

Women's Studies

at

Mississippi State University

--The Early Years--

by: Ellen Bryant



April 2007



WOMEN'S STUDIES

Acknowledgements

For critical and helpful readings of this history I wish to thank my daughter-in-law Janis Bryant and Dr. Kittye Delle Robbins-Herring, Associate Professor of Foreign Languages. For plodding through her old records in order to dig up bits of information I especially thank Dr. Margaret M. Murray, Associate Professor of English. For the sharing of her women's studies files I am thankful to Dr. Elizabeth (Libby) Nybakken. For patience with my slowness in shaping the focus I would use in putting together this history and my general procrastination, I am grateful to all those associated with and interested in promoting the women's studies program at Mississippi State University. And for happy memories of tireless sessions of composing, theorizing, and pursuing the effort to establish women's studies as an academically substantial program of studies at our university, I will always be grateful to Meg, Kittye, and Libby.

Introduction

At Mississippi State University, I believe Women's Studies has a multifaceted purpose. First and foremost, Women's Studies is an academic discipline concerned with the contributions and struggles of women, designed to enhance students' sensitivities to gender-related issues. At Mississippi State, we achieve this via an interdisciplinary program that covers more than a dozen disciplines across two colleges. Faculty from these programs comprise the Women's Studies Advisory Committee, which oversees the curriculum associated with both Undergraduate and Graduate Women's Studies Certificates.

In addition to the academic pursuits of the program, I believe we are charged with educating students, the community and other faculty about the strengths of women as well as the challenges women face. As such, we have developed several programs:

- The Gender Studies Lecture Series—held monthly during the academic year
- The Women's Forum—our celebration of Women's History Month
- The Annual Paper Competition—for both undergraduate and graduate students, and
- The Annual Poster Competition—in celebration of Women's History Month

As very clearly explicated here, the faculty of Mississippi State University have worked hard to make the Women's Studies

Program succeed. It has been thirty years since the first Mississippi State University Women's Commission and more than 25 years since the Concentration in Women's Studies was made available. We have had the Ellen Bryant Women's Resource Center for more than a decade and have had ten directors (Ellen Bryant, Susan Snell, Catheryn Goree, Linda Southward, Karen Mack, Rose Kadende-Kaiser, Melanie Eckford-Prosser, Meg Murray, Jeralynn Cossman, and John Bartkowski) lead this program to a place of prominence within the College of Arts and Sciences.

As Dr. Bryant closes this paper, she notes that we have a program that we should be proud of—this is true. We also have to continue the hard work of those who have come before us and strive to make Women's Studies at Mississippi State University even stronger. We plan to continue to work toward a minor and major in Women's Studies and hope one day to be able to offer a graduate-level degree in Women's Studies as well.

Dr. Bryant has put many hours into the development of this history. I challenge others who have participated in the development of this program to write their thoughts as well, making the History of Women's Studies at Mississippi State University a series of documents representing many voices.

Author's Forward

Since my life experiences, starting in the pre-world-war years of the 1930s and continuing through the 1980s, illustrate the changing roles of women and the social pressures of discontent which spurred the most recent upsurge of feminism that ultimately led to “Women’s Lib” and eventually to the start of women’s studies programs here and throughout the Nation, a brief overview of these years and my experiences in them is in order. The social matrix for a change in women’s roles and status was already in place in the 1930s.

Our generation grew up during the depression years and was eager to obtain jobs and achieve higher levels of living. Both sexes were generally well educated and literate, and the coeducational environment of the public schools gave little indication of the sex discrimination our generation of women would later face in the work arena. During the war, industries sought and hired women employees to fill many of the male-typed jobs. Women flooded into the workplace, only to be dismissed at the war’s conclusion and their jobs lost to men. The deprivations endured during the war had also inspired among us a desire to return the normalcy of stable family life.

After a brief economic slowdown, the possibilities for achieving our ambitions were fueled by a growing economy and the welcomed G. I. Bill that allowed the returning veteran to enroll in college, earn a degree, and typically get

a good job upon graduation. As their husbands were earning bachelor’s degrees, wives were earning PHT (putting husband through) degrees, filling, as a rule, secretarial or clerical jobs in order to augment family incomes above the G. I. living allotments. My husband and I fell into this pattern, except that we already had a small son and I was not able to work. Those young newly married couples who did not avail themselves of the program for earning a college degree nevertheless found good paying jobs in the expanding economy. Both groups began producing the baby boom generation. Suburbia exploded with this growth as new middle and working class families achieved breadwinner jobs and the American ideal of home ownership. One consequence of these developments was the isolation of a cadre of relatively well-educated middle and working class women into a ghetto of suburban boredom dependent on the automobile for transportation. Betty Friedan writes of the problem in her book *The Feminine Mystique*. To say the least, there was growing discontent among housewives, who having once been exposed to campus life or to having their own good paying jobs, found themselves living in “bedroom” communities and relying on the automobile to escape their often sterile environments. Some analysts have attributed the strident nature of the Women’s Liberation Movement in America to the structure of the American city with its outlying suburban growth.

Flash back a few decades to my particular experiences. In its fundamental aspect, I had always been a feminist, chafing against the strictures that kept me restricted to playing society's prescribed women's roles. As I was graduating from high school in 1941, I was talked out of aspirations for studying chemistry with arguments suggesting the field offered no jobs for women. I acquiesced, found a much needed job and enrolled in evening college although I continued to share and enjoy many of the typical activities of young women of that time. On the other hand, I was generally indifferent to perfecting my make-up, competing for popular boys, or reading romance novels. I retained my scholarly interests and, as was the case with many young women of my era, moved into maturity with a complex sex role identity.

There are probably two reasons why I never completely internalized feminine roles. First, I obtained most of my emotional nurturance from my father. He was always there for me, and I knew he loved me more than he loved my sister. My mother and sister were like a closed corporation. They went shopping for girl things. I went with my father to the hardware store to look for the right nail or screw or whatever. I never had good access to the female world of my mother and sister. Second, we were a working class family and my mother did not move in a world of middle-class femininity. Her message and expectation expressed to both my sister and me was that the ability to support oneself was necessary. Out of

the blue one day my mother looked at me and said, "Maybe you can be a lawyer." To say the least, I was taken aback, but I still remember the challenge. The middle-class feminine role was never included in her perspectives for our future. I remember a high school girlfriend, a big rawboned German girl, gushing about how she was persuading her family to buy new furniture. She looked at me condescendingly and said that I was probably not planning to entertain. Then she informed me "you have to be feminine." I looked at her somewhat stupidly. I didn't even know the implications in the meaning of feminine.

The first job I obtained as a new high school graduate did not pay very much. I was shocked that I had to balance cash, write letters, and help compose endorsements to insurance policies and that I earned less than the stupidest boy in high school who got a job delivering ice to households. My second job paid better, but I learned from coworkers that there were two wage scales for each job—one for men and one for women. I believed this to be true because when a man took over a job that I had previously held his pay was substantially more than mine had been. Simultaneously, while starting to work I enrolled in evening college where I took three years to accumulate one year of college credit. Then I met Glenn and got married. He personified everything I admired—brains, manners, looks, and interests. Even though I had an apparently ideal husband, after seven years of marriage and three children, I found

myself devolved almost into nothingness. For some of us, the wife-mother role can be suffocating, cutting us off from the things we focused on throughout our growing years. However, today, I realize that the best thing I ever did was have those three kids.

A part-time job and a return to college gradually brought me out of my slump. Working part-time at about 85 cents an hour and taking two courses a semester, I was able to help my family, pay for my education, and bring myself back to life. My job was in the Sociology Department at Mississippi State University and they liked my work, giving me responsibilities far beyond my job status and allowing me to write research reports. This would not be allowed today. In a way I was exploited, but I was also able to get my foot in the door to professional employment. I did well in my course work, earning mostly As and a chance to compete for a Woodrow Wilson scholarship. Because of my academic record and the pressure of the baby boom generation's movement into college years, I was enlisted as an instructor while only holding the bachelor's degree. I launched into graduate work and began to pursue a master's degree when I thought that my husband's work might take us away from Mississippi State. I reasoned that with a master's degree I could probably teach in a junior college.

On completion of my master's degree and thesis, for which I had received good organizational and editorial help, but no real

substantive help, I mailed a copy of my thesis to a former professor for whom I had had a great deal of respect and from whom I had learned extensively. Within a few months I noted that he was appearing on a program at a national meeting with a presentation on the theme I had developed as the theoretical construct of my thesis. I showed it to my boss; he was almost as angry as I was (he had been on my master's committee) and he financed a trip for me to the same meeting. When I crossed paths with this individual at the meeting, he looked as if he had seen a ghost. I told him I was looking forward to hearing his paper but he discouraged me from attending the session. After hearing the presentation, I saw him at breakfast the next morning and told him that I was disappointed in the papers of the other two leading lights of the profession that appeared with him but that he came across loud and strong. To his credit, he cringed. Later, when I saw him in the hall, he finally acknowledged receiving the thesis, told me there were three journal articles in it and that he would introduce me to someone who would be good for me to know. I did not immediately follow through on writing the articles. Any interest my former professor had in guiding me fizzled out, and I moved on to other interests. I have often wondered if the outcome would have been different had I been male. Besides suffering disappointment and disillusionment, there was one other unfortunate outcome from the experience. I got the idea that I was smarter

and more competent than I actually was—never a good way to progress on a professional career.

I drifted into the doctoral program. Realizing that I needed more education for the teaching and research I was doing, I kept enrolling in graduate courses. The graduate school kept writing that I should set up a program which I finally did. By the time I finished and was ready for comprehensive exams, the market for college professors had changed and I was no longer needed or preferred. Stupidly, always putting my job first, I had agreed to serve on committees whose decisions challenged some members of my department. Suddenly I found myself a challenge and threat to some of them. I was no longer an employee who could do analyses to bolster the accomplishments of senior staff; I was competition. I experienced many ugly episodes, some of them linked to sex discrimination, but some simply part of vicious professional competition. Eventually I got my degree and then, along with continuing teaching and research responsibilities, I went to work part-time for the vice president of the university as part of the team that developed the Affirmative Action Policy for the university. I was increasingly developing a personal interest in the politics of women's issues and becoming convinced of the need to develop academic

studies and research on women's experiences, achievements and status. However, I was never a member of the protest movement and my academic base for interest in women's studies was derived from my study of population statistics. I found that rapid population growth correlated positively with war and low status for women. Other evidence supported this finding. I concluded that if the world's population was to survive and thrive, then women, worldwide, had to be able to control their reproduction and find their own identities.

My life, work, and university experience had primed me for an interest in the Women's Movement and in the developing women's studies programs around the nation. I was ready to be involved in developing one for our university. My experience with this effort is recorded in this history. Since retirement, I have continued to maintain an interest in the program and since the creation of the Ellen Bryant Women's Resource Center have enjoyed attending the many and increasing number of activities sponsored by the program. I continue to be impressed by the many achievements of its faculty and staff.

Preface

The written history of the development of women's studies at Mississippi State University must, in my opinion, have multiple authors if it is to accurately record and explain the tenacity displayed, the political juggling required, and the emotional put-downs endured during the process in order to secure a place for its curricula in the academic offerings of the university. The portion of these efforts that I am able to accurately write about are those I experienced personally. At first, I thought I could do a comprehensive history of this academic movement at Mississippi State University; but the documents, even if complete, do not record the efforts expended in inserting gender facts into an established academic dogma. I believe that what has transpired since I left the university would be best reported by those who experienced it. I see my contribution as consisting of a recording of my work and experiences in developing the Women's Studies Program at Mississippi State University.

The history I write consists of: (1) my observations of the awakening feminist activities and awareness on campus; (2) my experiences in helping develop the affirmative action program at the university and my evolving identification with feminism which led to my interest in women's studies; (3) a chronological listing of the events in the development of women's studies at Mississippi State University; (4) my experiences in helping pull together the women's studies program and guiding it through

its formative years between 1981 to 1988; and (5) a discussion of variables that affect the status of women generally—or a brief incursion into feminist theory. The first four of these are included herewith. The last is still in progress and keeps growing. It is, in fact, a bigger mouthful than I had originally intended to chew. Hopefully, I will be able to complete this last part at a later date.

In concert with my approach to this history is the style in which I have written it. It is a casual and descriptive account of events as I remember them. However, although I use very few footnotes, I have anchored my accounts in available records and have striven to be accurate and honest in my presentation. On the occasions that pinpointing precise dates proved impossible, this is indicated in the manuscript.

My rationale for deciding to humanize my historical description is best illustrated by my experience when, as a young girl, I tried to read a set of books in my mother's library which claimed to be a comprehensive outline of world history. This compilation of facts was not buttressed in the cultural and social situations of the human societies in which they occurred. I found the books sterile and meaningless. I did not want to write a sterile history. "The personal is political" is a statement used by many feminists in justifying their ambitions to achieve equality for women. I can elaborate that the political is also personal. Many reform movements have been based on the stultifying

impacts from political restrictions thwarting individual aspirations. This account should illuminate the many personal frustrations that inspired the ongoing efforts to establish a program of women's studies, and I hope these contributions will be the start of a comprehensive history of the development of the Women's Studies Program at Mississippi State University.

BEGINNINGS

Officially, The Women's Studies Program at Mississippi State University began in 1981 with the appointment of its first director, but its tender roots found nurture in earlier events. In the 1960s and early 1970s all was relatively calm at Mississippi State University in spite of the influx of the baby-boomer generation and the stresses of increased enrollments. To ease the adjustments for expanding classrooms and course offerings, many qualified women were quickly and easily hired into the faculty. A few years later, the employment histories of many of these same women would provide documentation for discriminatory practices. My experience working at the university became part of this documentary record. In 1956, I was hired as a part-time hourly employee in the Department of Sociology by Dr. Harold F. Kaufman, head of the department at that time. I had already returned to college to finish my undergraduate degree. When he hired me Dr. Kaufman explained that he was interested in bringing into his department some intelligent women who were interested in continuing their education and working towards becoming junior professionals thereby expanding the research and teaching potential of his staff.

Nationally, there were student revolts against the Vietnam War while race riots and anti-war demonstrations were becoming everyday news items. Hippy counter-culture

behavior was seeping into the lifestyles of our youth and shocking the general public as they became increasingly aware of its extensiveness. In Mississippi, civil rights workers were experiencing strenuous and often violent opposition to their efforts to integrate schools and to increase voter registration and participation in elections among blacks. The University of Mississippi, located in Oxford, made national headlines as Governor Ross Barnett flamboyantly tried to halt the enrollment of the University of Mississippi's first black student. At Mississippi State, under the insightful and levelheaded administration of Dr. William L. Giles, problems associated with enrolling black students were minimal. They were quietly admitted and special programs were established to encourage black student enrollment and to help recruit black faculty.

The 60s also brought another upsurge in the Women's Movement. The 1950s, with its purported return to normalcy, had bred frustration for many women. In 1963, Betty Friedan wrote about it in *The Feminine Mystique*. However, the women's movement did not really gather steam until sex discrimination was added to the 1966 Civil Rights Law by the United States Congress. Before its passage, the attitude of many members of Congress towards women's equality was one of levity. Laughingly, some commented that adding sex to the law would make it such a joke that it would not pass. But

nevertheless it passed and became the basis for Affirmative Action policies; however, several years were to pass before the Executive Order from the White House was issued to enforce compliance with the law within all institutions receiving support funds from government appropriations.

The Women's Movement in the United States developed many facets and because of America's unique culture became more strident here than it did in other industrially developed nations. Importantly, initial organized support for equal employment opportunities came from the Women's Commission created by President Lyndon Johnson and had representatives from the various states meeting in Washington at the time the 1966 Equal Rights Law was enacted. (Interestingly, at the date of this writing, Mississippi's Women's Commission is still seeking funding to provide for its continued existence.) After the general meeting, several members met separately and organized NOW (National Organization of Women), with Betty Friedan as its first president. NOW became the centerpiece of activity for educated, middle-class women, primarily white women. Following NOW President Patricia Ireland's visit to campus and the Women's Studies Center in 2000, a local chapter of NOW was organized at Mississippi State and Starkville. Unfortunately, the local chapter of NOW was disbanded in 2005 due to lack of active participants.

The pressure for gender equity gathered momentum during the 1970s. The Equal Rights Amendment, which was first introduced in Congress in 1923, was reintroduced and passed by the 92nd Congress in the early 1970s. At first it seemed a shoo-in for approval by the states and there was extensive participation among Mississippi State women in the drive for its passage. However, it bogged down as resistance dug in its heels in many conservative, especially Southern, states. Phyllis Schlafly mounted her anti-ERA campaign, even traveling to Starkville in October 1980 to speak against it. Feminists came to be labeled "Women's Libbers." Lacking approval from a substantial majority of states required for its adoption, the amendment failed to achieve approval during the early years of the Reagan Administration.

On a tangential stage, Women's Studies Programs were developing in the late 1960s at some of the nation's leading colleges and universities. Nor was interest absent at MSU. At first there were a few scattered courses, but soon these were coalesced into respectable academic programs. Scattered among the majority of conventional female students enrolled in the early 1970s were a few hippie-like rebels who organized a Women's Liberation Group and published a newsletter, *Sting Like the Butterfly*. I remember two of the student members, Joanne Clarke and Emily (whose last name I do not remember). Both were idealistic and, having experienced some sex role trauma in their own families of orientation, were interested

in the developing dimensions of women's roles. Joanne, who had taken my population class and later won a graduate assistantship in Sociology, was one of the best students I have ever taught. Dr. Kittye Delle Robbins-Herring¹, who has been my substance editor for this history, was the group's faculty advisor. She has many anecdotal memories of the group but little archival material about it. She tells me they were actively getting organized in 1973 and 1974 and were known as the Campus Organization for Women, which conveniently became labeled COW. Furthermore, one empathetic male sociology professor, Dr. D. Wood Harper, offered an informal course dealing with women's liberation at his home one evening a week. But, these early efforts fizzled out, and it took another decade before efforts and interests coalesced into a recognized, approved academic program.

Other events affecting women's equity at MSU and throughout the nation were also taking place. Of prime importance was the instigation of Affirmative Action programs in compliance with the Executive Order issued from the White House. Guidelines and regulations were set up for organizations that were accepting federal funds for their operation.

¹ Dr. Kittye del Robbins-Herring is an Associate Professor of Foreign Languages at Mississippi State University. She has been a continuous and integral part of the development of women's studies and women's organizations at MSU since these days of early beginnings. She was a founding member of FWA (Faculty Women's Association), a joint author of the Proposal for a Women's Study Program, and served on the MLA Commission on the Status of Women, 1974-1976.

This Order, generated from the passage of the 1966 Civil Rights Act, had taken several years of preparation, but by the early 1970s it was ready. In 1973, I was added to the Affirmative Action Committee to help prepare procedures and reports of compliance. I was one of the few persons on the MSU faculty who had had experience in analyzing and publishing population data.

After receiving my doctoral degree, I became intensely involved in preparing tables that documented evidence of discrimination in the work force of the university. I worked directly for Dr. T. K. Martin, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and I was delighted to work on a project that promised to improve working conditions for MSU's female employees. My years of working with worldwide population data had convinced me that the women of many nations often lived under deplorable conditions, including repetitious unwanted pregnancies and the accompanying problems or pressured due to overpopulation. I had noted from international demographic data that areas with very high rates of population growth tended to erupt in armed conflict. I reasoned that world peace and prosperity was undeniably linked to easing population growth and that slower growth could be achieved by raising women's status and self respect to the extent that they could and would control their own bodies and their own fertility. It seemed that my professorial experience had propelled me toward feminist attitudes.

As a member of the Affirmative Action team, Dr. Martin gave me full access to the university's personnel records and told me to look for inequities, primarily among women. I was in the process of setting up tables on income by gender and race, controlling for rank and longevity, when government representatives from the Atlanta office of Health Education and Welfare showed up. They were, to say the least, a little bit arrogant. They were demanding employment and salary statistics by race and gender, apparently expecting stonewalling. However, when I showed them the computer printouts of my tables, they reacted with suppressed gasps, mumbling "You're already doing it." These tabulations, in somewhat refined form, became part of the university's final Affirmative Action Compliance Plan report completed during the 1978-79 academic year.

The university's Affirmative Action program brought sizeable pay raises to many women faculty, promotions to others, and eliminated the practice of some departments to repetitiously hire women for temporary and part-time teaching on a yearly basis. Programs to accommodate black students were also established, as was a separate allocation of funds for salaries to be awarded to departments who could successfully recruit black faculty. Hiring practices insuring advertisement of openings and deliberate interviewing of minority and women applicants were also developed, but these procedures never specified quota hiring.

In many ways, working with the Affirmative Action Committee on setting up the Compliance Program was frustrating. The Executive Order guidelines were confusing and often called for statistics for which no official sources were available. They not only wanted statistics on the university's work force, but also figures on the available qualified labor force pool by race and sex. Many of the statistics had to be estimated using demographic ratios and methods. Also, while it appeared that we were doing what was required, it was virtually impossible to get a written commitment of approval from HEW. Nevertheless, however tentative, the approval was sufficient and the plan was ready in sufficient time to allow the university to obtain its first million dollar research grant from Federal sources.

This grant was awarded to Dr. David L. Murphree, Director of the MHD Energy Center which later evolved into DIAL, and just recently became ICET (Institute for Clean Energy Technology) which is a major research unit of the university located in the Thad Cochran Research Park. While this grant identifies a benchmark in the start of competitive research grant applications by the university from the federal government, two other professors predated Murphree in obtaining noteworthy federal research grants. The first was Dr. August Raspet whose research with gliders brought in federal research money for aviation and led to building the Raspet Flight Laboratory which is located adjacent to the Starkville Brian Field

Airport. The second was Dr. Harold F. Kaufman who obtained federal grants for sociological research and organized a unit in his department which he labeled the Social Science Research Center. This unit ultimately evolved into another major research unit in the university and is also located in the Thad Cochran Research Park. I especially remember these innovative people because my husband worked for the first and I worked for the second.

International Women's Year was proclaimed by the United Nations in 1975 and later extended to include the decade. It was created by the UN and several private organizations for the purpose of calling attention to women's issues. But not until 1977 did the United States Congress appropriate money to fund an American Celebration of the International Woman's year. With the \$5 million appropriation, The National Commission on the Observance of International Woman's Year organized state-level coordinating committees to raise funds and serve as outreach points to the local communities. Each state was to discuss issues and elect delegates to a national meeting to be held in Houston, Texas in the summer of 1977. Mississippi's state coordinating meeting was held earlier that year in a downtown hotel in Jackson. Several Starkville women, most notably Dr. Kathy Gilbert, then an economics professor at MSU, worked extensively in organizing the state gathering. In addition, Dr. Gilbert was planning section meetings for discussing women's issues

which were to be followed by a general conclave for electing representatives to the Houston meeting. It was the events occurring at this state-level meeting that accelerated my thinking into realizing there was a pressing need to study and understand gender politics and the ubiquitous existence of efforts to subordinate women and suppress their rights to equality. Development of Women's Studies at MSU became—at that time—one of my top academic priorities.

When we arrived at the hotel in Jackson to participate in the meeting, we found the environs extremely crowded. Several busses were parked on the streets outside, and the lobby was swarming with both men and women. I caught the attention of a hefty gentleman standing at the edge of the crowd and asked him for directions to one of the sessions. He brushed off my question, indicating that he did not know, so I turned to ask the woman next to him. This time he responded with vigor, "She's with me." The woman cowered. Finally, reality hit me. A "take-over" of our meeting was in progress. Some groups in the lobby were singing hymns. I remembered that the names of right wing religious groups had been on the busses parked outside. Right wing fundamentalism was in high gear. I looked the man in the eye and asked "Whatever happened to God the Mother?" As I walked down the hall he seemed to be spinning into orbit, shouting "God the Father, God the Father, God the Father" at me as I found my way down the corridor. My question was not a

politically wise reaction to a bad scene, but I have never regretted it. I found the session I was looking for and was early enough to be able to participate in the voting on resolutions proposed by the interloping religious groups. Besides the women who had come because of their concerns for women's issues, many others, especially very vocal men, were in attendance. When the vote was taken, my one vote swung the election to a majority rejection of the reactionary resolutions the take-over religionists were proposing in this discussion session. The men at this session met their defeat with anger and raised fists. In this one session, the conspiratorial efforts of these conservative reactionaries had failed. They were furious; I felt a bit gratified.

But their take-over had been well planned. They had bussed in many dominating men and enough subordinated women to suppress sincere discussions on women's issues and elect themselves as delegates to the National Women's Year Conference in Houston. Women's issues were not discussed; they were squashed. Why? I asked myself. Why were these church leaders so opposed to open discussions of the issues women faced in a changing society? Nothing I had learned in church from the teachings of Jesus Christ could justify what they were doing. They had even used my precious hymns against me. That hurt.

In spite of local backlashes, the momentum for change and the investigation of issues was still reverberating nationally.

Leading universities were developing academic courses in Women's Studies and degree programs were in the offing. The winds of change were also being felt at Mississippi State University. Along with the push for racial justice, there was a clamor for justice and equality for women. Government supported institutions were vulnerable to forced compliance laws requiring economic and social equality. Research funds were at stake.

Commitment to the development of women's studies was a natural adjunct to a general commitment to progress. Beyond relying increasingly on Federal funding for research, the University was changing in other ways. It was developing a broader focus and had reached a level of development that was competing with leading universities in research rank and curriculum growth. The College of Arts and Sciences was created in 1956, when Mississippi State College became Mississippi State University. The College of Arts and Sciences offered many majors that were of interest to women and was expanding faster than the older colleges. Enrollment growth in the entire university consisted chiefly of women and black students. These new trends were a challenge that could not be ignored.

CONSTRUCTING A PROGRAM

During the 1970s, Women's Studies was becoming an acceptable and necessary academic initiative at the nation's leading universities. In *Issues in Feminism*, 1980, Sheila Reith writes that the first scattered courses emerged in the middle and late 1960s, and by 1974 there were 4,600 courses in 885 universities. Women's Studies was the academic branch of the Women's Movement. By 1977, NWSA (National Women's Studies Association) and SEWSA (Southeast Women's Studies Association) had been organized. Bringing women's realities into academic disciplines was a multidisciplinary and an interdisciplinary activity. In order to make this shift, the disciplines of history, literature, political science, sociology, communication, business, law and, to some extent, the biological and hard sciences, had to broaden their coverage of empirical data and expand their theoretical explanations. The examination of gender-specific data was to develop more detailed explanations of phenomena in several fields while increasing our understanding of all human behavior. Feminist theory was challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and feminist research was reexamining existing empirical data and historical sources. New research was focusing on gender as a critical variable, questioning the assumed objectivity of older research, and placing new emphases on subjective research practices.

The new administration, aware of these academic trends, initiated actions to establish a Women's Studies Program. Dr. William L. Giles, who had quietly guided the university through the transitional period of racial integration, retired in 1976. The new president, Dr. James D. McComas created the university's first Women's Commission in 1977 appointing Dr. Elizabeth Nybakken, a new Assistant Professor of History, as its chairperson. Nybakken had been hired by Dr. Harold Snellgrove, History Department head, with precise instructions to develop a course in Women's History. The expressed purpose of the Women's Commission was broad and aimed at exploring many avenues for improving the status of women on campus. As Dr. Nybakken stated in her address at the 1988 Women's Week Awards Ceremony, the commission's vision was to "enhance the position of all women on campus." This included supporting Affirmative Action, encouraging women's organizations on campus, working for the equalization of sports and office facilities, examining existing subtle obstacles to equal opportunity, as well as initiating a Women's Studies Program. An important activity that the commission initiated was an annual Celebration of Women's Week. While the celebration in 1977 was minimal, that for 1978, presenting a tribute to Mississippi State University's Centennial, was an extensive weeklong series of programs and meetings.

Members of the new commission and its several committees were drawn from throughout the campus. Included in the representation were the disciplines of English, Economics, Biochemistry, Engineering, Education, Counseling, Communication, Political Science, Anthropology, and Sociology along with other interested persons and groups from the community. Dr. Nybakken appointed a seventeen-member study committee for developing a program for Women's Studies, naming Dr. Margaret M. Murray, assistant professor of English, as chairperson. I was not part of the original committee, but, because of my earlier experiences and my commitment to the need for the academic investigation of women's realities, I asked Dr. Nybakken to add me to the WS (Women's Studies) committee. She did so in the fall of 1977 and I was welcomed enthusiastically by Dr. Murray and the rest of the committee members. The committee had work to do and began immediately.

The charge to the WS Committee was to investigate women's studies programs around the country and to tailor one suitable for Mississippi State University and report back with a written plan as soon as possible. The decision was made to produce the report as a concept paper. The idea that the university could embrace a program of study focusing on the experiences and realities of women was a distinct departure from the standard mission of the university originally devoted to the fields of

engineering and agriculture and, at one time, excluded the enrollment of women.

The existing mindset of many senior administrators and faculty at that time was simply focused on activities that excluded women or saw them as essentially adjuncts to male activities. Their lack of awareness of women as total persons is aptly illustrated by conversational exchanges I had with Dr. T. K. Martin, administrative vice president, when I was working for him on the Affirmative Action project. Dr. Martin, whom I have always sincerely respected, was a gentleman of the old school, formally polite and precise in the administration of his duties. One morning, as I entered his office, he asked, "Are you a feminist?" I said, "Yes." He replied, "Then, I'm not getting up." Another time, while discussing giving equal employment rights to women, he challenged me asking, "If your husband has the responsibility of supporting your family, doesn't he deserve higher pay?" I countered "Nobody objects to a bachelor having a good salary." He raised his eyebrows and demurred "that's right." A third incidence was a letter he sent in response to a letter I had written to the editor of our local paper in which I had criticized Phyllis Schlafly. He wrote "By implication you may have said it: Some women have through love what other women seek through law." He could only see women's studies as a temporary academic effort that would eventually be incorporated into existing courses. Academic, southern family men

mentally fused family and gender stereotypes and were bewildered by the social changes ongoing in the nation.

Understanding this bewilderment, the committee felt that the endeavor had to start with a thorough, ongoing examination of the nation's changing realities and an explanation of the importance of studying women's experiences and their contributions to society. The Women's Studies Program Report was produced as a concept paper, which diagrammed proposed activities and explained their purpose. As is not unusual in any committee assignment, the responsibility for developing the basic logic and format for a women's studies program at MSU fell to two persons: its chair, Dr. Margaret Murray, and Dr. Kittye Delle Robbins-Herring, Assistant Professor of Foreign Languages. I joined them in polishing the paper.

Meeting regularly, Dr. Murray and the Committee had a report ready to present to the Commission and to the Vice President for Academic Affairs by April of 1978. Entitled a Concept Paper, the report was essentially a comprehensive plan for structuring a Women's Studies Program for the university. In developing their program, the committee first set down some basic assumptions and guidelines. They specified that to be successful the program had to 1) be in harmony with the existing university and community; 2) have an administrative structure supported by at least a minimal level of resources; 3) find a favorable climate of support from the administration,

faculty and students; and 4) demonstrate benefits to the university and the larger community.

The program they proposed had a three-pronged thrust—three basic components, which were set up as stages in the development of a strong Women's Studies Program. All were intended to enhance and update attitudes and knowledge about women, as well as to encourage sensitivities to issues relating to women in contemporary American society. First, was Project Impact, an effort to raise awareness of issues related to women and to create a favorable academic and social environment for developing the projected program. Second, the creation of an associated Resource Center to serve as a clearinghouse for activities and functions needed for a Women's Studies Program. Third, the development of a concentration of courses investigating women's realities, both historically and in the contemporary world, aimed at correcting omissions and enriching the academic curriculum at MSU.

The paper also proposed an administrative structure for the program, linking it to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (now the Provost's Office), the College of Arts and Sciences, and the President's Commission on the Status of Women through a Steering Committee that would channel the work of running the program through two administrators: a director of the Women's Studies concentration and a coordinator of the Women's Resource Center.

The proposed start-up budget for the Women's Studies was \$13,256 for the first year and \$9,368 for the second year. This budget included one-quarter-time salary for the Coordinator of the proposed center, plus consultants' costs and instructional materials.

Included in the lengthy Concept Paper was a Summary of Recommendations. This summary, which includes suggestions for immediate actions, is given below.

Summary of Recommendations

The research, discussions, and consultations conducted by the Women's Studies Committee have resulted in a set of recommendations summarized below. We would appreciate a specific response to each.

1. We recommend that Mississippi State University proceed with the development of a Women's Program as outlined in the preceding sections of this paper.
2. We recommend that the program have a tripartite structure: Project Impact, a Women's Resource Center, and a Women's Studies Concentration.
3. We recommend the immediate creation of the Project Impact Committee, the appointment of its chairperson and the formal recognition of its already ongoing activities.
4. We recommend that an appropriate locale be chosen for the Resource Center and that initial steps be taken to begin its operation.
5. We recommend that the Women's Program Steering Committee and its chair be appointed as soon as possible. Further, we suggest that this committee should be asked to perform temporarily the functions which will ultimately be taken over by the Director of Women's Studies.
6. We recommend that the present Women's Studies Committee, having completed its charge with the submission of this Concept Paper, be dismissed upon the acceptance of the paper.

The report was readily accepted by the commission, but its implementation was not so easily achieved. Three of us (Dr. M. Murray, Dr. K. D. Robbins-Herring, and I) worked intensively throughout the summer of 1978 to fine-tune the proposal. In spite of our work we never received an unequivocal endorsement from the administration. Neither did the proposed program receive line item budgetary support to start the project, nor even an invitation to resubmit as a trimmed down project seeking approval and funding. Mississippi State's current Women's Studies Program was slowly put together, piece by piece, and as of this writing (2006), is still not completely in place. Limited funding for specific activities was obtained through the Women's Commission and the President's Office. We envied our women's studies cohorts at the University of Mississippi who had already achieved their funded Sarah Isom Center for their women's studies program.

In the meantime, as item three in the summary list states, Project Impact was already in operation. So, too, were two Women's Studies courses, which had received temporary approval for experimental courses typically granted to new course offerings. Project Impact, the university-wide effort to draw attention to women's issues and sensitize the community to

their relevance, was implemented through programs that brought in nationally known individuals to address specific topics. As the project proposal had explained, the purpose of Project Impact was to increase the awareness of community and university women and men of women's changing situations, to inform them about the scope of the women's program activities, and to involve them in those activities. In Mississippi, as elsewhere, controversies associated with the Women's Movement had led to emotional reactions to and polarized attitudes about many issues concerning women. The cost of bringing in these speakers was shared by the Women's Commission and cooperating departments at the university or community organizations.

The first and most outstanding event provided by Project Impact during this 1978-80 period was a visit to campus by Mrs. Lillian Carter, mother of then president Jimmy Carter. Dr. Murray, through a family connection, was able to organize this gala event. Mrs. Carter was the featured speaker at a dinner in the Union Ballroom on Saturday night, January 28, 1978. The event was packed and overflowing with attendees from both the campus and the city of Starkville. The Sunday January 29, 1978 edition of *The Clarion-Ledger/Jackson Daily News* covered the presentation and printed two stories about the event. Miss Lillian (as she was generally known) spoke of humorous and challenging activities encountered within her family when her children were growing up and

about her recent experiences in the Peace Corp. The audience laughed and applauded her throughout the evening. Tiny Miss Lillian gave a view of southern womanhood not generally depicted in the media. Her stories portrayed the life of a hard-working farmer's wife raising her family during the 1930s depression years. Her resilience in handling challenges was further depicted in her stories of her Peace Corp experiences. Commenting about being in Mississippi, she told us that she knew our hearts were in the right place when on election night at 3:00 a.m. those last three votes came in for Jimmy from Mississippi. She explained that she didn't really enjoy Washington because everyone was so busy that she ended up watching a lot of TV. The Murrays were once part of the old Georgia neighborhood where the Carters lived. Ron, Meg's husband, recalled "Miss Lillian as a tremendously vital woman" who stood out in an area where the image of most women is a "sweet lady."

Another nationally known person brought in during this early period was Marjorie Bell-Chambers who served as national president of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) from 1977 to 1979. Her presentation in the spring of 1979, also backed by the Women's Commission and the American Association of University Women, focused on the development of leadership among women and the significant part played by single-sex colleges. This was a gala event, including both a dinner in Starkville and a reception in

Columbus, both of which were sponsored by the local chapters of AAUW.

Two speakers addressed employment and economic factors for women and were sponsored cooperatively by the commission and the College of Business and Industry's Department of Economics: Esther Peterson, Assistant Secretary of Labor in the Kennedy Administration; and Dr. Barbara Reagan, professor of economics at Southern Methodist University and a consultant to various government agencies. I have not been able to identify the date of Peterson's visit but Reagan addressed an afternoon audience on October 8, 1979 on trends in the post-World War II economy, and the war's impact on women's participation in the labor force. She pointed out the increased growth in service industries, the resulting need for women's work, and the advent of shared parenting.

Dr. Jesse Bernard, nationally known sociologist and writer, was brought to the campus the third week of March, 1980, through the cooperation of the Women's Commission and the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work. Dr. Murray and I picked her up at the airport and later both of us developed helpful research relationships with her. Several activities celebrated her visit, including a banquet and a reception at the Enology Laboratory. I remember taking her to the reception, hosted by the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, in a driving rain. She never complained of the

soaking and was a genial honoree at the party. The next day she spoke to an audience of students and faculty on recent social changes, calling the Women's Movement a "seismic disturbance" that is changing everything—work, family, and marriage. In the same vein as Dr. Reagan, she explained that the seismic disturbance is the industrial and urban revolution which had recently come to the stage, where more and more of the kinds of work traditionally performed by women are needed while less and less of the kinds of work traditionally performed by men are needed. As a result, the private world could no longer be isolated from the public. She continued explaining that in the larger economy there will be more and more jobs available that demand the skills women have and perform well and fewer jobs that require the physical strength of men.

Activities to focus attention on women's issues continued but were sponsored chiefly by the Women's Commission rather than by Project Impact. The commission also continued to organize and sponsor programs for National Women's Week, which included a subsidized luncheon that was popular and widely attended by university women.

Although the second phase of the proposal visualized a Resource Center, which would provide physical centrality and a base for developing the Women's Studies Certificate curricula, in actuality the courses and certificate requirements were developed first. Perceptive department heads and professorial staff were

aware of the academic need to address women's issues. We had no faculty with specific academic qualifications to teach Women's Studies. None of us had earned a Women's Studies Certificate, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree or (if there were any to be had in 1980) a Doctorate in Women's Studies. What we had were bits and pieces of personal experiences, awareness of discrimination, exposure to the growing volume of literature, and a dedication to learning more about the obscure but increasing body of information so as to systematize it and build it into a curriculum.

The year 1977, which marked the creation of the Women's Commission, was also the year the first two specific Women's Studies courses were taught. Dr. Elizabeth Nybakken's course, *Women in American History*, carrying both graduate and undergraduate credit, was offered in the Spring semester, and my course, *Women in Society*, also offering both graduate and undergraduate credit but at a lower level, was offered in the Fall semester. Dr. Nybakken and I both sat in on each other's classes as often as possible, learning from each other's disciplines and exploring facets of study with which neither of us had any prior experience. Neither of us had taken courses in Women's Studies. People with these academic qualifications were not found at MSU and apparently very few were to be found in the nation. Nybakken's reading assignments were very heavy and covered the era of colonialism to the early 20th Century. While I was unable to

keep up the reading assignments, her course was a real learning experience. My course was more eclectic, dealing with changing sex roles in contemporary society ranging from appropriate sex role behavior, altruism, and discrimination to discussions of social problems. It was a frustrating course to teach. I used a *laissez faire* approach, allowing students to express their own feelings as much as possible. I particularly remember attempting to have an objective discussion on abortion. It was not possible; emotions spilled out and the effort had to be dropped.

Teaching classes in Women's Studies became the most challenging activity I had ever attempted. There was no structured curriculum outline to use as a guide, nor a generally established theoretical framework, but there was a set of emotionally charged topics with which to deal. Explaining gender-related social behavior brought up such topics as naming practices, education and occupational restriction, social mobility, residence patterns, the urban park movement, laws, criminal behavior, political activity, health care practices, religion, ideas of ideal societies, sports and entertainment, and family organization. While basic sociological theories and methodologies were helpful, their use involved a change in focus and a rethinking of assumptions. The work also required an objective assessment of feminist anger and the backlash from threatened dominating males. In spite of these frustrations, the Women's Studies program has given me the

most rewarding intellectual stimuli I have ever encountered.

Project Impact continued and in 1980 the Women's Studies Advisory Committee was created. It acted as a planning group to promote the development of new courses and to guide the program through the review by the college and university curriculum committees. The committee members also searched for qualified faculty to develop courses on women's issues within their own disciplines. Interest in women's studies continued to climb, and in 1981 the third women's studies course, The Psychology of Gender Differences (PSY 3203), was developed by Dr. Shelly Miles of the Psychology Department, and taught in the Fall semester of 1981. First listed in the 1982-83 Mississippi State University Catalogue, it became a very popular course and the university department frequently had to restrict enrollment.

In 1981, the Women's Studies Concentration was approved and the College of Arts and Sciences agreed to house the Women's Studies Program until a center for interdisciplinary studies was established within the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The search for a director and/or coordinator of Women's Studies began immediately even though there was no budget provided for running the program. Expenditures were covered through the Women's Commission or directly through the Mississippi State University President's Office.

Somehow, the search narrowed down to me, although other members of the Women's Studies Advisory Committee were more actively involved in the ongoing program. After some deliberation, I agreed to the appointment. At the time I was finishing a cancer therapy treatment and slowly beginning to recover my strength and felt I would be able to handle the appointment. Furthermore, my course in Women's Studies was becoming routine which enabled me to focus my concentration on organizational activities. Encouragingly, other departments and professors were proposing courses in Women's Studies. These developments bode success for developing a more comprehensive and permanent program for Women's Studies.

Still I was surprised at being asked to head the program. Charismatic leadership has never been my forte. I tend toward quiet study and research. Although initially I was unsure and hesitant to take on this challenge, the reasons soon became obvious. First, I was interested in developing the discipline having taught one of the first courses; second, I was tenured; third, my department (Sociology) was not opposed to my heading the program. Dr. Art Cosby, department head, agreed to allow me to accept the responsibility. On afterthought, I found this permission surprising, since there was no budget provided for the program. Nevertheless, I was allowed to count the approved courses I taught in the Women's Studies Concentration against my course load.

The university sent me to the Great Lakes Colleges' two-week Women's Studies Training Institute at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in the summer of 1981. The summer in Ann Arbor was hot, although not as hot as Mississippi. We were all housed in a dormitory (which, as I remember was not air conditioned) but ate most of our meals in restaurants. We had training sessions during the day and general conclaves at night. Since I was still weak from therapy, I was not able to join some of the late-night sessions and missed some of the participants' self-explorations into experiences of sex discrimination and their frustrations in their efforts to develop women's studies curricula. However, the general interest, enthusiasm and expectations were positive. There were about fifty in attendance including three males, but I was the only person from the Deep South. What was impressive was the wide variation among the feminists attending.

Some were strong academicians, devoted to strict standards of research and teaching. Others were exploratory in their approach to studying women's experiences, developing unorthodox methodologies and constructing feminist theories. The disciplines of English, sociology, and philosophy were strongly represented. Some attendees were extensively published authors and lecturers. There were representatives from both the white and black communities as well as from other ethnic groups, the majority giving the appearance of middle class America. One

woman had her small children with her, and one had her teenaged sons who visibly accorded their mother respect and admiration. One staff member viewed me as a Southern Lady, seemingly as a social elite and a remnant of the antebellum South. This was highly amusing to me since I had grown up in northern Ohio, migrating to Mississippi after the end of World War II. My cultural background was that of an American born daughter of Swedish immigrant parents. The interaction between this participant (Ms. X) and me became that of "one-upwomanship" which upset her. I found this amusing because I was not what she assumed I was. In charge of the discussion in one of the sessions, Ms. X attempted to marginalize me from the group by excluding me from the discussions. Aware of what she was doing, I simply left at the intermission and her efforts to humiliate me failed. Another incident I recall was an informal chatting session when Ms. X, an avowed socialist, talked about her tree farming activities. I asked her if she owned the trees and when she proudly responded "Yes," I looked at her and with a congratulatory smile on my face said "Oh, then you're a capitalist." Stunned, she glared at me.

But, all of us were immersed in an atmosphere of new discovery and experience, and the institute exposed us to useful available resources, including literature, teaching aids, suggested curricula programs, and even publishing outlets. We heard lectures from prominent visiting speakers as well as critiques

of films. Demonstration teaching assignments allowed us to practice teaching techniques and receive constructive criticism on our performance. As a concluding activity, each of us had to formulate a project that was to be finished when we returned to our universities. As my project I chose to revise the course I had been teaching along with developing an introductory course for our proposed Women's Studies Concentration. These were all valuable learning experiences.

The Institute also made us aware of the changing political climate in the nation and the influence rightwing religious foundations were having on our government. We learned that The Heritage Foundation, a right-wing religious organization, had written the agenda for the newly inaugurated Reagan administration. After I returned home, I called the foundation at their home base to find out if there was any truth to the news. But I was not able to talk to them because they were all in Washington. I found this knowledge interesting, especially in light of my experience at the Jackson meeting to elect delegates to the national meeting in Houston, Texas, in celebration of the International Women's Year in 1977. In spite of, or perhaps because of its many emotionally charged challenges, I found that overall the Institute accomplished its purpose and I appreciated the opportunity to attend and felt intellectually and emotionally enriched by it. It acquainted me with what was going on in a developing academic discipline, grounded me in the needs

of such a program, and gave me the self-confidence to believe that I could handle it.

After returning to Mississippi, I began to develop the introductory course relying on the substantive help and organizational acumen of the Women's Studies Advisory Committee. The committee gradually devolved into a Women's Studies Committee and consisted chiefly of persons interested in teaching and developing the courses. We named the new course Women in Contemporary Society and partly, because all of us were relatively inexperienced with teaching Women's Studies courses, and partly, because women's experiences intersect all areas of study, we devised an interdisciplinary, team-taught format for the course. We took a year to develop the course and obtain written permission from department heads for faculty participation. By November 1, 1982, we had completed the approval application for Women in Contemporary Society as the introductory course for the approved Concentration in Women's Studies. It was proposed as an experimental course with a request that the course be allowed the maximum two-semester run. This was standard procedure for bringing a new course into the curriculum. The two-semester experimental period allowed for refinement and needed revisions to the course before including it permanently in the university offerings.

Our justification for the course was to broaden the understanding of the whole human situation for both men and women by providing

knowledge about women and promoting sensitivity both to women and to women's issues. Societal changes had made such knowledge and sensitivities a virtual necessity. We argued that providing them through a Women's Studies Program was easier and more direct than trying to do so by mainstreaming them through existing courses. The specific teaching objectives we listed were extensive and perhaps overly ambitious. However, since women's achievements had been so trivialized, so undervalued, so disregarded, often even unrecorded over our entire history, we felt we needed to touch on as many topics as possible. We proposed to:

- Survey the contemporary situation.
- Provide historical perspectives, especially of the feminist movements and patriarchal systems.
- Explain feminist scholarship.
- Overview the disciplines in which the study of women is a significant element.
- Describe successful lives that transcended traditional gender roles.
- Provide comprehensive bibliographies.
- And, lastly, to encourage reflection, critical thinking and growth of self esteem.

The proposed course content was divided into three overarching conceptual areas: Heritage, Identity and Vulnerability. In the first area we dealt with cultural givens. In this section, (1) Dr. Elizabeth Nybakken presented a lecture on patriarchy; (2) Dr. Jimmy C. Durr discussed literary images of women with a presentation on the roles women played in

stories and poetry; (3) Dr. Paul Grootkerk overviewed the experiences of women artists and their artistic representations; (4) Dr. Kittye Delle Robbins-Herring discussed Feminism, the Women's Movement and women's representation in language.

The second area, Identity, dealt with current ways women were exposed to cultural gender roles through society's existing institutions. In this section, (1) Dr. Shelly Miles discussed psychological processes and biologically based sex differences; (2) Dr. Nybakken discussed the importance of home and family; (3) Dr. Avis J. Ruthven discussed the education system; (4) Dr. Dawn S. Luthe overviewed gender role learning in technology and science; (5) Dr. Kathy Gilbert documented women's labor force statistics; and (6) Dr. Ellen Bryant discussed women's gender role learning and assignment in group and political activity.

Under the third and last topic, Vulnerability, (1) Dr. Luthe explained women's bodies and genital functions; (2) Dr. Flavous L. Hutchinson discussed the legal and financial problems of women; (3) Dr. Jeane B. Lee presented mental health experiences of women; and (4) Violence, aggression and deviant behavior was team-taught by Dr. Miles, Dr. Bryant and Ms. Brenda Vander Mey. When Dr. Diane Wall joined the Political Science Department at MSU, she picked up the sections on gender politics and added an incursion into law.

Although I do not remember the specific enrollment, the class made and was generally successful. Especially well received were the sessions on art, psychology, and politics. The technical discussions on biology were difficult for some of the students. All of the instructors approached their topics from the standpoint of established and objective scientific fact. While we talked about realities, experiences, images and discrimination, none of us tried to politically motivate students or advocate rebellious activity. Such activities would have been contrary to our proposed purpose. Besides, we all had too much work to do and too many demands on our time.

The second project I had committed to when I left the Institute, the revision of the women's studies course I had been teaching, was relatively straightforward. It was already an approved offering in Sociology. The name had been changed from Women in Society to Sex Roles and Gender. The original course description stated that the course dealt with "Changing sex roles in theory and reality, social problems associated with gender, and probable future realities of the female-male relationship" which was general enough to incorporate the new material I now wanted to include in the course. Essentially, I expanded on the topics I taught in the introductory course—gender roles, socialization into femininity, and changing life course experiences. As long as I taught the course, new material kept surfacing that needed to be included if the course was to be kept

current with our knowledge about women in our changing society.

The first MSU catalogue announcement of the Concentration in Women's Studies was in the 1982-1983 issue. The 1983-1984 Catalogue informed that a Women's Studies Concentration of fifteen hours was available through the College of Arts and Sciences and that its completion would be recognized by the award of a certificate signed by the Chairperson of the Women's Studies Advisory Committee and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The existing eight courses from which the concentration could be selected were as follows: COE 4163/6163 Sex Roles: Special Issues in Counseling; EN 3993 The Southern Woman Writer; FL 3003 Women in Hispanic Literature; HI 5713/7713 Women in American History; INS 3333 Estate Planning; PSY 3203 Psychology of Gender Differences; SO 5203/6203 The Family in the United States; and SO 4403/6403 Sex Roles and Gender. Although it was taught in the spring semester of 1983 and counted toward the required 15 hours, the introductory course, SO 3993 Women in Contemporary Society, was not listed among the offerings.

The problem we encountered that amazed, frustrated, and finally infuriated us was the thwarting of our efforts to get final approval for SO 3993, which had been developed as a multidisciplinary experimental course prepared primarily as an introduction to the already approved Women's Studies Concentration. Women in Contemporary Society, abbreviated

to the simpler title of Contemporary Woman, was identified as a sophomore level sociology course. This course had easily won final department approval and an okay from Professor Peyton W. Williams of the English Department and the person screening courses for The College of Arts and Sciences before such courses were allowed to be presented for approval to the college's curriculum committee. It was in the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee that we struck an abrupt barrier. We were accused of "advocacy." I never learned their reasoning behind this charge nor was I informed of any other reasons they might have had for rejecting the course. While several of the committee members were favorable, enough opposed allowing the course to continue to result in a negative vote. One person was strongly opposed and the others may have followed his lead. My department head, Dr. Art Cosby and Professor Williams were indignant. So also was Dr. Ed McGlone, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The dean, Dr. Cosby and I went back to the committee two weeks later to argue the case. Among the members, I sensed an attitude of uncertainty and feelings of threat. One of the female members teaching a home economics subject exuded an air of contempt. After we finished our arguments, Dean McGlone rose and asked that we be excused, stating that he and Art were going home to relax and that Dr. Bryant had to go home to cook dinner for her family. I didn't appreciate his statement, but, of course, he was accurately describing the

situation for many of the female faculty members. We soon learned that we had failed to convince the committee to rescind their negative vote. What to do next? We decided to go over the College Committee's head to the University committee, which was composed of the upper level administrators of our university.

Our Women's Studies Committee decided to do some preparatory leg work to acquaint the committee members with the facts of the case. I wrote a letter describing and supporting the course to the University committee. The letter was enthusiastically approved and signed by all of the course's team teachers. All of them were anxious for approval and were happy to sign it. Once I had the signatures I manually carried copies of the letter to all of the committee members, waited while they read letter, and asked for their support and serious consideration. Only one member seemed hesitant about agreeing to cooperate. The university committee met, and Dean McGlone presented the request for course approval. The vote was unanimous. They voted to approve. The one hesitant administrator was absent from the meeting.

The rebuff from the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee had been shocking and almost devastating to me. Developing the introductory course and managing the program for the concentration had been an intense intellectual and emotional effort. To be turned down so summarily was humiliating and depressing. I remember when I wrote the

explanatory letter from our teaching team to the university committee, I was so nervous I misspelled one of participant's names. I had hurt someone's feelings but was forgiven, and we went forward with the letter. The stress I suffered was palpable. I survived and recovered but I have never been able to put a rational explanation to the committee's behavior. I can only conclude that their action was emotionally motivated. As my husband used to say, "There is no fear like the fear of a new idea." In spite of their education, academicians are very human.

With the Introductory Course finally and officially approved as part of the Women's Studies curriculum, we were able to proceed with developing the total program. Changes in the teaching team had to be made occasionally as some, usually under the pressure of too much work, had to withdraw from the panel. Regardless, the course continued to be offered regularly under the same general format. The course Gender and Politics (PS 2033) was added by Diane Wall soon after she joined the teaching team for the introductory course, contributing a section on that topic

About this time we began to put together a brochure advertising the courses in the Women's Studies Certificate program. The format was developed by students in a design contest for one of Dr. Deanna Douglas' art classes. All of the submissions were good, but the one I chose included a profile of a woman and allowed enough room for inclusion of all written material. Printed in maroon and white

by a printer in Columbus (most reasonable) I thought it looked pretty snazzy. Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate even one remaining copy in any of the files.

We also continued searching through the course offerings of other departments and when they applied to a woman's issue we added them to the accepted courses for a Certificate in Women's Studies. Consumer Economics, taught in the Home Economics Department, was a logical addition. We also reasoned that, since physical exercise was beneficial in building girls' health and self esteem, we would allow counting two hours of Sports Activity course work to count toward the certificate. In order to allow more flexibility to our focus, we also decided to allow three credits of Special Projects to be included. The last course to be offered as an addition to the Women's Studies curricula while I was director was a course on women in American literature taught by Susan Snell called Literature by Women: The Tradition in English (EN 5993/7993). When I found the time I sat in on Susan's stimulating lectures which pointedly showed how American women were depicted in late Victorian and early 20th Century literature.

Shortly before I retired, we awarded the first Certificate in Women's Studies. We may have had a formal presentation, but it must have been very minimal because I do not remember it. I do remember finding an appropriate charm bracelet to go with the certificate. It was earned by Pat Woolington, a graduate student majoring in Sociology, who was also one of our non-

traditional students. Pat was a faculty wife, married to Dr. James Woolington, professor of Educational Psychology. She had raised her children and was taking advantage of the availability of the university to complete her education. She contributed mature understanding to the issues we were examining in our women's studies classes and was a pleasure to teach.

One phase of the program, which we were trying to develop, met with little success. We had wanted to organize cooperative activities with women's studies programs at other universities but were unable to generate any responses from them. I subscribed to the newsletter from the group at Memphis State University. Diane Wall and I made one trip to Memphis to meet with them, but nothing developed from the effort. Also, several of us, Libby Nybakken, Ed Clynh (head of the Political Science Department) and I made a trip to The University of Mississippi in Oxford to attend a meeting sponsored by the Women's Studies group there. It was interesting to learn that in spite of their funded program and pleasant, permanent location on the campus, our (largely volunteer-based) academic program was much more extensive and impressive than theirs. I was never able to develop a cooperative program with either Memphis State University or The University of Mississippi. Undoubtedly our lack of resources, both of time allocations and budget, was a factor in the failure of both efforts.

Intermittently, we continued to search for a location for a Women's Studies Resource Center. Vacant space was hard to find. Dr. Jean Snyder, Associate Dean of Agriculture and Home Economics and head of the Department of Home Economics, generously offered us use of a room on the first floor of the Lloyd-Ricks Building. However, I had no working budget with which to hire even part-time help or buy supplies. The Women's Commission or the President's Office would pay for extra expenditures, such as printing the brochure, and the Sociology Department contributed my time. Furthermore, the room being offered was located on the opposite side of the campus, about a ten-minute walk from my office. It would have been impossible to use it efficiently.

We continued to pursue efforts to obtain a Women's Studies Center. One of my last activities as Director was the submission of a proposal for a center to our new Dean of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Lida K. Barrett in December 1987. This document was a revision of an earlier version sent to Drs. Art Cosby and Gipson Wells in the Sociology Department. The corroborating members of the Women's Studies Committee included Dr. Elizabeth Nybakken of History, Dr. Susan Snell of English, Dr. Helen C. Takacs of Computer Science, and Dr. Diane Wall of Political Science.

The proposal was a five-page document that summarized the achievements, strengths, purposes, and relevance of the MSU Women's Studies Program and requested support for a

three-quarters time professional, one clerical worker, and a furnished physical location. We did not include a specific budget but outlined a needed program of academic development, research proposal writing, and student and community outreach. I never received a response to this proposal, nor even an acknowledgement. It was not until 1995 that a viable site was located and a Women's Studies Center developed. As lovely as it is, this center is nevertheless awkwardly located, away from department offices and classrooms, and as I understand it, still inadequately funded. Why, I wonder now, did I ever agree to assume the directorship/coordinator responsibility for the MSU Women's Studies Program without a budget and with no support personnel?

As time for my retirement neared, locating someone to replace me was necessary. I had initiated feelers which seemed to me could have led to a strong women's studies program. I tried to set up an appointment with Dean Barrett to discuss these possibilities but was never able to reach her. I later cornered her at a luncheon, and when I explained my suggestion she responded favorably, explaining that she thought the reason I had been trying to reach her was to express my preference for selecting the person to fill the vacating headship position in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work. Nevertheless, my suggestions were ignored and I was never able to pass on to the new dean what I deemed to be essential facts learned from my work with the Women's

Studies Program. She did appoint a person genuinely interested in the program as the new director, Dr. Susan Snell of the English Department, but did not provide any budgetary support for her salary. The dean did provide some graduate student support, and a small closet office was set up in the English Department providing space for the graduate student and the accumulating files and library resources. Susan was enthusiastic about the program and at my retirement reception in May of 1989 presented me with a document that I framed and still have hanging above my desk at home. It states that in conjunction with my Emeritus status I had been awarded a "Degree in Non Illegitimi Carburundum" for my completion of work in the Women's Studies Concentration. It was a complete surprise to me and I really appreciated her kind acknowledgement of my efforts.

Dr. Snell continued as Director/Coordinator of Women's Studies and instructor of the introductory course until 1992 when she resigned from the post. She wrote a brief summary of her tenure in a report entitled "The History of the Women's Studies Concentration" in which she pointed out the importance of women's studies, citing as proof the experience of two male students, who on completing the concentration had secured their first jobs because their employers saw their interest in women's studies as an indication of their sensitivity to gender issues in the work place. In her evaluation she further wrote that

while the program included courses from four of the university's colleges it was supported financially only by The College of Arts and Sciences. She further stated that while women's studies programs at other institutions, which started after MSU, had grown rapidly while ours had grown only sporadically. She identified the major problems as (1) limited support for the program and (2) the subsequent need to rely on volunteer efforts of individual faculty members. In order to grow and develop visibility, Dr. Snell recommended that the program be placed at the provost level and be funded for a half-time director/coordinator, a permanent office location, and sufficient support staff.

After Dr. Snell's resignation, there was a hiatus in the development of the women's studies program. Under Arts and Sciences Dean James Soloman revitalization, directed by Dr. Catheryn Goree, began. With an indication of predictable funding from the dean, curricula and scheduling possibilities were reviewed at meetings and brainstorming sessions. The dean was frequently in attendance. As was the case with the original women's studies committee, the number of professional women involved was sizeable. The extensive involvement elicited many ideas, and plans were made for participating in university-wide activities, developing a new brochure, and collaborating with the Holmes Cultural Diversity Center. Money was provided for graduate assistants and for a new Director/Coordinator of Women's Studies.

Dr. Linda Southward, who had been extensively involved in the revitalization activities, was now appointed Director/Coordinator the Woman's Studies Program (fall of 1994). The program took on new life. It was under her leadership that Mississippi State University's Women's Study Center finally came into fruition. Graciously named for me as The Ellen Bryant Center for Women's Studies, it provides a nucleus—a physical location—for meeting, planning, and holding activities necessary for a successful Women's Studies Program. Located in the lower level of Rice Hall, the Women's Resource Center has become the centerpiece for activities as was projected in the original proposal. A reception celebrating its Grand Opening was held April 26 - 27, 1996. After the creation of the Center, the possibilities for developing the program expanded.

I retired officially from the university in 1988 although I continued to work part-time for several months into 1989. Gradually I became detached from the program and involved instead with retirement activities. My coverage of the activities of the program since the time of my retirement has therefore been fragmentary. The writing of a precise history of this more recent era must be undertaken by those more knowledgeable than I of what has transpired since I left the university.

It was not until the Women's Studies Center was created and graciously named in my honor that I again became involved with the

program, albeit in a very limited capacity. After observing the ongoing activities in the center, I realized how sparsely recorded was the history of the development of the program. I knew then that I had an obligation to contribute a record and description of my experiences in and of the development and growth of women's studies at Mississippi State University. The program's existence at the university is the result of a long and continuous struggle against prejudice—not only of gender prejudice but also of academic prejudice. It is doubtful that it would ever have come into existence without the women's movement and the passage by congress of the 1966 Civil Rights Law. This law became the basis for Affirmative Action policies and the

subsequent Executive Order from the White House that forced compliance with the law within all institutions receiving support funds from government appropriations.

I must congratulate those who have carried on the work, especially the directors: Susan Snell, Catheryn Goree, Linda Southward, Karen Mack, Rose Kadende-Kaiser, Melanie Eckford-Prosser, Meg Murray, Jeralynn Cossman, and John Bartkowski. The program is much better now than it was when I left it. I hope those more familiar with the efforts to develop the program since I left it will add to this history. The MSU Women's Studies Program is a program with much to be proud of.

Appendix A EVENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES AT MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

--a chronology--

Early 1970s

An informal course dealing with the Women's Movement was offered to students by Dr. D. Wood Harper, professor of sociology, one evening a week in his home.

A student Women's Liberation Group was organized, held meetings, and produced a newsletter, *Sting Like the Butterfly*.

1975

International Women's Year, created primarily by the United Nations and later extended to the International Woman's Decade.

1977

Early in 1977, Dr. James McComas created the President's Commission of the Status of Women, appointing Dr. Elizabeth Nybakken, Department of History, as its chair. The initial goals included the Institution of a Women's Studies program and Center.

Later in the year, after Congress appropriated 5 million dollars for celebration of International Women's year, federally supported statewide meetings were organized. Mississippi's was held in Jackson. Many Starkville and Mississippi State University women attended and Dr. Kathy Gilbert of the Department of Economics at Mississippi State University helped organize the meeting. However, the meeting was taken over by conservative Christian churches that brought in busloads of women who elected their own people, mostly men, as delegates to the national meetings held later that year in Houston, Texas.

The Women's Commission chair, Dr. Libby Nybakken, appointed Dr. Meg Murray of the Department of English to head a committee to investigate women's studies programs around the country and to tailor a women's studies program for Mississippi State University. The membership of the Women's Studies Committee was representative of the entire university, but the core working committee who prepared the concept paper and proposal consisted of Dr. Meg Murray, Dr. Kitty Delle Robbins-Herring, Department of Foreign Language and Dr. Ellen S. Bryant, Department of Sociology. The concept paper and proposal specified a program that used a three-pronged thrust: a project impact, a resource center, and a certificate-granting women's studies concentration.

Preceding the development and approval of the concentration, two courses specifically developed for the Women's Studies Program, were given temporary approval and taught in 1977. The first, Women in American History (HI 5713/7713), was taught by Dr. Elizabeth Nybakken in the spring semester. The second, Women in Society (SO 4403/6403), was taught in the fall semester of 1977 by Dr. Ellen Bryant.

The Women's Studies Committee continued to act in a planning and advisory capacity to promote the development of new courses.

1978-1979

The concept paper and proposal were finished and Project Impact began. With support from the Women's Commission, the President's Office, and academically involved departments, several outstanding women were brought to campus to speak and consult on program development. Among these outstanding women were Margery Bell-Chambers (AAUW national president, 1975-79); Esther Peterson (Assistant Secretary of Labor in the Kennedy Administration); Dr. Jesse Bernard (nationally known

sociologist and author); and Dr. Barbara B. Reagan (professor of Economics and consultant for various government agencies). A highlight of this period was a banquet featuring Mrs. Lillian Carter, President Jimmy Carter's mother, as speaker.

The Women's Commission also continued to promote awareness of women's issues by sponsoring an annual Women's Week program with a subsidized luncheon. This event was very popular and always well attended.

Fall 1980

The Women's Studies Advisory Committee was created to plan the curriculum, identify qualified faculty to develop courses focusing on women's issues within their departments, and guide the program through the review by the college and university curriculum committees.

1981-83

The Women's Studies Concentration was approved. The College of Arts and Sciences agreed to house the Women's Studies Program until a center for interdisciplinary studies was established within the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Sociology Department agreed to allow Ellen Bryant to accept the job of director and advisor for Women's Studies, and in the summer of 1981, she was sent to the Great Lakes Colleges' two-week women's studies training institute at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

The Women's Studies Advisory Committee continued to meet and develop the content of the introductory course (Women in Contemporary Society) for the Women's Studies Concentration Certificate. This course was organized around a team-taught format and received approval as a temporary course in the fall of 1983. Thirteen faculty members, on written approval from their separate department heads, participated in the first offering of the course. Ellen Bryant became the instructor of record, and the Department of Sociology allowed her to count it toward her department's teaching requirements. Women in Contemporary Society was first taught in the spring semester of 1983.

The first teaching team included:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| • Elizabeth Nybakken | Women in History |
| • Jimmy C. Durr | Women Writers |
| • Paul Grootkert | Women Artists, Accomplishments and Experiences |
| • Kitty Delle Robbins-Herring | Feminism |
| • Shelly L. Miles | Psychology of Sex Differences |
| • Linda Morse | Education |
| • Jan Ruthven | Educational Psychology |
| • Dawn Luthe, Biochemistry | Women's Bodies |
| • Kathie S. Gilbert | Economics |
| • Flavous L. Hutchinson | Legal & Financial Status |
| • Jeane B. Lee | Mental Health |
| • Ellen Bryant | Culture, Group and Political Activities |
| • Brenda Vander Mey | Deviant Behavior |

The first brochure describing the Women's Studies Program and requirements for earning a Certificate for a Concentration in Women's Studies was designed and printed.

Spring 1984

Final approval was earned for the introductory course (now Contemporary Woman) on May 30, 1984, through an appeal to the Academic Council by Dr. Edward L. McGlone, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The Curriculum Committee of the College of Arts and Science had twice, on April 11 and April 25, refused to recommend the course, citing advocacy (possibly for encouraging female students to question cultural role definitions) as the primary reason for refusal. Preceding the meeting of the Academic Council where a decision would be made about final approval for the course, a letter to its members was composed and signed by all of the instructors on the teaching team verifying the quality and legitimacy of the course. Bryant hand-carried and personally presented the letter to members of the Academic Council, waiting while they read it, allowing them to ask questions about the course. The purpose was to encourage their understanding of both sides of the controversy before making a decision about the course. Dr. McGlone attended the meeting and the course was granted final approval.

1985-87

Work on developing the curricula continued. The sociology course, Women in Society, was completely restructured and offered as Sex Roles and Gender. Two new core courses, Psychology of Gender Differences by Shelly Miles and Gender and Politics by Diane Wall, were developed and almost immediately became popular with students. Many courses, already part of the offerings in several departments, were cross-listed and added to the list of choices accepted as counting toward the Women's Studies Concentration.

Faculty participating in the teaching team for the introductory course varied somewhat as replacements became necessary.

The first Certificate for earning a Concentration in Women's Studies was awarded to Pat Woolington, a graduate student in sociology.

Search for a location for a Women's Center limped along. Dr. Jean Snyder, Dean for Home Economics in the College of Agriculture and Home Economics, generously offered use of a room on the first floor of the Lloyd-Ricks Building. But without a working budget and support from a graduate assistant or support staff, the room could not be used.

1988

Ellen Bryant retired from the University.

Arts and Sciences Dean Lida Barrett appointed Susan Snell of the English Department as Coordinator of Women's Studies and instructor of the introductory course, Contemporary Woman. The Dean also provided funding for a part-time graduate student who was to be housed, along with files and an accumulating library, in a very small, closet-size office in Lee Hall. Barbara Westmoreland was hired as the graduate assistant.

1988-1992

In her brief summary "The History of the Women's Studies Concentration" Dr. Snell emphasizes the importance of women's studies in the university's curricula and research programs. She notes that two male students who completed the Women's Studies Concentration reported that their first jobs after graduation were, in part, secured because their participation in women's studies indicated to potential employers that they were sensitive to issues of gender in the workplace.

Snell also wrote that the program, including courses from four of the university's colleges (College of Agriculture and Home Economics; College of Arts and Sciences; College of Education; and College of Business and Industry), was supported financially solely by the College of Arts and Sciences. She also

noted that women's studies at other institutions, those that started after the program at MSU, grew rapidly while our program at MSU only grew sporadically. Snell identified the major problems as (1) limited support for the program, especially at the university level, and (2) the program's need to rely on volunteer efforts of individual faculty members. She advised that in order to grow, the program needed visibility which she speculated would probably come if it were placed at the provost level and supported by a half-time coordinator, a permanent office location, and sufficient support staff.

Fall 1992

Dr. Snell retired as coordinator and the Women's Studies Advisory Committee was reconstituted.

1993-1994

Dr. Catheryn Goree began revitalizing women's studies at the request of Dean James Soloman. An ad hoc women's studies committee was formed and meetings were called to review curricula and scheduling of classes. Indications from the dean were that predictable funding could be expected. Participation on the committee was representative of the whole university and included Carolyn Adams-Price, Kathy Corpus, Phyllis Gray-Ray, Shirley Hastings, Libby Nybakken, Linda Southward, Gloria Reeves, Margo Swain, Diane Wall, Susan Snell, and Anita George. Others may also have been involved and Dean Soloman usually attended the meetings. Many ideas for promoting Women's Studies were presented in brainstorming sessions, and plans were made for participating in the university's Wellness Fair and Discovery Day. Work began for developing a new brochure and efforts were initiated for collaboration with The Holmes Cultural Diversity Center. Two new graduate assistants, Sandra Sadler Johnson, Graduate Teaching Assistant in the English Department, and Jennifer Watkins, an adjunct professor and business owner, were selected for 1994. At this time, a search began for a new Coordinator-Director of Women's Studies.

Fall 1994-1995

Dr. Linda Southward was appointed as Coordinator-Director and the Advisory Committee was enlarged. Subcommittees were appointed for Curriculum (Elizabeth Nybakken, chair), Grants and Funding (Phyllis Gray-Ray, chair), Public Relations/Education (Cindy Dickens, co-chair), Special Projects (Rose Davis, chair), and Women's Studies Space (Shirley Hastings, chair). Other committee members included Merrily Dunn, Homes Hogue, Don Howard, Sandi Johnson, Karin Mack, Donna Reese, Pat Sanderson, Linda Southward, Diane Wall, and Clara Young. Later, Carolyn Adams-Price, Carolyn Bryant, Barbara Costello, Pamela Freeman, Anita George, Don Howard, Leigh Jensen, Melanie McClellan, and Helen Regis were added.

Courses within the concentration were evaluated and increased. A graduate concentration was planned, a Mission and Objectives statement prepared, and the efforts for creating a Women's Center were revitalized.

Work moved ahead for all the subcommittees. Melanie McClellan, Director of Housing and Residence Life, located space for a Women's Studies Center in the lower level of Rice Hall. McClellan, together with Cathy Goree of Student Affairs, Leigh Jensen of the Sexual Assault Facts and Education program, Merrily Dunn of Counselor Education and Educational Psychology, and Shirley Hastings, head of the Department of Home Economics, developed and expedited plans for the physical space. Time spent decorating, a fax machine, a computer and printer, and furniture were all donated. Along with Melanie McClellan, Margaret Bateman and Merrily Dunn contributed their skills at decorating, which also included securing most of the needed furniture.

Spring 1996

The Women's Resource Center was moved to the lower level of Rice Hall and named in honor of Ellen Bryant, the first director of Women's Studies. The Ellen Bryant Women's Resource Center was

dedicated with a formal ceremony on April 5, 1996. The Grand Opening was held April 26-27, 1996, during Super Bulldog Weekend. Principal speaker at the Dedication was Dr. Kitty Robbins-Herring, who gave a synopsis of the history of starting Women's Studies at MSU. Dr. Linda Southward and Dr. Ellen Bryant also participated in the ceremony.

Fall 1996

Linda Southward assumes new duties in the Social Science Research Center leaving the position of directorship of Women's Studies open.

Spring 1997

Karen Mack, in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, assumes responsibility of Interim Coordinator of Women's Studies.

Fall 1997 to December 2000

Rose Kadende-Kaiser (Anthropology) is hired part-time in the fall of 1997 as coordinator of Women's Studies with offices in the Women's Center. A part-time graduate assistant is hired as support help. The program began to have more visibility on campus. Kadende-Kaiser set up monthly lectures, brought in national dignitaries, and sponsored workshops and conferences.

Some of the outstanding events during Kadende-Kaiser's tenure were:

- A newsletter entitled *Difference: The Voices of MSU's Women's Studies* was started with the first issue published in the Summer of 1998.
- A workshop on Gender In/Out of the Classroom was held in April 17, 1998, and jointly sponsored by the Women's Studies Program, The Mississippi Humanities Council, The Holmes Cultural Diversity Center, University Honors Program, Department of Counselor Education/Education Psychology, and the American Association of University Women.
- Patricia Ireland, President of the National Organization for Women, made a visit to campus on October 5, 1999. She spoke to an audience of over 350 students, faculty and staff on "Women in Office: Feminist Issues" and later to an overflowing crowd of students for a question and answer session at the Women's Resource Center. The spontaneity with which she fielded questions was impressive.
- A Women's Studies Conference, entitled "We Are the Stories We Tell: Women's Contributions to Culture, Wisdom and Oral Traditions" was held May 18-21, 2000. Individuals presenting papers came from Ireland, England, Turkey, Canada, New York, Florida, Pennsylvania, Wyoming, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, as well as Mississippi and MSU. Dr. Carolyn J. Bryant served as conference chair and Dr. Kitty Robbins-Herring as co-chair. Other hardworking committee members who insured the success of the conference included Carolyn Adams-Price, Lisa Hanna, Sheila Sullivan, and Rose Kadende-Kaiser.

Fall 2000

Kadende-Kaiser resigned, effective January 2001. With her two sons, born while she chaired the program here, she moved to Philadelphia to join her husband who had earlier taken a position there with University of Pennsylvania.

2001

Funding problems faced by the University also affected funding for the Women's Studies Program and hampered the replacement process for a director of the program. Nevertheless, some funding was provided and Dr. Meg Murray of the English Department agreed to accept the responsibility for continuing the program. She was appointed coordinator of Women's Studies starting in the fall of 2001.

The offices at the Women's Resource Center were at her disposal, and she was allowed a reduction of one course in her teaching requirements in the English Department.

The outstanding events in Dr. Murray's tenure were three university-wide programs which were co-sponsored by American Association of University Women and the Starkville chapter of NOW.

- The first forum was held in the Union Ballroom on September 11, 2002, and focused on the Middle East. This forum was entitled "Mending Rifts: Going beyond Stereotypical Views on Islam." Presented by a panel of six, the program drew an enthusiastic audience that filled the ballroom.
- The second forum, a Forum on Feminism, was moderated by Dr. Linda Cox, Director of Counseling and Testing Services. Slide presentations were given by Jenny Allred (the University of Alabama) on "The Faces of Feminism," by Dr. Ellen Bryant (retired, MSU professor) on "Pioneering Feminists," and by K. D. Robbins-Herring (professor, Dept. of Foreign Languages) on "French Feminism in Context."
- The third forum, Women & Power, was moderated by Daniel Melder (president of MSU College Democrats) and Diane Wall (associate professor of Political Science) and included addresses by a panel of outstanding women. Among these outstanding women were Mary Finch Hoyt (author and press secretary to Rosalyn Carter during the Carter Administration), Clyda Rent (President Emerita of Mississippi University for Women), Helen Taylor (CEO of Brickfire in Starkville), and Janet Rafferty (Archaeologist at MSU and state chair of The Green Party).

Fall 2003

Jeralynn Cossman, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, appointed as coordinator of Women's Studies. Rachel Janzen is appointed graduate assistant.