

WGS Alumni News

Allison Deering Brinkerhoff is a 2006 SSU Alumni with a BA in Women's and Gender Studies and a minor in English. She credits her degree with qualifying her for various types of employment, from counseling and education, to mediation and advocacy. She currently works as a Sexual Assault Advocate for Verity: the Sonoma County Rape Crisis Center. By helping those in need and creating positive impacts in other's lives she enjoys great fulfillment in her work. She details that her degree has further influenced her personal life by making her very aware of those she brings into it, as well as the dynamics of negotiating the world around her. She maintains many great friendships with peers and professors from her student days at SSU. She currently resides in Sebastopol, CA with her partner Sam Brinkerhoff. In describing WGS, Allison explained: "The impact that WGS has had on my life is immeasurable. It continues to play a role in my day to day life, and I look back on my decision to become a WGS major at such a young age with great pride. I always knew it was exactly where I was supposed to be."

- Interviewed by Morgan Bannister, Fall 2010

Serene Cooper attended Sonoma State University and graduated with a double major in Women's and Gender Studies and the Hutchins School of Liberal Studies in 2005. Since graduating, she went on to get a Masters degree in Organization Development (also at Sonoma State University). Throughout her studies she has navigated multiple different careers aimed at promoting positive social change including community organizing, working with the YWCA, and her current position as the Volunteer Coordinator at Social Advocates for Youth (SAY). She is a woman who had her deep-rooted feminism reawakened through the WGS program and she continues to fight for social justice today as she says, "I have a personal belief that those who know [about social injustices] have an obligation to do something about it [and if] I see things, that it is my obligation to do something about it" (Cooper 2010).

- Interviewed by Stephanie Morris, Fall 2010

Diana Drips is an alumnus from Sonoma State University. She graduated in 2005, double majoring in Women's and Gender Studies and Sociology. She says, "[she] felt really at home in [the Women's and Gender Studies] department." Currently she is involved in social work, doing advocacy work through the YWCA working with survivors of domestic violence. She is completing her MA in Counseling from SSU in Spring 2011.

- Interviewed by Michelle Zarate, Fall 2010

Corey Hale graduated from Sonoma State in 2000 with a BA in Women's and Gender Studies. WGS gave her the tools to talk about important subjects such as culturally constructed gender roles that she utilizes and questions constantly in her line of work. After graduation Corey was a program coordinator for an agency that prevents sexual assault, women's violence, and child abuse. She is now doing family, life, and business coaching. She is also working on her PhD at Pacifica Graduate Institute while raising her son in Forestville.

- Interviewed by Cassandra Sherman, Fall 2010

Charli Hoffman graduated from Sonoma State University in 2001 with a BA in both Women's and Gender Studies and Political Science. While she was a WGS student, Charli enjoyed questioning and learning about the ways in which society operated, constantly looking for underlying dynamics that she believes are always at play. After graduation, Charli went on to earn her law degree from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law in 2005. During her time at Hastings, Charli was a member of the Women's Law Journal from 2003 to 2005 and the managing editor for the 2004-2005 academic year. She was also an extern for the

San Francisco Family Law Facilitator's Office and for Judge Donald Sullivan of the San Francisco Superior Court, Family Law division. Charli is currently a practicing attorney at Hanson Crawford Law Group in San Mateo, CA where her practice focuses entirely on family law matters, from initial consultations to settlement or trial.

- Interviewed by Meg Carlucci, Fall 2010

Megan Izen transferred to Sonoma State University in fall of 2003 as a Math major; however, she quickly found that the Women's and Gender Studies Department was actually more suitable for her interests. On the first day of her senior year, Megan changed her major to WGS and added math as her minor, building a degree that she felt complimented the intersectionality of WGS. Directly after graduation, Megan earned an internship and later a paid position with *ColorLines* Magazine (in both their Oakland and NYC offices). Armed with the knowledge she gained from her studies, Megan began working in an environment that engaged, excited and challenged her. Megan's experience with WGS was invaluable, in her own words: "[WGS] completely changed the way I interact with the world...I can't think of a way that it didn't impact my life". She is currently studying at the Columbia School of Journalism in NYC.

- Interviewed by Catherine Deasy, Fall 2010

Yuka Kamiishi is a Women's Gender Studies Alumni who graduated from Sonoma State University in the year 2001. Since graduation she has worked for a few different agencies, including the YWCA Women's Shelter and Sonoma Police Department, as a victims' advocate. She explained that the Women's Gender Studies classes she took encouraged and paralleled her work in victims' advocacy. "...unless [the victims] have taken classes like [ours], they don't think of their experiences as a bigger level at a macro level, or how socially, or religiously, how those fields impacted their lives."

- Interviewed by Kendra Cover, Fall 2010

Chandra Larson earned her B.A. from Sonoma State University, double -majoring in Women's and Gender Studies and Liberal Studies (Hutchins). Her M.A. (2009) in Educational Policy and System Reform (Interdisciplinary Studies) is also from Sonoma State University. Currently, Ms. Larson serves as a Social Scientist and Training and Technical Assistance Specialist for the nationally-recognized research, evaluation, and technical assistance firm Social Research Policy Associates, in Oakland, CA. Her area of specialization is technical assistance on youth-serving system change. Her professional background includes management and coordination of technical assistance for a number of statewide and national initiatives focused on strengthening educational pathways to college and the workforce.

- Interviewed by Nicole LeStrange, Fall 2010

Elizabeth Mackey is a successful Laude graduate of Sonoma State University. Since earning her bachelor's degree in Women's and Gender Studies at SSU in 2009, Elizabeth has gone on to graduate from the California Police Academy. Although a California certified police officer, she currently serves as full-time mother and caretaker of her son with special needs. When she has the availability, she enjoys volunteering with a local domestic violence hotline where she consoles adult and children survivors. She looks back fondly on the time she spent at SSU, but her love for the WGS program, and the supportive, dedicated, and inspiring faculty she encountered within the department, are what stand out in her mind. Liz appreciates the ways in which the program has helped her to better understand the world around us. In her own words: "I think it just opens your eyes to...the diversity of everything. And how different everything is. And how there is no norm for anything. And if somebody says it's normal then there's probably something wrong with it.... It just makes you think." Her only regret in earning her bachelor's in

WGS is that the Queer Studies minor was not available during the years she attended Sonoma State University.

- Interviewed by Kristel England, Fall 2010

Ruth Mahaney was one of the leading pioneers in making Women's Studies what it is today. Starting her activist career by joining the Women's Liberation Movement she was able to participate in the launching of Women's Studies, during that same time she also came out as lesbian and met her current/ life-long partner who she now lives with in San Francisco, CA. Due to her involvement in the Women's Liberation Movement, she was one of the first professors to teach Women's Studies at both Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma State University, where she also started many programs to aid women in understanding their lived experiences. For 18 years she taught Human Sexuality and Queer Studies courses at San Francisco State and now teaches Queer Studies courses at City College. She has a lot of passion and loves what she is doing and has done with her life. Ruth has two pieces of advice for women to maintain a strong fight for women's rights, and these are, "to not get isolated" and "don't be afraid to put yourselves and your issues first." (Ruth, 2010)

- Interviewed by Candace Madu, Fall 2010

Laura Martinez graduated from Sonoma State University in 2007, with a degree in Women's and Gender Studies and Communication Studies. She spent a year studying International Media and Communication Studies in Sweden which granted her the opportunity to apply knowledge that she had gained during her courses at SSU. She has now completed a MS in Adult and Continuing Education from the University of Glasgow. Laura found a language in the WGS program that allowed her to define the ideas she had which were incommunicable prior to this new knowledge. She states, "It's like a language that I was finding I could use...a new vocabulary." She hopes to stay with in academia, possibly working as an academic advisor.

- Interviewed by Mariana Rodriguez, Fall 2010

Jake Shifrine, Women's and Gender Studies major, entered Sonoma State University as a transfer student after serving in the U.S. Marine Corps. Jake quickly found an appreciation for the welcoming atmosphere and the level of student and faculty investment in the WGS department. By involving himself in the material from an open and critical male perspective, Jake developed an alternative way of thinking about the world around him. This recognition of the socio/political context in which we all live has led Jake to his career as manager and supervisor of multiple work-sites for Vocational Training and Employment (VTE) where he works directly with adults with developmental disabilities.

- Interviewed by Joel Evans-Fudem, Fall 2010

Marylou Shira has been involved in bringing awareness to issues of racial and gender inequality since the 1950s. After raising four children, she pursued a college education at Sonoma State University. She graduated as a Psychology major, with a strong emphasis in Women's Studies classes in 1979; she continued on to receive her Masters in Counseling from USF. She says that her experiences in the Women's Studies Department at SSU started her "on a path that I have continued on. I think this is what an education should do." Her work as a lesbian activist has continued to educate others around issues of class, racial and sexual equality. More recently, Marylou Shira co-founded (along with former Women's Studies director, Ruth Mahaney) the Lesbian Archives of Sonoma County--documenting the activities and organizations of lesbians in the county from 1965 to 1990.

- Interviewed by Tamara Goldsmith, Fall 2010