

Report on Eighth Biennial AWSS Conference, April 2017

This year's AWSS conference with the theme "Roots and Legacies of Revolution: Transformations for Women and Gender" convened on 6 and 7 April 2017 at the Westin Alexandria Hotel outside of Washington, DC. Held in conjunction with the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies, our conference was one of the largest we have had so far – 23 presenters from the U.S., U.K., Russia, and India in eight panels over two days. Our first day of panels featured, among other topics, the history of women in the Third International, transnational feminist exchanges, cultural imagery during war, and cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova's fan mail. Discussants, presenters, and audience members engaged in productive conversations, exploring various moments of (mostly) the 20th and 21st centuries. On the second day our panels were embedded within the SCSS, spotlighting themes such as: gendered dimensions in art and literature of the past 100 years, attitudes toward polygyny in Tatarstan, post-Soviet fairy tales, the obstacles of motherhood and citizenship for women with disabilities, and marriage and nationalism in interwar Poland.

One challenge of our first day of the conference was the weather, which prevented Rochelle Ruthchild, our keynote speaker, from arriving in time for her talk. Thanks to some quick thinking by conference organizers, the event was rescheduled for lunchtime on Friday (with healthy snacks provided). Rochelle's talk, "What's Suffrage Got to Do With It? Women and Gender in Russia's Revolutionary Year," fundamentally challenged the dominant narrative of the 1917 revolutions in Russia, re-telling the story through the lens of the women who had long been organizing and advocating for suffrage and other rights. This was one of the great highlights of the conference.

Many thanks to all participants, especially to those who agreed to chair or serve as discussants. We were especially pleased to have a large number of graduate students and junior scholars participate in the conference. Stay tuned for information in the coming year about our next biennial conference, currently planned for spring 2019.

Betsy Jones Hemenway
Sharon Kowalsky

Conference organizers

