



# VOICES

*TOGETHERNESS, CHANGES, HAPPINESS, FEMINIST*

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

I've been thinking a lot about the concepts of "highs" and "lows" – the highlights of our day or week or semester and the things that are bringing us down, making us sad or stressed. I had the chance to spend time recently with friends I met while a student here at UConn, which definitely counts as a "high." We've been fortunate that the journey of our lives has allowed us to stay in touch, in spite of distance – sometimes geographical and sometimes philosophical. But the geography that brought us together – thanks to whoever assigned us all to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Windham – only served as a starting place. It was the conversations and time spent together that solidified our friendships and made for so many significant memories over the years.

A week and half earlier, we learned of the passing of one of our former students, [Shan Hu](#). I had the privilege of knowing Shan and working directly with her while she was employed here as our Statistician. Shan cared deeply about her work and her colleagues; radiated positivity; and demonstrated tenacity in her achievement of her goals. Those that worked with her here at the Center remarked on her kindness, her willingness to share her culture and to learn about that of others, and the impact she had on their experience at UConn.

I'm struck by the proximity of these two events and reminded of the importance of our work here at the Center. At a basic level, we create a space for people who are looking to explore concepts of social justice and equity and who are moved to action to make the world a better place. Students here often speak of our work as planting seeds, but they are usually referencing their education work with others. But through the interactions they have with each other all kinds of seeds get planted, as illustrated by the thoughts shared by our VAWPP FYE Facilitators and our new student staff who are profiled in this edition. And those seeds require additional nutrients to grow – similar to the sustenance provided through our fundraising efforts for the 100 Years of Women Scholarship and the AKL Ignite Challenge.

Moving beyond the basics, we provide knowledge about how power, identity, and life experience shape our individual experiences, our collective work, and the systems within which we are embedded. To do that, we must seek to understand multiple perspectives and question our reliance on binary systems of thinking – work which is reflected in the articles on UConn for Equality, the Men's Project, and our panel discussion on Faith and Feminism. And finally, we must create a community that allows us to both acknowledge the pain and trauma associated with injustice (for example through our annual Clothesline Project) and recognize and celebrate when we get closer to our vision of a more welcoming and inclusive campus (read more about how our Women's Center Staff Rocks). In other words, to learn to hold our "highs" and "lows" at the same time and to learn from how each informs the other.



*-Kathleen Holgerson*

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## RECAP: CLOTHESLINE PROJECT

The Clothesline Project is an event created to bring awareness to the issue of sexual and domestic violence. For people who have been affected, it is a means of expressing their emotions by decorating a t-shirt. There are five different colors that survivors can choose from, and each color has a specific meaning in terms of survivorship. Red t-shirts represented individuals who were raped or sexually assaulted. Yellow t-shirts represented individuals who were battered or physically assaulted. Blue t-shirts represented individuals who are survivors of incest or child abuse. Purple t-shirts represented individuals who were assaulted because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Black t-shirts represented individuals who were assaulted because of their race or ethnicity.



Photo credit: Rebecca Newman/ The Daily Campus

The display intends to honor survivors and remember victims. It is also intended to aid in the healing process for those who have been directly affected by sexual and/or relationship violence and raise awareness about the prevalence of these human rights violations happening right here in our own community.

The Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) has been organizing the Clothesline Project here on campus for roughly a decade now. VAWPP's over-arching goal is to shift the narrative away from how students can avoid sexual assault and intimate partner violence, and instead, toward how we can create a culture of respect that promotes healthy relationships and holding out for enthusiastic consent.

During the week-long event, members of VAWPP volunteered to table and answer questions regarding the display. Students approached the table throughout, asking for more information regarding the shirts and even opted to make paper shirts of their own to leave with the display. Dozens of other students could be seen every day reading each of the shirts and paying respect to those who have been affected by this violence. Overall, this event was an empowering way, both for survivors and allies, to interactively tell and listen to stories.

*-Amber Dickey*

## UConn FOR EQUALITY

On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Hermanos of La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc. sponsored UConn for Equality, a night of celebration of diversity and activism on campus. Activist and cultural groups were invited to present an artistic representation of the work they do and the message their organization hopes to convey. The event was introduced by stating that the force of activism is stronger when we act together as a unit rather than a divided community. The goal of the night was to share similar victories and struggles in the hopes of inspiring different groups to band together to create a more positive campus climate.

An original piece by Bryant Riera, a peer facilitator for the VAWPP program, was selected to represent VAWPP at UConn for Equality. The piece is representative of the individual struggles of those affected by sexual or gender based violence. A sharp color contrast defines the complexity and tumultuous nature of the individual's affliction and pain in struggling with defining themselves as something other than a victim. Purple was chosen as the central color, representing the individualization of the assault as the victim's identity. However, victims are not their experience or their unfortunate events. Therefore, the background of flourishing colors describes the complex mind and intellect that represents the individual as much more than their experience with sexual or domestic violence.

Many of those who stopped by and asked about the piece had never heard of VAWPP, but were highly impressed by both the mission of the program and the originality of the piece. Overall, it was a great night of exposure for VAWPP (we even recruited a few interested students!) and an opportunity to meet other activists on campus.

*-Lauren Marshall, Bryant Riera*

## MEET OUR VAWPP PEER FACILITATORS

*After a successful semester of working in the First Year Experience classes, the Fall 2015 VAWPP Peer Facilitators share their thoughts, experiences, and advice for future generations of VAWPPers.*

### *Voices: What motivated you to apply to be a VAWPP Peer Facilitator?*

“Personal experience and the desire for change to happen on this campus. But mainly because a very good friend of mine took VAWPP before me, and I saw her growth and the inner strength that she acquired as a result. I wanted to be a part of something that could help me grow like that.”

*–Natasha George*

“My future career in a female dominated field motivated me to become a well-rounded individual in both sympathy and awareness. I have found that and much more through VAWPP.”

*–Bryant Riera*

“As I went through my college career, I learned more and more about rape culture on campuses across the nation and knew I had to get involved in its eradication; VAWPP allows me to do that.”

*–Amber Dickey*



Photo Credit: Lauren Marshall

“I was involved in the VAWPP classes in the 2014-2015 school year and was interested in continuing to be a part of the program. I believed (and do believe) that education on consent is essential for college students and facilitation is a form of that education.”

*–Kate Berger*

### *Voices: What do you love most about VAWPP?*

“The amazing, inspiring coworkers, activists, and friends I have made. It has been a life-changing experience for which I am so grateful.”

*–Adam Kocurek*

“I love that I am completely accepted in VAWPP. That being said, VAWPPers are never afraid to share their opinions or explain new perspectives. I am corrected kindly if I offend, and I think that type of honesty is a beautiful thing. Silence over hurt changes nothing.”

*–Carol Ann Sharo*

“VAWPP taught me to be an advocate, to adapt, and learn to communicate in a group setting.”

*–Asahi Hoque*

“The sense of community and support. I’ve never met a better group of genuine, intelligent people on campus. Everyone is so inspiring!”

*–Lauren Marshall*

“I love the little family we’ve managed to create over the past few months. We’ve really carved out a space where people can feel comfortable enough to share the good and bad things, and we’ve really come to love each other. Everyone is so passionate, intelligent, and kind. It’s hard not to love this job.”

*–Adrienne Gutierrez*



## MEET OUR VAWPP PEER FACILITATORS

*Voices: What kind of impact do you think VAWPP is making on campus?*

“What makes VAWPP so special is its social justice approach to sexual violence prevention. VAWPP doesn’t just simply teach students the definition of consent, we try to challenge people’s problematic assumptions about gender, sexuality and the rape culture that exists on campus. Without this approach we wouldn’t be able to make wide scale social change.”

–*Nicole Simonsen*

“While many students have never heard of VAWPP explicitly, I think the program’s impact is most prevalent in students practicing what they learned in the workshops. It might be a subconscious behavior, but I’ve heard students talking about the workshop’s content without talking about VAWPP or the workshop directly. Therefore, I believe the program’s impact is felt even if remaining in the background.”

–*Amanda Simon*

“VAWPP is inspiring a lot of first year students to be more vocal against sexism and gender-based violence. We’re teaching students that it’s not only ok to speak up, but it’s the right thing to do.”

–*Terri Bulan*

“I think Lauren hit the nail on the head with her way of explaining what VAWPP does. She says that we are just planting seeds and watering the plant so it can grow. When I look back at my journey I see that there wasn’t just one moment that got me interested, but a series of moments that happened and are still happening.”

–*Tejash Parekh*

“I think VAWPP is really helping students gain a better understanding of consent. We help them learn about it in a way that’s practical and our workshops really demystify consent and make it approachable. I think the programs we put on like the Clothesline Project also bring awareness of sexual violence to the general population of UConn, and I think they really resonate with people.”

–*Jacqueline Pagano*

*Voices: Do you have any advice for future generations of VAWPPers?*

“It’s okay to stop and rest. Self-care knows no timeline, no recipe. If you want to sleep, scream, cry; whatever you need to do, do. Everyone has times when their stresses outweigh their supports. Reach out and get the support you deserve; then be that support for someone else.”

–*Ruth Lee*

“Get to know your fellow VAWPPers before anything else. You will learn more about yourself and others than you would have ever imagined, and your facilitations will be even stronger as a result of your strong connections and friendships.”

–*Matt Brush*

“Always leave the workshop with confidence. You have made an impact on these students. It is up to them to decide what kind of impact it would be. So, instead of thinking about what you could have done differently and “blaming” yourself for mistakes, you should summarize the goods and the bads and take them into consideration for your next workshop. Also, always remember how awesome you are.”

–*Sylvia Wang*

“What you are doing matters a lot! There will be not so great workshops, but there *will* be some great workshops, and those will solidify your dedication to becoming a VAWPPER. It won’t be easy, but nothing worthwhile and meaningful ever is; you’ll do great.”

–*Asadie Walters*

“Be confident. Be loud. And be as radical as you want to be. Make people hear your voice.”

–*Xena Cordero*



Photo Credit: Lauren Marshall

## 100 YEARS OF WOMEN SCHOLARSHIP

The Women's Center would like to congratulate this year's 100 Years of Women Scholarship recipients! We encourage readers to consider [donating](#) to the 100 Years of Women scholarship.

### Keisha Ashe

Keisha is currently pursuing a PhD at UConn in Chemical Engineering. She received her undergraduate degree in biomedical engineering at the University of Virginia, where she was a Varsity Track and Field athlete. As a child, Keisha wanted to escape her "girliness," because growing up as a girl meant she wasn't allowed to do certain things that her brothers could. As Keisha grew and matured, it became a priority to make sure other women knew that they are capable of pursuing anything they set their minds to. Keisha has served as a mentor to middle school girls in the Young Women's Leadership Program, has supported her peers in the Society of Women Engineers, and has participated in several other groups committed to empowering women in education. Driven and passionate about female involvement in the STEM fields, Keisha wanted to form an organization that empowered women to serve as mentors and role models to young girls in the highly-rewarding science, technology, engineering, and math fields. Keisha is the co-founder of ManyMentors, a program that aims to get more girls and young women engaged in STEM through advocacy, leadership opportunities, programs, and events. To date, ManyMentors has impacted over 5,000 students in the State of Connecticut. The program organizes one-on-one mentorship connections through an innovative website platform, in addition to panels and events where STEM leaders share their experiences and inspire the next generation of innovators. In the future, Keisha hopes to continue her journey empowering women to change the face of the STEM fields. Keisha's future plans also include pursuing an industrial post-doc. Through her ongoing commitment to women's issues, Keisha continues to remind young women to transform perceived obstacles into action and achievement.

### Aimee Loiselle

**Voices: Tell us about yourself!**

**Aimee:** "I currently live in Springfield, Massachusetts, where I recently bought a home in the East Forest Park neighborhood. I grew up in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts, a few dozen yards from Somers, Connecticut. In 1988, I left to attend Dartmouth College and then lived in a variety of locations, including Worcester, MA; Burlington, VT; Olympia, WA; and St. Paul, MN.

At UConn, I am a nontraditional PhD candidate in the History Department, where I am now focused on writing my dissertation. I am working on a dissertation that analyzes the Norma Rae icon, the image of Sally Field standing alone with the UNION sign. The icon exposes the way commercial symbols of "rebelliousness" often rest on the intensive labor or activism of many women, while denying the realities of that collective work. When the movie *Norma Rae* (1979) appropriated the personal story of Crystal Lee Sutton, it condensed decades of opposition by textile mill workers and union activists into a fictionalized individual. As an alternative narrative, Sutton continued to call for organizing as a means to improve conditions for the working poor. Caribbean, Central American, and Asian women who had migrated to the United States and worked in older factories also organized. The dissertation will emphasize the visibility of all women working in the textile and garment industries and analyze their labor and activism within the transnational mesh of government, financial, and technological structures.

I plan to continue my teaching career, moving to higher education. My experiences in public high schools, GED programs, and alternative education will help me serve as a resource for low-income and first-generation students. I will also continue writing for both academic and creative venues with attention to women and issues of power and status. My long-term writing goal involves commenting on issues for women and globalization."

**Voices: What role has feminism played in your life?**

**Aimee:** "When I was about nine, my mother bought the original 1970s edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and kept it around the house. I still have that book, with its worn edges and creased binding. It represents different aspects of my commitment and service to women's issues: the inspiration of that fiery time in feminism, a fascination with women who resist dominant norms, a passion for women's history and the significance of gender, race, class, and sexuality, and the importance of cooperation in activism to improve women's daily experiences.



Photo Credit: Aimee Loiselle

## 100 YEARS OF WOMEN SCHOLARSHIP

Feminism has served as an inspiration, a source of intellectual exploration, and a platform for activism. The tremendous diversity of feminisms and the long history of women from all types of backgrounds who advocated for women have given me confidence, shaped my thinking, and directed my career. I make an effort at every degree program and every job to connect with women and build tangible supports for each other (suggestions for work, recommendation letters, positive compliments and advocacy, referrals). I also recognize that many women activists did not call themselves "feminists" and yet their words and works have improved my opportunities, my safety, and my independence as a woman. Every woman must be vigilant to protect these advances and continue efforts for gender equity, expanded options for women, and the safety and health of the most vulnerable populations. Lastly, intersectionality emerged from scholars engaged in feminist scholarship--and an ongoing mission demands that we enrich our understanding of ways race, class, status, and ethnicity intersect with womanhood and gender to shape women's experiences, dangers, and pathways. Class and status in particular--access to income, wealth, and social capital--have become extremely potent in our twenty-first century global systems."

*Voices: In what ways have you contributed to advocacy for gender equity?*

*Aimee:* "Throughout my youth and my adult years, I participated in a diverse range of educational, policy, and economic activities to promote gender equity. As a teenager in the late 1980s, I joined NOW and NARAL. I displayed my affiliation with bumper stickers and wrote letters to my senators and representative.

When harassment of patients entering women's health clinics increased in the early 1990s, I joined a group of Dartmouth College women driving to Boston to provide escorts and buffer zones. I was also a member of the Untamed Shrews, a women's theater troupe, where I met other campus activists. We formed the Dartmouth Women's Initiative and offered discussion and speaker events.

I have worked in various education institutions over the past 20 years. I work to design syllabi in which women of many backgrounds and ethnicities appear as central actors in history, and I encourage young women to speak up, participate and organize, and present themselves as voices in their schools and communities. After my master's program in 1998, I wanted to join with an innovative effort to improve the economic and social power of low-income women. I had the opportunity to teach at The CARE Center, an academic program for pregnant and parenting adolescent girls in Holyoke, MA. The center functioned as a GED program but also offered art, sports, and life skills activities. The experience intensified my respect for young Latina women negotiating and overcoming the daily challenges of living in poverty. I also came to a deeper understanding of my 'white privileges'—the daily allowances and ongoing advantages—and grew more interested in the various obstacles to productive systemic change. I currently serve on the Special Ad Hoc Committee for Workforce Development in Springfield, where I raise topics like encouraging education and training for girls, adult basic education and viable wages for women, and long-term career pathways rather than low-skill jobs."

## ELECT HER



The Women's Center's annual Elect Her campaign training took place on Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup>. This half-day workshop teaches college women the importance of, and how to run for and win, student government positions. It also aims to prepare young women for future political service and other leadership positions in their communities and in their professional lives. More specifically, our focus is on increasing the number of women of color who serve on Undergraduate Student Government (USG) and other elected positions on and off campus; the number of women in leadership positions on USG; and to work to change the climate for women in USG and other elected offices.

We were fortunate to once again have State Senator Mae Flexer as our keynote speaker. Senator Flexer was sworn-in to the Connecticut State Senate in January 2015, after serving three terms in the Connecticut House of Representatives prior to that. She discussed the importance of women's representation in state and local government. In her time in

State government, Senator Flexer has illustrated this in many meaningful ways, particularly in championing the issue of violence against women. Almost immediately after being elected for her first term as a State Representative, she was appointed to serve as Chair of the House Speaker's Task Force on Domestic Violence. Many positive changes came from this work, including strengthening restraining orders and protective orders, changes in definitions for certain crimes, and increasing housing protections for victims. Last year she was a sponsor of a bill that would pass new laws to protect women and families from gun violence, as well as introducing the Affirmative Consent bill (SB 636) for the first time.

This year's facilitator was Jessica Kelly, former Women's Center intern and the current Program Manager for the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Campus Leadership Programs Department. Participants heard from representatives from USG about the "nuts and bolts" of running for an Undergraduate Student Government position. Rachel Conboy, current USG President; Haddiyah Ali, Commuter Senator; and Stephanie Sponzo, McMahan Senator, comprised this year's panel and shared their experiences running for various offices.

*-Kathy Fischer*

## FAITH AND FEMINISM PANEL

On February 11, 2016, I attended a panel that addressed how women of different faiths and views can derive strength and meaning from their respective religions. Venida Rodman Jenkins, Director of the Speicher-Rubin Women's Center for Equity and Diversity at New Jersey City University, moderated the discussion, encouraging audience participation while welcoming all faiths and views. Joyce Wong, a UConn alumna and Assistant Area Director for the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in the Hartford area, and Jocelyn Linnekin, an anthropology professor at UConn, participated in the panel. The panel created a safe space to talk about religion – as UConn does not offer a religion or theology major. This allowed the panelists and audience to discuss the issues around faith that they felt were most important and pressing, in a university setting.

Wong, when asked about what she thought were the most pressing issues regarding faith and feminism, stressed that churches do not make it clear that God is not a man – that instead, the Father and Son represent an important relationship. Churches do not always make this clear, possibly sending a message that God is a man, instead of stressing the strong bond between people of faith and their God. Wong also expressed concern over the silence around women's issues within religious communities, and how women need to have their voices heard.

Professor Linnekin, when asked what she thought were the most pressing issues regarding faith and feminism, stated passionately that the University of Connecticut does not allow for an environment of religious tolerance through a lack of religion/theology majors. Learning about the diversity of religions helps to combat stereotypes common in Western culture. Professor Linnekin stressed the need for religious tolerance and acceptance within the student body and University administration.



Photo credit:  
[http://m5.paperblog.com/i/31/316309/musings-on-the-now-conference-faith-and-femin-L\\_ic5QH.jpeg](http://m5.paperblog.com/i/31/316309/musings-on-the-now-conference-faith-and-femin-L_ic5QH.jpeg)

Then, the question was turned to the audience. If someone is transgender, how can they find strength and meaning in their religion if their religious community, friends, and/or family are not respectful to them? If a woman wants an abortion, but is still connected to her faith and religious community that may be against abortion, how can she find peace? The separation of culture and faith was also asked about – how do religion and religious texts become warped by culture to create certain standards and/or stereotypes? How can culture change a religious text's interpretation or reception? Linnekin, in response to these questions, stressed that reading feminist interpretations of religious texts may be beneficial to the audience. Linnekin stressed the diversity of religions and individual choice – that a person has options and the ability to find a religion that matches their values. Citing centuries of revisions and translations to scriptures, Linnekin made it clear that religion is up to interpretation, and should not be taken literally. Rodman Jenkins responded from a different angle – that religious communities should welcome all, and that these communities must adapt and change to the needs of their constituents.

Overall, faith was found to be empowering to women, and in unique ways – through creating a safe, welcoming space for everyone, while encouraging self reflection, connection to self, and a challenge to abide by what one believes. The panel itself provided a safe space to discuss faith and feminism, and their empowerment for all.

*-Amy Clarke*



## NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHTS

*We are delighted to welcome a host of new staff here at the Women's Center!*



### **Amy Clarke**

"I am an English and Human Rights double major. I am from the shoreline town of Clinton, CT."

### ***What is your position here at the Women's Center?***

"I am the writing intern here!"

### ***Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?***

"I applied to work at the Women's Center because I wanted to use something I feel I am strong at and enjoy (writing) for a cause and purpose that is meaningful. The Women's Center is such a supportive environment, and I am thrilled to be a part of such an amazing organization!"

### ***What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?***

"One of my favorite things about the Women's Center is the discussions we have with each other regarding important intersectional issues. Research into these topics and discussion around them is so important when writing for the Women's Center. I am excited to be a part of the staff here, to contribute and listen to these conversations, so I can be better informed in my everyday interactions and provide meaningful writing around important issues."

### **Asahi Hoque**

"I am a Molecular & Cell Biology & Human Rights double major from Cheshire, CT. My pronouns are she, her, and hers."

### ***What is your position here at the Women's Center?***

"I am a VAWPP Ambassador."

### ***Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?***

"Gender-based violence is something that has affected a lot of my friends and family, and I really wanted to do something about it on our campus. Moreover, I have had great experiences and made great friends at the Women's Center, so I definitely wanted to stay involved."

### ***What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?***

"Getting to know more people and going to as many of the great programs everyone puts together."





## NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHTS



### Jacqueline Pagano

"I am a Communication major and WGSS minor from Brookfield, CT."

#### *What is your position here at the Women's Center?*

"I am a teaching assistant for the VAWPP class as well as a VAWPP ambassador."

#### *Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?*

"After taking the VAWPP class last year, I was inspired to get more involved in the activist work that the program does involving peer education. I also felt that working at the Women's Center was a great opportunity to be a part of a community that shares my feminist values and would also help me learn and grow."

#### *What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?*

"I'm looking forward to being a part of various Women's Center events this semester, particularly Take Back the Night. I also am excited to help inspire and support a new group of VAWPP students."

### Asadie Walters

"I am a Psychology and Human Development & Family Studies double major from New Haven, CT."

#### *What is your position here at the Women's Center?*

"I am one of the VAWPP Ambassadors. We'll be working on programming events like Take Back The Night, Project Unbreakable, among many others."

#### *Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?*

"After attending Take Back the Night 2015 I just knew I had to get involved! So I applied and became a Peer Facilitator for VAWPP in the fall and of course wanted to continue working here so applied for the Ambassador position. My hope is joining/working at the Women's Center would help me be a part of the change that is happening, needs to happen on our campus."

#### *What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?*

"What I'm looking forward to most in my experience here at the Women's Center is building a relationship with the community of leaders that work here. Of course, building a relationship with my fellow Ambassadors but also branching out to other Women's Center staff because we are all sort of here to do the same job. Hoping to learn from them, and share my knowledge as well."



## MEN'S PROJECT

The 2016 Men's Project is well underway. With the help of Men's Project alumni, the Men's Project hosted a recruitment tabling event in the Student Union last semester centered around the theme #ManCrushMonday, a play on the popular hashtag in which members of the community were invited to write about a man that inspires them and read the entries left by others. We hope our event inspired men to express admiration for other men and to celebrate the positive attributes of men. It is because of the tabling event and other recruitment efforts of Women's Center staff, and other members of the UConn campus community, that the Men's Project has doubled its membership from last year.

The Men's Project is an 11-week Sexual Assault Prevention and Bystander Intervention Program for student leaders who want to get more involved in the campus conversation to combat sexual assault. Facilitators Varun Khattar and Lori Carriere are in their second year of co-facilitating the Men's Project together and are excited to be working with a new cohort of men committed to the cause.

Members of the Men's Project have been working hard to talk with each other and other men about gender role socialization. To facilitate the conversation, the Men's Project as a group attended "Man Up!" a presentation by Dr. Michael Kimmel, a sociologist who specializes in masculinities and teaches at Stony Brook University in New York. The USG Student Development Committee co-sponsored the event with the Women's Center and the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life. In his talk, Michael Kimmel discussed the social privileges afforded to men, called for more men to be involved in gender equity, argued that rather than being a zero sum game, feminism benefits men as well as women, and fielded questions on how men can work to promote gender equity by holding each other accountable and supporting each other to go against the grain of mainstream culture.

After the lecture, the Men's Project stuck around to have critical dialogue on the lecture and think about the ways in which the Men's Project can build on and critique the ideas presented as a group in subsequent meetings to help us do the work of promoting men's efforts to reduce gendered violence. Other efforts planned by the Men's Project facilitators this year include: engaging alumni and current Men's Project participants for a social event on campus to connect people who are doing this work together; presenting at Take Back the Night; and, thinking through ways the participants can go back to their respective communities to with the lessons learned in the Men's Project.

*-Lori Carriere*

## CALL FOR CULTURAL CENTER EX-OFFICIO SENATORS

Student workers and volunteers of the Women's Center and other cultural centers on UConn's Storrs campus should consider bringing their voice to the University's student government. Ex-officio senators and members of the USG's senate are selected every year by the President, approved by the Senate and, through participation, give members of cultural centers a stronger connection to the voice of student government at UConn.

Students from cultural centers serving as ex-officio senators serve on committees and provide valued input with speaking rights at every step of the student government process. While ex-officios currently do not have voting rights in the Senate, they are able to write and introduce legislation and largely shape student government activity as it starts through committees. There have also been some efforts to provide voting rights to ex-officio senators, and such changes may be made by future structural committees or constitution changes.

If you feel strongly about the student government endorsing changes from increasing diversity training to exploring affordable textbooks to rebranding the Celeron Path and rejecting the Safe Campus Act, talk to your cultural center director and ask to meet with the USG President about your interest in an ex-officio role. Ex-officio senators can be appointed and join the organization at any time during the year, and USG leaders are always looking to bring in more voices to help student government better serve students.

*-Bennett Cognato*

## WOMEN'S CENTER STAFF ROCKS!

*We want to dedicate a portion of this edition of **Voices** to celebrate our wonderful staff who are constantly accomplishing great things, and making us proud!*

*"I made the Dean's List for the first time!"*

*"I helped organize a protest in El Paso, Texas to call for an end to the criminalization of immigrant and border communities!"*

*"I got a 46/50 on my first public speech (and public speaking terrifies me!)."*

*"I got a perfect score on a psych exam!"*

*"I turned 21 and got to see Bruce Springsteen in concert!"*



Photo Credit: Sean Flynn/ UConn Photo

**Carol Millette**

Our Administrative Assistant, Carol, recently won the Outstanding Peer Award at the annual UConn Spirit Awards!

***Congratulations, Carol!***



## ALPHA KAPPA LAMBDA IGNITE CHALLENGE

We have great news! The campus-wide Ignite Challenge has kicked off and this year, the gentlemen of Alpha Kappa Lambda have banded together in order to raise money for the Women's Center. Every Spring, Alpha Kappa Lambda hosts their annual philanthropy event "These Hands Don't Hurt," in which they aim to raise awareness of, and have students take pledges against, domestic violence by posting a colorful paper hands to the "pledge wall". This year is Alpha Kappa Lambda's first Ignite Challenge and they are excited to work hand-in-hand with the Women's Center once again. Together, Alpha Kappa Lambda and the UConn Women's Center seek to educate individuals and organizations about healthy relationships and take strides towards ending domestic violence. Join the campaign! It's on us to end domestic violence!

You can follow the campaign at the following links:

**Website:** [https://uconn.givecorps.com/projects/10681-ignite-2016-ak-women-s-center-end-domestic-violence?entity\\_id=uconn](https://uconn.givecorps.com/projects/10681-ignite-2016-ak-women-s-center-end-domestic-violence?entity_id=uconn)

**Twitter:** @akl\_uconn **Instagram:** @akl\_uconn

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/Alpha-Kappa-Lambda-Connecticut-657886600889113/>

*-Kristian Schif*



Credit: Alpha Kappa Lambda

## CALL FOR ALUMNI SUBMISSIONS

Are you an alumni/ae of the Women's Center or VAWPP? We want to hear from you! Send us stories about life after UConn. How has being a part of the Women's Center or VAWPP impacted your life so far? In what ways has your feminism developed since leaving campus? Share your experiences, goals, and accomplishments:

University of Connecticut Women's Center

Unit 3118, 2110 Hillside Road

Storrs, CT 06269-3118

Tel: (860) 486-4738

Fax: (860) 486-1104

E-mail: [womenscenter@uconn.edu](mailto:womenscenter@uconn.edu)



## LETTER FROM THE WRITING INTERN

During an interview for a service advisor position at a car dealership, I came in – suit, resume, and references ready – to be asked, “Your last name. It’s interesting. Are you married?”

For beginners, there are roughly 74,689 people in the U.S. with my last name. If you want to count the “no ‘e’ at the end” variants, that brings it to 729,522 people. My last name, to my knowledge, is actually quite common. It’s one syllable - pretty uninteresting, if you ask me.

But at the beginning of the interview, I was asked, “Are you married?” And as I stammered over an appropriate response, I muttered, “No...not yet..?” The interview, from that point on, was a solid indicator that even if I *did* get the job, I would not want to work there. But I was dumbfounded. I was qualified for the position. I was professional. What did my marital status have to do with *anything*?

When I got to my car to leave, I sat inside and stared at the steering wheel, feeling numb. I felt my self-worth slip from my palms – was my marital status, my “man,” more important than any achievements I would make or any experience I would gain? Was me being a woman going to limit me for the rest of my life? Why was I asked if I was married? Why did it matter?

In my previous experience at a valet company, I pictured myself as a highly independent woman, just as capable as my male co-workers. I was running just as fast, if not faster, than they were. I did not shy from the “dirty work” or “hard labor” – shoveling walkways, and standing in the rain and cold, just as they were. I did my best to go above and beyond for customers, no matter what. I prided myself on these things.

But, apparently, those things don’t matter. Because I am a woman, my worth is determined by the man who gives me a ring. My professional achievements, including swiftly climbing the ladder of a company in less than a year, do not mean anything in comparison to the assumed likelihood I’ll need maternal leave for future children. I didn’t know “single and ready to mingle” was a professional requirement.

I am interning at the Women’s Center because I want to have the strength to say, if ever asked something like that again in an interview (despite the question itself being illegal), “I do not see how that question relates to my qualifications for this position.” I am proud of, and finding power in, being a woman. I no longer feel a sense of unease in the pit of my stomach at the word “feminism.” I am a feminist, and have embraced this.

It is my hope that with continued efforts through places like the Women’s Center, one day women won’t have to answer to a marriage question in an interview. One day, our incredible achievements will shadow our intersectional, societal oppression.

-Amy Clarke

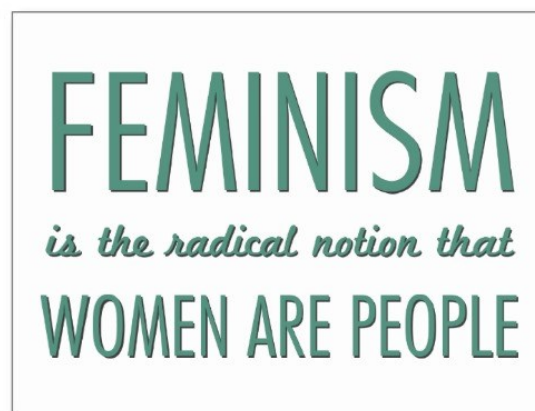


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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I recently attended *Man Up!*, a talk given by renowned masculinities expert, Dr. Michael Kimmel. Dr. Kimmel spoke about a number of important topics, including recognizing privilege and breaking down gender roles. His final words were a call of action to all men: speak up. He asked every man in the audience to stand up and pledge to speak out in situations of sexism and racism, no matter how uncomfortable it might be.

Afterwards, I turned to my male friend and asked him what he thought about the lecture. He said it was interesting, but he hadn't wanted to stand up and take the pledge at the end. He explained that it felt trivial, and that speaking up in situations of oppression is something that everyone in the room already knows about. Furthermore, simply standing up and making the pledge doesn't actually make it easier to do in real life.

I'm sure there were others in the audience who had the same thoughts, so I want to use this space to address them:

Making a pledge to speak out against sexism and racism is never trivial. How could making a pledge to fight oppression ever be trivial? What if there were people in the room who, before Dr. Kimmel's lecture, were not aware of male privilege? Perhaps there were men in the audience who spent the evening reevaluating the way they act around their friends, family, and coworkers, and found that they could improve the way they speak out? Those men might be making changes to their lifestyles right now, changes that could improve not only their lives, but the lives of those around them.

Say there weren't men like that in the audience. Even if every man in the room had already made the decision to speak up in oppressive situations, think about the impact the pledge might have had on everyone who was listening. Imagine all of the siblings, friends, and significant others who have now been reassured that a man in their lives has promised to stand up for them. For some people, a promise like that can mean everything. It can mean feeling safe around someone you weren't sure would stand up for you. It can mean being inspired by that person to speak out yourself.

My friend wasn't wrong about the pledge making the action seem easier than it really is. It is hard to speak out, especially when it's against a friend or a loved one. But that doesn't mean it's impossible. And we can't afford to think that it's impossible, because then that attitude is reflected in our actions. No one will even try to speak out, either because they think it's too difficult, or because they don't think it will make a difference.

Dr. Kimmel spoke about how it's not supposed to be easy, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try. It takes courage to be the kind of person who speaks out when no one else will, but I fully believe that everyone has it in them to be courageous.

So, if you weren't listening to Dr. Kimmel's call to action, here it is again. Stand up. Speak out. Words have power, but only if you use them. You are making a difference, even if it doesn't seem like it at the time. You don't have to be brave all the time, or even most of the time. But if you see someone in need, or hear something hurtful, find the courage to speak up. If there's even a chance that doing something small like making a pledge will change someone's life, do it.

-Emily Cantor

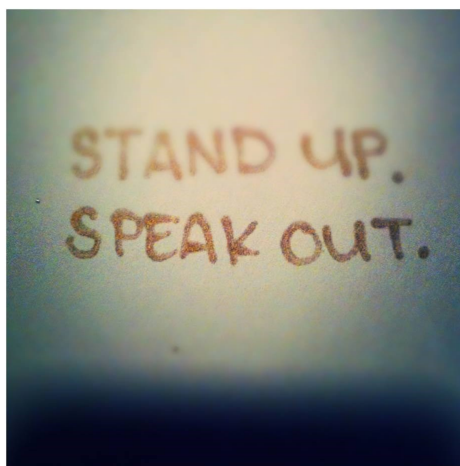


Photo credit:

<https://feministsunitedatx.wordpress.com/2013/08/28/evening-rally-for-speakout-another-ut-austin-student-of-color-attacked-by-bleach-bomb/>