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SAIDA WAHEED GENDER INITIATIVE
NEWSLETTER

Fall 2019

The Saida Waheed Gender Initiative (SWGI) had a busy Fall semester, which included several exciting events as well as extending support for gender-related research by faculty and students. We wanted to send along some of the highlights. Thank you for supporting the initiative, and showing interest in our events. Follow us on Facebook or check out our Twitter handle to stay updated!



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SEMINAR *series*

Since its inception, SWGI has been hosting monthly seminars, and inviting local scholars of gender studies to share their working research and/or published work with the community at LUMS. This semester started off with a talk by Dr. Nosheen Ali on 24 September. Dr. Ali is a sociologist studying state theory, ecology and Muslim cultural politics in South Asia. She is the founder of Karti Dharti, an alternative space for environmental learning in Hyderabad, and Umang poetry, a digital humanities endeavour for documenting contemporary poetic thought in South Asia. In her talk titled, *'Feminist Journeys in Academia: Theorizing State Power, Development and Social Justice in Pakistan's Northern Frontier'* she highlighted key theoretical interventions from her recently published book *Delusional States: Feeling Rule and Development in Pakistan's Northern Frontier*, while emphasising the power and perils of a feminist research process.

The next talk was by Dr. Arsalan Khan on 8 October. Dr. Khan is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Union College in Schenectady, New York. His research is situated at the intersection of semiotics, ritual, value, and ethics, themes that he explores in the context of the Islamic revival in Pakistan. In his talk titled, *'Engendering Piety and the Making of an Islamic Home in an Islamic Revival Movement in Pakistan'* he focused on how Pakistani Tablighis, practitioners of the transnational Islamic piety movement the Tablighi Jamaat, attempt to restructure kinship relations within their homes.

The third talk of the seminar series was by Dr. Ayesha Masood on 15 October. Dr. Masood is an Assistant Professor of Organisational Behavior at the Suleman Dawood School of Business. The talk titled *'Pakistani women in Medicine: Myths and Realities'* explored the historical trends underlying the feminisation of medicine in Pakistan, their implications for the organisation of medical profession and the place of women physicians in the Pakistani medical workforce.



This was followed by a talk titled '*Undervaluing Women's Voice in Pakistan and the UK*' by Dr. Rashid Memon on 5 November. Dr. Memon is an Assistant Professor at the Lahore University of Management Sciences. In this talk, Dr. Memon discussed his working research which, posits that gender discrimination in the modern world has become subtle and implicit - colleagues discriminate against female colleagues by ignoring their input. This research was conducted with university students in Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

The last talk of the seminar series was given by Ms. Nazish Brohi on 19 November. She is a researcher who has worked in the development sector for the past 20 years in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq. She works on thematic areas of gender, violence, conflict and democratisation. In her talk titled, '*Anatomy of a Rumour*' she grapples with what the absence of sexual violence against women means in conflict contexts, when it's accompanied by emphatic statements of presence. Sexual violence remains the single biggest fear for women when they enter the public sphere, even when their encounters with it occur usually in the private sphere. What then do secondary claims of sexual violence signify when they don't occur? What politics do rumors serve? Do these offer an insight to when such acts do occur? Do these help understand the nuances and conditionalities of impunity?





FILM

Screening

'After Sabeen'

a film by Schokofeh Kamiz

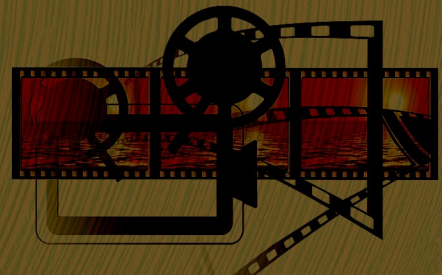


SWGI screened the documentary, *After Sabeen*, followed by a discussion with the director, Schokofeh Kamiz, and Sabeen's mother, Mahenaz Mahmud. In the wake of Sabeen Mahmud's murder, the director followed her mother and friends to record not only their memories and grief but their ongoing impetus to continue Sabeen's work.

Schokofeh, an Iranian filmmaker, used to be a video journalist, and *After Sabeen* is her first documentary. On the occasion of Sabeen's murder, Schokofeh recalls sitting with one her friends who knew Sabeen. She observed how shattered he was and closely listened to what he had to say about Sabeen and her work. What inspired Schokofeh the most is how Sabeen not only opened up a space for having difficult conversations on a broad range of issues but also how she, in her everyday life touched the lives of so many. The documentary focuses on documenting how Sabeen is remembered rather than focusing on bringing forth shots featuring Sabeen. Schokofeh shares how this was a deliberate choice as she wanted to bring across the impact Sabeen had on people and the legacy she leaves behind.

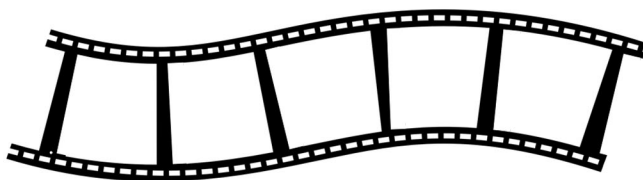
When asked about how people from varying progressive political affiliations lay claim to Sabeen, Mahenaz responded, *"It is difficult to put Sabeen in a box. I don't refute people laying claim to her and sharing what they thought of her because I realise that she meant different things to different people and I am most grateful for that"*.

The documentary was met with a lot of tears, joy, and praise. The sorrow of the audience was soon turned into celebration with audience members sharing their feelings and stories about Sabeen.



Lights Out

Directed by Fawad Khan



SWGf hosted the play, *Lights Out* directed by Fawad Khan this semester as well. Fawad Khan graduated from NAPA with a major in direction for stage 2008. Since then he has been consistently doing theatre, and being passionate about all aspects of theatre, he has not only been directing but acting and writing as well. The performers in the play were: Syed Meesam Nazar Naqvi, Kulsoom Aftab Ahmed, Muhammad Farhan Alam Siddiqui, Muhammad Samhan Ghazi, Kiran Siddiqui, and Ayesha Pervaiz

The play was set in the apartment of Laila and Rahat. Every night, they heard screams coming from the compound next to their apartment building. Laila waned her husband, Rahat, to report the screams to the police, while Rahat did not believe the screams were as loud as Laila was making them out to be. They heard the screams night after night, and switched off their lights, to prevent their windows from being broken. After the scene is set, the play then moves on to explore the following questions: what's happening outside? Are the screams real? Is a crime being committed?

The play touches upon themes of violence, patriarchy, apathy, and justice to name a few and this was explored in a panel discussion with the director and Ms. Saleema Hashmi after the performance.



RESEARCH MENTORING WORKSHOP

A cohort of 14 students from across public and private universities in Pakistan were selected for this workshop. This workshop aimed to help develop and support original research ideas related to gender and/or sexuality, which engaged primary and secondary sources. The workshop was open to a range of topics including but not limited to gender and religion, the media, literature, politics, social movements, feminist theory, masculinities and femininities, health and the body, sexuality, gender-based violence, history, and development.

With this workshop SWGi hoped to help young researchers explore key questions about:

- How can we actually "do gender" in practical terms?
- What are useful methods and techniques for researching and writing from a gender perspective?
- How can gender studies complement but also challenge other disciplines?
- And conversely, what critiques and new ideas can other disciplines bring to gender studies?

A basic training in feminist research methodologies was provided by members of faculty and researchers here at LUMS university. Sessions on feminist methodologies, postcolonial feminist theory, ethnographic research, and researching sexuality were led by Dr. Nida Kirmani, Dr. Saba Pirzadeh, Dr. Ayesha Masood, and Aimen Bucha respectively. This workshop was an excellent opportunity for student participants to present their research proposals and receive valuable feedback from the academic research community at LUMS. The workshop's goal was to aid students at multiple stages of their education: from those in the final stages of undergraduate training to those active with graduate thesis research. A range of research topics were discussed and feedback was provided by faculty and researchers here at LUMS university, namely: Dr. Ayesha Masood, Dr. Hadia Majid, Dr. Shayan Rajani, Dr. Gwendolyn Kirk, Dr. Sameen Mohsin, Dr. Tania Saeed, Dr. Saba Pirzadeh, Dr. Zebunnisa Hamid, Dr. Nida Kirmani, and Aimen Bucha.



SWGI GRANTS FOR SENIORS AT LUMS

The Saida Waheed Gender Initiative offers small grants for student led research projects and senior projects that focus on, or use gender as a major analytical tool in their work. Undergraduate students from all departments/schools at LUMS are welcomed to apply. This semester we have funded six senior research projects.

Grantees of this cycle are:

- **Ayesha Siddique** – researching on acid violence in Pakistan
- **Eesha Khan** and **Abdul Wahab Niaz** – Mapping Gender: A Study of Custody Cases in the Family Court of Lahore
- **Fatima Jawad** and **Amna Zulqadar** – Redefining Women's Empowerment in Pakistan
- **Rumassah Anjum Chohan** – research on how women workers allocate time between competing uses
- **Sara Raza, Arslan Goraya, Muhammad Usman Tariq** – research on the inherent institutional imbalance in the field of law against working mothers
- **Sharmeen Azeem** – Gender and Pakistani Police: Thana culture and Career Progression of Police Women

SWGI FACULTY GRANTS

The Saida Waheed Gender Initiative provides grants to faculty for the pursuit of creative and interdisciplinary research and projects relating to gender in Pakistan. In line with our Mission and Philosophy, the Initiative seeks to promote approaches that attend to the shifting and contested meanings of gender across different contexts.

Grantees of this cycle are:

- **Dr. Fozia Parveen, Centre for Water Informatics & Technology** – will be focusing on women in the waste scavenging community in Lahore
- **Dr. Zubair Abbasi, Associate Professor, Shaikh Ahmed Hassan School of Law** – will explore legal principles for the recognition of women's contribution (paid and unpaid) within the institution of family for the promotion of gender equality under Muslim family law of family for the promotion of gender equality under Muslim family law
- **Dr. Maryam Mustafa, Assistant Professor, Department Of Computer Science** – will focus on understanding the use of and barriers to use of YouTube among low-literate, low-income women in Punjab



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