

A Note from the Chair

SEEING THE LEAVES FOR THE TREES

As faculty, we have the opportunity to learn with and from our students and colleagues every day. I believe that LA/W/S is home to a set of especially committed people, working together to create possibilities for positive change in our day to day interactions and in the broader world. A recent discussion in our programs' jointly conceived class, *Working for Justice*, highlighted just how much work we face in an era increasingly characterized by precarity and a generalized lack of social protections for the most vulnerable members of our society. The class talked about the importance of setting new examples for social expectations at the risk of making people uncomfortable—beginning with ourselves. We discussed Gandhi's only apparently paradoxical assertion that no individual action matters, but that we must act nonetheless. Philosopher Alan Johnson explains the idea by analogy: If a single leaf dies, the tree survives; if all of the leaves die, the tree can no longer survive. They cannot be replaced collectively. It is our collective action that can cause real, incremental change.

I'm so happy to work with students who take these ideas to heart, working to change our communities one day at a time. Jade Williams (Senior, WS and English) is one such student, and was recognized this year for her engagement beyond the campus community with the Hill Neighborhood Association's Peter Cheung Memorial Scholarship. In this issue of the newsletter, you'll learn about other students and alums who are working to change the world, including Farrah Qadri (WS) and Sarah Marjane (LAS).

I look forward to continuing to increase both of our programs enrollments, and welcome you to stop in and learn more about opportunities in WS and LAS. Please contact me by e-mail for an appointment: jamie.trnka@scranton.edu.

—Jamie H. Trnka

A NOTE FROM THE LAS PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Welcome back all to a new academic year! I am Susan C. Méndez, and I will be the Interim Program Director of Latin American Studies for the 2015-2016 academic year while Yamile Silva is on sabbatical.

Though you may not have heard of me, rest assured that I am quite familiar with the Latin American Studies Program! I am starting my tenth year at the University of Scranton, with only having been given one year off for good behavior—my sabbatical year of 2012-2013. I have been a member of the Latin American Studies Program Steering Committee (formerly the LAS Executive Committee) since my first semester at the University of



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

LAS Director's Note	2
LAS Alum works as Health Advocate in Chimborazo	3
WS Student Attends PA NEW Leadership Institute	4
LAS Faculty Spotlight	5
WS Faculty Spotlight	7
Student Reflects on Visiting Cuban Artist.....	9

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Upcoming events
- Student Activism
- Alumni News
- Faculty Scholarship



A NOTE FROM THE LAS PROGRAM DIRECTOR

(cont'd from p. 1) Scranton, Fall 2006, thanks to the recruiting efforts of Lee Penyak. I have also been part of the Women Studies Program Steering Committee (formerly the WS Executive Committee) since my third semester at the University, Fall 2007, but that is a story for another time and place. Since my home department is English & Theatre, I teach literature classes in English for the Latin American Studies Program: ENLT 251: Borderlands Writing and ENLT 129: Literature & Social Justice. Maybe you have taken one of these classes before or maybe I hopefully will see you in one of these classes in the future. I primarily research novels written by Latino/a au-

thors, so these classes and the LAS Program overall are important to me.

For this semester, we have a good deal on tap. We have the Latin American Studies Film Festival, which celebrates the Southern Cone this semester. The films and dates are as follows: **Valentín** (Argentina, 2002) September 29, 2015; **Violeta went to Heaven** (Chile, 2011) October 27, 2015; **Son of the Bride** (Argentina, 2001) November 17, 2015

The location and time for all of these movies are the same: Brennan Hall 228 at 7pm.

*Virginia Grise, theatre artist and winner of the Yale Drama Prize for her play **blu**, will speak about making a life as an artist and read excerpts of her published and unpublished works. She addresses issues of class, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.*

UPCOMING LAS FILMS

Valentín (Argentina, 2002)
September 29, 2015

Violeta went to Heaven
(Chile, 2011)
October 27, 2015

Son of the Bride
(Argentina, 2001)
November 17, 2015

The location and time for all of these movies are the same: Brennan Hall 228 at 7pm.

Also, we will have Virginia Grise, theatre artist and winner of the Yale Drama Prize for her play **blu**, speak about making a life as an artist and read excerpts of her published and unpublished works on campus this semester. Besides her public reading on the evening of November 11, 2015, 5:30pm, at the Studio Theatre of the McDade Center for Literary & Performing Arts, she will visit with classes/groups of students on November 12, 2015. In her writings, Grise directly addresses issues of class, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Specifically, she discusses her own particular family's heritage which encompasses both Mexican and Chinese ancestry. We can welcome Grise to campus thanks to support from the Office of Equity & Diversity, the Latin American and Women's Studies Programs, the Department of English & Theatre, Sigma Tau Delta, the Asian Studies Program, and the College of Arts & Sciences Dean's Office. We hope to see many University community members at her public reading.

Lastly, I would invite any interested party reading this newsletter to come and talk to me about the Latin American Studies Program, our events for this semester, or events you would like to see in the future. We would love to hear what you are thinking about in terms of our Program and what you would like to see in future. My office is located in the McDade Center for Literary and Performing Arts, CLP 203, and I will be holding office hours this semester from 4:30-6:30pm on Mondays and Wednesdays. My email is susan.mendez@scranton.edu and my extension is x4317. Please contact me or another professor in the Latin American Studies Program if you have questions.

Have a great semester everyone, and good luck with your studies!

-susan c. méndez



LAS ALUM

SARAH

MARJANE

Would you believe that 9 years after graduation from the University of Scranton I still reference my Latin American History textbooks? As the Executive Director of Fundacion Buen Samaritana Paul Martel, Inc. (FIBUSPAM), I drive an organization that is dedicated to serving impoverished communities in the Andean region of Ecuador. The majority of our beneficiaries are

Puruha, Shuar, and Achuar, pre-Incan indigenous groups, most of whom maintain their unique language, dress, cuisine, and culture. The Latin American Studies Program at the University of Scranton prepared me in the most comprehensive way to work with this special group of people. Understanding their distinctive history, culture, and experience motivates the way I facilitate the design and implementation of our programs. The knowledge and hands-on experiences gained from my Latin American Studies courses and internships while at the University of Scranton, as well as my Scranton “spirit of serving,” uniquely readied me for my work with the indigenous people of Ecuador.

Founded by Paul Martel in 2007, FIBUSPAM is dedicated to bringing health care and hope to the people of Chimborazo Province through humanitarian and medical support. Our free medical clinic and surgical unit located in Riobamba provide preventive medical care; dental, eye, and surgical services; and access to life-saving medications to the poorest of the poor. Teams of traveling surgeons also use our medical unit to perform surgeries not otherwise available to the people of this region. Since 2007, we have served more than 25,000 patients.

This year FIBUSPAM was delighted to welcome our first intern from the University of Scranton, Lindsay Daniels. Lindsay supported FIBUSPAM in communications with health care delivery and fundraising. She also traveled to Ecuador to participate in a mobile medical caravan. Lindsay agrees that her Scranton education and participation in the Latin American Studies Program gave her the framework for a very successful intern experience. Lindsay said, “My Latin American Studies Major helped me to understand the underlying historical and social context of the poverty in the Chimborazo region of Ecuador. The profound discrimination against indigenous people that exists today can be traced back to the conquest of the Americas. Although it is hard to believe, some hospitals still refuse to treat sick or injured people on the basis of their indigenous heritage. Interning at FIBUSPAM was an excellent way to apply what I learned in my Latin American Studies courses. I highly recommend this internship to LAS majors and anyone interested in social activism.” Lindsay will be going on to Pennsylvania State University Dickinson School of Law to pursue a career in immigration law this fall.

My personal journey from the University of Scranton to my dream job at FIBUSPAM has been an adventurous one. Inspired by my participation in Scranton’s winter session in Guadalajara and a summer abroad in Guayaquil, I joined the Peace Corps after graduation. (cont’d on p. 4)

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH ADVOCACY, CONT'D

I was assigned to northern Mozambique where I worked as an English teacher, health educator, and youth advocate. My Peace Corps service intensified my dedication to serving others, as well as my passion for experiencing new cultures. I went on to earn a Master's Degree in Public Health, while working as an Assistant Project Manager at an international agricultural development organization. I later took a position as a Senior Administrator of a leading global health organization and worked to create sustainable innovations in health care to meet the needs of underserved populations. Through these positions, I have had the pleasure of traveling to dozens of countries around the globe and the privilege of serving communities in great need. In 2015, I was appointed to FIBUSPAM as the Executive Director.

In reflecting on this journey, I am so grateful for my University of Scranton education, and especially professors like Dr. Penyak who sparked my passion for Latin American culture. My advice to students majoring in Latin American Studies is to live life boldly, embrace new experiences, and to never stop learning. The Latin American Studies Program at the University of Scranton can launch you to a global career and enable you to reach the heights of your personal and professional dreams.

If you're interested in learning more about FIBUSPAM or would like to make a tax-deductible charitable contribution, please visit our website at www.fibuspam.org. If you'd like to learn more about our internship opportunities, please email me at sarah@fibuspam.org.

QADRI ATTENDS NEW LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

I never considered myself to be particularly invested in politics; like many in my generation, I was socially conscious, but unaware of the impact policy makes on our daily lives. However, I was sensitive to the lack of women in politics, thanks to my women's studies courses.

When I was given the opportunity to attend the Pennsylvania Center for Women in Politics NEW Leadership PA at Chatham University, I was elated to learn why there are so few women in politics and to become part of the solution. I never expected to gain such a deep appreciation for policy and legislation at the local level.

Located in suburban Pittsburgh, the program had close to fifty women from all across the state. They came from a wide span of backgrounds and political affiliations. I spent a bus ride to the capitol with a political science major who was a registered Republican, and had lunch with another woman who was interning for Planned Parenthood.

The week began with an introduction to women and politics, and then to our "practitioners in residence." This year, former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice, Cynthia Baldwin, and former State Representative Erin Molchany, lived with us in the dormitories and shared their insight and experiences. I was surprised to discover that so much of running for office is fundraising (Rep. Molchany raised a quarter of a million dollars for one of her campaigns!). Both women revealed how politics was never in their line of sight as they progressed through their respective educations and early careers. Eventually, someone else had said, "I think you'd be really good at this." The idea that women had to be asked to run, presumably because they had never seen another woman be elected or simply assumed they were not qualified, became a theme in many of the stories we heard from elected women.

During our time at NEW Leadership, we were assigned to a Social Action Project, in which we role-played a scenario about fracking on school district property. Panels of environmentalists, elected officials from areas where fracking had taken place, and concerned mothers spoke to us. Our project culminated in a mock hearing about whether to allow fracking on school property. I initially assumed that the topic that we would be given would be about an emotive-symbolic topic regarding women, but this project reminded me that women do not need to be in politics just to speak about women's issues.

We had workshops and seminars focused on enhancing our leadership abilities, ranging from public speaking, to identifying our leadership abilities, to tips on how to network, to an emotional diversity workshop. We were able to understand the qualities of leadership both in and beyond politics.

After all of our workshops about how to network, we were given the opportunity to put our newfound skills to use during a networking reception. The highlight of the week was the trip to the State capitol. I was in absolute awe of the architecture. During our day at the Capitol, we heard from State Senators, representatives, justices, lobbyists, and members of the Governor's cabinet.

I began to understand that no matter what political affiliation women had, their family status or educational background, their tenacity and success in their careers was fueled by coming to know that (cont'd on p. 5)

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT ON JANICE VOLTZOW

A year of immersing myself in science: Notes from a marine biologist

What do snail gills, mussel shells, and Darwin have in common? All of these were subjects of projects I worked on during my recent sabbatical year.

The primary focus of my research is the relationship between structure and function in marine invertebrates, especially snails and other molluscs. I used an endoscope (similar to the ones proctologists use for colonoscopies) to peer into the bodies of marine snails. The snails I studied, known as keyhole limpets and abalone, have cap-shaped shells with naturally-occurring holes in them. I carefully inserted the endoscope through the hole into the animal's mantle cavity, so that I could study their gills. Snail gills are similar to fish gills; they are thin layers of tis-



Ever since I was an undergraduate, I have had a strong interest in Charles Darwin and how he developed his ideas of natural selection and evolution.

QADRI, CONT'D

they were worthy of having their voices heard in the political sphere. At the end of the week, I had a newfound respect for the tenacity of the women that I had met, and a seedling implanted in me that maybe I could one day be active in the political sphere at the local level. I am in complete gratitude for the efforts of the Jane Kopas Women's Center and the Women's Studies Program for the incredible week.

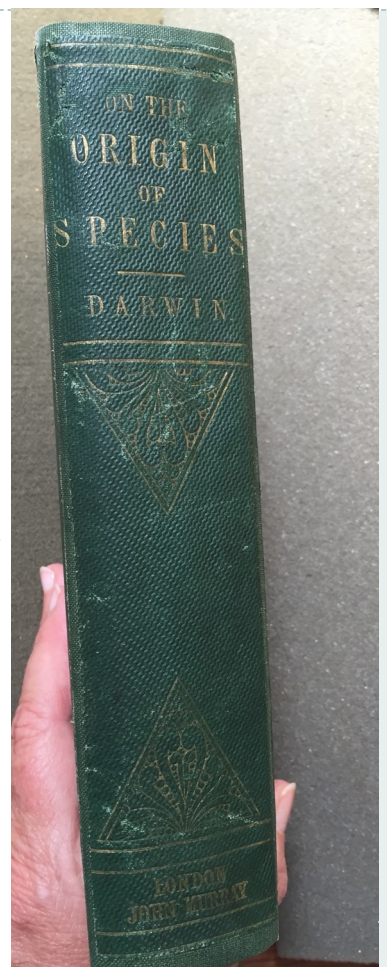
—Farrah Quadri

For more information on NEW Leadership, contact :

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sue through which water flows so that the animals can take up oxygen and get rid of carbon dioxide. Because the gills are housed inside the shell, it is difficult to watch the gills while they are alive and functioning. Thus my studies with the endoscope provided a novel view of how these animals work. I presented this research at the International Congress on Invertebrate Morphology in Berlin last summer and my paper was recently published in the *Journal of Morphology*, a peer-reviewed scientific journal on animal structure, function, and evolution.

A second study stemmed from a class project by Connie Wall, a biology major who graduated in June. Gulls and crows pick up mussels from the intertidal zone and drop them on rocks to break their shells and eat them. For her project in my biomechanics class, Connie measured the force required to break a live mussel shell and investigated whether its strength depended on the direction in which the force was applied. Think about breaking an egg—it's much easier to crack on the side than



on the end. We wondered if mussel shells were similarly stronger in certain directions. To find out how mussels fall, we dropped live mussels down the central stairway of the Loyola Science Center, videotaped them, and measured the forces with which they hit the ground. You may have seen us dropping mussels last Intersession or spring. We presented some of our results at a meeting for marine biology in Quebec City, Canada, last spring and are currently writing a paper for publication.

Ever since I was an undergraduate, I have had a strong interest in Charles Darwin and how he developed his ideas of natural selection and evolution. While reading his letters, I discovered a passage that I believe provides the basis for one of his most famous metaphors for natural selection, known as the metaphor of the wedges. The passage appears in a letter to John Henslow, Darwin's mentor at Cambridge University, in which he is relating his excitement about the geology of the Andes. Darwin, a companion, and a muleteer with his team, traveled from Santiago, Chile, through the Piuquenes and Portillo Passes across the two parallel ridges of the Andes to Mendoza, Argentina, returning via the more northern Uspallata Pass. This trip was significant for many reasons. It was the first time Darwin had encountered mountains of this elevation (the two ridges are approximately 12000 feet high), where the geologic formations were so exposed. It gave him the opportunity to test his developing theories about uplifting and subsidence as causes of the earth's geology. On the return portion of the journey, Darwin discovered a forest of petrified trees (now called Darwin Forest) and visited a geological formation known as the Incan Bridge. This scenery seems to have had quite a significant impact on Darwin, who wrote to Henslow, "I cannot tell you how I enjoyed some of these views—it is worth coming from England once to feel such intense delight. At an elevation from 10—12000 ft. there is a transparency in the air & a confusion of distances & a sort of stillness which gives the sensation of being in another world, & when to this is joined, the picture so plainly drawn of the great epochs of violence, it causes in the mind a most strange assemblage of ideas." I am completing a manuscript tracing Darwin's writings about this experience from his notebooks to his publications that links his South American geological work with his revolutionary notion of evolution by natural selection described in *On the Origin of Species*.

Faculty can use a sabbatical to reflect, read, write, and organize their priorities for the next phase of their careers. For my sabbatical year, I did a bit of all of these and also had some fun, traveling to beaches in Costa Rica, Florida, and Washington State. I am looking forward to developing new courses for the honors program on the nature of species as well as biology courses on marine organisms and their evolution. I also plan to continue my research on marine animals and Darwin's intellectual development.

—Janice Voltzow

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT ON ILEANA SZYMANSKI

"My research is inspired by several feminist philosophers of science. It contests the value and efficacy of traditional understandings of food."

I am very grateful to have been granted a sabbatical leave for the 2014-2015 academic year. In what follows I describe the highlights of the research and service I carried out during that time.

In September of 2014 I attended the conference of the European Consortium for Political Research to give the paper "Redefining Food to Promote Social and Political Responsibility." This international conference (one of the largest of its kind in the world) took place at Glasgow University in Glasgow, Scotland. It gathered over 400 panels on topics dealing primarily with Political Science. My paper was part of the panel "Global Food, Global Justice," organized by Dr. Mary Rawlinson from SUNY Stony Brook. Dr. Rawlinson managed to gather impressive scholars for this panel, each bringing their expertise to the topic of food in the global scene and the political issues raised in, e.g., the partnerships of public and private institutions with respect to human health, food justice in developing countries, rising food costs and their effect on life choices, and the insights that feminist philosophy can bring into

contemporary food issues. My paper explored the possibility of preempting social and political problems (such as uneven food taxation) by redrafting the account of food in the lives of individuals and institutions.

As a result of the collaboration with Dr. Rawlinson in that panel, she proposed that I contribute a book chapter to a volume that she is editing on global food and global justice, and which will be printed by Cambridge Scholars Press. My chapter is entitled “Redefining Food from the Perspective of Feminist Philosophy of Science.” In this chapter I explain how my research is inspired by the methodologies used by several feminist philosophers of science (most especially Helen Longino and Donna Haraway) who have contested the value and efficacy of the traditional understanding of terms such as “science” and “knowledge.” Using the strategies they employ in their work, I offer a methodology for contesting the value and efficacy of the traditional understanding of the term “food.”

Dr. Rawlinson also proposed to me to write the leading chapter in the volume *The Routledge Companion of Food Ethics*. This chapter is called “What Is Food? Networks, Not Commodities.” It surveys the literature on metaphysics of food, and proposes that rather than a commodity, food is a much more complex concept—one that behaves like an active multi-directional network where the identity of food items (some of which are commoditized) is but one axis in the network. It is a privilege that I will be published in the same volume with one of my intellectual heroes, Dr. Vandana Shiva, whose fascinating work I teach regularly in my course *Feminist Philosophy of Science* here at the University of Scranton.

I expect that these two book chapters will be published in the next



year or two. 2015 also saw come to life my entry “Food and Blogging” in the *SAGE Encyclopedia of Food Issues*. While this entry had been completed before my sabbatical, it was not until this year that the encyclopedia went into the market. Work continues for my monograph on the redefinition of food, a work that I would like to complete in the next year. In recognition of my merits in teaching, research, and service, I was awarded promotion to Associate Professor in 2015.

In addition to my research, I represented the University at the 2015 Leadership Program of the Association for Jesuit Colleges and Universities at the beautiful Lakeshore campus of Loyola University, Chicago. This was a fantastic opportunity to meet colleagues from other Jesuit colleges and universities, and exchange ideas about how better to accomplish our mission, as well as the leadership roles that we may be able to play in it.

SZYMANSKI, (cont'd fr. p. 7)

With respect to service to the larger community, I was able to participate in several events co-organized by Friends of the Poor and The University of Scranton, namely: the turkey give-away at the Valley View Community in Scranton, the toy give-away, and food give-away at Christmas. I also participated in the University's Christmas breakfast for the community: a day prior to the event, and alongside other colleagues and their children, I helped set up the free clothing for the attendees, and the day of the event I helped serving, and cleaning up. It is events such as these that remind me of the power of service in action. One of the goals of the University is to promote justice in the service of faith. As an instructor, I believe that I have a great share in the responsibility for showing our students that these are not just words, and that constant, cumulative, intentional actions do make a difference. As I have been inspired by many of my colleagues who donate their time to the University and other institutions that help the community, I too hope to inspire colleagues and students to carry out service work using their individual talents.

—Ileana Szymanski

STUDENT REFLECTS ON VISITING CUBAN ARTIST

Cuban writer Anna Lidia Vega Serova came to “offer her heart” to us at The University of Scranton in a bilingual presentation and conversation in late April 2015. She was born in Leningrad in the Soviet Union, now St. Petersburg, Russia, to a Cuban father and a Russian/Ukrainian mother. She moved back and forth between the Soviet Union and Cuba before eventually settling and doing most of her growing up in Cuba. After a brief introduction, students and professors watched the film version of Vega Serova's short story “Misericordia.” Vega Serova said the movie differed a bit from her short story because it was not produced by her, but it contained the same main points. The movie did not have any words but had many powerful sounds and actions.

In her short story, Vega Serova describes the difficulties of a monotonous day in the life of a Cuban housewife. The housewife lives with her husband, with whom she shares nothing in common, her daughter, with whom it is imprudent to talk, and her baby. The housewife goes about her day shopping at the pharmacy and cooking and cleaning at home. She then boards a bus and goes to feed the stray dogs, which seems to be a problem in Cuba. The housewife describes the dogs and the sunset as giving her enough energy to continue living the next day. On her way home, however, the housewife collects slivers of broken glass which she inserts into the meatballs she distributes to the dogs each day.

After watching this movie adaptation of Vega Serova's dark short story, the audience was buzzing with questions. The questions, some in English and some in Spanish, were about Vega Serova's short story, her upbringing, and her career. Dr. Parsons and Dr. Silva helped translate the questions and Vega Serova's responses. The audience found out that the housewife is, in fact, killing the street dogs on purpose by inserting the glass into her meatballs. Vega Serova says that the housewife is showing mercy, or the Spanish translation “misericordia,” by killing the street dogs instead of the people in her life whom she has come to despise.

Some of Vega Serova's other popular works include short-story collections *Bad Painting* (1997) and *Limpiando ventanas y espejos* (2000); novels *Noche de ronda* (2001) and *Ánima fatua* (2007) and the poetry collection, *Retazos de las hormigas para los malos tiempos* (2004). She said that she is able to channel her burdens through her writing. Jack London, who left school to

become a writer, was one of her inspirations to pursue writing. Vega Serova explained that in Cuba, each municipality has a cultural center which has an annual literature competition. She said when she was in her late teens, she entered the competition and her work kept advancing until she was awarded first place nationally. Her work was published, and she decided to write more after that success.

While explaining her upbringing, Vega Serova said the social systems in Cuba and Russia were very similar. She said that the people in Russia, just like the country's temperature, were much colder than the people in Cuba. She had a wry smile while saying that Cuba was more friendly yet scandalous. In the 90s, when Cuba was no longer supported by the USSR, Vega Serova said it was a bad time in the country politically, but it was a great time of writing. Desperate times in Cuba caused writers to push their works and focus on political and social issues. The country's lack of paper forced writers to write short stories and the genre gained popularity. During this time, women writers emerged with strength and Cubans were more receptive to their works. The works of Cuban women writers like Vega Serova did a lot for women's equality and the discussion of national issues.

It was a pleasure to watch *Misericordia* and listen to the journey of Anna Lidia Vega Serova to gain a better understanding of Cuban culture and history. She "offered her heart" to us just like she has done for many years to her readers through her writing.

—Carmine C. Gerrity-Gemei

Upcoming Event: Celebrate the Intersection of Black and Women's History Months with WS and the Cross-Cultural Centers

Please mark your calendars for Wednesday, March 9, at 4:30pm in BRN 228!

Ruth Feldstein, Prof. of History at Rutgers University, will deliver a lecture based on her recent book *How it Feels to be Free: Black Women Entertainers and the Civil Rights Movement*.

Feldstein examines celebrated black women performers, illuminating the risks they took, their roles at home and abroad, and the ways that they raised the issue of gender amid their demands for black liberation. Feldstein focuses on six women who made names for themselves in the music, film, and television industries: Nina Simone, Lena Horne, Miriam Makeba, Abbey Lincoln, Diahann Carroll, and Cicely Tyson.

Her work demonstrates that entertainment was not always just entertainment and that "We Shall Overcome" was not the only soundtrack to the civil rights movement. By putting black women's performances at center stage, Feldstein sheds light on the meanings of black womanhood in a revolutionary time.

(Description courtesy of Oxford University Press)

