In the beginning, there was controversy. The Schlesinger Library’s founding gift, the Woman’s Rights Collection, donated by Radcliffe alumna Maud Wood Park in 1943, documented the long battle over women’s suffrage. The right of women to vote, which now seems an obvious and inevitable reformation of the American republic, had in fact been the subject of heated debate for more than seven decades before the 19th Amendment joined the Constitution in August 1920.

Like most battles over the role of women in American society, the fight for the vote was often ugly—a multisided, multisited war waged among women as well as between women and men. And no wonder: the very idea of women voting upended ancient understandings of propriety, property, and power.

Contests over American women’s roles and rights neither began nor ended with suffrage. And so the Schlesinger’s vaults have continued to bristle with controversy. Over the past 75 years, as our collections have grown, we have added voices on many sides of issues that lie at the core of society and our democracy, including the long campaigns for and against the Equal Rights Amendment, struggles to guarantee women’s reproductive freedom and to protect fetal personhood, and battles over gender in the workplace from the Progressive Era through #MeToo.

A republican form of government depends on the ability of ordinary citizens to wade into ideological conflict with nuance and civility, often holding multiple and competing ideas in tension. So, too, does a college classroom.

Last fall, with my colleague Janet Halley, the Royall Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, I cotaught a course, Feminisms and Pornography, centered on one of the signal controversies in late-20th-century American women’s history: the conflict among feminists now popularly (and reductively) known as the “sex wars.” The Schlesinger’s collections document it with extraordinary depth. The personal papers of leading intellectuals and activists, including Susan Brownmiller, Andrea Dworkin, and Catharine A. MacKinnon, and of organizations such as Women Against Pornography (WAP), capture the enormous energy, along with the legal and tactical ingenuity, that marked feminist arguments against pornography and efforts to classify exposure to its harms as a civil rights infraction. Women who opposed those efforts—the journalist Ellen Willis, the porn star turned publisher Gloria Leonard, and the prostitutes’ rights group Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE) among them—are also well represented in our vaults.

With the help of the Schlesinger reference librarians Sarah Hutcheon and Jennifer Fauxsmith, students from Harvard College, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and Harvard Law School—born long after these pitched battles ended, or at least mutated—waded fearlessly into the records of a bruising conflict. Their research, some of which you'll read about in this issue, yielded new questions, new angles of vision, and new paths forward. Did they find common ground among combatants? Rarely. But plotting compromise between moral absolutes was not their mission. Rather, they learned to recover and respect the reasoning of organizations and individuals who had rarely respected one another. Scouring old wounds, they salvaged new histories.

The students in Feminisms and Pornography did not relitigate an old debate so much as imagine new ones. Controversy begets opportunity; to see history in the round is to view both past and present with fresh eyes. Teaching into the controversy in our collections trains rigorous scholars and engaged citizens. Never have we needed both more.

—Jane Kamensky
Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Director
Professor, Department of History, Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Curious hobbyists from across our readership—one from as far away as Alaska—took up our challenge to decode notes exchanged between Cynthia Anthonsen Foster and her boyfriend, Kenneth R. Miller. Carol Sternhell ’71 was the first to write in with her interpretation, but not before Summer Unsinn, one of our own catalogers of published material, cracked the code from the inside. All the letters we received delighted in talking through the process. Peter Sobol worked on the transcription with his son. Ali Daniell and Jody Fisher Williams ’56 noted the evolution of the code from letter to letter.

Several readers—such as Jonathan Alvarez-Gutierrez, who enclosed a screenshot of how he worked it out—noted that the code is a substitution cypher. Job Cardoza included a handy table showing all the substitutions along with his translations and notes.

We thank everyone who took the time to solve this puzzle and write us about it. We enjoyed reading all your e-mails. Jackie Wecker McDonough best summed up the task: “That was fun to crack, especially with the sweet images of snowy Massachusetts and teen love!”

To the right is the crowdsourced translation, original misspellings and all.
The Schlesinger Library announced a major acquisition this past February: the papers of the prominent political activist and pioneering feminist thinker Angela Y. Davis. The acquisition was made in collaboration with Harvard’s Hutchins Center for African & African American Research. A small team of Schlesinger librarians traveled to Davis’s home in California to pack the more than 150 cartons of unique and rare material, including correspondence, photographs, unpublished speeches, teaching materials, organizational records, and audio from the radio show *Angela Speaks*.

The announcement sparked interest in both local and national media, generating articles in outlets as varied as the *Harvard Crimson* and the *Root*. “The acquisition comes as scholars are telling a less male-dominated, top-down story about the Black Power movement and the left in general,” wrote Jennifer Schuessler in the *New York Times*. “It also sheds light on the rise of intersectional feminism (which takes into account women’s overlapping identities) and the campaign against mass incarceration, to name two causes Prof. Davis helped pioneer before there were quite words for them.”

Davis herself expressed gratification at making the Schlesinger the final home of her papers. “My papers reflect 50 years of involvement in activist and scholarly collaborations seeking to expand the reach of justice in the world,” she said in a statement. “I am very happy that at the Schlesinger Library they will join those of June Jordan, Patricia Williams, Pat Parker, and so many other women who have been advocates of social transformation.”

Speaking for the Library, Jane Kamensky, the Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Director, said, “We are honored that Professor Angela Y. Davis chose the Schlesinger Library to be the permanent repository for a remarkable collection documenting a remarkable life.”
Davis is known as a leading figure in the struggle for human rights and against racial discrimination in the United States and a foundational thinker in African American feminism. Her long-standing commitment to prisoners’ rights dates to her involvement in the campaign to free three California inmates known as the Soledad Brothers, who were accused of killing a prison guard during a 1970 riot at Soledad Prison in California’s Central Valley. Davis, then just 26, emerged as a leader of the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee, which galvanized the left, including such disparate figures as James Baldwin, Jane Fonda, Jean Genet, and Jessica Mitford. Her activism in the Soledad Brothers’ behalf led to her own arrest and imprisonment. She was placed on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted list on false charges, becoming the subject of an intense police search that drove her underground and culminated in one of the most famous trials in recent US history. During her 16-month incarceration, a massive international “Free Angela” campaign was organized. She was acquitted in 1972.

“Angela Y. Davis has lived her life lending her voice to those who could not speak for themselves,” says Kenvi Phillips, the Schlesinger’s curator for race and ethnicity, who was among those who traveled to Davis’s home. “Her decision to preserve her papers with the Library ensures that she will perpetually speak against inherently unequal power structures. We are thrilled to be part of the process of carrying the voice for the voiceless to future generations.”

Schlesinger archivists have begun processing the collection, to which Davis will continue to add. The Angela Y. Davis Papers will be available for research by 2020.
Writing from the Library

Scholars continue to flock to the Schlesinger to conduct research for their projects. Here we highlight three recently published books whose authors relied in part on the Library’s holdings.

**R. Marie Griffith**


While researching her newest book, *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians & Fractured American Politics*, R. Marie Griffith dove into the papers of the physician Mary Steichen Calderone. After serving as a medical director for Planned Parenthood, Calderone founded the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States in 1964, only to find herself a target of venomous hate mail, much of which is in the Library’s archives.

A review in the *Washington Post* called Griffith's book “magisterial,” saying, *“Moral Combat is an impressive history of a massive fault line running through American history and politics: namely, sex. In eight rich chapters that span a century, Griffith traces the ridge where the tectonic plates of very different kinds of Christians have abutted.”*

Griffith is the John C. Danforth Distinguished Professor at Washington University in St. Louis, where she directs the Danforth Center on Religion and Politics.

**Brittney C. Cooper**

*Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (University of Illinois Press, 2017)

In *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women*, Brittney C. Cooper looks at African American women as public intellectuals from the late 1800s to the 1970s, focusing on the evolution of several prominent thinkers and activists, including Pauli Murray. Cooper spent valuable research time at the Schlesinger, which houses the Pauli Murray Papers.

A review on NPR praised *Beyond Respectability* as a “work of crucial cultural study,” saying it “lays out the complicated history of black woman as intellectual force, making clear how much work she has done simply to bring that category into existence.” *Bitch* magazine advised readers: “If black women’s history is your thing, *Beyond Respectability* should definitely be on your reading list.”

Cooper, an assistant professor of women’s and gender studies at Rutgers University, took part in the panel “Rediscovering Pauli Murray” at Radcliffe in the spring of 2017. Video of the event is available at www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/video/rediscovering-pauli-murray.

**Agatha Beins**

*Liberation in Print: Feminist Periodicals and Social Movement Identity* (University of Georgia Press, 2017)

During the research for *Liberation in Print: Feminist Periodicals and Social Movement Identity*, Agatha Beins not only perused many titles from the Schlesinger’s periodicals collection but also looked at the papers of Charlotte Bunch, Wini Breines, Ann Popkin, and Rochelle Ruthchild, among others. The result is a volume that reveals the complexity of and diversity within feminism—including some understudied aspects of the movement.

*Liberation in Print* is part of the Since 1970: Histories of Contemporary America Series, which is coedited by the Schlesinger Library Council member Claire Bond Potter, a professor of history at the New School (see our fall 2015 issue for an article about her). Beins is an associate professor of multicultural women’s and gender studies at Texas Woman’s University.
Wednesday, May 16, 2018, reception 6 PM, lecture 7 PM

**Seven Stories for Seven Decades: Tales from the Vault Spanning Schlesinger Library’s First 75 Years**

In this illustrated lecture, Jane Kamensky, a professor of history and the Pforzheimer Foundation Director of the Schlesinger Library, uses seven jewels from the library’s collections to tell fresh stories of American history in the 20th century and to look ahead to the 21st. Topics will include women’s rights and civil rights, the sexual revolution and the remaking of the American family, and the actions and activism of American women abroad from World War II to the present day. *This is a Radcliffe on the Road event at the SLS Hotel–Beverly Hills, 465 S. La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles, CA.*

Thursday, September 13, 2018, 4:15 PM

**Feminisms Now! Panel**

Too many events in the feminist public sphere feature Founding Mothers of one kind or another finger-wagging at “kids these days.” This panel invites a younger generation to take over and talk back—a chance for the rising voices of emerging, intersecting, and sometimes competing feminisms to take stock and set the agenda. Panelists will situate their art, lives, and activism in relation to one another and the ways in which they do (and don’t) look back at the work of the first, second, and third waves in their efforts to move society forward. NPR’s Michele Martin will moderate.

*Knaefel Center*

This panel is presented in partnership with VIDA: Women in the Literary Arts in celebration of the Schlesinger’s 75th anniversary and the 10th anniversary of the VIDA Count.

Monday, October 29, 2018, 4:15 PM

**Schlesinger 75th Anniversary Celebration: A Discussion and Performance**

This celebration features the premiere of songs from the New York–based songwriter and performer Shaina Taub’s musical about the life of Alice Paul, a radical suffragist and the National Woman’s Party founder—a project that was incubated in the Schlesinger Library’s collections. The concert will be followed by a multidisciplinary panel discussion.

*Knaefel Center*

For more information and event registration, please go to [www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/calendar](http://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/calendar).
After much brainstorming about an exhibit to celebrate the Library’s 75th anniversary, a plan emerged. Loosely patterned after the British Museum’s popular podcast *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, the exhibit would include 75 objects or groups of objects. The exhibit committee asked current and past colleagues, researchers, and friends of the Library to name their favorite things in our collections. The items could be beautiful, odd, old, powerful, wry, revealing—whatever caught their fancy.

In no time, the list included more than 230 suggestions. The variety was surprising. Even staff members who have been here the longest and “seen it all” hadn’t seen some of these nominees.

Then the whittling began. Our goal was not a straight timeline of the Library’s history. We also decided against a linear history of women in America. We really wanted to highlight the richness of our collections: how broad and deep and sometimes surprising they are; how our manuscripts, printed material, and objects tell amazing stories; how they speak not only to women’s history but to all of American history.

As we pared down the list, we kept three goals in mind: First, we wanted to represent all types of materials, including oral histories, zines, photographs, and artifacts. Next, we wanted to tell stories that reflect important themes among our holdings—traditional strengths such as suffrage, post-WWII feminism, and women’s health, along with areas we’re working hard to strengthen, such as race, ethnicity, and sexuality, but also girlhood, Radcliffe College history, women and war, and activism of all sorts. We also wanted to highlight the Library’s role as a place that not only collects the materials from which others write women’s history but also makes women’s history: the Library-sponsored *Black Womens Oral History Project*, *Notable American Women*, which flourished under the Library’s wing; and the 1981 debate organized by the Library between Andrea Dworkin and Alan Dershowitz on the legality of pornography.
Paring the list down to 75 was no easy task. Some objects were no-brainers. The metal suffrage bluebird had a dozen fans. We looked for documents and objects that could be “twofers” or “threefers.” Flo Kennedy’s trademark cowboy hat tells at least five stories: of a radical feminist, a civil rights activist, an abortion rights advocate, an African American, and an all-round hell-raiser. The 1803 bill of sale for a 23-year-old female slave named Thankfull will break your heart.

Whether you see the exhibit, up until November 1, in person or tour it online—https://schlesinger75.radcliffe.org/—don’t miss the Kotex dispenser by the restrooms. Think about how itchy Edith Hall Plimpton’s 1896 black wool gym outfit must have been. Watch June Jordan read one of her poems.

Start with item #1, a photo featured in the fall newsletter of Radcliffe students in pumps pulling a suffrage wagon into Radcliffe Yard in August 1943—the arrival of the materials alumna Maud Wood Park, Class of 1898, had gathered to document the struggle, of which she’d been a part, for suffrage and beyond. This was the Woman’s Rights Collection, the seed from which the Library has grown for 75 years, the collection that attracted seven researchers in 1949, the first year it was open for perusal.

The collection arrived with Park’s hope that researchers would use it “with profit and inspiration.” For the past 75 years, they have; for the next 75 years, they will.

—Kathryn Allamong Jacob
Johanna-Maria Fraenkel Curator of Manuscripts at the Schlesinger Library
August 26 is a special day around Radcliffe and the Schlesinger Library. On that day in 1920, the 19th Amendment, giving American women the vote, formally became part of the US Constitution. The day also marks the founding of the Schlesinger Library in 1943. Those two events are in fact closely linked: the Radcliffe alumna Maud Wood Park's cache of suffrage materials provided the core of the Library's initial holdings.

The Schlesinger Library is already well launched on a year of events linked to its 75th anniversary. Thanks to a four-year grant of $870,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, we are also poised to play a leading role in shaping scholarly and popular understanding of the suffrage centennial in 2020. Building on the Library's rich archival resources, the grant will encourage cutting-edge interdisciplinary scholarship through long-term fellowships, summer residencies, public programming and exhibits, undergraduate seminars, and an international scholarly conference. These initiatives will position the Schlesinger Library and the Radcliffe Institute as key sites of intellectual authority on American women's citizenship, past, present, and future.

We are calling our project “The Long 19th Amendment,” evoking the ways scholars think about the “long 19th century”—a period of nation building that stretched from the American Revolution through World War I—and the “long civil rights movement,” which began with Reconstruction and continues still. Although the 19th Amendment dramatically increased the American electorate, the result fell far short of a universal adult franchise. Disenfranchisement remains a significant and growing problem today. Penal restrictions on voting, battles over immigration and naturalization, and the push for voter ID laws demonstrate that the fight for suffrage—who counts as a voter, and whose vote gets counted—is far from over.

A New Paradigm

Coming up with a bold new paradigm for understanding the history of suffrage and citizenship is an ambitious undertaking. Older narratives privileged the actions of elite white women, particularly Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, and these tales of the Founding Mothers (many seeded by the actors themselves) remain hard to dislodge. We can start by challenging the unhelpful 1848–1920 chronology that so often bounds the history of women’s suffrage. As the historian Lisa Tetrault and others have shown, starting the story with the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 was always contrived, downplaying previous women’s rights activism and rendering key actors invisible. The ratification of the 19th Amendment is an equally flawed end point. A significant minority of Anglo-American women had already been enfranchised by individual states, so they didn’t “win” anything when the amendment was passed. And 1920 was hardly a year of singular triumph for African American women or Native Americans, many of whom remained disenfranchised until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Rethinking Old Histories

New fields of research force us to rethink old histories. The activism of women of color around voting rights confirms that women’s political engagement neither began nor ended with the 19th Amendment. What distinct issues and movements drew working-class, Latina, Asian American, and indigenous women into the political process? How do notions of voting and citizenship mark bodies and define normality? Adopting a transnational or comparative approach to study of the suffrage movement will be especially fruitful. Besides challenging the deeply ingrained myth of American exceptionalism, a transnational frame will shed new light on the imperial dimensions of American women’s suffrage and on the origins of human rights thought.

The upcoming centennial of the 19th Amendment is ripe for our intervention in a broad civic conversation. With the Mellon Foundation’s support, the Schlesinger Library will advance scholarly and popular understanding of a crucial problem in American public life. Our admittedly brash goal is to set the agenda for scholarship on women, citizenship, and the vote for decades to come.

—Susan W. Ware
Schlesinger Library Council
Among the new opportunities made possible by the Mellon grant is the first Mellon-Schlesinger Fellowship at the Institute in 2018–2019. “This project will not simply celebrate the “winning” of women’s suffrage in 1920, but rather will illuminate the barriers to women’s full political empowerment that continue to shape our democracy today,” says Corinne Field, an assistant professor of history at the University of Virginia, who will serve as the first Mellon-Schlesinger Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute in 2018–2019. Field’s research during her fellowship year will explore the intertwined roots of race and age segregation in American feminism, arguing that white woman suffragists first promoted the idea of generational “waves” in order to justify political alliances with white supremacists.

The deadline for applications to the 2019–2020 fellowship competition is September 13, 2018. For more information about how to apply, see www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/fellowship-program/how_apply

Mellon-Schlesinger Summer Research Grants

The Mellon grant will also fund eight-week residencies in June and July of 2019, 2020, and 2021 for researchers doing advanced work on gender and suffrage, voting rights, citizenship, or other related topics. Successful projects will draw in meaningful ways on Schlesinger Library collections. The stipend for each award is $15,000. We will consider applications from clusters of two or three researchers as well as from individuals. College and university faculty, secondary school teachers, and other advanced researchers in any relevant discipline are invited to apply.

Applications must be received by November 15, 2018. For more information, contact Cara Raskin at slgrants@radcliffe.harvard.edu.
Countdown to Suffrage

In her recently published book, *The Woman’s Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote* (Viking, 2018), the popular historian Elaine Weiss has written about the six weeks before the 19th amendment passed in Tennessee. The amendment had been pushed through Congress and needed 36 states legislatures to ratify it, which Tennessee did during the summer of 1920.

If the amendment was defeated in Tennessee, momentum would be lost, and the antisuffrage forces might gain strength. “The suffragists rightfully suspected that the nation was on a swing toward isolationism and reactionary policies,” Weiss said in an interview from her home in Baltimore. “They knew if they didn’t get the vote then, it would be delayed a very long time.”

In researching her book, Weiss relied on several collections of suffrage papers at the Schlesinger—including the Carrie Chapman Catt Papers, the Sue Shelton White Papers, and many others. One of the collections she found most helpful was the Betty Gram Swing Papers, a then-recent gift to the library from Pam Swing, the granddaughter of the suffragist Betty Gram. Weiss was able to meet the granddaughter and to hear stories about her grandmother’s work as a national organizer. “Pam sorted out the papers that she thought would be useful to me and guided me through the unprocessed papers,” Weiss said. “That’s the goldmine of the Schlesinger, with new things coming in.”

Weiss said she was surprised by the sometimes-racist invective of the suffragists. “It’s clear that the abolition movement and suffrage were sibling movements,” she said, “but then there’s this terrible split after the Civil War, when women are told that universal suffrage is not going to happen, that the nation can only take one reform at a time, and women are told to wait.” Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony “descended into depths of vile racist rhetoric,” she writes in the book, “going so far as to warn against the ‘horrible outrages’ against white women that were sure to follow the black man’s enfranchisement and elevation in society.”

It’s a fight that she thinks can be instructive to today’s activists. “This is a book about grassroots activists,” Weiss said. “Suffragists for the most part were not high-born women. Susan Anthony was a schoolteacher. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was well read, but she was a house mother. She had seven kids.”

Weiss sees a parallel between the suffragists and the young people leading today’s fight for gun control. “They’re making demands that seem impossible to some people, but so were the suffragists. It was considered totally impossible, when women first demanded the vote.”

—Pat Harrison
*Publications Manager*
Anne Engelhart and Ruth Hill, two longtime employees of the Schlesinger, have seen decades of change at the Library. When Hill, the oral history coordinator, joined the staff, in 1977, and Engelhart, the head of collection services, in 1978, the Schlesinger was small and had few full-time employees. “It was tiny,” says Engelhart. “Like a mom-and-pop shop.” She cites a statistic from the Library’s 40th anniversary report of 1984: “Fifteen employees are listed, and many of them weren’t full-time. Now we have close to 40.”

Not only has the staff more than doubled, but the Library’s physical space has dramatically increased. The Schlesinger was renovated in the 1980s and again in 2004. Engelhart and Hill remember working in nearby Agassiz House and in the basement of Cronkhite during renovations. Each expansion strengthened the Schlesinger’s ability to serve a larger array of patrons.

Engelhart and Hill say that much of the Library’s growth in collections occurred in the 1970s, with second-wave feminism. “Everybody wanted to know about women’s history,” says Engelhart, “so they would come to us, and we welcomed a lot of collections and a lot of researchers who were outside the normal academic kind of folks.” New collections at the time included those of Betty Friedan and the National Organization for Women.

In the mid-70s, the Library also launched the Black Women Oral History Project, which Hill coordinated. “The project changed a lot of attitudes,” she says. “The Library was no longer just dealing with white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant women.”

Additional profound changes began in 1999, when the final merger occurred between Radcliffe College and Harvard, and Drew Gilpin Faust became the first dean of the Radcliffe Institute. By that time, the Library had a backlog of unprocessed collections, which often happens, Engelhart explains, with special collections libraries: “You never can predict how many linear feet will come in. One year, we got 700 feet of the Bill Baird collection, and just recently, the Angela Davis Papers came in at 150 feet.”

Faust, being a historian, had a special interest in the Schlesinger. She asked the Library what it would take to get rid of the backlog. “Those were heady years,” Engelhart says. “We hired another 12 to 13 people, and many of them stayed on.” The Library started catching up.

By 2010, the two largest manuscript and archival collections at Harvard—in linear feet—were the Harvard University Archives and Baker Library at Harvard Business School. Next largest were the Schlesinger, Countway Library at Harvard Medical School, and Houghton Library. The Schlesinger remains in third place according to the number of collections, after Harvard University Archives and Houghton Library. Not bad for a mom-and-pop operation.

—Pat Harrison
Publications Manager

Engelhart and Hill say that much of the Library’s growth in collections occurred in the 1970s, with second-wave feminism. “Everybody wanted to know about women’s history,” says Engelhart, “so they would come to us, and we welcomed a lot of collections and a lot of researchers who were outside the normal academic kind of folks.”
I came to this class largely because I wanted to find a link between thought and action. I wanted to know how these ideas could inform each other in my own life, and I found an entire movement of theorist-activists who seem to have done exactly that. But the results were not always positive. Antipornography feminists accused feminists who opposed them of “false consciousness,” claiming that they had been tricked by patriarchal society into supporting its structures. In protesting a Barnard conference on sexuality in New York City, for instance, antiporn activists loudly attributed false consciousness to the conference organizers and presenters. Putting theory into practice led to an accusation that seemed to deny people their agency, to shut down productive analysis.

To understand why this happened, I needed a concrete link between Marxist theory, where the notion of false consciousness was developed, and the marches in New York City, where it was used. The archive gave me something tangible. I saw the writers that activists were reading when they wrote a speech, and what they wrote while reflecting on these debates. I found serious theoretical considerations of feminist consciousness, with nuance that was clearly lost in action. But I also found questions and ways of thinking that made it into articles and dissertations only after observing and listening to people. I haven’t found an exact model for my work, but I have the beginnings of a way to understand.

—Martin Bernstein ’20
History and Philosophy Concentrator
When I decided to take Feminisms and Pornography, I knew little about the “sex wars” and nothing about archival research. However, over a few short months I fell in love with this topic and became adept at using the archives in the Schlesinger. With the help of brilliant professors, supportive classmates, and dedicated librarians, I found a gap in the literature on the pornography conflicts and helped to fill it by writing a paper based on archival sources. I chronicled the 1985 referendum campaign here in Cambridge regarding the antipornography civil rights ordinance created by Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin. The campaign provoked vitriolic clashes over how to approach pornography, both between feminists and outsiders and among feminist groups. Antipornography feminists met with strong opposition from free-speech activists, including other feminists, and the ordinance was defeated. Disappointed but ultimately undeterred, antipornography feminists took the lessons they learned from the Cambridge campaign and continued to apply them to their activism in communities all over the world.

I recently had the opportunity to meet several of the key players from the Cambridge conflict during a workshop the class’s students and faculty members hosted at Radcliffe. Speaking with these people brought the campaign alive, and it made me appreciate archival research more than ever. The campaign occurred 33 years ago. Memories have faded, and activists continue to disagree about the details of what happened. The wounds of that time remain raw. In short, people are imperfect narrators. While the archives have their flaws, they exist unchanged all these years later. They have not forgotten things; they do not filter their words depending on who is in the room. They simply tell their stories. May we continue to collect these materials and listen to all they have to say, especially regarding controversial moments in history.

—Alicia Daniel
Harvard Law School ’18