Mounia El Kotni

Mounia used her support from the DeCormier fund, together with a grant from the Institute for Women, to carry two months of preliminary fieldwork in Chiapas, Mexico. Working with the Women and Midwives’ Section of the Organization of Indigenous Doctors of Chiapas (OMIECH) has allowed Mounia to gather data for her dissertation project. Her dissertation focuses on women’s reproductive rights in Mexico. Preliminary fieldwork allowed her to document the barriers faced by Indigenous midwives in their practice, and how these barriers inform on the discriminations and broader inequalities suffered by Indigenous populations. The importance of midwives as social and healthcare practitioners in Indigenous communities is being transformed by the medicalization of prenatal health care in Mexico. Midwives’ knowledge is no longer recognized as valid, and as a result this important aspect of Indigenous culture is disappearing. This is yet another example of the discriminations faced by Indigenous populations in Chiapas. Through archival work and the collection of oral narratives, Mounia has started to document how a human rights approach to traditional medical knowledge might bring to light the processes reproducing social and structural inequalities in Mexico. Mounia presented findings from her preliminary research at the American Anthropological Association (AAA) national meeting in Chicago last November, under the title “Indigenous Women’s Healthcare Access in Chiapas: Midwives Defending Reproductive Rights.”

Mounia taking notes during an interview, July 2013

Participation in the changing of the crosses ceremony at OMIECH, June 2013