



# Perspectives:

## Research Notes & News

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<http://ips.illinois.edu/wggp/>



## Director's Notes

### Gale Summerfield

The global economic crisis has brought hardship and disruption to millions around the world, but one lesson from the response to this crisis is that combined policy interventions appear to have greatly reduced its potential human costs. The gender accounting of these costs is still in progress, and we would appreciate your updates and other contributions for our next newsletter. Economic and financial crises are not uncommon. Joseph Stiglitz has pointed out that there were 80-100 crises in the global economy during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Anne Villamil illustrated in her presentation for the WGGP forum on the crisis in fall 2008 that there have been numerous recessions in the U.S. in the last decade. In our article based on the WGGP symposium in 2000, Nahid Aslanbeigui and I noted the inherent tendency for crises as globalization proceeds. The increased complexity of the world economy including a greater number of actors and interaction among their diverse structures makes it “increasingly difficult to predict how countries will respond to events, and to design policies that will prevent crises.” In addition, the tighter coupling of economies contributes to instability and the contagion effect. We continue to see these factors in the most recent crisis. Although we cannot eliminate global economic crises, we can take steps to reduce their costs and their uneven impacts, where risks taken by the wealthy often create greater costs for the poor, especially those marginalized such as women and children. More researchers are now examining gender impacts of the crisis, but their studies are hampered by lack of data and inconsistencies in data collection across countries. While the global economic crisis continues to create havoc for many despite announcements of recovery, this is a good moment to use this newsletter to look at accomplishments of some of our faculty affiliates, associates, and students. ■

## Research Notes

### The Role of Literacy in Enhancing Women's Agency and Well-Being: A Qualitative Inquiry of the Effects of the Tostan Educational Program on the Lives of Women in a Rural Community in Senegal

#### Maimouna Barro

This book is largely the product of my doctoral research conducted in 2002 among women participants of an adult education program through a non-governmental



organization called *Tostan* that is based in Senegal. An important objective of the study was to explore the extent to which literacy education has an impact on the lives of rural women and influences their agency and well-being.

In recent years, the importance of women's participation in the development process in developing countries has received considerable attention from both governments and international agencies and organizations. In the 1990s more precisely, education came to the forefront in the development debate, starting with the Education for All (EFA) movement that was launched in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. There was an increased recognition by development that human resource development through education

*Barro*, continued on p. 2



*Sometimes the women would break into singing.*

and training constituted a vital element in the overall strategy for sustainable development. Such initiatives were particularly important in developing countries—especially in South East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The same period also witnessed an increased visibility of NGOs and a heightened recognition of their role in providing services in both formal and informal education for women. It is within this context of continued national and international efforts to bring about educational change that the Tostan program took shape, continues to evolve, and became a model for non-formal education in national languages in Senegal and several other countries in the West African sub-region and in parts of East Africa.

In this study, I propose that a better understanding of the effects of literacy requires that we see women learners as major stakeholders in literacy programs and any other development projects that are designed for them. This also requires that we bring to the fore women's own voices, perceptions and experiences of these programs for a much more accurate assessment of their successes, challenges, or failures. In Senegal, as in several other Sub-Saharan African countries, mass literacy constituted a major goal for policy makers in the years following independence. Literacy programs for adults were perceived as the remedy to the problem of high adult illiteracy rates, especially in rural areas

where women represented the largest population of illiterates. However, as the evidence from most African countries shows, the majority of literacy programs that were established during the first few years following independence were in many ways a legacy of colonialism and seldom catered to the real needs of the rural poor and of rural women, because of their narrow approach of education and economic development. In some of the discourse on development, the terms “literacy,” “education” and “empowerment” are often juxtaposed as if it is education or literacy *per se* that empowers its recipients.

Rather, I argue-- based on my findings-- that literacy should be part of an overall empowering education process through which women gain access to skills, knowledge, and greater awareness of their life conditions that allow them to critically reflect on their social reality and take collective action to transform it. That process of empowerment, as the findings of the study suggest, does not necessarily begin with literacy. Literacy is however a crucial part of that process.

To some extent, rural women in this study are perceived as individuals who strive for their own



*A Senegal woman records her story.*

individual agency and well-being, but above all, they are all members of the same group whose agency and well-being resides in their communal endeavors to improve the lives of their families and community.

Drawing on the theoretical and methodological approaches of participatory research and evaluation, the study progressed on the assumption that any literacy program that seeks to meaningfully change peoples' lives and in terms that make sense to them, should develop greater sensitivity to local kinds of knowledge and culture. Throughout the book, I discuss the use of a mother-tongue as it relates to notions of relevance in delivering literacy education to adult learners, and examine the extent to which women in the Tostan program found the use of Wolof or other national languages to be more meaningful and more empowering to them than the use of French. As a powerful symbol of identity and culture, the issue of language goes well beyond literacy and education. Using people's own languages or mother tongues represents not only the best pedagogical approach to acquiring literacy and education, but represents a fundamental right.

In my current research, I take the issue of language and cultural identity further and beyond Senegal and across West Africa to explore the importance of cross-border languages and their role in the process of regional integration



*Collective story-telling during focus group interviews in Senegal.*



*Maimouna's book, The Role of Literacy in Enhancing Women's Agency and Well-Being, is published by VDM Verlag, 2009.*

processes of integration and contributed to this highly vulnerable region's food security. Very recently, I presented a paper on the topic at the African Studies Association meeting in New Orleans (Nov. 19-21), and I plan to conduct the field work in summer 2010.

*Dr. Maimouna Barro is Associate Director, Center for African Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is a GRID Alum and a recipient of the 2001-02 Kathleen Cloud International Research Award. She can be contacted at [barro@illinois.edu](mailto:barro@illinois.edu). ■*

“from below.” My ongoing research also takes the debate surrounding the role of women in development further through an ongoing investigation of the role of women's informal cross-border trading networks in the process of a more grassroots-oriented regional

integration in West Africa.

In this research project, I hope to examine Sahelian women's cross-border trade networks in West Africa, in the three Sahelian and border countries of Senegal, Mali, and Mauritania along the Senegal River Valley. It will focus on the triangular women's informal trade between the towns of Bakel, Selibaby and Kayes. In particular, the research will be used to interrogate how economic integration in West Africa has affected these women and their networks and how they have shaped

# Working in the Community: Spanish Students Grapple with Immigration, Gender Issues

by Annie Abbott

“I want to speak Spanish with native speakers!” students say when I ask them what interests them the most about doing Spanish community service learning (CSL)—a teaching methodology in which students do meaningful service learning work within a Spanish-speaking community to enhance their learning of the academic content of the course. Then when I ask what concerns them the most, they often reply, “I’m nervous about speaking Spanish with native speakers.”

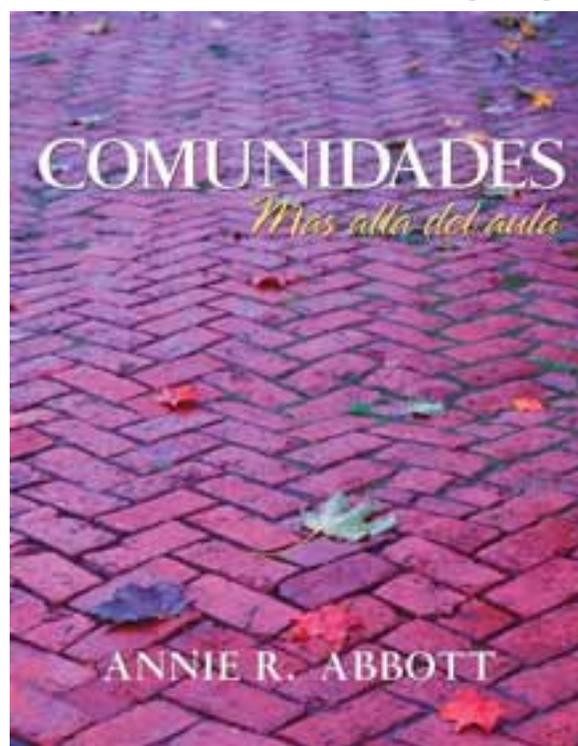
These seemingly contradictory student attitudes are both reflected in *Comunidades: Más allá del aula* (Prentice Hall), the first textbook that fully integrates Spanish CSL. On the one hand, Spanish CSL allows students to engage in real-world contexts that illuminate the Spanish language and Latino cultures in challenging, exciting and meaningful ways. On the other hand, students need a solid curricular program that supports them linguistically and culturally as they work in a community context that is quite different from the highly controlled classroom environment they are used to.

I began teaching SPAN 232 “Spanish in the Community” in 2005 with 12 students and one community partner—Urbana’s East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center. Now around 100 students per semester enroll in our two Spanish CSL courses, and we partner with around a dozen local organizations. All told, students contribute 2,400 volunteer hours each semester. For some of our community partners, this helps them reach local Spanish-speakers for the first time; for others, it helps them enhance what they’re already doing with Latinas/os.

Gender issues and immigration are highlighted in many parts of the textbook. One

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reading in particular recounts the triumphs and challenges of an undocumented Latina teen as she navigates high school, narrowly escapes a raid while shopping for a prom dress and cannot attend college because she would have to pay out-of-state tuition. The videos that accompany the textbook feature interviews with several adult Latinas living in the US who describe their experiences with culture shock, the difficulty of being far away during crises in their home countries, the misperceptions held by family and friends in their home country about their lives in the U.S, and more. (The videos can be seen at the Companion Website at this link <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/comunidades/>.) A lesson on push and pull factors for immigration urges students to think more deeply and more globally about the various reasons why people from all over the world take the risk of immigrating.



*First Spanish textbook integrating community service learning.*

Although both students and the community tend to react positively to Spanish CSL, there are many challenges as well. Even students who have taken years of Spanish courses and studied abroad still have trouble transferring their linguistic and cultural skills to a real-world, professional context.

For example, one of the very first things students learn in any Spanish class is the difference between the informal (*tú*) and formal (*usted, ustedes*) ways of addressing other people. In the classroom, students rarely address anyone formally, so they do not practice it; but in the community, they need to use it regularly. The textbook helps them practice this skill in order to be more culturally competent in the community.

Likewise, students learn early on in their Spanish classes how to form commands, but it too is rarely practiced in a classroom setting. Therefore, when they work with Spanish-speaking children in a local school, they are often not fluent in giving commands to more than one student at a time (e.g., *¡síéntense y abran el libro!*). Furthermore, students often misinterpret the cultural differences in the use of commands. They may perceive as rude a person who uses commands because their cultural preference would be to temper that form of speech with more indirect requests. However, it can be perfectly acceptable in Hispanic cultures for a person of authority to use the more direct, blunt command.

As these examples show, students' Spanish-speaking abilities and cultural knowledge can be very valuable assets to community organizations who often struggle to meet the needs of diverse linguistic groups with limited budgets. However, the challenge for Spanish CSL instructors is to help students bridge their classroom knowledge and their real-world tasks. The lessons in *Comunidades* are designed to help instructors and students do just that.

*Annie Abbott is Assistant Professor in the Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a WGGP Affiliate. She can be contacted at [arabbott@ad.uiuc.edu](mailto:arabbott@ad.uiuc.edu).* ■

#### **MARK YOUR CALENDARS:**

2010 International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) 19th Annual Conference, **July 22 – July 24**, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Theme: *Global Economic Crises and Feminist Rethinking of the Development Discourse (Crisis Economica Global Y Revision Feminista del Debate Sobre el Desarrollo)*. For details: <http://www.iaffe.org/>. ■

## **International Association for Feminist Economics 18th Annual Conference: Engendering Economic Policy**

Gale Summerfield, Marianne Ferber, and Kathleen Cloud, faculty from the University of Illinois, attended the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) conference in Boston, July 25-28, 2009. Staff from the (U.S.-based) International Museum of Women (IMOW) also attended the Boston IAFFE conference and recorded interviews with Naila Kabeer and Julie Nelson. Podcasts from these and other interviews are now included in the IMOW's new on-line "exhibition" described below:

### **The International Museum of Women**



The International Museum of Women (I.M.O.W.), an award-winning social change museum, has launched its new global online exhibition, <http://www.imow.org/economica/index>

**Economica: Women and the Global Economy** is a vivid and timely online exploration of women's global economic participation featuring powerful voices, visions, and images that cover a range of topics from business leadership and philanthropy to microenterprise and grassroots solutions. Join a new conversation about women and the global economy! Visit Economica to learn more about women's diverse experiences of the economy and visions for its future. You can also submit your own ideas, photography and writing for inclusion. ■

# WGGP Annual Award Opportunities

**APPLY BY FEBRUARY 15, 2010**

Donors have generously set up a fellowship and several grants to support UI graduate students' research on issues facing poor women in developing countries.

**A FULL FELLOWSHIP** is available to new and continuing graduate students in any program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

**RITA AND ARNOLD GOODMAN FELLOWSHIP** of \$14,000 plus tuition and service fee waiver supports a graduate student working on such issues as literacy, reproductive rights, political participation, economic security, child welfare, and environmental protection with preference given to students whose work promises to make a significant practical contribution to the improvement of women's lives and gender equity in the developing world.

**GRANTS** are also available to new and continuing grad students in any program here:

**EVELYNE ACCAD INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AWARD** of up to \$1,000 will be given to graduate students working on issues related to women in North Africa and the Middle East.

**Graduate students who select the multidisciplinary graduate minor, Gender Relations in International Development (GRID), offered by WGGP, are also eligible to apply for the following two grants [see GRID enrollment details below]:**

**DUE AND FERBER INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AWARD FOR DOCTORAL**

**DISSERTATION RESEARCH:** Grants of up to \$1,000 for expenses related to dissertation research addressing international issues of women, gender, and development for international students from developing countries whose work promises to make significant contributions to the improvement of women's lives and gender equity in the developing world.

**BARBARA A. YATES INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AWARD:** Awards of up to \$500 to support graduate students focusing on policy-oriented research on socioeconomic issues related to women and gender in developing countries for study on campus, conference presentation, or research abroad.

**TO ENROLL IN THE GRID MINOR:** Submit the one-page GRID minor form available at the WGGP office, or you can download the form at <http://ips.illinois.edu/wggp/grad.shtml>.

**TO APPLY FOR WGGP AWARDS:** Submit the application form available at the WGGP Office or at <http://ips.illinois.edu/wggp/grantfund.shtml>. A student can submit a single application form to be considered for one or more awards. To apply for the fellowship or grants, submit the application and required materials (listed on the form) by the **deadline of February 15** to: Women and Gender in Global Perspectives, 320 International Studies Building, 910 South Fifth Street, Champaign, IL 61820 (phone: 217-333-1994; fax: 217-333-6270); WGGP website: <http://ips.illinois.edu/wggp/>. ■

*Donors and Award Recipients  
at WGGP's Spring Reception,  
April 2009.*



## WGGP's Fall 2009 and Spring 2010 Events

Saturday-Sunday, **October 17-18**, *Water: Lifeline for Energy, and Health*, 26th Annual Conference of the Association of Pakistani Scientists and Engineers in North America, I-Hotel and Conference Center, (1900 S. First, Champaign), For speakers and program details, see [www.apsena.net](http://www.apsena.net), co-sponsored by Pakistani Graduate Students Association, College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences, WGGP and others.

Tuesday, **October 20**, 4:00 pm, *Humanitarianism, Neoliberalism and the West: A Postcolonial Feminist Critique*, **Inderpal Grewal**, Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Yale University, Asian American Cultural Center, (1210 W. Nevada, Urbana), co-sponsored by Gender and Women's Studies, WGGP and others.

Friday-Saturday, **October 23-24**, *The Natural, the Unnatural and the Social*, **Sally Haslanger**, Professor of Linguistics and Philosophy and Women and Gender Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Keynote Speaker of the Illinois Philosophical Association Annual Meeting at the University of Illinois, 5-7 pm in the General Lounge, Illini Union, co-sponsored by Department of Philosophy, WGGP and others.

Saturday, **November 14**, *Women and Globalization: Seeking Freedom in the War Zone*, **Evelyne Accad**, Professor Emerita, French, Comparative Literature, University of Illinois and Lebanese American University, at 2:30 pm at the Urbana Free Library. Co-sponsored by CSAMES, WGGP and Urbana Free Library. (Dr. Accad will give another talk on campus this spring. Watch for details.)

Sunday-Sunday, **April 4-11**, *African Women Writers*, Writers of the African Diaspora Festival, details to be announced; co-sponsored by Center for African Studies, Department of Theater, WGGP and others.

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**COMING MARCH 1st:**

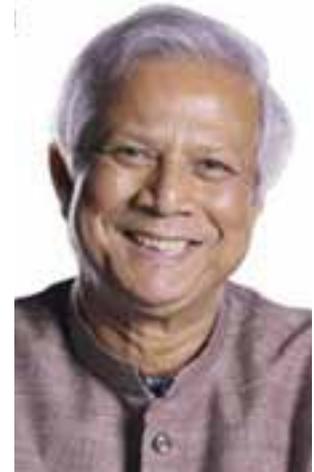
**Muhammad Yunus**  
Founder of Grameen Bank  
and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

*Social Entrepreneurship in the 21st Century*

**Monday, March 1, 2010**

**6:30 pm**

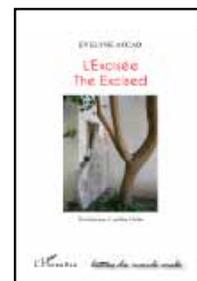
**Foellinger Auditorium**



Interactive sessions with Dr. Yunus at 10:00, 1:00 and 3:00 in Business Instructional Facility, (at Sixth and Gregory) will focus on **Gender Equity, Microfinance, and Health**. Posters and Panels will be presented by graduate students and faculty profiling research and fieldwork connected to the themes. This special event is co-sponsored by WGGP, Office of the Provost, Gender Equity Council, Center for Global Studies, Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership, and others. Watch for further details. For information on the Grameen Bank, see [http://www.grameenfoundation.org/who\\_we\\_are/](http://www.grameenfoundation.org/who_we_are/). ▀

# NEWS FROM WGGP ASSOCIATES

**Evelyne Accad**, French/Comparative Literature, published *L'Excisée/The Excised*, new translation by Cynthia Hahn, bilingual critical edition with introductions and notes. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009 as well as several articles: "Gender and Two Major Traumas of our Century: War and Breast Cancer," *Gender and Trauma: some attempts at critical intervention into the past* (forthcoming, University of California); "Creative Gender and Postcolonial Realities: Debates on Excision," *Meridian Magazine*, Spelman's College, Atlanta, Georgia, 2009; "The Objectification of Women in War Zones," *The Public I: Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center*. Champaign-Urbana, March 2009, Vol. 9 No.2, p.4; and "Cancer Speaks in War Language," *Proceedings IMPLAN 2008: The Implications of Language for Peace and Development Conference*, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway. During Spring and Summer of 2009, she gave papers/lectures in Paris, Morocco and Lebanon as well as in the U.S. in Alabama and Georgia. She gave talks in early November in Chicago and in Urbana on November 14 on *Women and Globalization: Seeking Freedom in the War Zone*. (She will give another talk on campus this spring. Watch for details.)



**Tutin Aryanti**, PhD GRID Student, Architecture, is the new treasurer of the University of Illinois Family Housing Council. She lives with her husband and two sons in the Orchard Downs community. She is a Fulbright student preparing her dissertation on the production of gendered space in Indonesia's Islamic architecture.

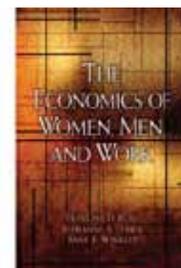
**Maimouna Barro**, GRID Alum, African Studies, published a book, *The Role of Literacy in Enhancing Women's Agency and Well-Being: A Qualitative Inquiry of the Effects of the Tostan Educational Program on the Lives of Women in a Rural Community in Senegal*, VDM Verlag, 2009. (See details in Research Notes, p. 1).

**Junjie Chen**, PhD GRID Student, Anthropology, received the following three awards: *David M. Schneider Award*, American Anthropological Association, 2009. Awarded "in recognition of innovative work in the fields of kinship, cultural theory, and American culture" for paper, "What Counts as a 'Family Line': Reproductive Politics and Class Differentiations in Postsocialist Rural China;" *Theodore C. Bestor Prize*, Society for East Asian Anthropology, American Anthropological Association, 2009. Awarded for "outstanding graduate student paper," for "Performing the Family Planning Project in Post-socialist China: An Interpretive Approach to (Re)Producing Class;" and *Percy Buchanan Prize*, Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs (a section of the Association for Asian Studies), 2009. Awarded for "the best original graduate student research paper in the area of China and Inner Asia" for paper, "Performing the Family Planning Project in Post-socialist China: An Interpretive Approach to (Re)Producing Class."

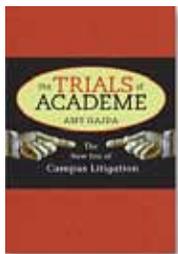
**Joy Coates**, GRID Alum, History, accepted a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of African American History at Guilford College, Greensboro, NC. She is teaching the survey of African history in two parts--to 1800 and since 1800. She is also teaching African-American history and in the spring will teach women in modern Africa.

**Pradeep Dhillon**, Educational Policy Studies, published a paper titled "The Role of Education in Freedom from Poverty as a Human Right."

**Marianne Ferber**, Economics, published the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Economics of Women, Men, and Work*, 2002 6<sup>th</sup> ed. 2010 (with Francine D. Blau and Anne E. Winkler), Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Prentice-Hall. She also published the following articles: "Whither Systemic Reform? A Critical Review of the Literature on the Distributional and Income Adequacy Effects of Systemic Pension Reforms" (with Patricia Simpson) *Management Revue* 20, 3 (2009): 254-67; and "The Committee on Economic Education: Its Effect on the Introductory Course and



Women in Economics” (with Robin L. Bartlett and Carole A. Green) *Forum for Social Economics* 38, 2-3 (Nov. 2009): 153-72 as well as a Review of Deirdre N. McCloskey. *The Bourgeois Virtues. Ethics for an Age of Commerce*. 2007. University of Chicago Press. *Journal of Economic Methodology* 16, 2, 2009 pp. 210-14. She also will deliver the Theodore Marburg Lecture, Marquette University, Feb. 12, 2010.

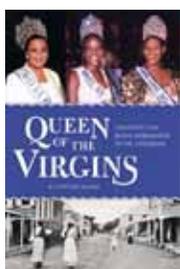


**Amy Gajda**, Law/Journalism, published a book, *The Trials of Academe: The New Era of Campus Litigation*, Harvard University Press, 2009.

**Kristin Hoganson**, History/Gender and Women’s Studies, published an essay in the *Journal of American History* on the state of U.S. foreign relations history. This essay has a section on women and gender. (Kristin Hoganson, “Hop off the Bandwagon: It’s a Mass Movement, Not a Parade,” roundtable essay, *Journal of American History* 95, March 2009.)

**Seon Mi Kim**, PhD GRID Student, Social Work, presented two papers at the 16th International Consortium for Social Development in Monterrey, Mexico in July 2009: One on “Models of community development and its conditions for practice” and another on “How neo-liberal approaches have damaged child care quality in Korea: An analysis and policy alternative.”

**Jane Lobnibe**, PhD GRID Student, Educational Policy Studies, published a paper on “International Students and the Politics of Difference in U.S. Higher Education” in *The Journal of Critical Education Policy Studies*, 7:2, November 2009.



**Cynthia Oliver**, Dance, has recently published the book *Queen of the Virgins: Pageantry and Black Womanhood in the Caribbean*, University Press of Mississippi (2009); and her Rockefeller Multi Arts Production supported dance theatre project entitled: “Rigidigidim De Bamba De: Ruptured Calypso” is about to premiere in Philadelphia’s Painted Bride Art Center and will go on to a national tour over the course of the next year. It has also been supported by the National Performance Network, The Pew Foundation’s Dance Advance Grant, Mid Atlantic Arts, The New England Foundation for the Arts Tour Support, and the University of IL Research and Creative Research Funds.

**Elizabeth Pleck**, History/Human and Community Development, has a forthcoming book, *Love of Freedom: Black Women in Colonial and Revolutionary New England* (Oxford University, 2009) by Catharine Adams and Elizabeth H. Pleck appearing in December of 2009.



**Gale Summerfield**, WGGP/Human and Community Development/Agricultural and Consumer Economics, co-edited with Jurgen Scheffran, *Sustainable Biofuels and Human Security in Swords and Ploughshares*, the bulletin of the Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security, University of Illinois, 17:2, Summer 2009. This special issue also contains her article, “A Note on China in the Global Biofuel Scenario.”

**Madhu Viswanathan**, Business Administration, will be presented the Bharat Gaurav Humanitarian Award in January 2010 from the India International Friendship Society for his work with subsistence marketplaces and marketplace literacy. Viswanathan is gratified by the award and says, “The most important impact of this award is that it provides us with a platform to advance our three-pronged agenda, which is doing business related research in the radically different contexts of subsistence, creating social initiatives like marketplace literacy for these contexts, and bringing our learning back into the curriculum at Illinois and for business education in general.” The award ceremony will be held on Global Friendship Day, January 7, 2010 in New Delhi, India at the Indian Habitat Centre. The day marks the anniversary of when Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, an event revered by Indians around the globe. The award name translates to ‘India Pride’ or ‘India Respect.’ ▪

