

On Gender and Natural Disaster: Reflections on Haiti

By Alison Bailey

After the earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, two *New York Times* reporters remarked that natural disasters “do not respect social customs, they do not coddle the rich. They know nothing about the invisible lines that in Haiti keep the poor masses packed together in crowded slums and the well-to-do high up in the breezy hills of places like Pétionville.”¹ It would seem that natural disasters are equal opportunity destroyers, but the reporters’ observation obscures an important point: some groups are more *vulnerable* to natural disasters before they even happen. For example, earthquakes of comparable intensity struck California in 1971 and Managua, Nicaragua a year later, but Nicaragua’s lack of resources, high poverty rate, and densely-populated capital led to eighty times more casualties—5,000 as opposed to 60 people died.

It is easy to see how disaster vulnerability is tied to socio-economic class. If you are poor, your house is more likely to be built with cheap materials and shoddy construction that make it more likely to be destroyed. If you live in a poor neighborhood, you are less likely to have hospital access and unlikely to be in the first group evacuated or rescued. This is a lesson from Hurricane Katrina.

But how many of us think about the ways gender increases women’s vulnerability to natural disaster? For women in communities already impacted by racial and

colonial injustices, gender inequalities exacerbate oppressive conditions that existed before disasters happen.

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, recognized the need to investigate further the impact of environmental disasters on women’s lives and to integrate a gendered perspective into disaster prevention, mitigation, and recovery. The basic argument is this: in a time of heightened stress, lawlessness, and homelessness, women face an increased threat of violence and find it harder to support themselves and other survivors in their care. Sure, men are harmed by natural disasters, but women and girls have always carried the brunt of the negative effects of these disasters, so rescue and recovery efforts must take this into account. Here’s why.... (see **Haiti** page 2)

Motherhood: Got Choice? Got Justice?

By Becca Chase

Who gets to be a mother, who doesn’t, and who decides? These are the questions driving Rickie Solinger’s research on motherhood in America. Solinger challenges the rhetoric of “choice-making” that underlies public maternity policies and vilifies and disempowers mothers who are “too young, too poor, too disabled, too foreign, too queer, too not-white,” and incarcerated or formerly incarcerated women.

Solinger, an independent feminist historian, delivered the 15th Annual Women’s and Gender Studies (*cont’d*)

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Symposium keynote address on Friday, February 12. On the previous day, she gave a related lecture at Milner Library and led a gallery walk through an exhibit she curated, "Beggars and Choosers: Is Motherhood a Class Privilege in America?" The show offers a visual counter-narrative to stereotypes of women who mother on the margins. The primary audience for all her work is the academic community. She seeks to "interrupt the curriculum," calling attention to reproductive justice issues that most curricula ignore.

Many reproductive rights advocates frame their arguments in terms of choice. This language of "choice" presumes that all women are able to freely make reproductive decisions, Solinger says. Based on this presumption, policy makers and dominant discourse communities claim that unmarried and poor mothers make bad reproductive choices and are immoral.

On the contrary, Solinger contends that the marginalized women whom she studies have not had agency historically, nor have they today, because the systemic discrimination they face constrains their abilities to exercise free will. Lack of access to health care, education (including comprehensive sex education), living-wage jobs, child care, and healthy environments make it difficult for poor women to control fertility and pregnancy, get proper prenatal and natal care, and support their children. The "blame" should be assigned not to the individual but to the structural causes of poverty.



Rickie Solinger delivered the Symposium keynote address, "Who Gets to be a 'Real' Mother in the United States: Race, Class, and the Fallacy of 'Choice.'"

In her lectures, Solinger exposed the historical roots of present injustices. The U.S. came late to providing social welfare services. Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) was instituted in the 1930s in response to the systemic causes of poverty during the Great Depression. However, legislators who crafted the ADC policy still valued only some mothers: those previously married, widowed, or divorced (single mothers need not apply). Additionally, domestic and agricultural workers—the poorest of the workers, mostly African-American or Mexican-American—were excluded.

Rather than championing reproductive *choice*, Solinger urges activists to focus their efforts on reproductive *justice*, which, according to Asian Communities for

Reproductive Justice (ACRJ), is "achieved when women and girls have the economic, social and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about their bodies, sexuality and reproduction for themselves, their families and their communities in all areas of their lives."¹ Scholars and activists in the reproductive justice movement analyze how individual women's agency to control motherhood is affected by systemic racism, sexism, classism, and capitalism, rather than seeing motherhood as the result only of individual decisions.

For more information about reproductive justice, visit ACRJ at <http://www.reproductivejustice.org/> and SisterSong at <http://www.sistersong.net/>.

1. Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice. "A New Vision" ACRJ. http://www.reproductivejustice.org/download/ACRJ_A_New_Vision.pdf. ☀

Haiti

(continued from page 1)

Natural disasters create conditions where food, potable water, and safe housing are hard to find. They increase the need for medical care. Children, the elderly, and the surviving injured need increased attention. Yet women, even under conditions of scarcity and social unrest, continue to be socially responsible for meeting these needs. Considering that 43 percent of Haitian heads of household are women, it is more than likely that they will be responsible for the survival of their families in the short run, and for protecting their children, rebuilding their homes, and reconstructing their communities for years after the earthquake.

According to Oxfam International, disasters that cause mass displacement are characterized by increased incidences of violence.² Security is a low priority, even as relief efforts prioritizing food, shelter, and debris removal are being implemented. Women and girls face an increased risk of sexual and other forms of violence while in temporary housing and relief camps. Bernice Chamberlin has barely slept since the earthquake forced her and hundreds of other women and children into tent camps where they are easy targets for gangs of men. "I try not to sleep," she says. "Some of the men who escaped from prison are coming around to the camps and causing problems for the women. We're all scared, but what can we do? Many of our husbands, boyfriends, and fathers are dead."³ Other women report being stalked by men when they go off to bathe or when they travel alone.

Reports of attacks on women in Haiti are also increasing as they are robbed of coupons needed for food at distribution points. Aid groups have responded (*cont'd*)

by offering women-only distribution points both to deter men from bullying them and because they trust women to get food to their families and not sell it on the black market. Only half the food given to men actually makes it back to families. Some aid workers have staged elaborate decoy operations to draw men away from the points where women are receiving coupons. But women must still be able to make it back to the camps safely.

Medical care is scarce for everyone, but disaster relief organizations often fail to account for women's special needs. According to CARE, among the three million Haitians affected by the earthquake, 37,000 are pregnant. Many women have lost access to reproductive health services. Some aid organizations are offering special protection for women, including trauma counseling and safe places to nurse. Days after the tremor, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) received \$2 million—part of the UN's overall \$575-million contribution to Haitian relief—to provide urgently needed services for the protection of women and their families, especially the construction of women's shelters and expansion of emergency services.

Sex tourism and human trafficking were thriving businesses in Haiti before the earthquake. In the aftermath, many fear that criminal profiteers will take advantage of people's misery and limited government protection, as they did in the wake of the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia. Haitian women now face even more economic pressure than before the tremor to succumb to sexual exploitation or to sell or even give away their children as restaveks (child slaves). Orphans are at particularly high risk.⁴

Women are more adversely affected by natural disasters, but they are also key to national recovery. Haitian women's organizations are uniquely positioned to recognize and respond to the threats that so-called "gender-neutral" approaches to humanitarian aid and reconstruction often overlook. Groups like MADRE operate "in partnership with community-based women's organizations to tap into local women's networks to mobilize Haitian women's expertise—as first-responders, caregivers, farmers, teachers, healthcare providers, income-earners and human rights defenders—in the service of broader efforts to rebuild communities."⁵

If you would like to contribute to a Haitian relief fund, please consider donating to MADRE. Contributions can be made online at <http://www.madre.org/>. ☀

1. Marc Lacy and Simon Romero, "Quake Ignores Class Divisions of a Poor Land," *New York Times*, January 16, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/17/world/americas/17class.html?scp=1&sq=Quake+Ignores+Class+Divisions&st=nyt>.
2. Oxfam International, "For a Safer Tomorrow: Protecting Civilians in a Multipolar World," <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/for-a-safer-tomorrow-0809.pdf>.
3. Paisley Dodds, "Haitian Women become Targets for Crime after Earthquake," *Washington Post*, February 6, 2010, <http://www.haitiinnovation.org/en/2010/02/03/protecting-haitis-women-and-children#comment-7>.
4. Jonathan Gray, "Sex Traffic Threat to Quake Orphans," *Evening Herald*, January 26, 2010, <http://www.herald.ie/world-news/sex-traffic-threat-to-quake-orphans-2031854.html>.
5. "Women's Rights are Key to Successful Reconstruction in Haiti," *MADRE*, January 27, 2010, <http://www.madre.org/index.php?s=4&news=279>.

Three Feminist Leaders Die in Haiti Quake



Myriam Merlet, Haitian women's rights activist and victim of the earthquake.

Myriam Merlet, Magalie Marcelin, and Anne Marie Coriolan, founders of three of the country's most important advocacy organizations working on behalf of women and girls, were victims of the January 12 earthquake in Haiti.

Until recently, Merlet was chief of staff of Haiti's Ministry for Gender and the Rights of Women, and served as a top adviser at the time of her death. She also

founded Enfofam, an organization that raises awareness about women through media, collects stories, and works to honor their names. Her essay "The More People Dream" was published in *Walking on Fire: Haitian Women's Stories of Survival and Resistance*.

Anne Marie Coriolan, who also served as a top adviser to the women's rights ministry, founded *Solidarite Fanm Ayisyen* (Solidarity with Haitian Women, or SOFA), an advocacy and services organization. She was a political organizer who helped bring rape as an instrument of terror and war to the forefront of Haitian courts.

Magalie Marcelin, a lawyer and actress who appeared in films and on stage, established *Kay Fanm* (Women's House), a women's rights organization that (*cont'd*)

deals with domestic violence; offers services and shelter to women; and makes microcredits, or loans, available to women working in markets.

Excerpted from: Jessica Ravitz, "Women's Movement Mourns Death of 3 Haitian Leaders" *CNN News*, January 25, 2010. <http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/01/20/haitian.womens.movement.mourns/index.html?iref=allsearch>. ☀



Dr. Regina Psaki visited ISU to deliver two lectures on gender in medieval literature. On February 3 she presented "Traffic in Talk about Women: Praise and Blame in Medieval French and Italian" to the International Studies Seminar Series. The next day she lectured on "*Le Roman de Silence: The Maiden-Knight Comes of Age*" to students and faculty of the Departments of English and of Languages Literatures, and Cultures.

Mary Daly, 1928–2010

Mary Daly, Ph.D., died on January 3 in a nursing home in Gardner, Massachusetts, "in a state of calmness and love," according to an e-mail from Max Dashu, founder of the Suppressed History Archives. The radical feminist philosopher was born on October 16, 1928, and raised in Schenectady, New York. She earned three doctoral degrees by 1966 and began teaching at Boston College. In 1968 she published *The Church and the Second Sex*, which confronts misogyny and discrimination within the Catholic Church. Daly taught at Boston College until she left in 2001 amidst a dispute with the college's administration.

Sarah Lucia Hoagland, co-editor of *Rereading the Canon: Feminist Interpretations of Mary Daly*, noted that Daly challenged us "to be aware of the background, to notice patterns, to resist patriarchal illusions. She shifted consciousness. That was her invitation and her insistence."

Daly has been criticized for not allowing men into her classes, holding essentialist views on gender, and being Eurocentric, but has been praised for her insights into the Catholic Church and the oppression carried within conventional English vocabulary and linguistic design. The significant conflicts surrounding her work "does not erase her positive contributions, but instead exist simultaneously with her gifts," said lesbian author Sarah Schulman.

Other books by Mary Daly include *Beyond God the Father*; *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*; *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy*; *Outercourse: The Bedazzling Voyage Containing Recollections from My Logbook of a Radical Feminist Philosopher*; and *Amazon Grace: Rekindling the Fires of Radical Ecological Feminism*.

Visit www.marydaly.org for more remembrances.

Excerpted from: Micki Leventhal, "Mary Daly 1928-2010," *Windy City Times*, January 13, 2010, <http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/gay/lesbian/news/ARTICLE.php?AID=24066>. ☀

Faculty Accomplishments

Melissa Johnson received the University Service Initiative Award at the Illinois State University Founder's Day Award Ceremony, February 18.

Sesha Kethineni edited *Comparative and International Policing, Justice, and Transnational Crime* (Carolina Academic Press) and was awarded the 2009 Outstanding University Researcher of the Year Award at the Illinois State University Founder's Day Award Ceremony, February 18.

John Pryor was appointed to the status of Distinguished Professor at Illinois State University in January.

Paula Ressler presented "Growing Up Gay" as a featured speaker at the McLean County Diversity Project at Illinois Wesleyan University, January 10.

Ali Riaz edited *Religion and Politics in South Asia* (Routledge), with contributions including both the introductory chapter and a chapter entitled "The Politics of Islamization in Bangladesh."

Maura Toro-Morn presented "A Gendered View of Neoliberalism (A Blade that Cuts Both Ways): Immigrant Mothers in the Americas" at the Association for Research on Mothering annual meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico, February 19–21.

Janet Wilson and **Lori Adams** toured *Shame the Devil! An Audience with Fanny Kemble* to the Mustard Seed Theatre in St. Louis, Missouri on January 18; and to the Lincoln Correctional Institution in Lincoln, IL on February 12. Wilson also facilitated and directed an original script with incarcerated women at Lincoln Correctional Center, *A Theatrical Ritual for Incarcerated Women by Incarcerated Women*, which was performed on August 6 and 7, 2009. ☀

Fifteenth Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium, February 12



Dr. Laurie Fuller and Lakeesha J. Harris, of Northeastern Illinois University. Ms. Harris presented "Reconstructing Slavery: White Capitalists and Black Video Vixens," on the

panel that Dr. Fuller moderated, "Gendering Black Sexual Bodies in the U.S."

Dr. Paula Ressler, moderator, with Viola Woolums, Sara Phillips, and Kendra Karman, on the "Queer Zones" panel.



Dr. Kass Fleisher moderates the panel "(Perpetually) Queued and Woman: Creative Writing."

Student News

"Dirty Linens" in the WGS Gallery

By Breanna Mull

The Women's and Gender Studies Gallery is currently home to an intriguing artwork collection by Kayla Heuneburg. Her focus is on "female identity and . . . the role of women in society." At the exhibit opening on January 28, Heuneburg expressed that she is "alarmed at how society portrays women." At first glance, audiences may think Heuneburg's work, some depicting of female nudes, objectifies women's sexuality. However, with a closer look it becomes clear that the paintings mark "a

distinction from the sexual objectification of women to the sexual liberation of them," as she says.

She works mostly with paint and ink, but also incorporates organic materials into her art. Using materials like berries and tea, Heuneburg says she allows "the process to take over through the exploration of media and materials."

The titles of most of Heuneburg's artwork derive from Alanis Morissette's song titles or lyrics. "Hello Mr. Man," referencing the first three words to an Alanis Morissette song called "Right through You," depicts a woman with golden eyes staring directly at the spectator while exposing her pubic hair. Another painting, "Deconstructing the Pieces," portrays a pair of women's legs in puzzle pieces. Heuneburg notes how she likes to create artwork that is "an image within an image," which is expressed in her painting "Looking for Answers," in which a woman sits facing a mirror with legs open, presumably staring at her reflection.

Incorporating seven paintings and one sculpture, Kayla Heuneburg's exhibit reflects her view that "liberation over objectification is an essential component of women's freedom." Heuneburg credits Natasha Law, Stina Pearson, Tracy Emin, and Kiersten Essenpreis as her influences. Her artwork is currently on display in the WGS gallery. ☼



Kayla Heuneburg with her painting "Looking for Answers."

Response to Solinger's Talk

By Kelly Donnellan

After attending Rickie Solinger's lecture at Milner library, I was inspired to reflect on how her ideas impacted mine. As a white woman who was raised in middle-class America, I am subject to a multitude of privileges that others may not possess, some of which are apparent to me while others are more difficult to pinpoint. I never thought that the natural human right of reproduction would count as a privilege.

Rickie Solinger sheds light on how privileged people demean poor mothers through the false argument that they are "unfit" mothers, make "bad choices," and do not live up to their responsibilities. Questioning poor mothers' decision-making skills, they say, "I am responsible for my life, why can't she do the (*cont'd*)

same?" Or, "I know of a poor woman who has twelve children, is on welfare, and still has the nerve to show up late to a job interview." Or, "That mother is selfish, because she does not have enough resources to raise a child." But in reality, the quantity and quality of the choices that impoverished women are given, and the circumstances in which they have to make life decisions, are much different for those who degrade them.

I was fascinated by the fact that some people in the audience just could not overcome the stereotypes they had embedded in their heads, and even at the end of Solinger's lecture asked questions like those above. Their inability to hear what Solinger had just said only demonstrates the graveness of the issue and how difficult it is for privileged people to overcome their "bad mother" prejudice.

For me, being aware of one's privilege is not enough. As evidenced by those audience members who had just learned about the fallacy of "choice" for poor mothers, *knowing* and *applying* that knowledge are two separate processes. Possessing privilege entails a responsibility to challenge how privileged people stigmatize others. Even in regards to something as simple and humane as motherhood.

Kelly Donnellan is a graduate student in History and the graduate assistant for Women's and Gender Studies. ☼

Student Accomplishments

Julia Drauden, WGS Minor student (English Studies), published "Girl from Prison City" and "XoXo, Helen Adam" in the online journal *Seven Corners Poetry* at <http://www.sevencornerspoetry.blogspot.com/> on January 13; and presented "Girl from Prison City" at ISU's Fifteenth Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium on February 12.

Jenna Goldsmith, WGS Graduate Certificate student (English Studies), presented "Changing the Subject: Clothing, Embodiment, and the Female Body in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" at ISU's Fifteenth Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium on February 12.

Kendra Karman, WGS Minor student (Journalism), presented "Asian and Pacific Islanders: Trying to see 'i2i' with the LGBT Community" at ISU's Fifteenth Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium on February 12.

Theresa O'Donnell, WGS Graduate Certificate student (English Studies), presented "Evidence of an Unsuccessful Girl" at ISU's Fifteenth Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium on February 12.

Erica Thurman, WGS Graduate Certificate student (Political Science), presented "Jurgen, Jeezy and Jezebel: The Residual Effect of the Hip-Hop Feminist Counterpublic" at ISU's Fifteenth Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium on February 12.

Jason Alan Wilkins, WGS Minor student (Political Science), presented "Construction of Black Masculinity" at ISU's Fifteenth Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium on February 12. ☼

2010 Scholarship Recipients



Dr. Karen Pfost (right) presents the Luellen Laurenti Award to Caitlin Keturi.

Julia Drauden received the 2010 Women's and Gender Studies Student Achievement Award.



Breanna Mull, Anne M. Semlak Award recipient, with Jay Groves, who presented the award.

WGS Fall Course Offerings

Required Undergraduate Courses		
WGS 120	Women, Gender, and Society	TR 11-12:15 p.m. MW 3-4:15 p.m.
ENG 160	Intro. to Studies in Women's Writing	TR 2-3:15 p.m.
HIS 261	History of Women in the U.S. to 1865	MWF 10-10:50 a.m.
PHI 246	Feminist Philosophies	MW 3-4:15 p.m.

Undergraduate Course Electives		
<i>(*) Denotes Graduate Certificate electives, too.</i>		
CJS 339	*Women in Criminal Justice	TR 9:35-10:50 a.m. TR 11-12:15 p.m.
COM/ENG/ LAN 128	Gender in the Humanities	MWF 2-2:50 p.m. TR 2-3:15 p.m.
ENG 125.004	Literary Narrative: 18 th Century on Film	TR 3:35-4:40 p.m.
ENG/LAN 206	Cultural Expressions in Social Contexts	TR 3:35-4:50 p.m.
ENG 260	History of Lit. by Women	MW 3:35-4:50 p.m.
ENG 261	Women's Lit. in a Global Context	MW 2-3:15 p.m. TR 12:35-1:50 p.m.
ENG 360	*Studies in Women's Writing	TR 9:35-10:50 a.m.
FCS/HIS/ SOA 112	American Family: Change & Diversity	MWF 8-8:50 a.m. MWF 9-9:50 a.m. TR 9:35-10:50 a.m. TR 11-12:15 p.m. TR 12:35-1:50 p.m. TR 3:35-4:50 p.m. MW 2-3:15 p.m.
FCS 222	Cultural Diversity in Dress	TR 12-1:15 p.m.
FCS 233	Family Economic Resources	MW 10-11:15 a.m.
FCS 327	*Clothing and Behavior	MWF 1-1:50 p.m.
HIS 219.1	Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Europe	TR 11-12:15 p.m.
HIS 308	*Greek and Roman Women	W 4-6:50 p.m.
POL 225	Women in Politics	TR 12:35-1:50 p.m. TR 2-3:15 p.m.
POL 338	*Gender & Political Theory	T 6-8:50 p.m.
PSY/SOA 123	Human Sexuality	MWF 2-2:50 p.m. MWF 11-11:50 a.m.
SOA 265	Personal Relationships	TR 12:35-1:50 p.m.
WGS 390	*Interdisciplinary Research in Women's and Gender Studies	Arrange
WGS 398	Professional Practice: Internship in Women's and Gender Studies	Arrange

Required Graduate Courses		
WGS 400	Independent Study	Arrange

Graduate Course Electives		
HIS 417	Women's Activism in the Americas	M 4-7:50 p.m.
SOA 469.11	Sociology of Gender	TR 2-3:15 p.m.
WGS 498	Professional Practice: Internship in Women's and Gender Studies	Arrange
<i>See left (*) for more Graduate Certificate electives</i>		

WGS Summer Course Offerings!

WGS 120	Women, Gender and Society	Internet
CJS 307	* Family Violence: Cross Cultural Persp.	MTWRF 1-3:50 p.m.
CJS 339	* Women in Criminal Justice	Internet
COM/ENG/ LAN 128	Gender in the Humanities	MTWR 1-3:30 p.m., or 11-1:30 p.m. Internet
FCS 222	Cultural Diversity in Dress	MTWRF 1-3:50 p.m.
PHI 202	Sex, Values, and Human Nature	MTWRF 8-10:50 a.m.
POL 225	Women in Politics	Internet
POL 337	*Gay & Lesbian Politics & Theory	Internet
PSY 305	Psychology of Women	MTWR 1-3:30 p.m.
WGS 390	*Interdisciplinary Research in Women's and Gender Studies	Arrange
WGS 398	Professional Practice: Internship in Women's and Gender Studies	Arrange
<i>(*) denotes elective for Graduate Certificate credit</i>		

HIS 417: Women's Activism in the Americas *M 4-7:50 p.m. with Dr. Kyle Ciani*



This course will examine women in the Americas who challenged the systems that they were subjected to and the ways their communities dealt with their actions. For more information, contact Prof. Ciani at keciani@ilstu.edu.

Gender Matters
Illinois State University
Women's and Gender Studies Program
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Welcome, New Minors!

Amanda Alberti, Public Relations
Jessica Bales, Sociology
Sarah Boatner, Undeclared
Kolette Bohr, Communication Sciences and
Disorders
Roseanna Dorsey, English
Lauren James, Psychology

**Welcome, New Graduate Certificate
Student!**

Erica Thurman, Politics and Government

Calendar

- Mar. 17** Pride meeting, Media Night. SSB 375,
7 p.m.
- Mar. 24** Preventing Bullying: Building
Respectful Communities for our
Children. ISU Alumni Center, 8 a.m.-
1 p.m. For info, call Tuwana
Wingfield, (309) 438-5005.
- Mar. 27** Pride Drag Show. CPA, 7:30 p.m.
- Apr. 9** Women's and Gender Studies Five-
Year Plan Review Retreat. STV 401,
2-5 p.m.
- Apr. 17** Take the Stage against Violence
Talent Show. Eastland Mall outside of
Macy's, 6-8 p.m.