



The Gender of "Terror"

On May 2nd, CSW will sponsor an international conference on "The Gender of 'Terror'" organized by Purnima Manekar, Associate Director of CSW, and myself. We intend the conference to make several distinct interventions to the topic of terror. While there has been a considerable amount of scholarship done on September 11, 2001, and its aftermath, conversations on terror and terrorism have been largely from U.S.-centered perspectives. Our conference will internationalize the discussion and foreground the role of gender and sexuality in the formation of terror. Our concern is not with demographics (as in discussions of how many men vs. women become terrorists) but related more fundamentally to the interrelated constructions and representations of gendered identities, agency, nationhood, and citizenship. For example, how might ideas about manhood or feminine agency shape how men and women are recruited to become terrorists? What is the role of gender and sexuality in

situations of state-sponsored terror? How are discourses of gender and sexuality implicated or reconfigured when terror is visited upon communities at the margins of nation-states? How are conceptions of martyrdom, sacrifice, and victimhood central to the designation of certain populations as perpetrators of terrors and how are these conceptions of martyrdom gendered and sexualized?

The conference features three panels, the first on the role of states, civil societies and NGOs in the politics of terror, counter-terrorism, state-endorsed terror, and peacekeeping. The second investigates the representational practices that construct terror. The third will consider how legal discourses and practices of citizenship constitute the very category of terror. The scholars we have invited hail from humanities, social sciences, legal, and media studies backgrounds and all do interdisciplinary research. They represent very diverse, possibly divergent, perspectives on these issues. They include: Susan Buck-Morss, Malathi De Alwis, Inderpal Grewal,

Jennifer Terry, Lori Allen, Paola Bacchetta, Sherene Razack, Sunaina Maira and Veena Dubal. The discussions we envisage emerging out of the conference will bridge conventional divides that frequently separate these disciplines, such as that between policy and theory. We are grateful for the generous (and interdisciplinary) support we have received from our co-sponsors: the Deans of the Humanities, Law, Social Sciences, and Theater, Film and Television; the Center for India and South Asia and the Asian American Studies Center; and the Departments of Anthropology, Asian American Studies, Comparative Literature, and Women's Studies. The complete conference program can be viewed at http://www.csw.ucla.edu/Flyers/GT_program.pdf. The conference is free and open to the public. (If you want to join the participants for the lunch, you must pre-register.) Please join us for our consideration of this timely and important topic.

— KATHLEEN MCHUGH