

Tribute to Nancy Hewitt

I first heard Nancy Hewitt speak at the Phi Alpha Theta induction ceremony at SUNY Brockport in 1987. Her topic was “History’s Outcasts Get Their Revenge.” As a new but “mature” graduate student returning to the study of history after many years, and just discovering that women had acquired a history while I wasn’t looking, she immediately became my hero. Like me, she had come to Brockport as an older student (although not nearly as old as I was), and, like me, she had been inspired by a class from Robert Smith. Hearing her, I began to think that maybe I too could become a historian. My many thanks to her now for that inspiration.

Nancy was generous in her time she gave to Brockport, giving talks and meeting with faculty and students. She has been unfailingly friendly to me at conferences. When I organized for Brockport’s President to sponsor a tea at a Susan B. Anthony conference where she was the keynote speaker, she gleefully took away the sign I had had made to give to her mother.

One of the great pleasures of my professional career was to work with Alison Parker on a proposal for a SUNY honorary degree for Nancy. Not only did it bring home to me her important contributions to women’s history, more importantly, it made those who award honorary degrees and those attending Brockport’s commencement ceremony aware of the importance of women’s history itself.

I was also delighted that Cambridge University, my alma mater, invited Nancy to be a distinguished visiting professor. There couldn’t have been a better choice!

Jenny Lloyd

Associate Professor Emerita

The College at Brockport



SUNY BROCKPORT
Department of History

October 15, 2012

National Women's Hall of Fame
Lives and Legacies Book
Seneca Falls, New York

Dear National Women's Hall of Fame,

I am thrilled that Dr. Nancy A. Hewitt is being entered into the National Women's Hall of Fame Lives and Legacies book. This is a fitting tribute to Dr. Hewitt, who is a leading expert in U.S. women's history. Specializing in the diverse and complex history of women's activism and women's rights in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Dr. Hewitt is a highly respected and well-known scholar and teacher. She is currently a Professor of History at Rutgers University and has served as Director of the Institute for Research on Women there. Dr. Hewitt has helped Rutgers University build well-known and prestigious undergraduate and graduate programs in women's history, women and gender studies, and the study of race in American history.

I am delighted to be able to claim Dr. Hewitt as one of the most distinguished graduates of the College at Brockport, State University of New York. As an undergraduate at Brockport, she was the recipient of our Women and Gender Studies Program's Harriet Whitney Award for the most outstanding student. Additionally, we in the History Department at the College at Brockport are proud that Dr. Hewitt credits our faculty with inspiring her to pursue her graduate education in history. From Brockport, she applied to the graduate program in History at the University of Pennsylvania, from which she received her Ph.D. in 1981. Upon graduation, Dr. Hewitt taught at the University of South Florida and then Duke University before moving to Rutgers University, where she has taught since 1999.

Recently, the State University of New York honored Nancy Hewitt with an honorary Ph.D. and invited her to be Brockport's 2010 undergraduate commencement speaker. Dr. Hewitt delivered what I and most of my colleagues agree was one of the best commencement speeches, ever. Her presence at commencement was particularly meaningful to the Women and Gender Studies program because that year we had 13 students graduate, our largest graduating class to date; that year also marked a culminating period when the Women and Gender Studies discipline gained in logistical and symbolic stability by moving into its first office suite of its own at Brockport. It is fitting that Dr. Hewitt is this year's Seneca Falls Dialogues recipient of the biennial Women's'

Institute for Leadership and Learning (WILL) Award, in recognition of her extraordinary contribution to women's rights, women's history, and women and gender studies.

Dr. Hewitt is a prolific and well-respected scholar. Her publications have influenced a new generation of scholars and students. Her seminal first book, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822-1872*, has helped us better understand the significance of grassroots local activism, for instance. Her second book, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s*, received the Julia Cherry Spruill Prize from the Southern Association of Women Historians in 2002. This prize-winning book allowed readers to see the combined importance of race, class and gender among factory workers of several racial and ethnic backgrounds in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Florida who organized to better their working conditions and lives. Part of this work was also published as "Becoming Black: African Americans and Afro-Cubans in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s." in an edited volume, *Black Women's History at the Intersection of Power and Knowledge*.

Most recently, Dr. Hewitt has been telling a new story of American history that highlights global connections between countries and social movements. Instead of thinking of American history as exceptional, for instance, she asks students and scholars to think more broadly and creatively about America's place in world history. One part of this project is titled "Re-rooting American Women's Activism: Global Perspectives on 1848," which appeared in the edited volume, *Woman's Rights as Human Rights*. In it, she shows how the first women's rights convention in the U.S. (in 1848) was an integral part of the revolutionary struggles that were taking place around the world that same year. Finally, Dr. Hewitt is also writing a biography of Amy Post, a major nineteenth-century abolitionist and women's rights activist from New York. In support of her research, Dr. Hewitt has been the recipient of some important honors, including serving as the Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions at the University of Cambridge, 2009-2010; a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellow, 2000-2001; and a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, 1996-97.

Dr. Hewitt has also shaped the way students understand history by writing and editing major textbooks. Her interest in this work is connected to the fact that when she first began teaching in the early 1980s, it was still considered daring to incorporate gender, race and class into the general survey. By writing her own textbooks, she has helped publishers to adopt this emphasis. Now, she is trying to push the boundaries of what is included in a survey course by incorporating histories of sexuality and by focusing on global perspectives on United States history. Her newest textbook is coming out this December 2012 with Bedford/St. Martin's Press and is entitled *Exploring American Histories: A Brief Survey with Sources*. Some of her other successful texts include *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism* (Rutgers University Press, 2010), as well as Blackwell's *Companion to American Women's History* and of *Women and Families and Communities*, a two-volume collection geared to the United States history survey. She is also co-author of *Who Built America?* (Bedford/St. Martin's Press). Dr. Hewitt serves and has served on the editorial boards and advisory boards of several university presses and important scholarly journals, guiding the choice of articles and books published in her field.

In addition to Dr. Hewitt's strong record of publishing and scholarship, she has participated in important public history projects that have shared a more sophisticated understanding of history with the wider public. For instance, she has worked as a consulting historian at the Seneca Falls Woman's Rights National Historical Park. In addition, she is committed to teaching teachers and professors how to teach by leading workshops on integrating race, gender, and ethnicity into the curriculum and by contributing to a project based at the University at Binghamton to provide web-based teaching materials on women and social movements in the United States to students around the country and the world. Furthermore, Dr. Hewitt has guided many doctoral students at Duke University and then Rutgers University and has shaped a new generation of historians and scholars in women's studies who now teach at universities and colleges all over the country and beyond.

Dr. Hewitt's impressive record of achievement makes her a perfect candidate for induction into the National Women's Hall of Fame Lives and Legacies Book.

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alison M. Parker".

Alison M. Parker
Professor of History &
Women and Gender Studies Advisory Board