

Yale WGSS &
LGBTs

Women's, Gender,
& Sexuality Studies Program
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
& Transgender Studies Committee

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Alum Spotlight: Liza Grandia

Liza Grandia (B.A. Women's Studies 1996, Yale) has worked as an assistant professor at Clark University in the Department of International Development, Community and Environment since receiving her Ph.D in anthropology 2006 (University of California, Berkeley). In the fall, she will be moving to the University of California, Davis as an associate professor in Native American Studies. Inspired by ethnographic research for her honors thesis in Women's Studies on the invisibility of reproductive labor in economic accounting indicators like the GNP, she returned to northern Guatemala after graduation and established a regional reproductive health program called *Remedios* that had a dramatic impact on fertility rates (falling from 6.8 to 4.3 in just a decade). In recent years, her research has focused on the impacts of corporate trade and globalization on agrarian change and indigenous landholdings, as described in her latest book, *Enclosed: Conservation, Cattle and Commerce among Q'eqchi' Maya Lowlanders* (2012).



Photo by Aaron Tukey

"The Personal and the Political"

As an activist, I was drawn to Women's Studies as a place in the university that took seriously the revolutionary power of history. During my first shopping period, an older student lured me to Nancy Cott's "Women in America" class, and I was hooked. Larger than life to all of us, Professor Cott once casually mentioned needing to pick up her son from baseball practice; I recall how my classmates and I huddled after class to marvel about how she wrote all her books *with* children. As an academic mother now myself, I make sure to tell occasional stories about my daughter in class to make visible this reproductive labor and, hopefully, stimulate the imagination of my students for creatively melding the ever-evolving boundary between the public/private in their own lives.

Ultimately it was the deep commitment of Women's Studies to understanding the linkages between theory and practice that propelled me into Laura Wexler's office to declare the major with a special focus on women and the environment. I remember that some of my classmates feared the labor market consequences of doing so, but I figured that if someone didn't want to hire me because I was a WS major, then I didn't want to work for them anyhow. To the contrary, it gave me the confidence to

raise money to create my own organization in Guatemala.

Although I'm not often explicitly engaged with gender in my current scholarship, my explorations of material feminism at Yale nonetheless fundamentally shaped my critique of corporate capitalism and its utter disregard for the household economy, subsistence systems and indigenous knowledge, and the planet's natural resources. As a recent lymphoma survivor, I've been reflecting once again upon the fundamental insight of gender studies that the "personal is political" as I explore my next major research project on the cultural analysis of cancer and how people assess toxic hazards in their everyday lives.

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