



VOICES

TOGETHERNESS, CHANGES, HAPPINESS, FEMINIST

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Care – concern – kindness – support. These were just some of the themes that students shared at our end of the semester celebration on the last day of classes. They talked about how they found a community that shared their passion to make a difference and to challenge ourselves and our institutions to be more inclusive. They noted their struggles with seeking balance and the importance of self-care. They shared advice and suggestions for future programs. They planned for how to maintain their connections with each other and with the Center.

In this edition, you'll get to hear directly from our graduating seniors about what stands out for them about their time at UConn. And while, I'm not convinced that the plan they've hatched for monthly get-togethers of our alums will come to fruition, I know their experience will facilitate their bond with each other and with the Center beyond their time at UConn, as evidenced in "Reflections of a Professional VAWPPER." You'll find articles about some of our Spring programs, which focused on everything from heart health, sex trafficking, and women's contributions to STEM. We also recognized Women's Herstory and Sexual Assault Months. Finally, we are so appreciative of the efforts of Alpha Kappa Lambda, who not only took the initiative to participate in the Ignite Challenge (a student focused crowdfunding competition sponsored by the UConn Foundation), but who won the competition and raised over \$9,700 to support VAWPP and the ongoing programs and services at the Center.

Graduation serves as a time for reflection – on past accomplishments and challenges; on what sustains our progress; and on how we are positioned for whatever comes next. With the end of this academic year, we said goodbye to a significant number of our student staff. Many of those students have been affiliated with the Center for 2, 3, even their whole 4-year tenure at UConn. But our job is to be but one landing place on their journeys. Hopefully, one that expanded their capacity for critical thinking, their understanding of the world beyond their own experiences, and their sense of belonging. The thank you notes, tokens of appreciation, and the amount of tissues used at our celebration let me know we are often meeting those goals.

Kathleen Holgerson



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GO RED FOR WOMEN - HEART HEALTH

The Go Red for Women movement has been around since 2004 thanks to the American Heart Association. However, fundraising and bringing awareness to cardiovascular disease as a workshop for the Women's Center has been in the making since my sophomore year. The American Heart Association created Go Red for Women, which is an emotional, passionate, social initiative that is designed to empower women to take charge of their heart health.

The mission of this wonderful initiative was brought to my attention by my Women's Center supervisor, Carol Millette, in the beginning of my second year at the Center. Carol stated to me that one of her previous student employees, who now works with the American Heart Association, introduced her to the website and fundraising. Once I heard this story, I was energized to try and create a fundraiser sponsored by the Women's Center. However, at the time we didn't know if we wanted to have just a fundraiser, or a workshop as well, to bring awareness and lifestyle changes that can be used to lower the risk of cardiovascular disease.

This year with the help of our Body Image/Health committee, I was able to lead a workshop with a general overview, detailed resources, and giveaways surrounding heart disease and stroke. Along with that, we also did blood pressure screenings so that individuals could learn how important it is to keep track of this particular measurement when looking at their risk factors. Go Red for Women sponsors national "Wear Red Day" every year, along with different fundraising efforts, to support research to discover scientific knowledge about heart health and have the most up-to-date guidelines that women can follow and tailor to lower their overall risk. These efforts, along with our event, bring awareness and education to this health issue and can lead to healthier lives.



Photo Credit: goredforwomen.org

-Meteyana Miller

ACTIVIST IDENTITY RETREAT

The mission of the Activist Identity Retreat (AIR) is to foster dialogue amongst UConn's activist community around intersectionality and identity through the sharing of information and experience, and creating a space of rejuvenation for activist fatigue. This program seeks to fulfill this mission through a series of separate, but connected sessions. These sessions focus on topics such as unpacking social identities and lived experiences; connecting identities with activist causes; participating in multi-level analysis of issues, concerns, or problems in our community; unpacking privilege; and engaging in conversations about self-care.

I co-facilitate AIR with Johanna Debari and Dominic Ortiz. Kathleen Holgerson also has been aiding in the preparation process. We have put a good amount of work into developing the AIR mission, content, and overall planning for the program. I think that the retreat has been successful based on participant feedback and engagement during the sessions. Participants have expressed that they found the activities to be useful, felt like they are more comfortable being vulnerable, and reflected on identities that they hadn't thought about.

Personally, I have learned so much from co-facilitating the retreat. I have learned to adapt when unforeseen obstacles present themselves, to facilitate in a way that encourages dialogue, and be okay with imperfection. I'm incredibly grateful for this experience, and I am excited to see how this program will develop after I begin my next chapter.

-Huong Nguyen

GET IN FORMATION WITH JAMILAH LEMIEUX

This year, for the opening of Women's Herstory Month, the Women's Center welcomed Jamilah Lemieux, Senior Editor at *Ebony* magazine, as the keynote speaker. Her lecture, "Get In Formation: Finding the Feminism That Fits You," explored the challenges of fitting our identities into our individual feminisms, while at the same time recognizing the experiences of others. She stressed the importance of listening, and making spaces for people to be heard. It is important to look beyond your own experiences in order to understand and appreciate the struggle of others, because positive change cannot occur unless everyone's voices are being heard. She recognized that this is easier said than done, claiming that intersectionality is a goal to be achieved, not something everyone expects from you right away. Feminism is a lifelong journey, and while you should strive to be the best you can be, it's ok not to be perfect.



Photo Credit: Zhelun Lang/*The Daily Campus*

Ms. Lemieux strongly encouraged the audience, particularly college students, to get involved in social movements now rather than later. She expressed regret that she wasn't more involved when she was in school, because young people are the driving force behind most meaningful social changes. College is the best time to create the spaces needed for people to speak out, and students should take advantage of it while they still can.

She also cautioned against overstepping your limits. It's important to acknowledge that activism can be exhausting, and that it's ok to practice self-care when you need to; to recognize that there are others fighting the same cause, and that you don't have to do it all by yourself. Pick and choose when and where you can give the most effort, but never forget how important it is to take time for yourself.

-Emily Cantor

BROKEN PROMISES

The Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) recently partnered with the Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center to co-sponsor the play *Broken Promises*. Written by Olga Sanchez and directed by Francisco Garcia, this bilingual play follows the story of young men and women who become trapped in the world of sex trafficking. Performed by only four actors, *Broken Promises* explores the stigmas behind prostitution, and reveals how easy it is to become involved in sex trafficking, as well as how hard it is to get out.

The play was followed by a panel discussion where audience members were encouraged to discuss the themes of the play.

Huong Nguyen, Graduate Assistant at the Women's Center, commented on the play:

"I thought the performers in *Broken Promises* did a fantastic job, and I loved that the play is bilingual (Spanish and English). The story behind the performance spoke to real-life situations in how women end up in the world of sex trafficking. It was an intensely emotional play, and I think it's important to debrief with someone afterwards."

-Emily Cantor



Photo credit: Jennifer Morenus,

AMPLIFYING THE VOICES ON THE GROUND

On March 5th, the Women's Center hosted a forum with the leaders of some of Connecticut's legislative commissions that advocate for women and racial and ethnic minorities. The panel was facilitated by Evelyn Simien, Professor of Political Science and Africana Studies at UConn, and featured Mui Mui Hin-McCormick, Executive Director of the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, Glenn Cassis, Executive Director of the African-American Affairs Commission, and Carolyn Treiss, Executive Director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. The goal of this program was to create a space to center issues for communities that are traditionally marginalized; make visible barriers to progress and engagement; and identify strategies to empower and engage the electorate. I felt that the panel covered a wide variety of topics under the conceptualization of how race, gender, and many other forms of identification matter. The main topics that were discussed focused on how these issues of concern are integral to understanding how to change the perceptions and actions of global citizens. The topics that stood out to me the most included discussions on intersectionality through perspectives of feminism, ableism, racism and societal actions after the event.

The first part of the discussion centered around the displacement of Asian refugees who were forced out of their homes to seek refuge and safety within another country. Much of this conversation centered around the acclimation of the refugees within the American culture, as well as the specific needs of those who had disabilities within the refugee population. Ms. Hin-McCormick highlighted how feminism and race were not as big of an issue as many would suspect due to the open reception and aid that they received from the small community in Connecticut. The conversation continued with Mr. Cassis discussing the importance of knowing our history, and sharing his experience as an African American college student during some of this country's greatest civil rights changes. He spoke on how he was treated within the collegiate community at the time, and how being a man of color influenced him to continue to speak out against political violations against persons of color. Lastly, Ms. Treiss discussed her work and experiences as a woman facing systematic gender violence and oppression on an individual and institutional level. She explained that though she could relate to aspects of what the other speakers were saying, there is a distinct difference between each of the issues. Having recognized this she started to speak in a more intersectional realm of thought to capture how all of the topics at hand are connected through the social injustice practices.

Overall, what made the event powerful, was the opportunity for individuals to be able to have an intellectual space to consider the intersection of different socio-political theories and how they affect perceptions of the individual. Personally, I enjoyed the multiple stories that each speaker shared in addition to the academic commentary that they had to follow. Having this personal connection with those who came made the event more of an analysis about the American system and how it has become a place not only for learning about the social injustices, but how to change the way we perceive and discuss them. In the end, much like the words that the speakers left the audience with, I too believe that discussions such as these will leave everlasting impacts on those we talk to.

-Castella Copeland and Kathy Fischer



Left to right: Evelyn Simien, Mui Mui Hin-McCormick, Glenn Cassis, and Carolyn Treiss.



Photo Credit: Jason Jiang/The Daily Campus

USE YOUR VOICE CONCERT

GRAMMY® Award-winning singer/songwriter Patty Griffin teamed with artists Sara Watkins and Anais Mitchell for a U.S. tour and voter engagement drive in conjunction with the League of Women Voters. The Women's Center partnered with Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts to host this concert as part of Women's Herstory Month.

After attending this concert, I felt that I gained a greater appreciation for folksong/ballad music by the end of their performance. An integral part of this included listening to the stories and memories of their lives through the music they sang. Initially, I was a bit uneasy since I saw the genre of music they all sing is folksong/ballad style, and I had the common misperception that this was the same as country music.

Thus, when the concert started, I thought I wasn't going to enjoy it too much since it had a country swing and twang to it that I don't listen to on a normal basis. I then thought about the audience and saw how packed the theater was, full of individuals who genuinely appreciated and yearned for endless amounts of ballads and journeys that they were about to take us on.



Photo Credit: Castella Copeland

Despite these initial thoughts, I kept an open mind to the songs and messages that the singers had throughout the concert to fully engage myself in a new experience. As a whole, I felt that the concert was very fun and had many moments of their personal lives embedded within the songs. All three of these singers rotated throughout the performance to share a bit more about themselves and about the origins of the songs that they wrote. A majority of the songs were written in a ballad/story structure that took the audience on a journey through the emotions, settings, and people within the songs. I enjoyed listening to how they crafted the songs with specific words that triggered us to think of the countryside. They also prefaced most of their songs with a backstory for everyone to keep in mind before they started the song. Though it didn't quite make sense at first, after the first few songs, I enjoyed hearing more about why each singer writes and the impact that music has had on their lives. Specifically, each of the women would take the lead on a song and then switch to a different lead singer. While one of them led the song the other two played accompaniment on the guitar, drums, or tambourine. I thought that this was an interesting style to bring all three of these singers together since they are all originally solo artists. All three talked about how they all decided to go on tour together to get more young women and young voters out to the polls. To encourage them to do so, they all decided to try something new and come together for a great cause. I was surprised to find out that they all weren't already a group together, but felt very humbled within all of their presences.

Each of these singers had a few songs where they would sing a solo or have an instrumental solo on their instrument, but their overall attitude and cohesive abilities to harmonize and blend with one another's styles was what made the concert very fascinating and captivating. By the end of the performance, everyone wanted to continue to listen to the stories and smooth high blend of their voice intonation. To be honest, I was surprised at how well the singers worked together considering that each had their own eclectic style of instruments and diction within the songs they wrote. Personally, I enjoyed the songs that they all sang in harmony with because it amplified the meaning behind the song and gave it a fuller and more well rounded feeling. This means that the tone had major chord harmonies, which are more commonly seen as the notes that strike each person's brainwaves and nerve endings into getting goosebumps. Some of the songs that had this effect on me and many individuals in the audience include: "Hades Wall," "Moon River," and "Prayer." Surprisingly enough, each of these songs was lead by a different singer, and yet, I felt so enlightened by each of them.

At the end of the concert, I felt pleased to have attended, not only to be a Women's Center representative, but to learn more about a genre of music that I could possibly explore and look into more. I was inspired to write more because, as a poet, I listen to lyrics and get new ideas from everything around me. Having gone to this concert, I felt refreshed with new ideas and concepts to play around with and considered writing music. One of the singers discussed what it was like to write music, and I thought that her style of how she writes music is very similar to how I write poetry. Even though I don't think I will be writing a song anytime soon, it's fun to not only feel humbled, refreshed, educated, and inspired after the concert, but to know that these group of women are profoundly impacting individuals and communities with their music.

-Castella Copeland

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT



Wafa Simpore

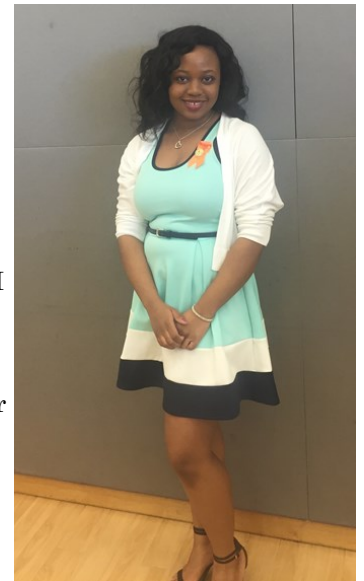
My name is Wafa Simpore, and I am a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) major. Graduating with a Bachelors in the Arts will show partially how far I've come as an individual and a feminist in my time at the University of Connecticut. As an undergrad, I've been the Vice President of UNICEF Campus Initiative, a Women's Center Intern, Sister of Nu Gamma Sigma Sigma National Service Sorority, a facilitator for the Violence Against Women Prevention Program, and Community Outreach Alternative Spring Break participant. Becoming so involved in servicing the UConn community has allowed me to fulfill my role as a feminist and advocate to as many people as I can reach. Finding my voice in a crowded sea, and constantly challenging ideals with an analytical mind, has been my most rewarding take away from being a WGSS major and a UConn student. Post graduation, I will be joining the workforce in a non-profit organization in hopefully either domestic violence or adult education.

Meteyana Miller

I am a Nursing major and I plan to begin my professional career as an Registered Nurse licensed in Connecticut. My goal is to be accepted into a residency program and to gain experience on either a medical-surgical telemetry floor, cardiac unit, or pediatrics. I would also like to return to school for my Masters Degree, hopefully either as a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner, or Family Nurse Practitioner.

Every moment from my first day at the Women's Center has been memorable. However, I would have to say that finally putting on my Go Red for Women Heart Health Workshop is at the top of the list. This is because it has been a potential program since my sophomore year, and it finally all came together in my senior year. Another thing that will be memorable for me is my growth as an individual. Over the last 4 years, the Center has pushed me to share my story, to be confident in my opinions, and has taught me how to view issues in a different light.

In terms of accomplishments, my biggest one would be making it to the end of my Nursing program. This is an accomplishment that I thought would take forever to complete, and I am finally reaching the end. I am excited for the new chapter of my life that is about to begin. I am also sad about my UConn chapter coming to the end and leaving the Women's Center.



Jacqueline Pagano

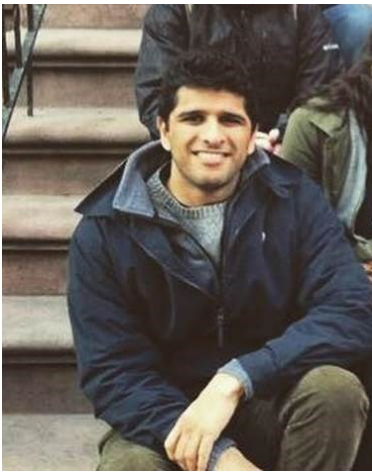


I am getting a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and minoring in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

A goal of mine in the future is to continue to work for a place that values the discussion and prevention of gender-based violence and other related issues.

Something I am undoubtedly proud of is all of the hard work and effort that myself and the other VAWPP ambassadors, along with the assistance of the Women's Center staff, put in to Take Back the Night. At times it felt overwhelming, but I'm glad that we were able to work collaboratively and prevail in planning an event that means so much to us.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT



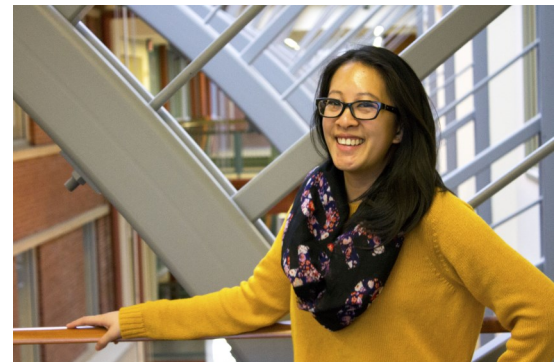
Varun Khattar

I will be completing my Bachelor's degree in Sociology after three years of involvement in the Women's Center as a VAWPP and Men's Project facilitator. In one week, I will be moving to Nebaj, Guatemala to train and supervise interns for a non-profit supporting social entrepreneurs in delivering products and services to promote public health, gender equity, and economic development. Upon returning, I hope to continue to support and advocate for immigrant youth and families as a member of the student support staff at Windham Public Schools and a community organizer with Connecticut Students for a Dream. One of my main post-graduate goals is to invest in developing a healthy sense of self and positive relationships with friends and family in order to ground and sustain myself in the lifelong struggle for collective liberation.

I cannot believe it was over three years ago when I stood on the Take Back the Night stage and performed Coldplay's "The Scientist" with my a cappella group after the keynote speaker retold her survivor narrative and watching tears stream down audience members' faces. Applying to join the VAWPP class in the Fall of 2013 was one of the best decisions of my undergraduate career, as it led to the opportunity to get involved in the Title IX movement and summer VAWPP, in the final year before its elimination. During this period, I embraced my political identity, helped organize my first protest, and was first introduced to the concepts of intersectionality, self-care, and community of practice. I'd like to offer my deepest gratitude to the bold, fearless leadership of Nicole Simonsen, Carolyn Luby, Rose Richi, Brittne Carrier, Martina Powell, Jose Figueroa, May Mango, Vanessa Lovelace, Caryl Nuñez, Heather Turcotte, and Lauren Donais, among others, whose influence in the earliest stages of my feminism shaped the person I am today. Of course, that person is still a major work in progress, and I look forward to continuing my journey of unlearning internalized notions of misogyny and male supremacy and sharpening the tools to practice active solidarity with women, trans, and gender non-conforming folks for years to come.

Huong Nguyen

I will be graduating with a Master of Arts in Higher Education & Student Affairs. I plan on working for a few years before entering graduate school again, particularly looking at jobs in areas such as academic advising and TRiO programs. My most memorable moment in the Women's Center would have to be when I co-facilitated/planned the Activist Identity Retreat (AIR). I enjoyed working with other graduate students and Kathleen to develop a program for UConn student activists. The participants in the retreat also gave me life! I will miss all the Women's Center staff members and the wonderful conversations around social justice, gender equity, and food!



Lori Carriere

I've greatly enjoyed my time co-facilitating the Men's Project with Varun Khattar at the Women's Center over the last two years. The Men's Project tends to attract really great people, and it has been very rewarding to get to watch everyone go on their personal journey and become more involved in sexual assault prevention at UConn. I'll be defending my dissertation in English this summer and will begin MFA work at Rutgers-Camden in the fall, where I will also be teaching composition.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT



Jovonne Pullen

My name is Jovonne Alicia Pullen. I am graduating with a major in Sociology and a minor in Africana Studies.

After graduating I plan on taking the time to work so that I can begin paying off loans. In 2017, I will apply to graduate school (hopefully SCSU), where I will be pursuing my Master's Degree in Social Work. From there I hope to work in Yale New Haven Hospital through the Social Work department until I am able to begin pursuing my dream of building my own non-profit organization.

My most memorable moment at the Women's Center would be hard to pinpoint honestly, because I have experienced so many different things, but I think the most memorable was the first time I represented the Women's Center at the Homecoming football game. Though it was cold and early, I still enjoyed my time, especially seeing all those alumni/ae come back to enjoy the day. Being that I'm about to graduate in such a short time, I can understand their love for the University.

I am someone who is very active within the University, and I wanted to make sure that I left this school without a single rock unturned. I am happy that I was able to work at the Women's Center for all 4 years of my undergraduate career, was president of the Nu Mu chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated, and was a part of many boards and organizations including National Pan-Hellenic Council, Voices of Freedom, Poetic Release, Sisters Inspiring Sisters, VP of Student Affairs Student Leadership Council Women's Center representative, and so much more. I'm happy for the connections I have made and the woman I am leaving as because of everything UConn has offered me.

Bennett Cognato

I am graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, and will be teaching as a Connecticut elementary school teacher this fall through Teach for America, while also working on a masters program in Education through Johns Hopkins University.

My most memorable moment at the Women's Center was probably getting to know everyone at orientation, which was a huge learning experience, as well as being able to talk about women in politics and student leadership during ElectHer with students and State Senator Mae Flexer.

I'm proud to have been able to work in the Women's Center this year, and to have worked with Undergraduate Student Government and others to support affirmative consent and resources for survivors of sexual assault during my time at UConn. Now onto finding new ways to advocate for anti-racist feminism in my work going forward.



Emily Cantor



I will be graduating with a Bachelors of Arts in English, a minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and a concentration in Creative Writing. I've worked as the editor for *Voices* for the past year, and I have enjoyed every minute of it. Working at the Women's Center has taught me so many things about feminism that I might have never learned otherwise. Every event, staff meeting, and conversation in the student office has been an incredible learning experience, and my only regret is that I hadn't learned about the Center sooner.

Out of every choice I've made during my time at UConn, choosing to walk through the doors of the Women's Center was my best one. I'm proud to say I feel confident entering the world armed with the tools I've gained here.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT



Maha Saleem

I am a Molecular Cell Biology major. Upon graduation I want to work in a medical clinic specifically for women's health and eventually attend medical school. My overall goal in life is to combine my passion for medicine and feminism to advance and improve the quality of lives for women.

One of my most memorable moments here at UConn is being inducted to the Connecticut's Women's Hall of Fame.

My memorable moments are consistent with my accomplishment of creating the Women's Center first

mentoring program, Women in STEM Mentorship. The accomplishment is understood for me at the personal level because I put so much work and passion individually into making sure it starts off with success and energy. My goal was to establish a community with an emphasis on mentorship, where women can share experiences, overcome barriers, and help other women in a field where they aren't much supported in. Next thing I knew, the mentees in the program were getting into research labs, jobs, and improving grades all because of the mentors I had paired them up with. From time to time, I occasionally spotted mentors with their mentees at dining halls and other events. So it was nice to see all of this come together in the end from just an idea.

Fallon Foster

I will be graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting. I am interning this summer in Hartford at PricewaterhouseCooper in their Tax Department. Next year, I will be studying for the CPA exam and hope to pass all of them by next spring! Eventually, I would like to move to Boston and work at a large accounting firm in their tax department! Before interning this summer, I am traveling to China and Japan to sight see and learn more about their cultures.

My most memorable moment of working at the Women's Center was facilitating the GASA (Greeks Against Sexual Assault) group each week. Getting to know a new group of people and being able to engage in conversation with them candidly was one of my favorite memories. To find other people in Greek life who share a similar passion of ending gender-based violence, and looking for ways to combat this problem at UConn, was very rewarding and a memory I will always cherish.

After transferring to UConn my sophomore year, I am so proud of myself for graduating ON TIME! Picking up extra courses during the semesters and all the late nights in the library have absolutely paid off, and I feel it is one of my biggest accomplishments!



Congratulations
Class of **2016**

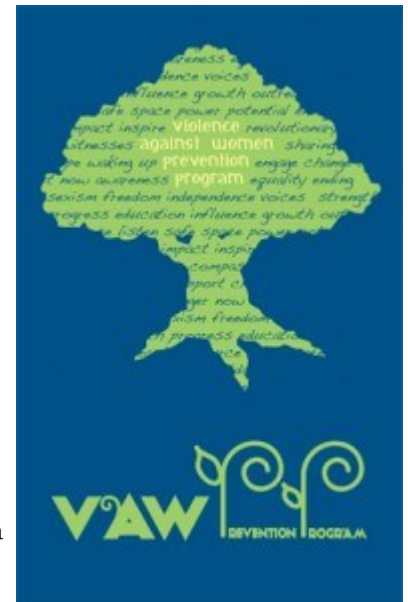
The Women's Center would like to thank all of its seniors for all of their hard work over the last few years.

REFLECTIONS OF A VAWPP T.A.

This semester, I had the opportunity to work for the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) in two capacities. While both positions I held were very rewarding experiences, I want to talk specifically about my time as a Teaching Assistant (TA) and the things I will take away from it. As many people may know, VAWPP's aim is to prevent gender-based violence, and one of the ways it does this is through its workshops. It's primary workshop, and perhaps it's most well known, is the Consent Workshop, which helps to give students a better understanding of UConn's definition of consent, as well as placing consent into a more everyday context. What might be lesser known, is that the students who facilitate these workshops usually go through a class first, WGSS 3271. In its current form, the class is used as a time to prepare students who are interested in becoming peer facilitators for the Consent Workshop during the fall semester, teaching them about how gender-based violence manifests in society, how it intersects with other forms of oppression, and about facilitating.

As previously mentioned, my role in all of this was as a Teaching Assistant for the class. I know when hearing that, people might assume my main responsibilities were grading, responding to emails, and attending class/meetings. And they would be right, however, that is just a surface level look at what was required of me in this position. These tasks are the tangible evidence of what my work was, but not entirely what it's all about. So, as has been challenged of me all semester, I want to continue by thinking more critically about the work I have done.

First and foremost, my main objective this semester was to provide support for the students in the class. Though it may not seem like it, grading and emailing are actually a few of the ways I accomplished this. By grading, I was able to assess where they were at with their understanding of the material, and if deemed necessary, provided constructive feedback (another thing this position has made me think about more strategically). While seemingly mundane, emailing proved useful in providing another element of support for students. Responding to questions, as well as checking in on students, has helped me feel that my role as a resource was being emphasized. Aside from these routine ways of giving support, I also have gained experience through more specific instances, namely, helping a group of students in the class organize a speaking piece for Take Back the Night. Navigating this was a bit challenging, especially because there were six students interested, each with their own voice and ideas. Offering them some encouragement and affirmation for their thoughts was perhaps a small gesture of support, but I think was what they needed to work together and combine their ideas. I kept in contact with them, staying updated on their progress, and the final product ended up being a powerful and thoughtful performance. Seeing them overcome these challenges made me reflective of other aspects of being a TA that I have encountered.



Facing challenges is something I am quite familiar with, particularly in this role. This is why problem solving was the other thing I focused on this semester. Every week we had TA meetings where we discussed and strategized about how to go about certain things. In these meetings, I was challenged to think critically about things as small as transitions from one activity to the next, or as large as providing feedback/correcting people politely. Sometimes the problems we faced felt unmanageable, but with some thoughtful discussion, they could be talked and reasoned out until we found our answer. On the other hand, sometimes the problems were larger than us and we were not able to arrive at a perfect solution, like with our recurring question, "How do we encourage people to speak and overcome the fear of being wrong?" As mentioned, we are still looking at how this can be achieved, but after much deliberation, I feel it's a question that doesn't come with a straightforward answer. While we can't always solve everything, my time as a TA has truly made me more thoughtful in my pursuit of answers.

Last year, when I was sitting in WGSS 3271 as a student, I would never have imagined myself taking on the role of a TA a year later. I initially wasn't going to apply for this job, but I'm so glad I did. This experience has been invaluable and I feel as though being in this position has taught me more than I ever could have expected.

-Jacqueline Pagano

SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and the Women's Center and VAWPP hosted a number of events to raise awareness. Amy Clarke, Writing Intern, goes into detail.

Tony Porter

On March 29, Tony Porter came to lecture at UConn. He has worked in social justice for over twenty years, and is internationally renowned for his work toward ending violence against women and advocating healthy masculinity. Mr. Porter spoke about the social structures of masculinity in

America, and men's part in ending violence against women. As the author of "Well Meaning Men...Breaking Out of the Man Box – Ending Violence Against Women" and co-founder of A CALL TO MEN: The Next Generation of Manhood, Mr. Porter offered perspective as a man and a father.

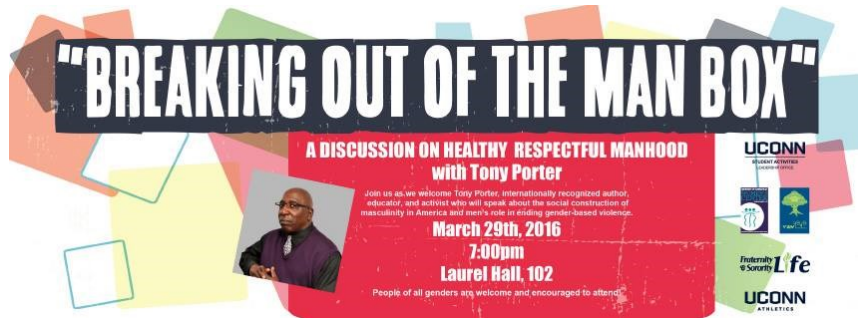


Photo Credit: Zhelun Lang/*The Daily Campus*

Jesus Moralez-Sanchez, part of the Women's Center staff, reflected on the event:

"I attended Tony Porter's lecture as part of The Men's Project. It was an interesting talk. After the event was over, everyone present from The Men's Project gathered together and discussed the event. We noticed that in certain ways it had been similar to Michael Kimmel's event in February in the sense that it was an effective way to talk about gender issues to those who are not exposed to social justice work and advocacy on a daily basis. However, something unique that he brought up was the perspective of a father. It is a side of the story that we usually don't hear much about.

Overall, it is always great to have speakers like him come and talk to students. Tony Porter not only came and challenged societal norms and expectations of what does it mean to be a man, but also showed that as men, we can be involved in the gender equity movement and call ourselves feminists."

Project Unbreakable

This semester, Project Unbreakable was again displayed in the Homer Babbidge Library from April 4th to April 8th. The exhibit included artwork, poetry, pictures, t-shirts, and posters submitted by those within the UConn community who have experienced sexual and gender-based violence. Project Unbreakable creates a space for survivors to share their stories, in efforts to raise awareness of sexual and gender-based violence while facilitating healing. The exhibit was semi-public and could only be seen upon entering.

This semester marks the fourth year that VAWPP has participated in Project Unbreakable, which was inspired by a national photography project started in 2011 by Grace Brown, in New York. The project seeks to raise awareness of sexual and gender-based violence, while allowing survivors to express themselves in a way that promotes healing. Since its inception, the project has extended to include submissions from survivors of child abuse and domestic violence.

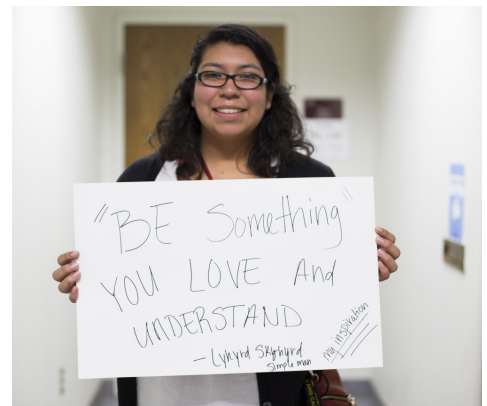


Photo Credit: Project Unbreakable

Take Back the Night

On April 13th, 2016, VAWPP hosted its annual Take Back the Night as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This was my first Take Back the Night, and I was admittedly a little nervous, as I knew that I could easily get very emotional, and was unsure how I would process the night.

The night opened with two cappella groups, including Rubyfruit and The Rolling Tones. As Rubyfruit's tones echoed through the Student Union Ballroom, I felt my eyes well up with tears as students united in heartbreak and healing. Despite there being over a hundred students, the room turned intimate. After several groups spoke out against sexual violence (including peers at the Women's Center), we took to the march across campus.



Equipped with candles, signs, and our voices, the chant across campus began: "2 4 6 8, no more violence, no more hate!" However, I noticed that the march was so large that, in the middle, some of the megaphone chants were difficult to hear. There were people who were unfamiliar with the chant (as I was, too) and felt uncomfortable speaking out without having done so before. But I could not march across campus in silence. So I started to chant as loud as I could, and the students around me joined in.

By the end of the march, we were one united voice. The creation of solidarity by just speaking up - whether I was in sync or not, whether I got all the words perfect, or stumbled a bit - was absolutely incredible. I felt empowered in that I helped to empower others in finding their voice to speak out against sexual violence. Cars honked at us in support, and students around campus peered from their dorm windows. Our message was heard, loud and clear: "Whatever we wear, wherever we go, YES means YES, NO means NO!"

We made our way to Celeron Path, infamously labeled the "Rape Trail," where former Undergraduate Student Government Senator, Stephanie Sponzo, kicked off the Celeron Path Beautification Project. The project is a student movement to stop the acceptance and perpetuation of rape culture on campus through beautifying and renaming the trail. As part of the project, five cherry trees were planted along the trail. These cherry trees will bloom in April, during Sexual Assault Awareness Month, to stand as a testament against sexual violence on campus.

We looped back around campus and returned to the Student Union Ballroom. Here, survivors of sexual violence were given a safe space to speak out about their experiences. I was amazed by the strength and courage students had to speak out, and was struck by the nature of the events, including ones that occurred on or around campus. Students snapped and raised their arms in support, facilitating healing.



However, there is still work to be done. During the march, I recall hearing a student shout from a hill, "Shut up!" Behind me, a male student asked his female friend, "Why are you still chanting?" as we were heading back from Celeron Path to the Student Union. I was alarmed by the amount of students who rose to speak out, knowing that there were still many more stories untold. For these reasons, Take Back the Night must continue. We must continue to take up space, and make our voices heard to stop sexual violence on campus. We must continue to unite, empower, and heal.

All Photo Credits: Chris Stumper

STEMINIST EXHIBIT

Despite the snowy weather conditions on the 4th of April (yes only in CT), the day kick-started with middle-school schools girls stopping by from Multiply Your Options Conference as part of the Engineering Diversity Program. The Women in STEM (WiS) mentors and mentees did a great job conversing and interacting with them and asking who their favorite woman in STEM is. One of the WiS mentors, Cristina Macklem, did a STEM talk on her journey abroad as a STEMInist.

I very much enjoyed talking to 8th grade girls, and I realized for the first time that I developed a passion for empowering young girls, because at that age, I didn't know gender bias and sexism even existed. Gender stereotypes start from a very young age as a toddler, where girls are placed in the category of non-STEM, pink dollhouses and toys that clearly reinforce a girl's role as only a child-bearing mother or a housewife. By then, girls have developed a unconscious bias, a strict gender identity of associating math with boys. The recruitment and retention of women in STEM further declines as they move into secondary school, college, and in the work-place. We really need to create solutions that will provide young girls and young women the support system to battle any negative experiences and sociocultural ideologies that stray them away from STEM and even education in in general. We don't realize it as such a big issue until sexist comments and actions discourage us from the education that we had always dreamed of, that could have been otherwise avoided.



Had nine middle schools not cancelled due to the snow, there would have definitely been more girls! There were 24 posters of amazing and inspiring women, both past and present, hung on the walls of the Women's Center. My most memorable part was when a male Physics professor went around the room and jotted down notes from the exhibit. It was truly heartwarming to see someone voluntarily attend on his own and take part in this initiative. I later found out that he inspires women in Physics. Also I could not have carried on that day without the WiS members who helped advertise and set up. WiS Program was created at the beginning of the 2015 fall semester, and in the end this event brought all of us together into a family of women helping other women. It's a day I'll never forget!

Christine Doherty, UConn's Women in STEM mentor, also reflected on the event:

"Talking with my sis today, reminiscing about how she had to dress up as a guy who invented peanut butter for the sixth grade scientist day, because apparently inventing peanut butter is a more important scientific advancement than curing leprosy, which was accomplished by the female chemist Alice Ball. People ask me why I care about empowering women in STEM, and the reason is because I don't want another generation of 6th grade girls to have to wear scratchy beards and wigs to school because the bulk of scientists remembered and valued by history are men."

-Maha Saleem



All Photo credits: Maha Saleem



LUNAFEST

Being a second semester senior here at UConn has its bittersweet moments. Of course one of the better ones has been coordinating LUNAFEST for the Women's Center this semester. LUNAFEST is a national film festival with an added twist, making me extremely excited to be apart of it. These films are by women, for women and about women. Having the central focus of women, in every dimension, created a very unique experience for not only the ones involved in organizing the event but the audience as well. My fellow coordinator, Castella, and I both worked really hard to find sponsors and partners throughout the beginning of the semester to share in the experience of LUNAFEST. We also worked to involve the community with likeminded mission statements as the Women's Center to get the ball rolling. In the end, we were able to partner with Mansfield OBGYN, who we had worked with in previous years as well as the UConn Alumni Association and the NE CT League of Women Voters.



Photo credit: lunafest.org

Having the topics of the films vary every year, I know I can speak for Castella and I when I say we were both excited to see what we would learn from the films. The topics ranged from a transgender child, the only female Cuban boxer, and a snapshot look into the life of a deaf woman with cancer. My personal favorite was the transgender boy because of how real the experience was for the family, not just the child. It really showed how early and innate the feelings were, how important they are to listen to, and how successful a transition at a young age can be. I believe the overall message that this type of event is trying to accomplish is how overwhelmingly women need a voice in every aspect of their lives, whether it's a difficult, confusing, or joyous time and this is one platform for women to use to share stories.

-Wafa Simpure

ALPHA KAPPA LAMBDA IGNITE CHALLENGE

With the end of [IGNITE](#) and our [These Hands Don't Hurt campaign](#), Alpha Kappa Lambda raised a total of \$9,766.71 for the Women's Center and its Violence Against Women Prevention Program. We are very proud of this achievement and have never fundraised to such a magnitude before. This is a huge step in the right direction for our organization and relationship with the Women's Center. We are looking forward to our continued philanthropic ventures with the Women's Center in the future and hope that our contributions help to make our campus a better and safer one.

-Kristian R. Schif



Photo Credit: Alpha Kappa Lambda

Ignite
HuskyDrive

ALPHA KAPPA LAMBDA'S
THESE HANDS DON'T HURT

GREEKS AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

As Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA) finishes up another productive semester, Voices reached out to participants to talk about their experiences and to give advice to future members.

Why would you tell someone to join GASA?

"I would tell someone to join GASA to become more open-minded and learn about issues that may not affect you directly, but have immense impacts on other people's lives." —*Cass Felice*

"GASA is an amazing way to discuss topics and issues many people find 'taboo.' It is a safe haven and provides people the opportunity to go out of their comfort zone." —*Jane Munson*

"I would tell someone to join GASA because it provides a safe space to have thought-provoking, deep conversations about the complexities of sexual assault, gender-based and race-based violence and how we can make a difference in the Greek community." —*Kaylyn Fagan*

"GASA was an amazing opportunity. It serves as a safe space to discuss important issues — gender, sexuality, violence, privilege — with other members of the community." —*Maisie Albis*

Where would you like to see GASA three years from now?

"I would like to see GASA still thriving at UConn, doing increased community outreach, fundraising, and showcasing a Greek community that is fully committed to ending sexual assault and gender-based violence." —*Anonymous*

"I would love to see GASA grow in numbers, incorporating all the councils of Greek life. In three years, I hope GASA becomes a known organization not only in Greek life, but on campus overall. Additionally, I would like to see GASA host events to educate the UConn community." —*Jessica Hong*

What has been the biggest take-away you've had from GASA?

"Awareness. I am now fully aware of the presence of sexual assault and how being aware of one's choice of words and actions can impact the 'rape culture' stigma on college campuses." —*Mike Hudon*

"I learned about how different cultures and categories of people are affected by gender-based violence." —*Kristin Henry*

"The biggest takeaway from GASA was insight. I listened to many people's opinions and it helped me see through another person's perspective." —*Anonymous*

"The breadth and variance in the opinions and experiences of others can serve as a resource to your own personal growth and passion." —*Audrey Spencer*

"GASA has taught me not to underestimate anyone. We all have unique experiences and all have something valuable to share. Hearing the stories of those with different intersectional identities than my own has taught me so much about what I can do to learn more and educate members of my sorority." —*Salonie Dave*



GASA speaks at Take Back the Night
Photo Credit: Chris Stumper

REFLECTIONS OF A PROFESSIONAL VAWPPER

Earlier this year, one of my friends referred to me as “A Professional VAWPPER,” and while I can’t dispute that it’s true, it’s also ironic, because I never planned on becoming a VAWPP facilitator in the first place. I came to UConn as a Pre-Med Bio major. My extracurriculars in high school were pretty much limited to varsity sports. When I went to pick classes for my second semester, I suddenly decided I was going to switch my major to Psychology, but I still didn’t know what I wanted pursue after college. Today, Timehop resurfaced what later turned out to be a turning point in my life: on April 7, 2011, I was hired as a summer VAWPP facilitator.

I never planned on becoming a VAWPP facilitator, but I *especially* never planned on dedicating my life to sexual violence prevention in higher education. In fact, I almost missed the chance to join VAWPP completely—I saw the job posting the day before the deadline. I agonized about the requirement that an application be submitted in person—I had never even been to the Women’s Center before! But I applied anyway, and I had no idea of just how much taking that one chance would impact my life.

Flash forward five years—I’m writing this from my very own office, one with my name and the title *Interpersonal Violence Prevention Coordinator* on the door. I just finished interviewing 38 candidates for 18 sexual violence peer educator positions. I’m starting to organize the training course they will go through during the fall. Every day, I get to mentor, guide, and support students who are in the same position that I was in a few years ago. It’s something I could have never dreamed of five years ago.

A lot of people don’t believe me when I say I didn’t have any idea what I was getting into when I joined VAWPP, or even when I helped start the Revolution Against Rape, a student organization committed to ending the rape culture through education, activism, and reform - but I didn’t. Yet, in between then and now, I’ve had so many opportunities, and I’ve been changed by so many people who I’ve gotten to work with. And so much of it began with one simple question— “What if we did this? What if *I* did this?”

There were a lot of times in my college career where the odds were definitely against me. I’m still not sure what anyone saw in me during my first VAWPP interview—I was a first-year with no experience talking about sexual violence. There were projects and endeavors that I, or my organizations, took on that seemed like they might fail. But I honestly believe that the most important part was taking a chance and trying anyway. When the Women’s Center offered me a chance as a VAWPP facilitator, it changed everything for me. And it all came back to asking, “What if I could do this?”

I know the semester is coming to a close, but I hope you have a chance to take that question to heart. Sometimes, the world doesn’t need the absolute best or most prepared people (and very often, even if we might be the best person for a job, we’re disinclined to believe that) – it just needs someone to start somewhere.

I keep my graduation gift from the Women’s Center in my office. The quote (by Paula Best) on it reads, “Together, be fearless, kind, and extraordinary. Dare to be remarkable. Leave this world a better place than when you found it.” I think we all need to hear this sometimes.

So ask yourselves—“What if I did this? What if *we* did this?” Because beautiful, magical, wonderful things could follow.

-Rachel Stewart



Photo Credit: Women’s Center

CALL FOR ALUMNI/AE SUBMISSIONS

Are you a 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 and/or VAWPP impacted your life so far? In what ways has your feminism developed since leaving campus? Share your experiences, goals, and accomplishments to:

University of Connecticut Women's Center

Unit 3118, 2110 Hillside Road

Storrs, CT 06269-3118

Tel: (860) 486-4738

Fax: (860) 486-1104

Email: womenscenter@uconn.edu



WHERE HAS THE WOMEN'S CENTER BEEN?

Lauren Donais, VAWPP Coordinator

-Presented a workshop on Healthy Relationships to high school students at Wesleyan University on March 8th

VAWPP Peer Educators, Bryant and Lauren

-Facilitated a Consent workshop to a First Year Experience class at the University of Hartford on March 30th

Kathleen Holgerson, Director of the Women's Center

-Gave a lecture on Intimate Partner Violence to a Human Development and Family Studies class at Storrs on April 11th

OUTSTANDING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

The Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Awards were established as part of the University of Connecticut's celebration of the 100 Years of Women at UConn in 1993. The award recognizes those graduating women who have excelled academically within each school and demonstrated dedication to research and service to the University community.

Sarah Chamberlain

Jessica Laprise

Erika Sturgis

Giorgina Paiella

Kelsey Reeves

Karen D'Angelo

Grace Felten

Brianna Muñoz

Alexandra Wilds

Sarah Kessler

Alexandra Jabick

Molly Stanavage

Victoria Wickenheisser

Kerrin Kinnear

Caitlin M. Bette-Waner

Thanisha Pariage

Catherine Buerger

Congratulations to all the recipients!

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!*

“This past week at the Residence Hall Associations banquet on Tuesday April 12, 2016 I won E-Board member of the year! It was something I am very proud of because I have been a part of RHA since my freshman year. I started with the North Hall Association as the Social Coordinator, and then my sophomore year I saw that the RHA E-Board had an open space for their Director of Promotions, and I applied and was selected to join the E-Board. The rest is history and I have been working towards making RHA larger not only at UConn, but nationally among the RHA's across the country. My friends say I have a weird obsession with Reslife, and I am very proud of this obsession because Reslife has helped shaped me into the person I am here at UConn. I can't wait to see what RHA brings my senior year!”

—*Mary Olmsted*

“Got a job doing training and leadership development for a non-profit in Guatemala this summer!”

—*Varun Khattar*

“2nd place finalist in nursing innovations competition!”

—*Meteyana Miller*

“Admitted to John Hopkins for my masters!”

—*Bennett Cognato*

“Facilitated a couple of classes at the Yale Peabody Museum about diversity in college campuses for high schoolers!”

—*Anonymous*

“I was given a scholarship by the CLAS Dean!”

—*Anonymous*

Student Life Achievement Awards:

Jovonne Pullen —Donald L. McCullough Leadership Award Finalist

Maha Saleem —Donald L. McCullough Leadership Award Finalist

Maha Saleem —Building Community Award Recipient

Congratulations, Jovonne and Maha!



Photo Credit: <http://sla.uconn.edu/currentrecipients/>



WOMEN'S CENTER STAFF ROCKS!

The Women's Center is proud to showcase some of Castella Copeland's poetry!

Auspices

I miss you so much inside
 I wish to confide
 That I am scared
 Sacred sounds silly slightly
 Off these days
 Observing flight's talking pattern
 Ominous omens amendmending
 Amen authority commands
 To kill the sands small salty
 Properties powering properly
 I pull sugar out of my coat
 Not seeming like a goat
 I sprinkle them with the grains
 Of sand wheying in on pains
 Wounds scars scrubbed over

Don't close your eyes
 Time will fly by and disappear
 And become your seer
 To look into the past
 As a blast to cast
 A spell onto your old self
 Wishing you had the wealth
 Of courage defeating stealth
 Stand tall

Authorities will strategically
 Influence your thoughts
 Commanding certain consciences
 To be your decisions to ultimately
 Sacrifice actions to transcend
 Moral dilemmas faithfully finding
 That this pain is your own
 To be sown into you
 To be your own character
 Relatable if you want it to be

I wish to understand to certain extents
 Extending hands reaching out descending
 Don't ever be content with truth
 Push limits farther than they pushed you
 Fight for your voice that matters

Bubbles Effervescence

Crafting hunger to game the number
 One experience numbing my
 Souls sick silly salty
 Passions are not to be used as
 Rations but rather actions
 Vocalizing exercises athleticism
 Ideas stretching
 Concepts criticizing creatures
 I am an emotional human
 Of colors not the hue
 Of a man who once
 Thought upon time that all
 The rhymes began in line
 Lying leering laughing lilt
 Tilting tables turned try to
 Not be burned but listen.
 We need to listen more
 N understand the sore
 Feeling has much to do with
 Healing talks and mind instead of
 Sealing cotts inside
 Endlessly, sleeplessly, the dreams come
 Thy will be don on births leavening death's
 Unborn child, it'll be a while till you see
 Me truly smile.

Resting Falls

Refracted reflections reminiscing
 On melodic evanescence I sing
 Cracked I need somebody to lean on
 Peeling layer after layer of pie
 Crusting over the surface it crumbles
 Slowly enough to digest
 And only upset myself inside
 Swimming swirling I need it like water
 The drops rippling into sound waves
 Carried silently in my head
 Electronic pulses beat wave after wave
 Steady as the beating drum to my heart
 That wants to burst but cannot
 For I am cursed from my shadow within.

LETTER FROM THE WRITING INTERN

As the warmer weather approaches, I find it hard to believe how quickly the semester has gone by. One of my personal goals for this semester was to try to lose weight and be “bikini body ready” by this May, after gaining pounds when I took an office job last semester.

I progressed in the gym, with my reps rising in shorter times, and my speed, weights, and endurance increasing. I went to the doctor, excited because I felt like I was the healthiest I have been in a while. However, I was told for the first time that I have slightly high cholesterol, and need to keep a close eye on it. Despite my efforts, the numbers on the scale have remained the same. Frustrated, I began scrolling through #fitspo on Instagram – to an unhealthy degree – wondering why I didn’t look anything like the fitness models posting smoothies and Nikes, despite my hard work.

I was in this frustrated mindset when I entered Body Image Committee meetings and events. How can one promote body positivity, if you don’t like your own reflection in the mirror? I began to realize I was holding myself to unrealistic standards portrayed in society and media - standards I didn’t even hold others to.

Scrolling through #fitspo and #fitspiration was not “inspiring” me at all – in fact, it was making me feel worse. I stopped comparing myself to others, and realized that from the beginning of this semester until now, I have made astounding progress. I have not lost a single pound, but have gained so much more in confidence. I may not weigh my ideal body weight, but I know I can drop down and give you 20. I may not have a thigh gap, but that doesn’t mean I can’t rock shorts. I may not be a fitness model, but that doesn’t mean I’ll stop working out.

So yes, I am “bikini body ready” for this summer. My pale legs will still blind others on the beach, and I’m sure I’ll still jiggle as I walk across the sand. I might miss a few stubbles on my legs with my shoddy shaving, and my hair will likely appear more like a frizzy poodle than beachy waves. But that’s okay, because everyone is beautiful in their own, unique way – jiggles, stubbles, “imperfections” and all.

Give yourself permission to love yourself. You deserve it.

-Amy Clarke

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I’ve been thinking a lot about perfection lately. Everyone who goes to school is familiar with the pressure to get perfect grades or have the perfect social life, even if you don’t necessarily want those things. But what I think a lot of people don’t realize is that the pressure to be perfect exists within the world of activism as well.

What I mean by this is many activists feel like they need to be on top of everything all the time. They feel like they need to know everything, be able to speak proficiently on every subject, and attend every march and rally. If you can’t do all of these things, there’s the sense that you are a bad activist, or that you aren’t a true feminist.

The topic of perfection came up during one of our recent staff meetings. Margarita Blush, Assistant Professor in the Puppetry Program here at UConn, was our guest facilitator. She had us clear the tables, stand in the middle of the room, and just move about freely. She instructed us not to worry about what other people were thinking or doing: to just move in whatever way felt comfortable. Afterwards, when we were discussing the exercise, a lot of people expressed that they had difficulty letting go of their inhibitions. This prompted a discussion on why we feel the need to be flawless all the time, especially when it comes to our work at the Women’s Center.

I think that deep down everyone knows that it’s ok not to be perfect. But it’s also incredibly easy to forget that, and this discussion was exactly the reminder we needed as feminists and activists. Sometimes we get so caught up in the fight that we forget that it’s ok to make mistakes, or that it’s ok to take a step back if necessary. We don’t have to be experts on every subject – not many people are. No one expects us to go to every event either. Whether you’re speaking to one person or an entire crowd, whether you’ve attended one speak-out or a dozen, the work you are doing is important. Years from now, when we look back at all the changes we have made, what will matter most is not how perfect we were, but how we overcame all of our reservations and self-doubt, and never gave up on the fight.

-Emily Cantor