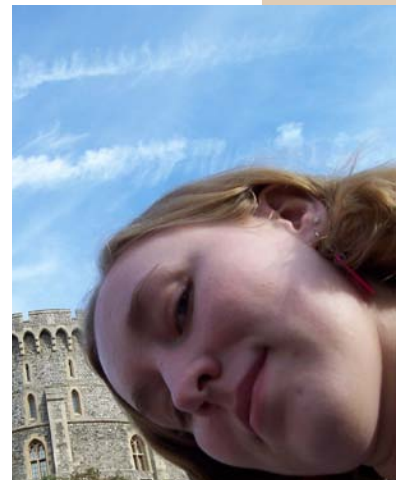
## Off-Campus Experiences of Some Sociology Majors

(Continued from page 8)

### Lindsay Young '08 in London:

Spending time away from your own culture dramatically increases your awareness of culture itself. Going to another country was especially enlightening. I spent the fall semester of 2006 in the Grinnell-in-London program. Unfortunately, no sociology professors from Grinnell taught in London that semester, although they did the year before and will teach next year. I still found many rewarding experiences. From the way people live, work, and move through a big city to the presence of the economically impoverished to the rich social history of a location that has been inhabited for so long, I saw intriguing aspects of society all around me.

Doing my internship with the London Swing Dance Society gave me a unique perspective of the behind the scenes production of a swing dance community that I had previously only encountered as a consumer. It was fun to talk to other local dancers and recognize the similarities and differences between our societies. Returning to America, I feel I have gained a fresh perspective on what makes our society unique.



## Student News...

### Number of Current Sociology Majors

#### Seniors

24

#### Juniors

33

#### Sophomores

23

**Graduating  
Seniors  
2007**

Mary Ahlquist  
Lester Aleman  
Rachel Allison  
Gema Alonso  
Paul Bateman  
Anne Bernier  
Jasmine Brewer  
Liz Carrier  
Andrew Colver  
Eszter Csicsai  
Lauren Davis  
Deisy Del Real  
Teresa Dotson  
Sollie Flora  
Carolyn Fraker  
Meredith Hughey  
Alvin Irby  
Htike Htike Kyaw  
Soe  
Becca Landor  
Katie Mineck  
Caitlin Shannon  
Sarah Smith  
Leslie Turner  
Jenny Weber



## Plans of Current Students and Graduating Seniors

by Rachel Allison

Each year, graduating seniors in the Sociology Department are involved in amazing projects all over the country. Many of our current students also participate in summer internships and programs that expand on what they have learned at Grinnell. Here are what some of our majors are going to be up to this summer and fall!

**Rachel Allison '07** will be entering the graduate program in Sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Gema Alonso '07** will be pursuing her Masters in Social Work and Education in the fall with the ultimate goal of getting a teaching position in an independent school in an urban city.

**Andrew Colver '07** will travel to Belgium this summer to play baseball with USA Athletes International.

**Eszter Csicsai '07** will be entering a graduate program in Museum Studies.

**Lauren Davis '07** hopes to work with a nonprofit serving the Hispanic community during the summer, and plans to teach English in Seville, Spain from September 2007- May 2008.

**Deisy Del Real '07** will be finishing a film she started two years ago. As the director, she will be taking classes on the technical aspects of filmmaking to get acquainted with the newest technology. She also plans to write a book detailing the experiences of different undocumented immigrant students in different parts of the world (namely, Argentina, Mexico, Spain, United States, and England) before going back to school to get her Ph.D.

**Sollie Flora '07** will be entering law school at the University of Michigan.

**Meredith Hughey '07** will be finishing pre-requisite courses in preparation for a masters degree in nursing.

**Rebecca Landor '07** will be entering the masters program in social work at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Erin McBurney '09** will be spending two months as a summer intern in New Orleans working for the Episcopal Diocese of the State of Louisiana. She will be helping to gut houses, will crew-chief gutting crews, and will possibly start to rebuild houses as part of the ongoing relief work after Hurricane Katrina.

**Caitlin Morley '08** has a public health internship

in Mexico for the summer with a group called Amigos. She has volunteered with them for two summers (2002 in Honduras and 2005 also in Mexico) and is now going as staff/project organizer. The group promotes community-based development, with an emphasis on women and children. The whole idea is to use local resources and to make the projects (which can be building construction, pouring floors, latrine construction, gardens, community groups, libraries, sanitation projects, nutrition talks, etc.) sustainable.

**Amy Rothbaum '08** will be continuing a project this summer that she started in SOC 390: Optimizing Social Change. She has been collaborating with an ad hoc committee of students and faculty from the Voicebox and the Social Justice Action Group to conduct a Community Needs Assessment. She is trying to understand the town of Grinnell as holistically as possible and to put her findings towards a constructive resolution regarding the issues, concerns, and strengths that arise throughout her research.

**Ben Schrager '08** will be studying abroad in Tokyo after having interned in the office of Senator Tim Sheldon in the Washington State Legislature.

**Caitlin Shannon '07** will be entering a masters program in either Kinesiology or Education with an emphasis on the sociology of sport.

**Sarah Smith '07** will most likely be in a teaching position with either Teach for America or Teach-NOLA.

**Mark Wilcox '09** was granted a summer research position with Professor Stephen Sieck in the Chemistry Department. They will be developing methodology for diversity-oriented synthesis and synthesizing never-made-before compounds they expect will have biological activity.

**Lindsay Young '08** will work as a summer intern at the Center for the History of Family Medicine with the American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation in Leawood, Kansas. She will be doing oral histories and helping to create exhibits from archival material. She also will work at the Ceramic Cafe, a paint-your-own pottery studio, where she will run summer camps and help painters.

# In Memoriam---

## Dr. John H. Burma

John Harmon Burma, Jr., died August 22, 2006 at the Health Services Center at Pilgrim Place, Claremont, California, at the age of 93. A resident of Claremont since 1970, he had suffered for several

years from Alzheimer's disease.

He was born April 2, 1913, in Dallas, Texas, the only child of the Rev. John H. Burma and Manetta Knock Burma. While growing up, he lived with his parents in Dallas; in

Dubuque, Iowa; and subsequently in Waxahachie, Texas, where he attended high school. His father served as the Vice President of the University of Dubuque from 1916 to 1920, and as President of Trinity University, Texas, from 1920 until 1933. John graduated from Trinity University in 1933 with a major in sociology and minors in German and The Bible, after also having taken courses at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Southern California. Prior to and during pursuit of his master's degree at the University of Texas, he taught at Sherman High School and served as principal of Crisp High School and Whitewright High School, Texas, where he also coached football. He was an instructor in sociology during summer sessions at the University of Texas, in Austin.

He received his M.A. degree in sociology and education from the University of Texas in 1938, following completion of his thesis, "An Emergent Fascist Movement in America: A Sociological Study." This was followed by completion of his Ph.D. degree in sociology and economics at the University of Nebraska in 1941, with his dissertation on "Migration from a Nebraska County During the Drought-Depression."

Dr. Burma continued his academic career as a member of the faculty of Grinnell College, Iowa, beginning as Instructor in 1941. During his 29 years at Grinnell, he reached the rank of Professor of Sociology and Anthropology and served for a time as Chairperson of the Department and of the Division of Social Studies. He was named the Lucy Leland Professor of Sociology in 1961. For a number of years, he served as a Justice of the

Peace in Poweshiek County, Iowa. While at Grinnell, he also taught summer sessions at the University of Minnesota, New Mexico Highlands University, the University of Nevada, Whittier College, and the University of Redlands. During 1946-47, he taught at Pomona College. Fluent in Spanish, he traveled and studied extensively in Mexico and in Costa Rica. In 1970, he became Professor of Sociology and Criminology at California State Polytechnic University-Pomona, from which he retired in 1982 as Professor Emeritus.

Dr. Burma was an authority on Spanish-speaking minorities in the United States, and his book *Spanish Speaking Groups in the United States*, first published by Duke University Press in 1954, was reprinted in 1961 and 1974. He authored and co-authored several college textbooks, including *Mexican-Americans in the United States: A Reader* (1970). He served as a contributing author in 1960 for the White House Conference on Children and Youth regarding Mexican-American youth, and as a consultant on migratory agricultural labor for the U.S. Department of Labor and for the National Teacher Corps. He was a life member of the American Sociological Association, was past president of the Midwest Sociological Society, past editor of *Midwest Sociologist*, and a member of the Review Board of Editors of *The Sociological Quarterly*.

John was an avid coin and stamp collector and had a particular interest in Mexican coins, which he enjoyed while traveling throughout Mexico during summers and sabbaticals. In retirement, he and his wife Dorothy enjoyed many cruises to destinations throughout the world. An excellent marksman since his days as a young man growing up in Texas, he won cruise ship skeet shooting competitions in his eighties.

John was preceded in death by his first wife, Hughlette Beasley Burma in 1952; by an infant son in 1950, by his daughter Susan B. Huntoon in 1970, and by his wife Dorothy Ann Pulley Burma in 2004. He is survived by his son-in-law, Dr. Peter Huntoon of Boulder City, Nevada; his nephew, Dr. Robert Timm of Ukiah, California; his niece Jackie Hallier of Kansas City, Kansas; his niece Janice Hopkins of Plymouth, California; and his nephew Jim Pulley of Breckenridge, Missouri.

## Editor's Note:

John Burma was a sociology professor at Grinnell College for almost 30 years! Several alumni have mentioned Burma in their letters to me. Many of you also had classes with him or remember him. Please send any stories, anecdotes, or memories you have of Professor Burma or of the Sociology Department to me, the editor, Susan Ferguson, Department of Sociology, Grinnell College, Grinnell, IA 50112. You also can e-mail me at [fergusos@grinnell.edu](mailto:fergusos@grinnell.edu). Thank you.

Alumni  
News...

Spring 2007

## Alumni Updates

by Meredith Hughey

### **Doris Schmidt '45**

Doris is retired and living in Sacramento, CA. She formerly worked at UCD Medical Center in the Accounting Department. She enjoys gardening, walking, reading books, and visiting her five daughters.

### **Marigold Kissler Hakanson '56**

Marigold lives in Englewood, CO. She is a retired social worker, a homemaker, and a grandmother.

### **David Hagstrom '57**

David is living in Portland, OR having retired from teaching at Lewis and Clark College. He now works as a Retreat Facilitator at the Center for Courage and Renewal based in Oregon, Washington, and California. He also serves as a Leadership Advisor for the Sisters School District (Oregon). In 2004, Jossey-Bass published his book entitled *From Outrageous to Inspired: How to Build a Community of Leaders in Our Schools*. Another book is due out this year, *Called to Sing Our True Songs* (working title).

### **Eric P. "Jake" Jacobson '64**

Jake is retired from 16 years of prison work and 25 years in hospital and health management. He lives in Cape Coral, FL and his current occupation is that of grandfather.

### **Tobi Klein Marcus '87**

Tobi received an MS at the London School of Economics in 1991 and a Ph.D. at Bristol University in 1998. Tobi currently resides in Carmel, CA where she is a homemaker and community volunteer.

### **Jane Enrietto Horn '88**

Jane resides in Long Beach, CA with her husband Philippe Horn and son, Nathaniel Michael Horn (Nate), who was born on October 10, 2004. She currently works as an audiologist.

### **Rebecca Bowen '92**

Rebecca lives in Portland, OR where she works as a line-producer for animation in commercials.

### **Elisabeth Bailey '94**

Elisabeth graduated from Meadville Lombard School of Theology with a Masters of Divinity. She was recently fellowshiped into the Unitarian Ministers Association. Currently, she lives in the UNESCO world heritage site of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia with her husband John and baby boy Charlie. In the fall of 2006, Elisabeth planned on assuming a Canadian UU congregation.

### **Carla (Carly) Parry '94**

Carly lives in Boulder, CO working as an Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center as well as keeping a small private practice in alternative healing, working mostly with cancer survivors and patients. She also just received a 5-year grant from the National Cancer Institute to continue her exploration of psycho-spiritual growth and quality of life in cancer survivorship, focusing on leukemia and lymphoma survivors. Additionally, she still works with Dr. Eric Coleman on care transitions intervention. Last January, she bought her first home and followed that with a fall trip with her partner to Croatia.

### **Diem-My (Mimi) Bui '97**

Mimi is finishing up her Ph.D. in communications research at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She is now on the job market. Her dissertation looks at representations of Vietnamese women and their bodies in U.S. media.

### **Maia Hendel-Paterson '97**

Maia and her husband Brett welcomed their first child into their lives this past fall. Maia works as a Training Coordinator with Crime Victim Services for the state of Minnesota, where she arranges trainings and annual conferences on various topics for advocates who work with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

### **Kun-hong Lu '97**

Kun-hong returned to Grinnell this past fall to work at Poweshiek County Mental Health Center. Before her return, she practiced clinical social work for the last seven years in San Francisco, CA. In 1998, she earned her masters degree in social work with a concentration in mental health from the University of Michigan.

### **Molly Dingel '98**

Molly is currently living in Fargo, ND. She is in a tenure-track position at North Dakota State University, where she teaches medical sociology, theory, and methods.

### **Rachel Muñoz '98**

Rachel finished her MA at the University of Massachusetts and completed her studies at Northeastern Law in Boston. In October of 2004, she ran in a half-marathon to support Leukemia and Lymphoma. Since then, she has passed the bar exam and is working in a labor law firm.

### **Kevin Oulds '98**

Kevin lives in Cleveland, OH where he practices podiatry. He will be receiving his DPM degree this May.



# Alumni Updates

(continued from page 12)

## Heather Korte '99

Heather is an Elementary Counselor in Marshalltown, IA.

## Sarah Elizabeth Staveteig '99

Sarah is a graduate student at the UC-Berkeley where she is finishing her dissertation related to civil war, genocide, and how the targeting of civilians as a combat strategy has changed over time. Before graduate school, she took a few years off to work at the Urban Institute. Her work there included acting as a research assistant and teaching assistant, completing publications and presentations, and doing research.

## Michelle Brunner '01

Michelle lives in Denver, Co where she is a full-time graduate student. This is her final year of the Master in Social Work program at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work, where her studies concentrate in family and child welfare. Her field placement is with the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, Family Support Services. She also is a research assistant for the Fostering Healthy Futures project at the Kempe Children's Center in Denver, where she works with kids ages 9-11 years old who are in foster care.

## Emily Larson '01

Emily has finished graduate school at the University of Minnesota with a Master's in Public Policy. During the summer of 2006, she worked for the Office of Economic Opportunity at the state's Department of Human Services. This past fall, she moved with Josh to Washington, D.C. to work as an analyst with the Government Accountability Office.

## Rebecca Zwerling '02

Rebecca lives in Austin, TX. She has finished her work with the American Cancer Society and is completing her first field placement.

## Joa Taylor Carlson '03

Joa is pursuing a dual Masters of Social Work and Masters of Public Policy at the University of Minnesota. She resides in St. Paul, MN with her husband Paul Carlson ('02). Before beginning her dual Masters, she was part of the AmeriCorps VISTA at the Hennepin County Office of Multi-Cultural Services, where she worked on capacity building for immigrants and refugees and the community-based organizations that serve these populations.

## Julie Dona '03

Julie was living in Chicago, working on a study on

the country's felony court systems. However, she has since left and is traveling and working in Ecuador. This coming fall, she will be attending law school and hopes to attend policy school in the fall of 2008. Her career goal is to familiarize herself with immigration and refugee legal casework then move into policy and administration.

## Tina Lim '03

Tina graduated in December 2005 from Nazareth College in Rochester, NY where she studied Inclusive Childhood Education. She is now certified in general education and special education, elementary grades 1-6.

## Jessica Rochester '03

Jessica works for the Emergency Foodshelf Network in Minnesota.

## Kafila Odesanya '03/04

Kafila is now a graduate student at Drake University in public administration after working as a Campaign Associate at United Way of Central Iowa. After she finishes her degree, she hopes to go to law school to study international law. She also is sharpening her fluency in French and Arabic to assist her in a future career for an international human rights organization.

## Lexi Abel '05

Lexi is in the Peace Corps in Jamaica. She is working with a middle school, where she is helping start an environmental club, heading up the construction of a new auditorium, and teaching children to read.

## Keli Campbell '05

Keli is currently in Zambia with the Peace Corps (until Jan. 2009). For the next two years, she is working on a radio education program.

## Stacie Kossoy '05

Stacie is in her second year teaching first grade in Camden, NJ. She is continually challenged by her students, most of whom are as far as 2.5 years behind grade-level in academic skills.

## Matt Cleinman '06

Matt is a Facilities Asset Analyst at Sightlines in Madison, CT.

## Abigail Hagel '06

Abby will be involved with the Lutheran Volunteer Corps in Seattle, WA until this fall. Her work with the Corps focuses on social and environmental justice, inter-faith exploration and dialogue, and a commitment to community and simplified living. Her specific work project is at the Government Accountability Project and the Hanford Nuclear Waste site in Washington.

# Alumni News...

Send Us Your Alumni News ---  
(See page 16)

Spring 2007

## Faculty News...

*“Somebody just walked off with all of my stuff... I said.... somebody just walked off with all of my stuff” -- Ntozake Shange.*



Sociology Department  
Newsletter

### Kesho Scott Gives Scholar's Convocation (Continued from page 2)

find my own space --- out of this *Tight Space* of being black and female.

My next vocation was shaped by my two new challenges: a need to define and advance my feminist voice and a need to be a professor so that my new platform could be writing.

My bibles changed: *The Second Sex*, *The Feminine Mystique*, *The Personal is Political*, *I Know Why a Caged Bird Sings*, and *In Search of My Mother's Garden*, and my heroes become sheroes: Audre Lorde, Toni Cade Bambara, Gloria Anzaldúa, Paula Gunn Allen, Toni Morrison, Rita Dove, Louise Erdrich, Mari Evan, Patrica Hill-Collins, Nikki Giovanni, Barbara Smith, bell hooks, June Jordan, Cherie Moraga, Sonja Sanchez, Patricia Williams, Nellie Wong, Mitsuye Yamada and Ntozake Shange ... who made me scream over and over.

“Somebody just walked off with all of my stuff....I said....somebody just walked off with all of my stuff” (Ntozake Shange).

Up to that point in my life, in my mid-thirties, the three P's addressed how I lived my vocations: the personal as black feminist, mother, and partner; the political-activist—now transplanted to “not heaven but Iowa”; and the professional as an experienced teacher of young adults. In 1988, I completed my Ph.D., which I thought was “pretty harsh duty” away from the rigor of activism but toward the rigor of study and research. I did experience a different kind of introspection not limited to framing everything as political and living personal things as political statements.

Frankly, this new introspection upset me. Disorientated me. I wobbled around looking for a new anchor of some sort ... slightly embarrassed when I was with my “so-called politicos” and slightly guilty when I enjoyed Hawkeye football games and clean and neat non-industrial space. I went back to Detroit and acted like an Iowan and came back to Iowa and kept trying to fit a square peg of Detroit politics into a round hole ... of Iowa. When I read that sign that said: “Iowa, a place to Grow”... I was intrigued. I wasn't sure how. Things were just too nice... too nice and I had only the experience with things growing when things were too difficult.

“Hi, honey, do you want to have lunch today...ok...I will meet you at the....oh...that would be nice....a picnic...ok...”

\*\*\*\*\*

I begin to practice Dr. Kesho at Grinnell College. The voices begin to change again because I had put myself into a different con-

text: Rural space. Small town. Town/Gown. Middle of the cornfields. Middle of America. Predominate whiteness. Iowan cultural values. Country capital. Rural poverty. New minorities. Nature. Big Skies. Stars. Quiet nights. Neighbors who really came to visit.

This “potpourri” of new voices, listened to with this new introspection made my living in “GRIN City” feel like I was a kind of a small-town Joan of Arc. I heard voices for real.

I begin to look at the other side of political questions and non-political questions that I did not take the time to examine before. It didn't hurt that I did not have money problems for the first time in my life. I was almost like those people on the Soaps now. It didn't hurt that I had a prestigious job --- the best that a Ph.D. could acquire. It didn't hurt that I wasn't the mother of younger kids. It didn't hurt that I was far far away from the pressures of the political obligations of my youth. I wasn't hurt in the old ways.

“Can I have the number of Border's Bookstore in Des Moines, please? Thank you.” 515-244-6034. Ring.

“Hello, do you have Zachary Lansdowne's *Rules for Spiritual Initiation*, Elaine Pagels' *The Gnostic Gospels*, John Dominic Crossan's *The Historical Jesus*, or Paul Davies' *The Mind of God*. Yes.... I'd also like to read John Mack's *Passport to the Cosmos* and Gregg Braden's *The Isaiah Effect*, as well as Gene Roddenberry's *Last Conversations*. Oh, you think I'd like Stephen Hawkins' *A Brief History of Time*, Victor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* or Chardin's *Hymn of the Universe*, ok, I'll take them too.” Of course they had those books and more.

My bibles changed again and my heroes changed along the line of my unmet spiritual vocation. I became ever so open and humble to what I would call new ways of knowing, but that would be a lie, because ideas of God and soul had always been in my heart and mind (after all, I had studied with the Jehovah's Witnesses, gone to Catechism, and attended Friday night lectures at the Mosque in Detroit with the Nation of Islam), but life in America had prioritized my survival to political questions, not to “the complexity of spiritual things.”

I could not wrap my mind around “this new kind of 21st century politics” that did not have a God and soul and consciousness. And, I did not want to have a God, be a soul or have a consciousness void of politics or social responsibility.

“Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me . . . I once was lost but now am found . . . was blind . . . but now . . . I see.”

(Continued on page 15)

## Kesho Scott Gives Scholar's Convocation

(Continued from page 11)

I was becoming what I could never imagine: multi-vocational. I was not apologizing for it either. My inner urges and callings were stacking up like the intersections of my oppressions and privileges: black, female, heterosexual, and middle class. It was a necessity to complete some kind of circle within myself. The callings were historical, sequential, and seemed to operate like a Native American Medicine Wheel. I just could not help the compulsion to blend my family callings, with my political, feminist, spiritual inclinations. I was responding to a summons for which my Western educations could not be the lead. I did not run. I surrendered.

\*\*\*\*\*

I do not claim my autobiographical accounts are as neat as I have placed them in this talk. I am trying to write the "unknown" parts of my self before the "literary hounds" write me wrong. And, I do re-use my personal and public American past with leisure and license, to tell you the internal and external life and times of one --- Kesho Yvonne Scott, alias "Evil Evie" --- who followed in the footsteps of her heroes.

There is diversity in vocation, and I believe we have many callings in a lifetime based on one's race, gender, social class. The list can go on and on, but the journey to vocation might be unique to the times . . . as I am an American, a woman of African descent, a daughter from political Detroit, a spiritual being living "in heaven, which I think might be Iowa."

I hear voices that are connected to my vocations and my ancestor's meanderings: grandmothers and fathers all the way back to Africa,

from the North Carolina hills where the Black Meherrin Indians of my family lived and prayed, from Detroit --- the city of my political birth and Iowa --- where many of the Hollywood films make fun of the characters being born here. Iowa is my place of becoming.

What is a hero then to me? Is it obvious? She or he is someone you find along the way of listening to that call --- taking that journey to vocation. In life, everyone has the opportunity to be a hero.

They and You take risk. They and You can possibly lose your lives or aspects of your lives and privilege in a given historical moment.

They and You cause change --- with the big C and little C --- and the outcomes are often something good or even great for other people, not necessarily for You or Them.

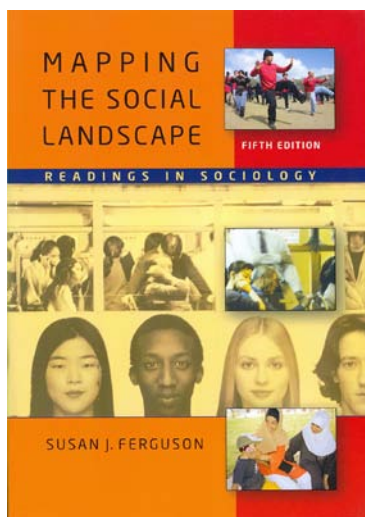
Heroes are dead but they teach. They and You are alive, and They and You are destined to teach. And, the consequences of what They and You teach --- can and do --- affect the thoughts and actions of others, even black girls from the Motor City or every city and hamlet in our global world.

We emulate heroes. We often take on a role through them --- to find the voice we wish to project ourselves into history. The most important thing that I learned from my heroes was that my judgments matter and that I must make principled decisions about my actions. I learned to have the faith that my actions are connected to everything else and will make a difference. So I and you can sing this song:

"What a difference a day makes . . . 24 little hours . . . WE . . . brought the sun and the flowers where there used to be rain." Thank you.

**Note from Kesho Scott:** This year I have presented eleven community and campus wide presentations, and completed 24 interviews for the *Habit of Surviving II: Black Male Alums at Grinnell College from 1950 - 2005*. My 2007 Race and Ethnicity class partnered with Hubbell Elementary School in Des Moines and created an ethnic timeline of the Roosevelt Cultural District from 1908 - 2007 as a dedication to the renovations at the school. This summer, I will be putting the finishing touches on my two articles: *Twenty Years of Unlearning Racism* and *Female Harassment in Ethiopian Universities*.

## Faculty News...



### MAPPING THE SOCIAL LANDSCAPE: READINGS IN SOCIOLOGY

FIFTH EDITION

Edited by  
SUSAN J. FERGUSON

Drawing from a wide selection of classic and contemporary works, this best-selling reader includes 60 readings that represent a plurality of voices and views within sociology.

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Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Present Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Employment Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Other News: \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

(Please attach sheets if you need more room)

Would you like to donate to the Designated Fund in Sociology? If yes, please enclose a check with your information sheet. \_\_\_\_\_

**\* Visit Grinnell Sociology Department website at <http://www.grinnell.edu/academic/sociology/>**



Newsletter compiled by the  
2006-07 Sociology Student  
Educational Policy Committee

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