



VOICES

TOGETHERNESS, CHANGES, HAPPINESS, FEMINIST

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we close out 2012 and the 40th anniversary year of the Women's Center, I would like to take time to thank all of our supporters, volunteers, and staff who contributed to the success of our programs and activities this year. The overwhelmingly positive feedback we received after the Gloria Steinem lecture on November 30th informed us that many people in our community are deeply connected to the movement for women's liberation of the 60s and 70s. It also highlighted how there are people in our community in the process of creating their own legacies of feminist activism. The stories that attendees shared at the Reunion Reception made visible the profound impact of the Women's Center on the lives of those who were affiliated with us over the past 40 years. The theme for the 40th was *Voices for Equity*, which reflects our tradition of creating space for advocates and activists to give voice to the struggles and the successes that inform our continued pursuit of challenging oppression in all its forms and of creating a vision of gender equity. The Women's Center has long served as a training ground and a touchstone for students, staff, and faculty who are exploring their development as feminist activists.

Both of these events reminded us of the importance of knowing our herstory, both local and global, and using that to inform our future activism and advocacy. These programs facilitated an environment for us to celebrate the myriad of ways that all who have been active at the Center have shaped who we are and the work we do today.

As I noted at the lecture, we received support from the Schools and Colleges, academic departments, unions, senior administrators, corporate friends, and students, as represented by SUBOG. That support came from the fact that we have long-standing working relationships with these various constituencies. We are proud that in addition to collaborating in the work of promoting equity and social justice, we can also come together to celebrate our accomplishments. With your continued support, we will continue our work as we move forward towards celebrating many future anniversaries.

*Thank
you*

-Kathleen Holgerson



Inside this issue:

Gloria Steinem Lecture	2
Herstory	3
SlutWalk 2012	4
Homeless Sleepout	5
Carol Virostek Scholarship	6
<i>Wonder Women!</i>	7
Women of Color Luncheon	8
Title IX	9
VAWPP	10
Letter from the Editor	11
Closing Remarks	11

AFSCME
AAUP - UCONN CHAPTER
ASIANAMERICAN STUDIES INSTITUTE
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES
CONNECTICUT EMPLOYEES UNION INDEPENDENT (CEUI)
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
EL INSTITUTO
JOANN PRICE, FAIRVIEW CAPITAL PARTNERS, INC.
GRADUATE SCHOOL
INSTITUTE FOR AFRICANAMERICAN STUDIES
NEAG SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
SCHOOL OF PHARMACY

SCHOOL OF NURSING
SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS
OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR DIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS
SCHOOL OF NURSING
SCHOOL OF PHARMACY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
SUBOG
UCONN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
UCPEA WOMEN'S ISSUES COMMITTEE
UNIVERSITY EVENTS & CONFERENCE SERVICES
WOMEN, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



Photo Credit: UConn Today

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of the UConn Women's Center. We are very excited to close out another decade of pushing for gender equity at the University and the world at large. It has been a very productive and enlightening journey for staff, students and alumni/ae, from our founding in 1972 to today. Great strides have been made in many areas thanks to the Women's Center and all who are involved. We have made UConn a much safer and inclusive space for many women, and we continue to work to ensure that the safety and inclusivity we have created withstands the test of time. We have been brought here by many feminists before us like Gloria Steinem, who was invited to celebrate women and the accomplishments of the Women's Center with us on November 30th in the Student Union Theatre.

GLORIA STEINEM AT UCONN

Kathleen Holgerson introduced Gloria Steinem with quotes from community members anticipating her visit. One administrator was enthralled by Steinem's confirmed visit to UConn, describing her as being in his top tier of distinction. An alumna emailed Kathleen, "Good thing you emailed me because you got to miss all my squealing over Gloria Steinem." Holgerson introduced Steinem and the entire auditorium rose to their feet in a standing ovation for her, a pioneer and a legend in the Women's Rights Movement.

Steinem is extremely personable and charismatic; she spoke to the audience as though we were a room full of dear friends as she celebrated our 40th anniversary and womanhood. During the Q&A, members of the audience expressed their personal gratitude for the strides that Steinem has made for women across the nation, as well as for them, personally. Audience members sat poised at attention, hinging on Steinem's words in awe as she delivered hard-hitting points about the intersectionality of race and gender, the successes of gender equity, and the dire need for progress.



"The truth will set you free, but first it will piss you off."

A point that Steinem discussed was the fact that in classrooms, and in general, people are taught more about Europe than Africa, even though it is proven that we are all descendants of the latter. Our skin complexions are merely the results of varying climates and natural selection. Also interesting given you could fit Europe inside the continent of Africa several times over. The audience nodded and applauded in agreement as Steinem stated "the truth will set you free, but first [it has to] piss you off." Steinem segued the conversation into the problems with language and the way that we are subconsciously forced to think about things. Steinem said the dominant word that we use is a result of the superior group, and everything else is deemed inferior, which is why we learn *history* instead of *herstory*. Also, certain kinds of movies about women are often considered "chick flicks;" which Steinem countered by saying certain movies about men should be considered "prick flicks." This comment was met by resounding laughter from audience members.

"A roadblock [in feminism] is the assumption that we're going against human nature, God—Freud—something intrinsic."

Gloria Steinem went on to harder-hitting issues, such as the recently published book written by Valerie Hudson, in partnership with others, entitled *Sex & World Peace*. Steinem discussed a point brought about by Hudson which was the idea that a "determinant of violence within a country is not finances, natural resources, democracy, or religion, but determined by [the frequency of] violence against women... Not that women's lives are more important than men's but violence against women is normalized." She discussed violence against women as intimate and normal, such as the frequency of female infanticide and sexual assault. Alongside the idea that violence against women is cloaked and set aside as something cultural and inevitable, which it is not. Steinem cited alarming facts from *Sex and World Peace* relating the incidences of violence against women to the number of deaths caused by 9/11. The lives of women taken by violent sex crimes, female infanticide, husbands and boyfriends are numerous, and equally as tragic as all the wars fought in the 20th century, but seen as a mere consequence of the culture, while violence against women is a war being fought on our own soil every day.

(Continued on page 12)

HERSTORY, A CONTINUED CHRONOLOGY

Time flies when you're having fun! The Women's Center has 40 years of rich herstory, and in our 40th year, we would like to take some time to highlight the successes and accomplishments made here at the Women's Center.

1992-93 Establishment of Mandatory Orientation Training for all incoming students on sexual assault and acquaintance rape. Expanded support groups for students, services for women of color, and advocacy services.

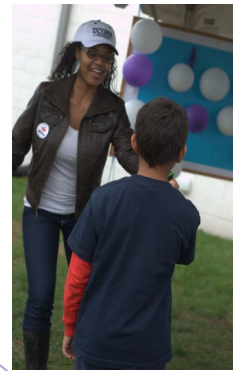
1993-94 Rape Education Program changes to the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP).

1994-95 First Annual Take Our Daughters to Work Day held on campus.



2000-01 The Women's Center is awarded Department of Justice Grant to combat violence against women on the University campus.

1997-98 The Men Against Sexual Assault Program, the precursor to Men Against Violence Against Women, is created.



2001-02 Helped organize the first Cultural Explosion and Love Your Body Day

2002-03 The Women's Center is awarded the "Advancing the Status of Women" award from the Soroptimist International of Willimantic, CT. Hosted the 16th Annual Women's Health Conference with the School of Nursing.

2005-06 Women's Center creates several new programming initiatives including "Creating Real Community," "Celebrate Women Brown Bag Lunch Series," "Support Staff Brown Bag Lunch," and "Among Women."



2010-11 The Women's Center is the primary organizer for the University's Constitution Day program, which recognized the 90th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

2009-10 The Women's Center sponsors a lecture by Sheryl WuDunn, best-selling co-author of *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*.

2006-07 Moves to the 4th floor of the Student Union. Launces "Don't Cancel Your Class" program that allows faculty to work with Women's Center staff to provide guest lectures when a faculty member is unavailable to teach.



2011-12 The Women's Center, along with the other Cultural Centers, becomes a part of the Division of Student Affairs.

2012-13 The Women's Center celebrates their 40th Anniversary by bringing Gloria Steinem to campus.

WOMEN'S CENTER



For a complete timeline, please visit our [website!](#)

-Thomas Dickens

UConn SlutWalk 2012

SlutWalk UConn: A March to End Victim Blaming is an event held on campus to increase awareness about sexual violence and to create a community-wide dialogue about issues such as stereotypes, bystander empowerment, and victim blaming.



I think it's a shame that when a woman is raped, the first things people ask are: "What was she wearing? Where was she? Was she drunk?" Instead of asking why the man raped her. We live in a society that teaches women how to avoid getting raped, instead of teaching men not to rape.

-Precious Humphrey

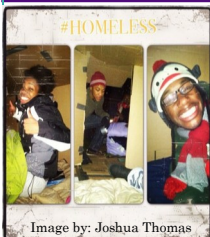
I attended SlutWalk for the first time this year, and thought it was an interesting event. I never really thought of the impact a woman's clothing has on the thought process that [some] men have. I have heard stories on TV shows of course, but I feel like it makes a bigger difference when you hear someone give their testimony in person because something like that really hits home. It helps bring awareness to many people on campus and should be promoted a lot more to make sure an even bigger crowd comes so we can continue to try to prevent as much sexual abuse [and assault] as we can.

-Kristal Lewis



Photography by:
-Mic Johnson

HOMELESS SLEEPOUT 2012



Of all the interesting things I have gotten myself involved in at UConn, I believe that the “sleepout” portion of Homelessness Awareness week, sponsored by ConnPIRG, was by far one of the most enlightening. Three of my friends: Ahla Amin, Mic Johnson, and Joshua Thomas, all agreed to participate in the event to stand in solidarity with those who are homeless, alongside a select few of our fellow Huskies. It took place on November 14th-15th in the Student Union Mall, which I endearingly nicknamed: Struggle Village.

There was a box building competition, to see who could build the best shelter to sleep in for the night; entertainment, hot chocolate, and soup were provided, and the area was buzzing with activity as we all constructed our shelters. All of the participants, friends, and passersby interacted, helping each other and offering supplies to get us through the night safely. The social aspect of it was great, and it was amazing to see all of our Huskies involved and engaged in a cause that is much larger than ourselves. But the reality of it all set in as the night wore on, and for me personally, around 4:00am. The temperature had dropped to twenty-seven, all of us were huddled and shivering in the box in an exhausted, heavy silence as the cold seeped through all of our blankets, coats, and layers of clothes, gnawing our bones. We were all apprehensive listening for potential danger, and hearing the wind ripping the roofs off our neighbors’ shelters and the groans of startled inhabitants; all the while thinking how someone else was out there with us, not many miles away, doing the same thing, except they didn’t have a warm bed to run to if it got too tough.



People who are homeless face these harsh conditions every day, year after year. At one point in the night, we heard rustling sounds outside of our shelter. This led me to think about violence against women. Although there was a police officer stationed within Struggle Village, ensuring our safety, that isn’t the reality of the common situation. Homelessness is a very real problem in the United States. Gender inequity with regard to personal safety and agency is largely at work. ConnPIRG made a resounding statement during Homelessness Awareness Week. It was a very real, very eye-opening experience for us, and despite waking up cold and sore at daybreak, we are incredibly thankful for the opportunity, for what we have, and that much more moved to help those that go without.

-Takina Pollock

WHY DO WE NEED THE WOMEN’S CENTER?

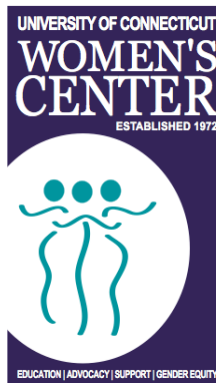
A lot of students here don’t know why we need a Women’s Center or what the Women’s Center is for. Many assume the Women’s Center is just “where you go if you are raped.” While we are a great resource to reach out to in instances of assault, we serve a multitude of other purposes. We challenge societal norms about the way we think about women, push for gender equity, address the intersectionality of sexism and other forms of oppression. Here’s what some students had to say about the UConn Women’s Center!

In a world/society that is male dominated, the Women's Center can serve as the collective (and maybe individual) voice of women on women's issues, concerns, empowerment, education, health, support, and healing—when the rest of the world/society may not have those interests at heart. *-J. Johnson*

We need the Women’s Center because it gives us a space to vent to like-minded people, and celebrate when candidates who support women’s issues are elected to office!
-Cassidy Kushner

Because as long as vaginas are walking around campus, we need the Women’s Center to stand up for them!
-Jen Perez

We need the Women’s Center because we’re doing work here, actively trying to make a change. We’re the home of many groups on campus, and without us they may not have existed or have anywhere to go. We’re all about progress. We tackle gender equity, domestic violence awareness, sexual assault awareness. We may not be able to make a global change right now but activism starts in the community, and that’s what we’re all about!
-Kat Montero



CAROL VIROSTEK SCHOLARSHIP

The American Association for University Women's (AAUW) mission statement is "advancing equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy and research." The AAUW was founded in 1881, where members are free to take part in issues affecting women educationally, socially, economically, and politically. Presently, there are over 150,000 members and supporters, nationwide, alongside 1000 local branches and 700 college and university partners involved. Recently, the State chapter honored Carol Virostek with a scholarship in her name for students to be able to attend the National Conference for College Women Student Leaders (NCCWSL). Carol has identified students at the University of Connecticut and Central Connecticut State University as the beneficiaries. The scholarship will alternate between the two universities, and in its first year, UConn has the pleasure of being awarded the opportunity to send one of our students to the NCCWSL Conference at the University of Maryland in May. Carol Virostek, former Chair of the Connecticut State Chapter of AAUW, discussed the newly established scholarship and the impact it will have on UConn and the AAUW.



Carol Virostek received her PhD in Curriculum Instruction in 1986. She did her fellowship in the School of Education here at UConn and was an adjunct professor. Her personal interests in women's rights led her to become involved with the Women's Center, and programs like *\$tart \$mart* and *Elect-Her* has maintained that interest. Virostek wanted to honor and continue her long withstanding connection with UConn and the Women's Center by offering a scholarship open to students involved with the Women's Center because she knows that "they'll pick a great student leader, and when they come back from the conference they'll be that little pebble that makes a splash in the larger community, and bring men along, too."

Virostek wanted to ensure that Connecticut schools took advantage of this new scholarship designed just for them. Connecticut AAUW, local AAUW State Chapters, and the University all provide funds for students to attend the NCCWSL conference, but Virostek wanted to offer a special opportunity strictly for members of the Women's

"I really believe that the work at the Women's Center is outstanding. I know a lot all around the country; the work that they do is important."

Center. The scholarship is for \$500, the cost of the conference is \$395, and the remaining amount can be applied to transportation.

While the AAUW is not gender exclusive (it has a 17% male population), NCCWSL is strictly for women. A student that attended NCCWSL brought the first *\$tart \$mart* program to CCSU. *\$tart \$mart* is a workshop that trains women about salary negotiations because women typically settle for lower salaries. Conferences like NCCWSL are vital to the success of women, and this scholarship allows another student to have the opportunity to attend.

It is an honor for us to receive the Carol Virostek scholarship the first year of its implementation. NCCWSL is a vital resource for networking and gives students a new perspective on their educational and professional lives. Keriana Kechmar [attended NCCWSL last year](#), so we look forward to sending another member of the Women's Center to the conference in May.

-Takina Pollock



WONDER WOMEN!

THE UNTOLD STORY OF AMERICAN SUPERHEROINES

Kelcey Edwards' film *WONDER WOMEN!* analyzes the alterations of super heroine, Wonder Woman. The character Wonder Woman was actually developed by a male psychologist in 1941. During the era after the Great Depression, the popularity of superheroes expanded because they served as an escape from America's bleak reality of the Great Depression. Americans gravitated to the idea of a super hero saving the day. The film begins by asking citizens who was their favorite super hero, and many answered Batman, Superman, the Hulk, and other male super heroes. One fourth grade girl stated that Wonder Woman was her super hero because she was strong and could save people from danger. Wonder Woman, though a fictional character, has impacted the advance of young girls and is a symbol of empowerment for all women regardless of race or partisanship, even though she did impact those issues.



As World War II unfolded, the comics of *Wonder Woman* symbolized her super heroine behavior. She became patriotic as she saved American citizens. Many covers of the comic books show her defeating and attacking evil creatures and villains. These covers were significant because, at the same time, women in America were taking jobs in factories, etc. because men were fighting World War II. By women working in factories, society was able to embrace that women were equal to men. However, at the end of World War II men came back home and repossessed their factory jobs, and women went back home to take care of their families. Interestingly, during that time *Wonder Woman* comics showed her doing less adventurous things. The covers of

comic books showed her being carried by her husband instead of being a heroine and carrying someone else. She also was depicted as weak. But women protested against this wonder-less Wonder Woman, and she repossessed her strength and dare.

Wonder Woman started a legacy and set the foundation for women to take a lead role. She helped the female gender advance. For instance, many other shows that had strong female characters took the stage. Television shows like *Charlie's Angels*, *Bionic Woman*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* all exemplified women as leaders.

At the end of the documentary, many women mentioned that Wonder Woman inspired them to be leaders. Wonder Woman is a phenomenal fictional character in history. The feminist movement thrived because of the young girls who grew into women with Wonder Woman as a symbol of female strength and leadership that wasn't often seen or acknowledged. Wonder Woman has successfully and universally empowered young girls and women across the country.

-Joshua Thomas

Photo credit: <http://wonderwomendoc.com/>



For more about the *Wonder Women!* documentary, please visit: <http://wonderwomendoc.com/>

WOMEN OF COLOR LUNCHEON

The Women of Color Luncheon originated from the Diversity Committee at the Women's Center. The Diversity Committee was later dissolved because diversity needs to be fluid throughout the Center, and not solely the responsibility of a few people. The Women of Color Events Planning Committee was established to continue the Women of Color events, which are signature events of the Women's Center. The Women of Color Luncheon is an opportunity for women to network and discuss issues important to underrepresented groups across campus. Bandana Purkayastha, a Professor of Sociology and Department Chair, recipient of the Faculty Member of the Year award multiple times, and an advocate of Asian immigrants in Connecticut, was the keynote speaker.

Purkayastha discussed her college education in India, which only cost \$15/month to attend because of the choices of their government. She expressed ideas about how regardless of caste or any other separation of people they were all still given the same opportunities to have an education. She discussed different women in power, such as Sarala Davi, the founder of Bhararaf Stree Mahanadad in 1910, and Sarojini Naidu, who was elected President of Congress in 1921. She contrasted the values and the lifestyle in India to the way that things are within America and the University. Purkayastha said that "people are afraid of the change that activists bring," which is why the work they do is so vital to progress. The women in attendance discussed ideas of tokenism and the need for more minorities "around the table" in order to make decisions and to have a more collective, concise voice, as seen to be beneficial to women's success in India.

Participants discussed the significance of diversity within the University and the benefits of active diversity initiatives. There was a discussion about the need to make a conscious effort to have a plethora of diversity and to not reinforce tokenism amongst students and faculty. The challenge to the University is to treat diversity as something important that needs to be fulfilled, purposefully to better the University, instead of being viewed as a requirement or add-on. Methods include supporting travel for prospective faculty members' interviews, instituting a department and/or representative for diversity, and generally making a conscious effort to have a more diverse, inclusive community of students.

-Takina Pollock



TITLE IX

Did you celebrate our government's birthday this year? We sure did at the Women's Center, with special regard to Title IX! September 17, 1787 is the date which the Constitution was signed, which is considered the birth of our government, making it 225 years old this year. However, Title IX is still infantile in comparison, having been signed in 1987.

What is Title IX?

Title IX is a law that states that "no person in the United States shall on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." The amendment in 1987 expanded the definition of program or activity to include all the operations of an educational institution, governmental entity or private employer that receives federal funds.^v

Why is it Important?

In the *William & Mary Journal of Women and the Law* (Vol. 3:113) it states: "Thomas Jefferson wrote: 'All men are created equal.' With regard to women however, he qualified this statement, 'were our state a pure democracy,

"Were our state a pure democracy, there would still be excluded from our deliberations women, who to prevent morals and ambiguity issues, [women] should not mix promiscuously in the gatherings of men."

—Thomas Jefferson

there would still be excluded from our deliberations...women, who, to prevent depravation of morals and ambiguity issues, should not mix promiscuously in the gatherings of men.' In the years since Jefferson described women as second-class citizens, the US Constitution has not specifically recognized the rights of women." Title IX is a step in the right direction, making it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of gender. However, the *William & Mary Journal of Women and the Law* goes on to say that "history suggests laws lagging behind social change will remain

on the legislative back burner until an Equal Rights Amendment establishes a constitutional demand for equity between the sexes."^o

Title IX & You

Even with Title IX in place we still face gender discrimination in educational settings. Schools that were reportedly in violation of Title IX have taken very long to make full adjustments to be in full compliance with the law. Many schools choose to make negligible efforts toward compliance with Title IX because they deem it unimportant, and the process is long and complicated, although it need not be. We need Title IX because we don't have enough female Engineering, Math, and Science majors. Female students tend to be persuaded into Health, Teaching, and Liberal arts fields, even under Title IX. And male students are dissuaded from Liberal Arts, Nursing, and Human Development and Family Studies because the outlook for those jobs are considered "pink collar," as opposed to blue collar jobs like lawyers, doctors, and professors. Education is unfortunately very gendered, and although steps are being made to give male and female students the same opportunities, the bias still exists and follows us into our professional lives.

—Takina Pollock

^v"History of Title IX." TitleIX.info. The Margaret Fund of NWLC, n.d. Web. 06 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.titleix.info/History/History-Overview.aspx>>.

^oAllison L. Held, Sheryl L. Herndon, and Danielle M. Stager, "The Equal Rights Amendment: Why the Era Remains Legally Viable and Properly Before the States," 3 *Wm. & Mary J. Women & L.* 113 (1997), <http://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmjowl/vol3/iss1/5>

BETWEEN WOMEN

Between Women is a group on campus for women who love women, or think they might. Each week there is a different topic of discussion that the meeting is centered around, ranging from coming out stories, and mental health, to LGBTQ representation in the media, and LGBTQ icons. The group discusses these and other similar topics and does activities focusing on these issues, with, of course, an occasional movie or game night. *Between Women* is a strictly confidential group in order to provide a safe space for its members to come and discuss the issues with women who share their feelings and experiences. Although we love the support of our allies, *Between Women* is only open to LGBTQ women. For more information please email: betweenvomen@uconn.edu.

—Emma Reber

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PREVENTION PROGRAM

The VAWPP marketing team has recently updated our brochure and created a new flyer to advertise our workshops. Our flyer reaches out the entire university, to effectively raise awareness about the workshops we offer so that we reach a diverse group of students. The *Power and Control* workshop has been our most popular workshop this semester, followed by *Bringing in the Bystander* and *Dreamworlds*. Our facilitators have given workshops to a range of age groups this semester. We have educated the university population, local high school students, and even middle school students.

-Cassidy Kushner



THE WOMEN'S CENTER PRESENTS... **VAWPP** PREVENTION PROGRAM

VAWPP stands for the Violence Against Women Prevention Program and is the University's peer education group dedicated to advocacy, education and bystander empowerment surrounding issues of sexual assault and domestic violence. Violence against women is not just a women's issue, it impacts the entire UConn community. We offer workshops to any interested student groups!

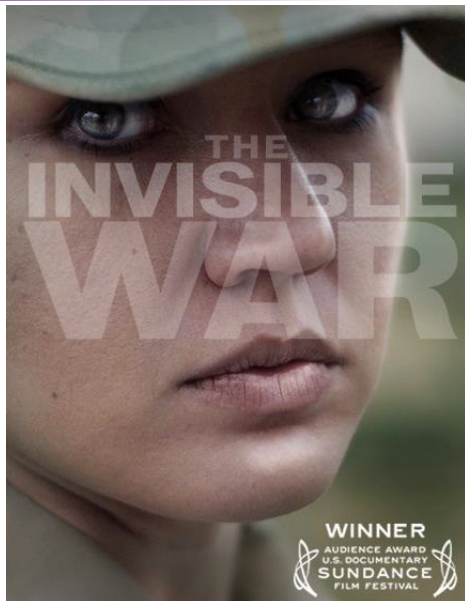
*WORKSHOPS INCLUDE:

- Dream World: Media impact on sexuality and gender roles
- Power and Control: Violence within relationships
- Consent 101: Clarify miscommunication in sexual situations
- War Zone: Exploration of everyday sexual harassment
- Bringing in the Bystander: Community of responsibility
- Tough Guise: Violence, media, and the crisis in masculinity



*To Request a Workshop: Email us at vawpp@uconn.edu

THE INVISIBLE WAR



The Invisible War is a groundbreaking investigative documentary by Oscar- and Emmy-nominated filmmaker Kirby Dick. It exposes one of America's most shameful and best kept secrets: the epidemic of rape within the U.S. military. On November 5, 2012, the documentary was shown at the University of Connecticut on the Storrs campus. The film was followed by a discussion led by a panel of U.S. military veterans, who spoke from personal experience about the undeniable rape culture and lack of punishment for perpetrators in the military. Today, a female soldier in combat zones is more likely to be raped by a fellow soldier than killed by enemy fire. The Department of Defense estimates there were a staggering 19,000 violent sex crimes in the military in 2010. Yet, these issues are far too often unacknowledged or overlooked.

The Invisible War event at UConn served to bring awareness to the epidemic of rape within the U.S. military and left a profound impact on all who were present.

-Kayla Dias

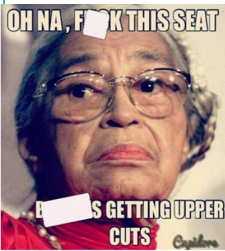
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Violence against women has become so commonplace that it is socially acceptable to laugh at. We have slammed the doors shut on domestic violence and forced women to continue to be victimized in their own homes, or fear for their safety on the way there. We have blamed victims for inviting men to violate their bodies and to leave with their dignity in tow, mocking them, and saying they brought it on themselves through their behavior and/or the way that they dressed. We have provided a safe haven for rapists to be coddled for their crimes and to be excused, because of women we have scarlet-lettered as sluts.

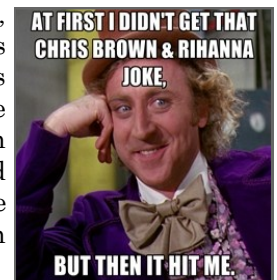
We live in a world where we glorify the physical assault of women. Society frowns on violence against women, while simultaneously supporting it. In my experience, this violence is particularly emphasized against Black women. Recent events, such as that which involved bus driver, Artis Hughes, assaulting Shidea Lane on a city bus in Cleveland, resulted in a viral video in which people made a mockery of her predicament. Viewers were insisting had she not been so belligerent, he would not have been moved to punch her. There no challenge of accountability on his part of having self-control, instead, he was carried into World Star Hip Hop stardom, the video receiving 12,511,041 views, to date, complete with sexist, misogynist, victim-blaming comments in defense of the bus driver. They demeaned and humiliated Lane, in a process too many women find familiar in the face of assault. In another recent emergence of videos was one involving rapper, Lil Reese, who violently assaulted an unidentified woman, where multiple people merely observed. This video was also surrounded by resounding laughter from viewers whose common theme was “if these black b*tches didn’t talk so much they wouldn’t get put in their place.” Why were these events so popular and found so funny?



There is no humor in such things. These kinds of events and these ways of thinking are backwards and unfortunately deeply engrained in society. I spoke to a student on campus, who asked me if I dressed up for Halloween. I did, as Rihanna, and I told him this. He then proceeded to tell me I should’ve made up my face to appear bruised and had a friend dress up as Chris Brown and drag me around campus. I was appalled, and he made no move to apologize or recant what he said. This student, being a complete stranger to me, felt nothing was wrong with his statement. It’s interesting to note, in all of these instances of violence against women, all parties involved are Black. How would this change our thinking if the victim was a White woman? Or if the assaulter was a White man? It’s easier to mock those who are not in power. Black women are the most disenfranchised group due to the overlap of race and gender. This way of thinking is disrespectful to the progress we have already made in the past, and negates the accomplishments of the Civil Rights, Black Power, and Women’s Rights Movements. As a survivor of domestic violence, I shudder to think that anyone would have laughed at the things I have been through and seen.



Violence against women has never been funny. We tend to laugh at certain things to soften the blow, but to mock victims is to lessen the severity of the incident and reaffirm the culture. Many men are moved to violence against women as an exertion of power they lack in their daily lives, so they lash out on wives, girlfriends, children and anyone whom they find weaker, to make themselves stronger. This is borne of a patriarchal culture in which men are supposed to be powerful. While there is nothing wrong with empowering yourself, there is something wrong with attacking those around you to attain that power. Incidents such as these have created a culture in which women are raped every day and are afraid to say so; oftentimes when they do, they are blamed or not taken seriously, such as the incident that occurred at [Amherst College](#), where the student was unjustly institutionalized as a result of her rape, as her rapist graduated with honors. Our culture permits that.



All of this is just to say: be careful what, and who you choose to laugh at. Who’s the joke? What’s the punch line? Why is it so funny? The things that you talk about, and the words you choose, greatly impact the climate of the culture that we live in. You never know if the woman that sits behind you in economics was assaulted by her boyfriend last year, or if the man in your anthropology class used to watch his dad abuse his mom, or if the people retweeting you are cleaning bloody fists. Laughing at these things empowers the criminals and doesn’t allow all victims to become survivors.

-Takina Pollock

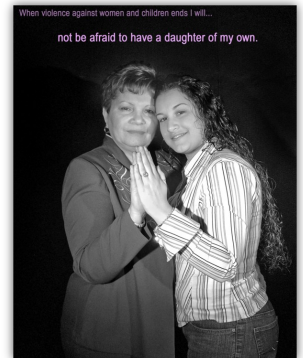
GLORIA STEINEM AT UCONN, CONTINUED

Steinem combined these facts with a call the need for women to support each other. She discussed how women have been conditioned to think “we are nothing unless we have a man standing next to us,” and goes on to say “but sometimes I think if men understood how little it matters *which* man, they would support our movement.”

Steinem was extremely educational and inspirational to those in attendance, and she is greatly admired by not only current students, but by alumnus and alumni, and we were extremely fortunate to have her speak life into gender equity and into the issues that we have been discussing in the Women’s Center since 1972. Steinem reaffirmed how feminism is not dead, and how institutions like the UConn Women’s Center are vital to progress in order to combat the idea that we don’t need feminism anymore, because the problem has been “fixed.” At 78 years old she discussed how important it is to bridge the past with the present and to understand how far we’ve come and how much further we can go, and that “progress lies in a direction we haven’t been [yet].” *-Takina Pollock*

REUNION RECEPTION CLOSING REMARKS

“Four decades. We have much to be proud of during that time. Our theme for the 40th is “Voices for Equity”, and the Women’s Center has long served as a training ground and a touchstone for students, staff, and faculty who are striving for gender equity. At our annual retreats for our student staff/VAWPP peer educators and for our Advisory Board, we tell the herstory of the establishment of the Women’s Center. We create a space to make visible what was the order of the day during the Center’s formative years. And we tell that story, because that tradition of feminist activism continues to inform our programs and services today. Our work to support individuals who are the target of violence against women, gender discrimination, bias, or workplace incivility reflects the commitment to community support and accountability. Institutional advocacy provides us the opportunity to work with leaders and decision-makers to recognize there are still barriers to full and equitable participation that are based on gender roles and stereotypes, in addition to discrimination and bias, based on other forms of identity.



We foreground education, the process of raising awareness on issues related to gender, as a way to enact social change and to address a climate that supports sexism and other forms of oppression. This year, focusing on the 40th anniversary, including our programs on the ERA and Title IX, it has been surprising to note how many of us continue to have limited education about how women have contributed to history and/or have accurate information about the status of public policies related to women’s liberation. So we will continue our signature programs such as *Elect Her* and the *Women’s Advance Conference* as venues for that education.



As many of you know, the prevention of violence against women is a core component of our educational activities. Our VAWPP program is our longest standing signature program and is designed to not only provide students with information about resources, but to create opportunities to critically reflect on what contributes to rape culture and how to be empowered bystanders.

Finally, as in the beginning, the Women’s Center serves as a gathering space, a “home” for those interested in exploration and activism. Our New Female Faculty Luncheon, our Women of Color Luncheon and Awards Ceremony, and the Academic Achievement Awards all are signature programs which serve to create spaces of welcome, networking, and celebration of women’s accomplishments.

Tonight is another occasion of celebration. A celebration of transformation and liberation. So please, continue to network, get acquainted (or reacquainted) and enjoy – because tomorrow – we get back to work on the changes still to be made.”

-Kathleen Holgerson

WOMEN'S CENTER



SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S CENTER EDUCATION | ADVOCACY | SUPPORT | GENDER EQUITY

The University Of Connecticut's Women's Center is committed to our work with students, staff, and faculty in an effort to promote gender equity on campus. Our efforts are spread widely throughout the University Community and support all aspects of the University's mission of teaching, research, and service. We are a key contributor to the University's priorities of student success; distinctions in research; philanthropy; promoting excellence, and progressing in our values of civility and diversity. While we are proud of our successes, we need your help to support and enhance this work.

Dear Friends of the Women's Center:

As you consider your end of the year gifts, we would like to encourage you to contribute to the Center in recognition of the close of our 40th anniversary year to ensure that the major activities can continue to address areas of priority around gender equity.

Your gift can support:

- *Student participation in a variety of out-of-class academic experiences, such as regional and national conferences*
- *The Women of Color Recognition award*
- *The 100 Years of Women Scholarship*
- *Summer Orientation facilitators/peer educators from VAWPP to engage incoming students in discussions around consent, prevention of violence against women, and bystander empowerment*

For more information on ways to support the Women's Center, please visit our giving page at

<http://womenscenter.uconn.edu/support/give.php>

Or, visit the [UConn Foundation's giving site](#), select "other" under Purpose and include one of the following designations:

Women's Center: #20447

Years of Women Scholarship: #30231

Need Help Now?

contact the Community Response Team

Domestic Violence Program, United Services, Inc
(860) 456-9476 - Willimantic Area

Sexual Assault Crisis Services of Eastern Connecticut
456-2759

Women's Center
(860) 486-4738

Student Health Services
(860) 486-4700

University Police
911 or (860) 486-4500 (for routine calls)

Don't forget to check out our website!
<http://www.womenscenter.uconn.edu/>

We welcome you to visit UConn's Women's Center!
We are located at:
Student Union, Room 421
2110 Hillside Road, Unit 3118
Storrs, Connecticut 06269-3118
(860) 486-4738
www.womenscenter.uconn.edu
Hours: 8am-9pm, Monday thru Thursday;
8am-5pm Fridays

