

WOMANifesto

NEWSLETTER OF THE MSU WOMEN'S CENTER

October, 2010

Terrorizing Women: Dr. Cynthia Bejarano's Visit to MSU

By Betsy Danforth

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology recently brought in speaker Dr. Cynthia Bejarano, a Criminal Justice professor at New Mexico State University, whose current research focuses on gender violence against women in the border towns of Mexico. Dr. Bejarano's lecture was enlightening and offered a good background about an extraordinarily grave situation that we in the U.S. typically hear little about. The systematic rape, torture, mutilation, and murder of young women since 1993 in and around the border town of Juarez, an area dominated by the existence of maquiladoras-or foreign-owned factories- is an excellent example of the devastating effects of misogyny. According to a 2004 Amnesty International Report, over 370 women and girls in Ciudad Juarez had been murdered—no doubt the number is much higher since the report is six years old and the kidnappings and murders have systematically continued. Various estimates range from 450 to 4,300 victims since the murders themselves have undeniably contributed to a general atmosphere of violence against women in the region. Several international governmental organizations have tried to pressure the Mexican government to resolve past killings, make arrests, and put

an end to these murders, but with no results. There has been only one conviction in all of the combined murders.

While growing up in Anthony, N.M., Cynthia Bejarano was exposed to violence and poverty and was no doubt horrified by what she learned about the Juarez murders. She currently teaches Criminal Justice at NMSU and was recently awarded "Outstanding New Mexico Woman of the Year" by the New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women in recognition of her advocacy work with migrant workers and her fight against violence against women in the borderland. She co-founded the United States-Mexico solidarity organization Amigos de las Mujeres de Juarez, which continues to be one of the most recognized and effective woman-created networks raising awareness and promoting justice for the disappeared and murdered women and their families.

The Juarez murders are evidence that the continuum of sexism, misogyny and violence against women reaches its natural conclusion in femicide or feminicide. Throughout history, we've see women's bodies and lives traded for a dollar or a peso, but the abhorrent violence displayed in these murders, as well as the resistance of the powers that be to investigate and prosecute these crimes, show us the level of disdain society ultimately holds for women. Many of the very young victims

have been accused of being deviants involved with prostitution and the drug trade when, in fact, they were workers for the maquiladoras or school girls who had no protection on their walks to and from work or school. This portrayal serves to blame the victims and depicts them as complicit in their own murders by falsely accusing them of living outside culturally prescribed "good girl" roles. It also serves to excuse the police and other officials' lack of attention to the crimes and failure to investigate and prosecute potential perpetrators.

I was glad to hear Cynthia mention Dr. Diana Russell's work in defining femicide. Dr. Russell's work has had an enormous impact on my own life—I read *Rape in Marriage* in a Violence Against Women class at college and immediately changed my major to Women's Studies. The Women's Center brought Diana to MSU for our Shannon Weatherly Lecture after the publication of *Against Pornography: The Evidence of Harm*. She is a true pioneer in the field of violence against women and her work thoughtfully follows the continuum of sexism as it morphs into marital rights (or lack thereof), graphic pornography,

violence, rape, and, ultimately murder.

There can be no doubt that in many modern societies, varying forms of sexism limit the mobility, successes, and safety of women around the world. The extreme case of the Juarez murders only highlights the extent to which sexism and misogyny are extremely detrimental.

When my colleague Alanna Sherstad from the MSU VOICE Center and I were discussing Cynthia's lecture, we shared our overwhelming sorrow and anger about the realities of women's lives all over the world. The resilience and bravery of activists like Dr. Bejarano who are out there fighting these seemingly impossible battles on the ground day after day are indeed astounding. Please know that you are our hero, Cynthia, and that it is impossible for us to express the extent of our gratitude for your work. We can only hope that as administrators and educators at a university in a place like Montana, we can successfully engage students in these dialogues and ultimately affect their lives to inspire them to continue the struggle for social justice and change.

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL COMING OUT WEEK!

QSA and the Diversity Awareness Office present the following events to celebrate National Coming Out Week:

October 11-15: Look for tables selling "Love=Love" t-shirts and tickets for the Drag Show and Ball

October 11, 12 & 14: 9 p.m. Monday and Tuesday, 7 p.m. Thursday, Procrastinator Theater, Screening of *Soldier's Girl*. This event co-sponsored by the Procrastinator Theater

October 12: 12-1 p.m. SUB 168 Sack Lunch Seminar, "What is Sexual Fluidity?" Exploring the various ways sexual and gender identities present, identify, and are defined.

October 16: 8:00 p.m. (doors open @ 7:30) SUB Ballrooms: Coming Out Drag Show and Ball

Eat Pray Love

By Krystal Fischer

This summer was extremely challenging for my family. A friend invited me to go see *Eat Pray Love* and I decided to go with her to take my mind off things-- I'm very glad I did! I also decided to buy the book. The story gave me a better outlook on life, and I felt much better about where the summer's journey had taken me.

The story takes us on author Elizabeth Gilbert's journey through Italy, India, and Bali. She has recently struggled through a messy divorce and a subsequent relationship that doesn't seem to be going anywhere. From the time she was a child, she kept a box of treasures-- items related to world travel-- and one night decides that this might be a good time for her to take a soul-searching journey. Her first stop on the journey is in Italy where she rents a villa and slowly learns the language as she savors Italy's buffet of delights—the world's best pizza, plenty of excellent wine, and engaging conversational partners. Gilbert indeed consumes la dolce vita as spiritual succor. "I came to Italy pinched and thin," she writes, but upon leaving, finds herself fuller in both waistline and soul. Gilbert then moves on to India where she commits to several months of life working and meditating at an ashram, seeking communion with the divine and a life of prayer and ascetic rigor. She emulates the ways of yogis in grueling hours of meditation, struggling to still her churning mind. Her final stop is in Bali, where she returns to find Ketut, the medicine man who explained to her how to keep her feet on the ground while seeking spirituality. She agrees to teach Ketut English in return for knowledge of his many secrets if she returns to Bali, and they form a wonderfully deep friendship. In Bali, she attempts a balancing act of "betwixt and between" realms, and ultimately plunges in to a charged love affair.

The book and movie differ in several ways. As is the case with any book-turned-movie, much of the original material is deleted for times' sake. In the book, she describes her sister's life in the suburbs, compares their very different personalities and choices, and her own desire to have children. The Italian tutor who, in the book, has a twin to whom Liz find herself extremely attracted, becomes one person whose advances Gilbert ultimately turns down. The descriptions of her spiritual journey in both India and Bali are rather limited in the film as one would probably expect, and there is more focus on her love affair with Felipe.

The book helped me through my tough summer in many ways. My grandmother died of lung cancer and shortly afterwards, her husband of many years also passed away. The same week, I found out that my second Grandmother was also diagnosed with lung cancer. My two year old son was tested for a possible disability, and my summer class load was a bit overwhelming-- I had little time for stress release. I realized after seeing *Eat Pray Love* that perhaps things happen for a reason. My grandparents were truly in love and married for 57 years- theirs was a great love story. My son's diagnosis is not as serious as first thought, and he has improved vastly with small changes at home, more quality time, and some physical therapy. I realized that taking eight summer classes was too much, and as a result of wanting to rush through school, I missed my entire summer. Gilbert's approach in *Eat Pray Love* was to take stressful and emotionally difficult situations in stride and use adversity as an opportunity to grow and turn negative experiences into something positive. Like Elizabeth, I also realized I needed a break from daily life here in Bozeman, and though I did not have the opportunity to travel the world, I did get away with my son to Seattle for a long weekend. I love Seattle, and liken it to Gilbert's experience of Bali. It feels like home to me and consequently, I feel more like myself there. I had a relaxing and beautiful trip that helped me to take a deep breath and clear my head. It was very refreshing! I have also started meditating to help me relax.

Eat Pray Love helped to put my life in perspective and made me realize that I need to pay attention to what is important and where I need to practice patience and take my time. I think the book and film are both worthy and get a two thumbs up from me; I cannot wait for Gilbert's sequel, *Committed!*

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Visit us at FB or our website to find out what we've been up to! Check out our Sack Lunch Seminars, and info about other upcoming events, our resources and services!

We also have an updated library list, new pictures, and Staff bios!

A Sincere Thank You to Our Donors

The Women's Center could not do our work without your constant support and commitment. We'd like to extend a very special thank you to all who donated to our "Believe in a world with gender equality" fundraising campaign! You are truly an inspiration to young people on our campus and in the community—keep up the great work!

* Wendy Bianchini Morrison * Phyllis A. Bock * Katie Cady * Christy Castronovo * Mari Domínguez * Dorothy Eck * Joseph Fedock * Patricia Gamble * Karen Grigry * Rolf and Jaynee Groseth * Julie Hitchcock * Linda Karell * Brad Kempf * Julie Kipfer * Colette Kirchoff * Edis Kittrell * Mary Murphy * Pat Oriet * Shaun Phoenix—Safe Passage Counseling * Adele Pittendrigh * Martha and Sophie Rotella * Jane Schumacher * Lynda Sexson * Becky Sheehan * Jo Anne Troxel * Clarice Walters * Frances Weatherly * Janet Winnie * Bill Wyckoff *

What's Your Green Dot?: Ending Violence One Dot at a Time

The unforgettable image of small red dots representing individual cases of an epidemic is a common visual used to signify the way three or four single dots multiply and spread until a map emits a red glow comprised of a zillion tiny red dots. A green dot, on the other hand, would signify a positive "epidemic"—an "epidemic" of constructive individual choices at any given moment to make a community safer. It is any action, behavior, option, word, or attitude that promotes safety for all citizens, and communicates utter intolerance for violence-- it is a visual reminder that we all need to be active participants working to create a safe, healthy environment. This program, developed by Dr. Dorothy Edwards as the Green Dot Violence Prevention Strategy, is a social norms program to demonstrate a commitment to making campuses and communities safer for all members. A green dot is pulling a friend out of a risky situation, responding to a victim-blaming statement with words of support and clarification, donating a few dollars or volunteer hours to a local violence prevention program, displaying an awareness poster in your store, office, or home, striking up a conversation with a family member or friend about how much this issue means to you, or any other action that raises awareness, takes the blame off victims, and brings others to the realization that violence against women is not OK.

How many green dots will it take to begin reducing, and eventually end power-based violence in our community? How many of us need to add 2 or 3 or 50 green dots to this map to begin to make a difference and outshine and replace those red dots? No doubt the answer is zillions, but we cannot get there if we insist upon shutting our eyes when we see violence and discrimination, if we persist with indifference and apathy, if we fail to open minds and change behaviors. We can no longer accept that 1 in 3 women and countless children become victims of violence. That is not OK. That must not be OK with any of us. Start today, if you hear a sexist comment or something condoning violence, question it; if you see someone in a high risk situation, help them escape; if you receive a request for donations in the mail from your local shelter, send them \$5 or \$10. It must start now, and it must start with YOU. Join MSU's VOICE Center in their green dot campaign to raise awareness of the ways we can each contribute to a safer campus. You can get your green dot button at the VOICE Center in SUB 370!

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Oct. 3rd – 5-8pm

Suds and Cinema – Fundraiser for HAVEN

Bozone Brewery

Oct. 13th – 11:30-1:30pm

Third Floor Extravaganza and Open House

VOICE Center SUB 370

Oct. 20th - Noon-1pm

Sack Lunch Seminar

“Through Their Eyes: The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children”

Procrastinator Theater

Oct. 22nd – 9pm

“Telling Amy’s Story” Documentary

Montana PBS

Oct. 27th – 7pm

“Beauty & the Beast” Movie Screening

Procrastinator Theater



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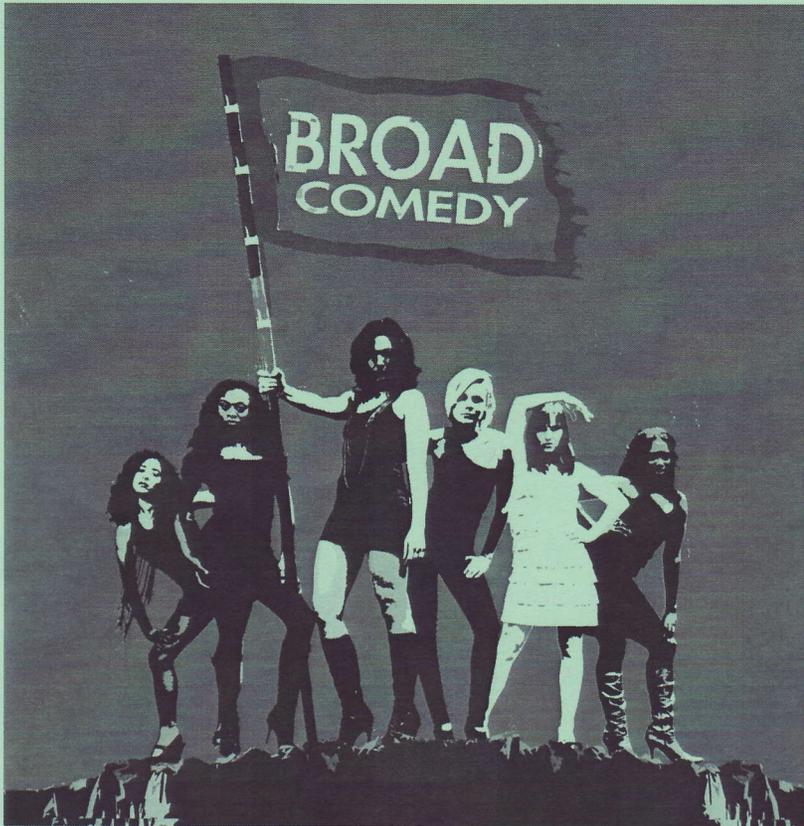
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