

# Between Friends



FRIENDS OF WOMEN'S STUDIES GROUP NEWSLETTER • [www.uwindsor.ca/womens](http://www.uwindsor.ca/womens)

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## *We Asked for Your Help... And This Is What Happened*

By Anne Forrest  
Friends of Women's Studies

We asked for the help of our 250 for \$250+ supporters, and we got plenty. Twelve women have been nominated for Distinguished Visitor in Women's Studies 2009. They are an impressive bunch – an environmentalist, author, film-maker, singer-songwriter, seasoned politico, farmer, and more. Their understanding of feminism is diverse and their practice spans a wide variety of cultural, political, and economic organizations.

Some nominees came to us as a name; others were elaborately supported. But everyone got close attention. Thanks to Danielle Reaume, every nominee came to the Friends of Women's Studies committee with a biography and highlights of her career.

Friends met in early January to narrow the field. Our decision about each nominee was framed by two issues. Uppermost in our minds was the question, Will she be of interest to the Windsor-Essex and University communities? Equally important, our Visitor must also be able to contribute to the Women's Studies courses on offer next fall – courses as diverse as "Women in Canadian Society," "History of the Women's Movements in North America," "Women, Race, and Social Justice," "Women, Power, and the Environment," and "Women and Globalization."

It's a tall order. Our ideal Visitor is someone who is concerned about the big issues of today locally, nationally, and globally. She is a woman with a wide range of interests, she practices an inclusive feminism, she is an accomplished speaker – and, of course, she must be willing and able to come to Windsor for an entire week in October.

The food was great and the discussion brisk. There was haggling, lobbying, and balloting. And we came to a decision. We have an invitation out and another person in reserve, just in case. In fact, we have many nominees in reserve – enough to keep the Distinguished Visitor in Women's Studies program going for a few years yet.

If you are keen to be among the first to know who our Distinguished Visitor for 2009 will be, come to our annual Breakfast Party event on Friday, June 19 at the Caboto Club.

Our thanks to everyone who helps make the DV program a reality. We need your energy and your interest. Thank you, in particular, to those of you who support the program financially. We simply could not continue without our major donors and 250 for \$250 members.

### **UZMA SHAKIR IS BACK IN TOWN**



#### **2009 Annual Dinner**

Saturday, March 7

6:00 p.m.

G. Caboto Club (Hall C)

Tickets: \$50

The South Asian Centre welcomes Uzma Shakir

### *What's Engineering Got to do with Radical Feminism?*

By Gisèle Harrison  
Friend of Women's Studies

Last fall my brother, a civil engineer, attended the Distinguished Visitor in Women's Studies community luncheon with me and my mother. He came to hear what I had to say as one of three panelists talking about radical feminism and social services.

Picture this, my 50 year old, white, male, engineer brother who is living "the American dream" in sunny California, sitting amongst 70 or so feminist activists and social service workers talking about the "F" word.

Despite popular beliefs about us radical feminists and what we have done to unarmed, white males, my brother left the luncheon feeling welcomed, satisfied, and impressed. He told me later that he was glad that I was finally thinking like an engineer. I remember scrunching my face and looking puzzled. How was I thinking like an engineer and how did he get this from a talk on radical feminism?

My brother explained that engineers have been trained to look for and find the root cause of any given problem. He told me that engineers who solely focus on papering over the cracks were seen as lazy, short-sighted, and ineffective.

Comparing engineering to radical feminism was an interesting exercise. I wondered why it had taken my brother and me so long to realize how similar our approaches were to our work.

I guess it makes sense: after all we were raised in the same family with a mother who was both a feminist and an activist.

### **Got Questions? We've got answers!**

#### **Question:**

What is an "Honorary Friend" of Women's Studies?

#### **Answer:**

Someone who as a Friend of Women's Studies has contributed time, energy and support to the Distinguished Visitor program, and will continue to support the program by attending Distinguished Visitor events, encouraging others to attend, and contributing financially to the program as able.

Honorary Friends are not expected to attend Friends' meetings, but are informed of Distinguished Visitor events and encouraged to submit suggestions for future Distinguished Visitors.

For a list of Honorary Friends, please visit:  
[www.uwindsor.ca/wsvisitor](http://www.uwindsor.ca/wsvisitor)

## Friends Breakfast Party 2009

Friday, June 19  
7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

Caboto Club  
\$10 donation at the door

If you plan to attend, please R.S.V.P. to  
[wsvisitor@uwindor.ca](mailto:wsvisitor@uwindor.ca)

### *Dinner with Uzma Shakir*

By Lillian Gallant  
Social Work and Women's Studies major

"Being socially just is not something you do; it's something you live. It's a conscious political thought." This was the theme of Uzma Shakir's keynote address last October.

This idea is very meaningful to me as a student social worker. The social work code of ethics reflects the ideals of social justice, and it would be hypocritical if they are not reflected in our work with others. Yet, I know there are many policies and systems that continue to oppress and marginalize.

Uzma reflected on the denial of civil liberties for immigrants, refugees, and women who are racialized based on their colour and religion. This is very personal for her as a parent. "I am willing to accept less because I am an immigrant," she said. "But my children were born here. They are Canadian; they are born into their rights. Yet, I have to worry that because of the colour of their skin, or their religion, or their politics, they might be imprisoned. No mother should have to worry about that."

Until the system changes, social workers are obligated to help clients to the best of their abilities. We must lobby to fill in service gaps and view difficult situations as a way to create/ learn "new" professional knowledge. "Don't let the system take away your ability to be just," Uzma urged. If you face an obstacle, "re-label" your action to reflect the values of the system: "Call it 'capacity building for clients' or call it 'community development.' Call it whatever the hell they want so that you can do the right thing by your clients."

Uzma's call to action included the need for self-reflection. As social workers, we need to understand that our lived realities are very different from those of our clients. We have to critically analyze our own views on discrimination and racialization to understand how our own personal biases might actually harm others. Real changes can only happen if this becomes part of our conscious thought. A goal of social work is to support a person's right to self-determination. We must dismiss any thoughts that we are here to "save people," but rather to support their rights and decisions about their lives.

Uzma convinced me that I must be political in my thoughts and actions if I want to bring about change. She told the audience: "If you're not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem." I intend to be part of the solution.

### *Calling All Women: Reflections on Uzma Shakir's Visit*

By Arij Elmi  
Social Work major

I did not envy Uzma Shakir's task as Distinguished Visitor in Women's Studies 2008. I thought back to all of the speeches I have attended that claimed to provide the "Muslim perspective" on life. Most did little more than denounce the tenets of Islam or repeat the endless debates on dogma and theology. After hearing Uzma speak, my various concerns, and many of the concerns of my fellow Muslim women, were put to rest.

What set Uzma apart is that (for once) the Muslim members of the audience felt she was speaking *to* them rather than *about* them. Uzma emphatically and repeatedly stated she was not an expert on the Muslim experience in post-9/11 North America; she was an expert on her own experience. She described the discrimination she has personally fought against and the oppression she fears her children will face.

As a Muslim woman and a student in Women's Studies classes, I had the unique position of sitting at a crossroads between the feminist community and a Muslim audience. Like me, many others in the audience described Uzma as refreshing and her take on Muslims in a North America as a breath of fresh air.

If you missed this event for fear that the speeches would be "too political," Uzma responded to those claims by explaining that social engagement begins with "declaring your politics." Every individual is responsible for recognizing the power and access to resources society has given or withheld from them.

Uzma challenged us all – Muslim, feminist, aboriginal, or anything else – to "take a critical view of our privileges," such as our knowledge of a national language, access to education and other factors. By addressing issues relevant to *all* women, she was able to weave her belief that women must "fight shoulder to shoulder" to gain civil liberties for everyone into all of her speeches.

Whatever our differences women are unified by the fact that we are all undervalued. If we can work together side by side we have a chance of tapping into a source of unlimited strength.

### **The Cushing Distinguished Lecture Series presents the Jane D. Schaberg Lecture:**

**Professor Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza**  
*"Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire:  
A Feminist Perspective"*

Thursday, April 16  
7:30 p.m.  
Maureen A. Fay Center,  
College of Health Professions  
University of Detroit Mercy

Reception to follow



## *Inquest Action Group Update*

By Carol Libby  
Friend of Women's Studies

Most of us are sadly familiar with the tragic stories of two area women who were murdered at their places of work and were the subjects of a major inquest. Theresa Vince (June 2, 1996) at Sears, Chatham and Lori Dupont (November 12, 2005) at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital, Windsor.

In response to these tragedies, and in an effort to raise our community's awareness of the prevalence of male violence against women in our society, the Friends of Women's Studies invited Lee Lakeman to be the 2006 Distinguished Visitor in Women's Studies. Lakeman, an outspoken leader in the struggle to end gendered violence, challenged us to join in that struggle.

Thus women in the community formed the "women in white" to bear witness with the Dupont family through the ordeal of the Inquest into Lori's death. At the close of the Inquest, Barbara Dupont and others who advocate an end to gendered violence, formed the *Inquest Action Group* as a strategy to ensure jury recommendations are adopted and applied.

Here is some background and an update on what has been done so far.

*Pressed for change in provincial legislation*, members of the Action Group have:

- Lobbied all our local Members of Provincial Parliament as well as the Minister of Labour to advocate for legislative change to the Occupational Health and Safety Act.
- Obtained thousands of signatures on our Petition to the Ontario Legislature calling for change to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. These Petitions will be presented at Queen's Park in the spring.
- Submitted a brief to the Ministry of Labour's Consultation Paper on Workplace Violence.
- Participated in a *Workplace Violence Prevention Think Tank* which will provide recommendations to the Ontario government as they address the issue of preventing workplace violence.

*Planning in process for a trip to Queens Park* to push for legislative change. We look for some of you to join our advocacy mission to Toronto. WATCH FOR DETAILS.

*Pressing for implementation of the Dupont Jury recommendations* to Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital, members of the Inquest Action Group have:

- Studied the HDGH Workplace Safety Plan and provided feedback to the Board.
- Studied the HDGH Response to the Recommendations of the Dupont Jury specific to the Hospital and provided feedback and recommendations for change to the Board.

*Attended a HDGH Board meeting* where the Dupont Jury Recommendations were finally officially approved by the Board.

*Met informally with the newly hired HDGH Workplace Safety Advocate*, offering support and resources.

Our advocacy work will continue as we press for legislative change in Ontario. We dedicate ourselves to this work in the hope **that not one more family suffers and most importantly, not one more woman is murdered in her place of work.**



*Join WEST and celebrate International Women's Day*

*"Journey Towards Success Awards"*

*Sunday, March 8, 2009*

*Doors open at 5:00 P.M.*

*St. Clair Centre for the Arts*

*Ticket: \$50 per person*

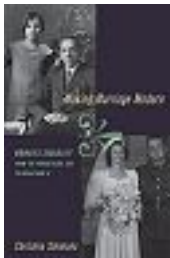
*Our annual fundraising gala will include dinner, silent auction, entertainment and more!*

**Tickets are on sale now! To RSVP or for additional information please contact us at 519-256-6621 ext. 243 or email at [jobs4@westofwindsor.com](mailto:jobs4@westofwindsor.com)**

## Book Launch

*Making Marriage Modern*  
By Christina Simmons

*Making Marriage Modern* explains the emergence in the 1920s of “companionate marriage,” which incorporated birth control and an active sexual role for wives and displaced Victorian marriage and femininity for both white and African-American women. Still marked by male dominance, the companionate ideal prevailed by the 1940s and set the standard against which later feminists rebelled.



Monday, March 9  
5:30 p.m.  
McPherson Lounge, Alumni Hall  
University of Windsor

Free and open to the public



## 10th annual Feminist Research Group Conference May 21-23, 2009

Features feminist research and creative activity  
completed by students across disciplines.

Online registration begins March 2009

[www.uwindsor.ca/frg](http://www.uwindsor.ca/frg)

## *Rape as a War Crime: gender mainstreaming in international criminal prosecution*



Tonia St. Germain, J.D.

Wednesday, March 25  
12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
Law Building, Rm. G110, UofW  
Presented by:  
Centre for Studies in Social Justice



## a sense of wonder

RACHEL CARSON'S LOVE OF THE NATURAL WORLD & HER FIGHT TO DEFEND IT

Screening followed by panel discussion

Tuesday, March 24

7:15 p.m.

Free and open to the public

“You cannot walk  
away unmoved.”

—Bill Moyers

F.J. Brennan Catholic High School  
910 Raymo Rd., Windsor

## Blogging About Uzma...

By Candace Nast  
Women's Studies Graduate  
History Master's Student

Uzma Shakir, GTA activist, visited Windsor to talk about activism, feminism, Islam, immigration, community, and violence against women, racism, sexism, Islamophobia, Sharia law, and the imperiled Muslim woman. I kept a running list of quotes from the talks I attended.

Here they are:

1. Multiculturalism is not just food, music, and dance. I call it Sari and Samosa Syndrome. We're not talking about power — let's talk about my right to wear hijab, about power and privilege.
2. Activism is not about convenience. I cannot be antiracist all day and then go home at 5 o'clock, put my feet up and be a bigot.
3. I had an arranged marriage. I arranged it myself.
4. My family turns into a nuclear family by virtue of Immigration Canada.
5. Muslims do not have a monopoly on oppressing women.
6. If I am the standard and you are different from me then I have the power.
7. When you get tired of anti-racism and social justice, remember those who cannot walk away. You've got to stand with them.
8. Pakistan has been colonized for 200 years but the colonizers went home. They left behind their cronies to watch over us. But in Canada, the colonizers never went home.
9. I didn't know I was being a feminist until I came here a week ago. I thought I was just a woman who liked to fight.
10. We have to fight together. We have been marginalized and oppressed and if we're not careful we're going to marginalize and oppress someone else.
11. Just because we are doing social justice does not mean we are socially just.
12. We [immigrants and refugees] don't come here to live in poverty. We don't come for the weather and we don't come for the food - we bring the food! We come for the democracy.

You can read more at <http://www.femilicious.com/blog/2008/11/02/uzma-shakir-quotes/>