

## Introduction: A Decade of the Journal of International Women's Studies

By Diana Fox and Katherine Side, JIWS Editors

Ten years ago, the first issue of the *Journal of International Women's Studies* (JIWS) was launched on the web site of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MC:LA), a small, four-year, state college in northwestern Massachusetts. At the time, I (Diana Fox) was director of the Susan B. Anthony Women's Center at the College, when two seemingly disparate concerns fortunately collided leading to the creation of the JIWS. The first pertained to my role as new director of the Women's Center where one of my main goals, shared by the Women's Studies faculty, was to find a way to help our Women's Studies students understand the critical link between the twin missions of feminism—scholarship and activism. A second concern emerged when I travelled to Havana, Cuba in 1998 for an international Women's Studies conference, where I learned from women faculty at the University of Havana how isolated they felt from other Women's Studies scholars around the world, because of their limited access to print publications, not to mention restrictions on their own travel. When I returned to MCLA, inspired by the potential for web publications, I created the JIWS with a group of new editors recruited from online publicity. The first issue was launched in 1998, with a very local objective in mind: to assist our students in connecting the abstract theories of gender inequality to the experiences, struggles and achievements of women worldwide; and a transnational agenda: to forge international connections, understanding and opportunities through open-access web publishing. In this sense, the JIWS itself was conceived as an embodiment of scholarship and activism: we defined its mission as an effort to articulate and analyze intersectional relationships across conventional divides of global North/South publishing; "Western" and "Third World" feminisms; graduate students and established scholars; as well as encouraging feminist partnerships between women and men as "comrades in struggle" as bell hooks has urged in her 1984 book published by South End Press, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*.

Since moving to its new website on the Bridgewater State College server in 2000 when I assumed a tenure track position there, we have published articles from around the world, by scholars, activists and scholar-activists; by women and men and transgendered persons; by graduate students and faculty. From the beginning we sought to incorporate a wide array of multi- and interdisciplinary scholarship and a range of strategies for change harnessed by activists globally. Given this diversity of topics, one commonality running through all our articles is their analysis and challenge of taken-for-granted categories including "woman" and "gender."

One of the JIWS editors, Katherine Side, Head of the Department of Women's Studies at Memorial University, Newfoundland, Canada, who has been on the editorial board since the JIWS was founded, has the following to say about the development of the JIWS over the past decade:

"The inaugural issue in 1998, a slim issue which included three articles and one piece of creative work, indicated a promising start. The latest issue, Volume 10, Issue 1, October 2008, collaboratively published with *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies*, makes our links with wider feminist

communities and international issues evident and points toward a continued promising future. Over the past ten years, the journal's content has expanded, from the publication of peer-reviewed articles and creative work, to include peer-reviewed essays, photo essays, plays, short stories, media and film reviews and book reviews. It has expanded to reflect collaborative endeavours with other scholarly journals and with feminist organisations such as the Feminist and Women's Studies Association (UK and Ireland). And, it has extended to support for Women's Studies students and professionals through the awarding of a research scholarship.

The strength of the *Journal of International Women's Studies* has always been, and will continue to be, the accessibility and range of its high quality peer-reviewed submissions. The on-line format extends its reach through free download and enhances the abilities of contributors and readers to engage in ongoing discussions about international issues from across multidisciplinary perspectives. The challenge for the *Journal of International Women's Studies*, like that facing many other scholarly journals, is to remain a journal of choice for feminist activists, students and scholars. This challenge is being continuously attended to by the Executive Editor, two Associate Editors, Book Review Editor and thirty editors from across the United States and from six other countries. This challenge, of course, also rests with feminist scholars, activists, students and readers of the *Journal of International Women's Studies* and we encourage you to send us your submissions, discussions, and reviews, and to read and support the *Journal of International Women's Studies* so that we can continue toward a bright future.”

A central challenge that the JIWS faces is to expand the global reach of our editorial board membership. JIWS Editors help to publicize the journal and solicit contributions within their region. Editors also review articles and help to formulate Journal policy through on-line discussions. We also continue to work on making the JIWS more linguistically diverse. Currently, we have published only one article in Spanish, and in the future we hope at the very least to publish abstracts simultaneously in English and Spanish. One area of significant growth in recent years has been with our book review section, under the competent leadership of our book review editor, Suzanne Baker. The section of each issue has expanded significantly, and the JIWS is now on the mailing list for many publishers seeking reviews of recent works across the broad spectrum of gender studies.

The current issue reflects the objectives of our Journal: it is multidisciplinary; includes works by scholars and activists from around the world including graduate students and male authors who investigate gender and masculinity as socio-cultural constructs and the challenges male Women's Studies faculty and students face. We hope you enjoy the issue, find it stimulating, provocative and reflective of the dynamic field of women's studies and gender studies as they have developed over the last decade of the JIWS' existence. We look forward to ongoing engagement with authors from around the world, as we work to share our efforts—local, regional, national and transnational—to transform conditions of inequality.