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A Roundup Report on 1979
Summer Institutes
in Women's Studies
By Shirley Frank

Summer Institutes have become a tradition in women's studies, although, compared to the hundreds of NDEA Institutes in the '60s, the numbers are still painfully few. This year Summer Institutes were held in Alabama, Arizona, New York, and Pennsylvania. Their goals were all similar: to give participants—primarily, but not only, teachers—an education in the history and literature of women, which were not part of the curriculum when they received their formal training; to acquaint them with new materials and methodologies developed by feminist scholars and educators; and to provide them with a supportive network within which to continue the work of social change. What follows here is a brief description of those Institutes. (If readers know of others that took place during the summer of 1979, or are ready to announce the formation of new ones for 1980, they should write in and let us know.)

Alabama: The three-week Institute which took place at the University of Alabama was directed at college faculty, all of whom had to have their institutions agree to their teaching what would be a permanent course in Nontraditional Women's Literature. Sponsored by the Modern Language Association Commission on the Status of Women, the Institute focused on the history and literature of the U.S., mainly through "nontraditional" materials: letters, diaries, oral testimony, out-of-print fiction. The 25 participants (24 women, 1 man) from all over the country and from a variety of institutional settings, studied not only the materials but the theory behind teaching such materials and their potential impact on the curriculum. [See "Regional Women's History and Literature: New Approaches to New Materials," in the Women's Studies Newsletter 7:2, Spring 1979, for more information.] The director of the Institute was Leonore Hoffman, of the MLA; the resident faculty were Margo Culley, Ellen DuBois, Florence Howe, and Elizabeth Meese; and visiting faculty included Toni Cade Bambara, Rayna Green, Gloria Hull, Paul Lauter, Donna Stanton, and Catharine Stimpson.

Arizona: The Women's Studies Program of the University of Arizona actually sponsored two Institutes at its campus this past summer. One, the Institute for Equality in Education, funded by a Title IV grant under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, provided a learning experience for 63 teachers of grades 1-12, and was similar to the Institute held in 1978 [described in the Women's Studies Newsletter 7:1, Winter 1979]. Its focus was on English and history. This year, an added feature of the Institute is a continuous year-long project, including workshops, inservice training, and a communications network, to reinforce the work of the summer for the same group of teachers.

The second Institute was funded by a Title I grant of the Higher Education Act of 1965, administered through the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education. Called the Institute for Women Entering Management, this intensive one-week program was aimed at ethnic and rural women who are now clerical workers but who have the potential for management. The 28 participants included 17 Mexican Americans, 7 Native Americans, 1 Asian American, and 3 Anglos. Among other things, the group has put together a management casebook of cases involving women.

The director of both projects was Myra Dinnerstein. For more information about either Institute, or for information on how to go about getting a similar grant through another state, write to the Women's Studies Program, 209 Math Building, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721.

New York: The Institute on Women's History which took place this past summer at Sarah Lawrence College was somewhat unusual in that it was aimed primarily not at teachers but at feminist community leaders representing such organizations as NOW, NARAL, WEAL, the National Alliance of Black Feminists, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, the Girl Scouts, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, New Directions for Women, and others. During an intensive 15-day retreat, participants read widely, heard lectures, and engaged in discussions, with the goal of learning their own history as women. The Institute was conducted under the sponsorship of the Women's Action Alliance, funded by the Lilly Endowment, in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution and the Women's History Program at Sarah Lawrence College. Faculty were Alice Kessler-Harris, Gerda Lerner, and Amy Swerdlow, along with teaching assistants Pam Elam, Bonnie Johnson, Carole Nichols, and Peggy Pascoe. Among other results of the Institute, the participants produced a bibliography of sources on women's history and drew up a resolution urging President Carter and Congress to proclaim the week containing March 8 "Women's History Week."

Pennsylvania: For each of the past two summers, a six-week Institute has provided 23 high school teachers with the opportunity to live and study at the University of Pennsylvania on full scholarships. A cooperative effort of the Women's Studies Program, the College of General Studies, and the School of Education, funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute was directed by Ann Beuf. The Institute required each teacher to select a subject area course—history, literature, or social psychology—and to attend a teaching seminar. Additional activities were also provided, including evening lectures and informative women's walking tours of historical Philadelphia. Teachers received full graduate credit. In the fall, there are follow-up conferences and a continued commitment to provide aid and advice for participants in their efforts to introduce women's studies into their schools. In addition, the teachers have formed solid support groups among themselves as a result of their participation in the program.