



Barbara Ehrenreich



Susan Faludi



Rebecca Walker

Three Generations of Feminists Speak at Radcliffe

"American feminism has always been a stop-and-go affair. No matter how often feminism has been declared dead, it has always managed to come bounding out of the coffin roaring with life." Susan Faludi '81 gave this overview in a lecture she delivered at Radcliffe on April 26. The other two speakers in the lecture series—Barbara Ehrenreich and Rebecca Walker—seemed to share her view of feminism's resilience. But all three were fairly bleak about the current status of American feminism.

"I worry that what we are living in is not the next wave of feminism, but the receding trough after the last wave has crashed," Faludi said.

Faludi's lecture and the presentations by Ehrenreich and Walker comprised this year's Voices of Public Intellectuals series. This year's series focused on *Feminisms Then and Now*, to celebrate the reopening of the renovated Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America and to mark the library's processing of important papers related to second-wave feminism.

"Barbara Ehrenreich is the kind of public intellectual the Schlesinger Library wants to document," said Nancy F. Cott, the Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Director of the library, when she introduced Ehrenreich on May 10. Cott announced that Ehrenreich, a stalwart of the second wave, has selected the Schlesinger as the repository for her papers. Ehrenreich's presentation was also Radcliffe's 2004–2005 Maurine and Robert Rothschild Lecture.

"The weird science and bad medicine just keep coming," Ehrenreich said, describing the way drug companies marketed hormone replacement therapy (HRT) not only as a cure for hot flashes but also as a way of

preventing heart disease and even Alzheimer's. It's now known, she said, that HRT contributes to the development of heart disease and breast cancer.

Rebecca Walker, the youngest of the three speakers and cofounder of the Third Wave Foundation—which makes grants to individuals and organizations that support young women's health, education, and activism—was perhaps the most hopeful, although she too sounded warnings when she spoke on April 14.

Walker repeated one of her key messages several times so the audience could absorb it: "The chaotic circumstances that we find ourselves in today, which are disguised as forward momentum, are tinged with the potential for annihilation." She advocated an end to divisiveness and increased openness to the views of others, such as those held by second- and third-wave feminists, saying, "I believe if we plant openness with diligence, we will get openness."

PAT HARRISON

To watch videos of the Faludi and Walker lectures, visit www.radcliffe.edu/events/video.php.