Ina Coleman believes in action. As managing director of the Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF), she oversees programs that empower others to take action for change: leadership training, global initiatives for girls’ human rights and education, outreach about how public policy impacts society, and more. As an advisory board member of the USC Annenberg’s Center on Communication Leadership and Policy (CCLP), Coleman is organizing a panel: “Championing Women and Diversity in Communication Leadership.” And as a Stanford alumna looking for a place to give her thirtieth reunion gift, she asked, “Where could my gift have the most significant impact?” Upon learning more about the “world-changing” work done at CCSRE, Coleman took action. She was mobilized by the belief that engaging the public in the scholarship and research at the Center could transform how people think about race and ethnicity. Coleman believes that frank national discussions about race and ethnicity can help our world to better understand how and why race impacts our societal interactions, with the goal of moving to less fear and more acceptance. Working with previous and current faculty directors Ramón Saldivar and José David Saldivar, Coleman’s expertise in marketing and communications will help promote CCSRE’s research and work to a national audience.

Coleman describes herself as coming from a “boring, straightforward academically achieving background,” but her dynamic accomplishments belie her modest words. Originally from Los Angeles, Coleman earned her undergraduate degree in communication from Stanford, then moved on to Harvard Business School. After working in the entertainment industry she moved to real estate and joined the board of the Feminist Majority Foundation in 1997. Her skills and enthusiasm eventually inspired the FMF President to ask Coleman, “Can you work for us?” Coleman did not hesitate, and she has been the managing director since 2005. Acknowledging the interconnectedness of social justice issues, the Foundation’s programs focus on advancing the social, legal and political equality of women, civil rights, environmental sustainability, worker rights, reproductive rights and LGBT equality. One of the Foundation’s overarching goals is to empower women and men who share these goals for social justice to “know what they need to do to take action for results.” The founders of FMF “wanted to develop new strategies and programs whose impacts are felt nationwide and globally.” Coleman’s energy embodies that spirit: “I’m very proud to be associated with this organization.”

Coleman’s interest in CCSRE, as with her work at FMF and the Annenberg Center, comes from her belief that “race, class and gender—it all intersects.” She is eager to learn more from her involvement with CCSRE and its scholarship, and hopes to further develop her feminist work with the next generation of women and men. “Sometimes especially minority women feel that feminism is a white women’s movement,” Coleman explains. “Because feminism is the policy, practice or advocacy of political, social and economic equality for women, a person who believes in that supports feminism – no matter the color of their skin or their socioeconomic status.” She hopes to gain more effective language to explain the intersections of race and gender to reach young people who still feel they have to choose between their identities and activism. One of Coleman’s first efforts to bring CCSRE’s work to more public distribution is to host an upcoming joint panel with CCSRE and Stanford’s Clayman Institute for Gender Research at FMF’s West Coast office, in the media capital of Los Angeles.

With action as a primary goal, Coleman hopes her skills and involvement will bring the Center’s work to a national audience. She is eager for the public dialogue to change: “I remember in the ‘80s that most people still were not comfortable talking about race and I don’t see a lot of improvement. We’ve gotten better from when I was 20 to now, but I would think that at 52 the conversations and understanding about race and ethnicity would have progressed much farther than they have the past 30 years.” The veteran marketing expert plans to help diversify CCSRE’s communication strategies, including social and digital media. Coleman believes “the award-winning and outstanding research and work that’s at the Center can impact and promote a much-needed national conversation about race and ethnicity in this country.” Once again Coleman puts her beliefs into action.

Annelise Heinz

Annelise Heinz is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of History. She is researching the surprising American history of the Chinese game mahjong and the politics of culture from the 1920s through the 1960s. Annelise’s work focuses on the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in American and transpacific history. Before beginning graduate work, Annelise lived in Southwest China 2007-2008, teaching English to graduate students at Yunnan University. Previously, she worked in education and social work in Washington State. A native of Southern California, Annelise earned her B.A. in History at Whitman College in 2003.