

The Alphadelphian

The newsletter of the Alfred University Women's Studies Program

Riley lecture: proving the power of first ladies

First ladies are "extraordinary political players," and any other view is "shortsighted," stated Allida Black, a Pulitzer Prize history nominee, to a crowd of over 100 people April 6.

Black, a J.N.G. Finley Fellow at George Mason University and fellow with the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institute, presented the third annual Riley Lecture in Women's Studies, "First Women: Power, Image, and Politics from Eleanor Roosevelt to Hillary Rodham Clinton."

Black said before the speech that her interest in woman and power came from a children's show, Tarzan. "After all, Jane was just as cool as Tarzan, she just didn't wrestle alligators," she

explained.

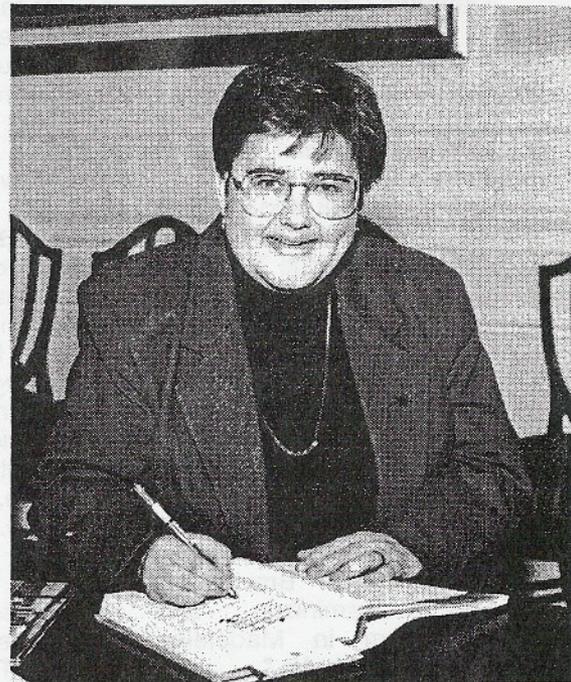
Having an accurate image of the past and present roles of first ladies is important so we don't question when first ladies speak out, or take an active political role, Black explained.

"I hope to put the position into some context so that we don't reinvent the wheel every time a 'presidential partner' speaks out or takes a complex assignment," she also said.

In the lecture Black presented her thesis for her upcoming book on first ladies.

"Why do historians believe [first ladies] when they say they do nothing?" asked Black. "Their impact is strikingly clear."

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Above: Allida Black, Pulitzer Prize history nominee and J.N.G. Finley Fellow at George Mason University, presented the third annual Riley Lecture April 6. Her talk, "First Women: Power, Image, and Politics from Eleanor Roosevelt to Hillary Rodham Clinton," focused on the political power of first ladies.

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Earning a minor in activism

The current women's studies minors agree: beyond learning within the classroom, the program has enabled them to speak out as activists, today and in the future.

"[The program] makes you want to go out and change things," said senior Jessica Greeley. Last year the program prompted her to intern at ACCORD, a local organization which works with victims of domestic violence, and to organize a panel with '98 alum Robin Arian on violence against women.

"[It] will affect my whole life," she said. This includes her future job choice. Originally Greeley said she was looking at a career in criminal justice, but she has since changed to focus on social work, where she can help women.

Junior Courtney Fleming said the minor has encouraged her to speak freely and openly about her opinions. Before she

kept her thoughts to herself, but now she's "exploding" with opinions, she said.

"When you are given knowledge... and realize what's going on, it prompts activism," she also said.

For example, Fleming explained that in her "Women in Society" course she researched the conditions of women's lives in Tibet. Now she will never forget what she found, and will always be an advocate for women globally and locally, she said.

The minor has made such an impact on her, Fleming is even considering becoming a women's studies professor.

Junior Cariann Colman also said the classes have helped her to formulate her own opinions. Now she is "yelling" for equality, she said.

Colman said she has been an activist through educating others. For instance,

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Faculty News

Cecilia Beach contributed several articles on women's theater to the "Feminist Encyclopedia of French Literature," to be published by Greenwood Press.

This spring, she gave a talk at the Language House on the history of contraception and abortion rights in France.

On March 28, she presented a paper titled "Forgotten Playwrights of the Twentieth Century: Marie Leneru and Marcelle-Maurette" at the International Colloquium in Twentieth-Century French and Francophone Studies in Amherst.

Cecilia will also participate in May in the Women in French Conference in England, where she will give a paper titled "Braving the Law: Feminism and Anarchism in Madeleine Pelletier's Theatre."

Gary Ostrower is teaching the course "Herstory and History" this semester, which he started teaching in the mid-1970s as an independent study, until the course became a regular part of the curriculum around 1978. In the two decades he has taught the course, this is the first year there has been more than one male student enrolled in the class.

Gary's most recent book, about the relationship between the United Nations and the United States, is scheduled for publication in June.

He also wants to remind

readers of this newsletter that "if you think American governmental organizations are sexist, you should visit the United Nations where what are euphemistically called 'cultural differences' have created an environment that welcomes women staffers as warmly as tunafish welcome nets."

Carol Burdick recently wrote a long interview with alumna Gail Hosking Gilberg concerning her book, "Snake's Daughter," for the *Alfred Magazine*.

Also coming up for C.B. is an interview with alumnus Robert Littell via transatlantic telephone, also for the *Alfred Magazine*.

She is also awaiting the arrival of "Woman Alone: A Farmhouse Journal," which will be issued in paperback this fall. The book was first published in 1989 by Paul Eriksson.

Vicki Eaklor's article "Learning From History: A Queer Problem" will be published in the *Journal of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identity* in July.

Also Vicki will be participating in a panel at the National Women's Studies Association meeting at Oswego, titled "Coming Out in the Classroom: Theory, Practice, Practice, Practice." Her presentation is titled "Out at School: Where the Personal, Political, and Pedagogical Meet."

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email fporter@bigvax.alfred.edu
Director: Karen L. Porter, Associate Professor of Sociology
Newsletter Editor: Megan Allen

From the Editor of the *Alphadelphian*...

Welcome to the second issue of the *Alphadelphian*.

Sadly this is the last *Alphadelphian* I will be producing, since I will be graduating in May. When I decided to produce the newsletter as my honors thesis about a year and a half ago, I never imagined how many hours of writing, designing and editing it would require.

Despite the work, I will miss producing the *Alphadelphian* next year; while it has filled my nights and weekends, it has also given me a great sense of accomplishment. When I look back over the past four years, the *Alphadelphian* is one of the projects that makes me most proud.

I am happy to report that the newsletter will continue next year, since Cariann Colman is planning to continue the newsletter as her honors thesis. Hopefully the newsletter will find another new editor after she has graduated, so that it will live on as part of the Women's Studies Program. On that note, if anyone is interested in doing the newsletter in the future, please contact Karen Porter or myself.

Looking over a draft of this issue of the *Alphadelphian* Karen Porter pointed out that many of the articles focus on activism: activism while being a Women's Studies minor, participating in activities in the Women's Issues Coalition and the activism of first ladies, as described by Allida Black.

This theme is certainly appropriate, since it is crucial that activism be encouraged and discussed, for our society to one day become egalitarian.

I agree with the other Women's Studies minors that the program encourages activism, and changes a person's way of thinking and looking at the world. While four years ago I had only vaguely heard of women's studies, today I consider myself a feminist, and what I've learned in the program has permanently changed my perspectives on life. I hope through my career in newspaper journalism I will continue to be an activist, by helping to ensure that "women's issues" and egalitarian points of view are presented to the public.

Thank you to Karen Porter once again, for all of her guidance and assistance in the production of this newsletter. Without her help, it would not have been possible.

I also want to thank all the professors in the Women's Studies Program from whom I have taken classes over the past four years; I won't forget what you've taught me.

I hope you enjoy reading the second issue of the *Alphadelphian*. Best wishes to the program for its continued growth and success in the future.

—Megan Allen

How Welfare Reform Hurts Women

It is a myth that women on welfare bear children to receive more money, refuse to work and are typically teenage mothers, argued Karen Porter, director of the Women's Studies Program and associate professor of sociology, at her Bergren Forum, "Myth Conceptions of Women: A Feminist Perspective on Welfare Reform," March 5 at AU.

Porter discussed the 1996 welfare reform which relies on these myths, how the changes affect women on welfare, and feminist solutions to the welfare problems.

"Behind these sweeping policy changes are deep-seated notions and emotions about women's behaviors that are not supported by empirical data," said Porter.

Women on welfare do not have children as a "get rich quick scheme," she said. For instance, in 1991, 40 percent of women on the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) public assistance program had one child, 30 percent had two children and only 10 percent had four or more children, she explained.

Also studies using data on the states have found no link between benefit levels and illegitimacy rates; states with

higher AFDC benefits do not have higher out-of-wedlock birth rates than states with lower benefits, she said.

Having more children does not make women on welfare rich, either, she argued. In 1993, families received approximately \$79 a month for each additional child, she explained, hardly enough to cover all the costs associated with raising a child and have money leftover.

"Women on welfare are working, have worked, plan to work and continue to work," said Porter, disputing another myth.

In a national study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1,181 single mothers receiving AFDC assistance during a two-year period were surveyed. Porter reviewed the results of the study and explained that only nine percent of the women who were physically able were not caring for children, in school or looking for a job.

The study also found that 37 percent of the women were in low paying jobs. Also their average job lasted only 46 weeks and took approximately 16 weeks to find, she explained.

A third myth Porter argued against is the myth that teenage mothers com-

prise most of the women on AFDC. The average age of mothers on AFDC is 29, she said.

These myths have led to the current welfare reform, which poses many problems, explained Porter. The reform passes the responsibility for dispensing benefits from the federal government to the states, which could create problems since states may try to offer the lowest benefits, so as not to attract welfare recipients, she said.

Also as part of the reform, welfare recipients must work, but not enough jobs are available to absorb the huge numbers of welfare recipients who will need employment, said Porter.

A feminist perspective on welfare reform would support women by making childcare and health care accessible, said Porter. Instead of "using a stick to push them, indeed shame them, out of poverty," the feminist perspective would give them respect for the work they are already doing, she explained.

"[Those factors] could go a long way to easing the burdens parents face today," she said.

—Megan Allen

Spring Semester Women's Studies Roundtables

Jan. 23: "Mapping A Life: Notes from a Female Geographer," presented by Diana Sinton. Diana discussed a map she created to represent her life. Through a discussion of the symbols she used, she discussed various events in her life.

Feb. 20: "Pop Feminism," presented by the Women's Issues Coalition. Seven members examined the recent popularity of feminist messages in American culture, and discussed the sincerity of the messages. Each of the members introduced a different example of "pop feminism," including the Spice Girls and the Lilith Fair.

March 20: "Four Folks' Forays into Feminism," presented by Cecilia Beach, Felicia Cruz, Allen Grove and Fiona Tolhurst. Each gave brief narratives about doing graduate work in Women's Studies. Fiona discussed the politics among feminist scholars at graduate school, while Felicia talked about finding a mentor through a single women's studies course. Cecilia discussed doing women's studies work without institutional support while Allen discussed the

challenges men face working in the women's studies field.

April 24: The seven graduating Women's Studies minors presented their independent study projects:

- Megan Allen created the Alphasdelphian.
- Melissa Cianciulli wrote a paper about first ladies.
- Jessica Greeley interned at ACCORD and wrote about her experience.
- Cheryl Hurst participated in the "Women As Leaders" academic seminar in Washington, D.C.
- Meghan Mercier created a quilt and wrote a paper on the history of quilting bees and quilts as an art form.
- Jeannette Oliver wrote an oral history of her family, which included a discussion of the feminist taboo, which she argued exists today even though there are more types of feminists today than in the past.
- De Anne Smith created an electronic discussion list with colleges within three to four hours driving distance of Alfred, to help WIC network with similar groups.

Women's Issues Coalition m

WIC is an activist and social group for women and men. WIC's purpose is to raise awareness of women's issues and to create opportunities to encourage an egalitarian society.



Above: Women's Issues Coalition members pose in front of the White House during the group's trip to Washington, D.C. Nov. 7 to 9 to see the Museum of Menstruation. From left, Nomi Manon, De Anne Smith, Christa Nyman, Amy Garbark, Pam Lakin, Fiona Tolhurst and Katy Hawson. Not pictured: Megan Allen.

Thank you to WIC members for making this a great year

This year WIC's membership has grown tremendously, to include many new active and enthusiastic members. With their dedication and participation, many activities have been possible.

We would like to thank all of the members for making WIC such a great group to be in, and in particular the Executive Board: Secretary Christa Nyman, Treasurer Nicole Lebo, Student

Senate Representative Jeneen Lehocky. Also a big thank you to our advisers, Pam Lakin and Fiona Tolhurst. -De Anne Smith and Megan Allen, WIC co-coordinators

WIC members describe the highlights of 1997/1998

"The Washington trip—meeting creepy people, seeing the museum, running into Hillary Clinton's secret service men, going out to dinner, and just spending a weekend with WIC people!"

-De Anne Smith

"WIC goes to Washington (especially the Museum of

Menstruation) and the wonderful Valentine's Day cards."

-Fiona Tolhurst

"I totally enjoyed becoming involved in WIC this year. It was so exciting to be a part of a small (but rad) group of girls who accomplished so much."

-Amy Garbark

"The Menstruation Museum. What could be better?"

-Christa Nyman

"I especially enjoyed the 'Take Back the Night March' and hey, you've got to love those periods."

-Ashlee Cancio-Bello

Congratulations to WIC's graduating seniors:

Méghan Mercier, Nicole Lebo, Jeneen Lehocky, De Anne Smith, Julie Callahan, Leslie Augenbraun, Megan Allen, Laura Kaplan and Ashlee Cancio-Bello

Members combine activism, fun

WIC activities for Fall 1997/Spring 1998

September:

WIC's "Becoming a Woman" poster, which featured a textbook diagram of a uterus, sparked controversy and an examination of campus posting policies.

October:

WIC members volunteered at ACCORD in Belmont, with programs for victims of domestic violence.

October:

WIC members created and sold feminist bumper stickers and fortune cookies containing feminist quotes to fund trip to Washington, D.C.

November:

WIC co-sponsored a table on lesbian health issues at the Health Fair with Spectrum.

November 7-9:

WIC members traveled to the Museum of Menstruation in Washington, D.C. There the group toured MUM, in owner and creator Harry Finley's basement. Also the group went to the National Museum of Women's Art.

November 22:

WIC organized and co-sponsored a community-wide "Take Back the Night" March with SAVAP. With a candlelight march, self-defense class, speakers and music, the event created awareness about sexual assault and domestic violence.

February 20:

Seven WIC members presented a Women's Studies Roundtable, "Pop Feminism."

March:

WIC sold feminist-friendly t-shirts.

April:

WIC organized a letter-writing campaign against treatment of women in Afghanistan.

April 4:

WIC co-sponsored a performance by musician Adrienne Gonzales with Spectrum.

"[The program] has made me so much more aware of issues that I never knew existed."

Senior Melissa Cianciulli also agreed. "[What you learn] becomes part of your views," she said. Cianciulli said she wants to lobby for women's rights by working for a women's organization after college. She also highlighted the required independent studies for minors as a way the program promotes activism, since it makes students think about doing something outside class.

"[The program] makes me want to do something, to find a cause," said senior Jeannette Oliver. She also said she wants to work in a field where she is helping other women. For example, she may go into social work, and has already applied for a job at the Women's Rights National Historic Park and the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls.

Some of the women's studies minors stressed that the degree to which the program fosters activism also depends on the individual involved.

"[It] depends on how active a person is to begin with," said Heather Kool. She said what she has learned will influence how she raises children in the future, in that she will encourage them to stand up for their rights, no matter what their gender. Also in her future career, "I hope I feel confident with who I am no matter what my sex or my superior's sex."

"For certain people, they will want to change things; others care, but consider [the classroom] the end of it," said senior De Anne Smith. She said she came to college already knowing that she was interested in women's issues, so unlike some of the other minors, the program did not cause a "revelation." Further study of women's issues in classes has been "inspiring," however, Smith said, and the knowledge has "invigorated" her.

—Megan Allen

Activism, continued

Colman, who is a resident assistant, encouraged her residents to attend the Riley Lecture by making it a program in her residence hall. Also, during educational rape portrayals, she argued for portraying male victims as well as female victims, to be egalitarian.

Senior Cheryl Hurst said, "Everything I've learned I'll apply." Like Greeley, Hurst is planning to go into social work after she graduates. She will utilize everything she has learned

about marriage, divorce and how single mothers are treated by the welfare system in the job, she explained. "I have more of a perspective [now], than before becoming a minor," she said.

Senior Meghan Mercier agreed. "[The program] makes you think about what you're doing, [such as] how you react to jokes," she said. She said after taking "Women in Society," she began attending WIC meetings to get involved.

Freshwoman Nomi Manon agreed.

For example, Lady Bird Johnson saved votes for her husband with her Lady Bird Express, a train in which she campaigned around the country, said Black.

As another example of first ladies' effectiveness, Black said that Eleanor Roosevelt received 16 death threats and wrote a daily column and 17 books. "None were about her dog Millie, I might add," she said.

Although these first ladies had so much influence, only a fraction of Americans thought that Roosevelt and Johnson were controlled by their wives, unlike the perception of the Clintons today, explained Black.

As part of her thesis Black argued that when Betty Ford replaced Pat Nixon, four forces combined to change the image of first ladies.

"Watergate dramatically undermined the position of president while leaving the position of first lady unscathed," said Black.

Also, once the popular press moved from investigative reporting to more speculation with less fact-checking, first ladies' opinions took on a larger role, by being balanced with the presidents', she explained.

Black said the White House also became "increasingly accepting" of contributions from both the East and West wings of the White House.

Finally, feminism grew to a mainstream movement and women's votes became a political focus and in 1996 there was a striking gender gap in vot-

ing, said Black. "Today, editorials are written on how to get women's votes," she said.

The image of first ladies was also changed when economic problems and the growing women's movement caused Americans to look closer at the White House, she explained.

First ladies began to be seen as "power players" in the White House, said Black. For example, Nancy

"The first lady grew to represent the conflicting expectations of women in government and the country in general."

Reagan fought with the chief of staff, and Hillary Clinton has been active in many areas, including education and health care, she said.

Black also said first ladies were expected to act publicly as political agents, not just stand-ins for their husbands.

Press coverage of the White House also changed, with more press given to first ladies' opinions, said Black.

Finally, "the first lady grew to represent the conflicting expectations of women in government and the country in general," she said. First ladies were expected to be ideal spouses and first mates for their husbands, she

explained.

Despite media criticism of active first ladies, the general public feels otherwise, said Black. "Clearly there is a thirst for information on these women," she said. For example, she cited that first ladies' memoirs have outsold their husbands'.

Unfortunately it is hard to verify information about first ladies, since their private papers are considered confidential by the government, said Black. Until we can piece together these women's contributions, she said, we "will never fully appreciate the presidency, or the position these women hold."

In a question and answer session following the lecture, Black predicted the first female president will be a Republican who has experience with military and economic issues, but not with women's issues, such as education.

"If I were a Republican, I would want Dole so fast it would make my head spin," she said. Black said she doubts Dole will be nominated however, and a candidate is more likely to come from within the Senate.

In response to the question why first ladies were active, Black said that Hillary Rodham Clinton is tough to figure out. "Why did she put his career first?" asked Black. Black said in the future she would like to write a biography of Hillary Rodham Clinton. "She is the most complex person in politics in this century," she explained.

—Megan Allen

Women's Studies Course Offerings Fall '98

WST 254 001	Women Writers	4	Morehouse S	11:20-12:10 MTWTF
WST 305 001	Psy of Women	3	Walker G	1:00-2:15 TTh
WST 380 001	Women Knowledge and Reality	2	Dobie B	1:20-3:10 M
WST 450 1-15	Independent Study			HTBA
WST 460 001	Anthro of Violence	2	Myers R	11:20-12:10 MTWTF
WST 480 001	French Women's Lit and Feminist Theory	3	Beach C	3:20-4:10 MTTh
EGL 300 001	Major Figures in Lit: Jane Austen	2	Grove A	3:20-5:10 MW
COM 460 001	Gender and Communication	2	Schultz P	3:20-5:10 M

Correcting "history"

Linda Mitchell has discovered that families, not male individuals, held the power in medieval society.

Women of the Medieval Ages will finally be given the recognition they deserve for their significant contributions to politics, thanks to one Alfred University professor.

Until the current research of Linda Mitchell, associate professor of history, it was believed by historians that male individuals held the political power in medieval society. Her research has found the political power was held by families.

Her research has already "created a stir" among colleagues, Mitchell said. Her research questions every assumption about a patriarchal structure in medieval society, she explained.

Mitchell began her research last summer in England, with a National Endowment for the Humanities grant.

Mitchell is focusing her research on the William Le Marshal and Isabella De Clare family, which held political power from approximately the late 1100s until the 1400s.

The first few generations set up an agenda for gaining political power, and the future generations carried those plans through until the family became too large for their power to continue, explained Mitchell.

The family gained power and land when the women married into wealthy families and eventually the royal family. The family was "all business," she said.

In addition to the impact her research is already making on how history is told, the research is also making an impact on Mitchell.

To gather the information on the Marshall's, Mitchell went to the British Museum, the Lambeth Palace Library and county archives in Rosebury, Worcester, Lincoln and Leeds. There she read manuscripts, notes on family history and approximately 400 charters.

To be reading original documents was a "sensory and intellectual experience," said Mitchell. While in the British Archives, Mitchell said she even found herself almost humming because she enjoyed the work so much. It was "a wonderful thing," she said.

While on her year-long sabbatical next year, Mitchell will return to England for at least six months, to continue her research.

The idea for Mitchell's research came from her doctoral dissertation, a book on widowhood in England from 1225 to 1330, which she is currently trying to get published. In the book she traced 50 widow's lives, one of whom was Isabella De Clare.

When she returns to England there is plenty more research waiting for Mitchell. For instance, she just discovered approximately 1000 charters to read.

Not surprisingly, Mitchell looks forward to the work. "[I'm] excited—and happy that my little palm-top computer [on which she takes notes] is up to the task," she said.

—Megan Allen

New Women's Studies Courses for Fall '98

Anthro of Violence:

Investigates violence in traditional and modern societies. Topics include ritualized violence, gender, the sociocultural construction and reinforcement of violent behavior in the United States, and programs aiming to reduce levels of violence. Prerequisite: AN 200 or SOC 110 and junior or senior status.

French Women's Literature and Feminist Theory:

French writers have produced some of the most thought-provoking and controversial ideas on the significance of gender and sexual difference. In this course, students trace the development of modern feminism and women's literature from the French Revolution to the present day. Readings include both literary works by major authors George Sand, Colette and Marguerite Duras, and writings by such theorists as Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray. Prerequisite: MLF 301 is recommended for students taking the class for French credit. No French needed for Women's Studies credit.

Major Figures in Literature: Jane Austen:

(This course is not cross-listed, but will count as a women's studies elective) In this course four of Jane Austen's novels will be read: "Northanger Abbey," "Pride and Prejudice," "Sense and Sensibility" and "Emma." Central to discussions will be questions of conduct and propriety, female authorship, marriage and Austen's masterful use of parody and satire. The class will also examine the recent popularity of Jane Austen in film, monitor the Jane Austen discussion group on email, and discuss the "Jane Austen is a lesbian" controversy that hit English papers a couple of years ago.

Gender and Communication:

This course focuses on gendered differences in communicative style, ranging from interpersonal relationships to workplace politics. Issues discussed include conflict, culture, power, hierarchy and linguistic strategies.

Patricia Riley applauds lecture

Patricia Riley said she felt "empowered" by the recent Riley Lecture in Women's Studies.

"The power of these women is very encouraging to other women," said Riley.

Riley, who is an AU trustee and an assistant U.S. attorney in Washington, D.C., said she agreed with speaker Allida Black, however, that the United States would not have a female president for a while. She predicted a female president wouldn't be elected until 2024. "We need a generation raised by women [who are] enlightened," she explained.

However, "I'm prepared to be pleasantly surprised," she said.

Riley said she also agreed with Black that the White House is run by a team of people, not just the president, and that Hillary Rodham Clinton is a "fascinating" person.

Riley said she was excited in particular by the lecture because her grandmother had loved Eleanor Roosevelt, just as Black does.
—Megan Allen



After the Riley Lecture, from left: Vicki Eaklor, Beth Ann Dobie, Frank McBride, Allida Black, Susan Morehouse, Sharon Hoover, Karen Porter, Allen Grove, Cecil Beach, Linda Mitchell and Patricia Riley.

The Elizabeth Hallenbeck Riley and Charles P. Riley Lectureship in Women's Studies was endowed in 1996 by Patricia Riley, Pamela Riley Osborn and Melissa Riley. The five-year endowment was a completion of the memorial Charles Riley

had planned on making to his wife was not able to complete due to death. The lectureship is "a tribute to them and their feminism," said Melissa Riley.

Women's Studies Program
Olin Building
Alfred University
Alfred, NY 14802-1224

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