



## ACTIVISM IN THE ARCHIVES: WOMEN'S COLLECTIONS AT THE TAMIMENT LIBRARY/ ROBERT F. WAGNER LABOR ARCHIVES

*This month's program, which coincides with Women's History Month, will feature presentations by Tamiment archivists Gail Malmgreen and Laura Helton on the personal papers of militant suffragette Mary Gawthorpe and the records of the radical reproductive rights organization Women's Health Action and Mobilization (WHAM!). Martha Hodes, professor of history at New York University, will conclude the evening by offering some insights on writing history from the archives using women's collections as a point of departure.*

The Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University is one of the oldest and largest research centers in the United States for scholarly research on Labor and the Left. The Tamiment Library was founded in 1906 as part of the Rand School for Social Science, a pioneering workers' education school sponsored by the Socialist Party. The Library actively solicited books, periodicals, pamphlets, and archival material describing the history of the labor and progressive movements. In 1956 Camp Tamiment, a socialist summer camp in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains, took over the management of the Rand School and its library. In 1963 New York University acquired the Library. The Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, associated with the Tamiment Library, was founded in 1977 to preserve the historical records of the New York City labor movement.

**Mary E. Gawthorpe** (1881-1973) was a key figure in the militant suffrage movement in Britain. A dynamic and popular speaker, she toured the country as an organizer for Pankhursts' Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). She was jailed and subjected to force-feeding during the suffragettes widely publicized hunger strike campaign. In 1916 she emigrated from Britain and settled in the United States where she continued her political activities, working for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and the National Consumers League. Her papers, which have long been retained by her relatives, include correspondence with notable figures in the suffrage movement as well as posters, periodicals, flyers, and memorabilia. Gawthorpe's papers were recently donated to Tamiment and for the first time are available for research. Gail Malmgreen will offer an overview of Gawthorpe's career as an activist and relate how this important collection came to NYU.

*Materials from this collection are on view at Tamiment in "Organizing on Two Continents," an exhibit documenting the life of Mary Gawthorpe.*

**Women's Health Action and Mobilization (WHAM!)** was established in 1989 in response to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services* that states may bar the use of public money and public facilities for abortions. WHAM!, an activist organization based in New York City, fought to safeguard reproductive freedom by defending abortion clinics and bringing women's health issues to public attention with bold, direct action tactics, such as draping the Statue of Liberty with a protest banner and disrupting the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice David Souter. WHAM! worked closely with lesbian and gay rights groups to combat homophobia and discrimination. In 1989 members of WHAM! and ACT UP disrupted a Sunday Mass at Saint Patrick's Cathedral to protest the church's position on homosexuality, safe-sex education and the use of condoms. WHAM! helped to form two additional activists groups, the New York Clinic Defense Task Force and the Church Ladies for Choice, that challenged attempts by religious right groups to blockade women's health clinics. Their records include graphically striking and provocative posters and flyers that reflect the irreverent and militant organizational culture. Laura Helton, who is currently processing this collection, will consider WHAM's place within the tradition of women's activism.

**Martha Hodes** is Associate Professor of History and Director of Graduate Studies at New York University. She is the author of *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South*, which won the Allan Nevins Prize of the Society of American Historians, and the editor of *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History*. Her scholarship has also appeared in the *American Historical Review* and the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*.

**Gail Malmgreen** is the Associate Head for Archival Collections at the Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives. She served as the Associate Editor of the *Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony*.

**Laura Helton** is a graduate student in the Department of History and Program in Archival Management at NYU, and an archival fellow at the Tamiment Library/Wagner Labor Archives. Her research interests include movements for social change in the 20th century United States.

**Co-Sponsored by:** Tamiment Library/ Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, NYU

**Date:** Thursday, March 11, 2004

**Place:** Tamiment Library, 70 Washington Square South, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor

**Time:** 5:30 - 6:30 pm Social  
6:30 - 8:00 pm Program

**Directions:** *By subway:* Take the 6 train to Astor Place Station. Take N, R or W train to Eighth Street Station. Take the A, C, E, F, V, or S train to West Fourth Street-Washington Square Station. Take the 1 or 9 to Christopher Street-Sheridan Square Station.

**Fee:** \$4 Members \$6 Non-members

**RSVP:** To Kathleen Sabogal by Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>:  
[ksabogal@carnegiehall.org](mailto:ksabogal@carnegiehall.org) or telephone: (212) 903-9777. Please be reasonably sure that you can attend before responding.