



VOICES

TOGETHERNESS, CHANGES, HAPPINESS, FEMINIST

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Fall 2014 semester is almost over, and it seems impossible that fourteen weeks have gone by so quickly. Yet, these fourteen weeks were filled with successes and challenges, both here and in the world around us. This edition of *Voices* is a testament to both. This semester the Center collaborated with various campus partners to co-sponsor inspiring programs with scholars, activists, and scholar/activists such as Dr. Robert Cipriano, Kelly Tsai, Kevin Hines, and the various keynote and plenary speakers at the 15th Annual UNESCO International Human Rights Conference on Human Trafficking, Forced Labor, and Exploitation. These individuals shared their stories of pain and triumph, their creative works, and their wisdom with the campus community. In doing so, they helped to situate the scholarly, activist, and advocacy efforts currently on our campus as part of the on-going herstory of how, as a community, we have transformed ourselves. The UConn for Equality program, a collaboration between La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc. and the cultural centers, provided an opportunity for us to represent and honor that legacy. Also, the accomplishments of this year's 100 Years of Women Scholarship recipients and our newly appointed representative to the CT AAUW Student Advisory Council remind us how the next generation continues the work to achieve equity and dismantle oppression.

Celebrating our progress is vital to sustaining our work. However, this semester we also had much to remind us of the work we still need to do around ending sexism, racism, and the other interlocking forms of oppression that cause harm. In this edition, we also recognize the profound trauma that issues of sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence and stalking have on individuals and to communities. This can be seen in the stories on Stronger, Sil Lai Abrams, Anita Hill, the Clothesline Project, and our screening of *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*. It is also visible in the continued national dialogues on addressing gender-based violence on college campuses, domestic violence in the NFL, and race-based violence in Ferguson. Finally, as our Newsletter Editor, Sam Barrett, reflects on in her *Letter from the Editor* that we don't have to look beyond our own community to see the impact of the intersection of racialized and sexualized violence.

The Women's Center has long been an advocate for individuals experiencing violence, harassment, and discrimination, as well as a resource on campus for making the connection between individual experience, patterns of inequity, and institutional strategies for addressing barriers to access. I have been asking students a lot lately "What would it look like if we got it right?" And while that vision for the future is often difficult to articulate, I suggest we keep it simple and listen to what they are saying - until our students of color, our female-identified students, our students who are LGBTQIA* can say they feel safe everywhere in our community, we know we have more work to do. May 2015 be the year when our vision for "getting it right" more closely aligns with the experiences of all of the students, staff, and faculty who make up our campus community.

—Kathleen Holgerson

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UNESCO CONFERENCE

I will be completely honest, I did not know what to expect from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Conference held at UConn on October 21, 2014. In an effort to avoid going into the conference “empty handed” I wanted to get [more background](#) on the topic of UConn’s UNESCO Conference for this year:

“Recognizing, that trafficking exists at the nexus of other human rights issues, including sexual violence and exploitation, the rights of migrants, children’s rights, and workplace and labor rights, the UNESCO Chair and Institute of Comparative Human Rights will convene a wide range of international and national activists, officials, survivors, and scholars to discuss the impact of trafficking around the world as well as the opportunities and challenges in combatting these crimes. This conference will present an opportunity for students, faculty and the community to come together to learn how they can act in partnership with others to combat this grave crime.”

Something that really grasped my attention during the conference was hearing the story of Ms. Holly Austin Smith, who a survivor of sex trafficking, as well as a published author. She spoke about how she was coerced as a young girl into the sex trafficking world. Her words resonated with me mostly because I immediately thought of my younger sister, who has recently begun high school. I knew that I needed to pass the information I was learning on to her.

I have done my best to help influence my sister to remain well-informed about the dangers of sexual violence. As a young teenage girl it is easy to fall naïve to the reality that the possibility of becoming a victim of a sex crime is very real. That was my biggest concern because, as the speaker explained, she was looking for “(an) escape,” someone to understand her like no other, and to help make her dreams of living in the “big city” a reality. After hearing her story, along with becoming aware of additional “red flags” that may help identify a human trafficking situation, I have already begun to spread the information to my sister. I’ve always believed that the first step in making a difference is becoming aware, and although I did not have the information in high school to really speak up, and spread awareness, I am happy that I can educate my sister and other young people to do just that.

—*Vincenza Brantle*

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER: ANITA HILL

In 1991, Anita Hill spoke out about sexual harassment she experienced from Clarence Thomas (then a Supreme Court Justice nominee). Ms. Hill was scrutinized countless times while testifying about the harassment she endured while in the company of Thomas. Her experiences were invalidated countless times, and Thomas went on to become a Justice on the Supreme Court despite his actions. Nevertheless, Anita Hill’s testimony changed how sexual harassment was viewed within the workplace across the nation. On November, 12, 2014, Professor Anita Hill visited the University of Connecticut to speak about her experience, as well as answer questions from students, staff, and faculty regarding civility and justice on campus and beyond. Hill stressed the importance of transparency in leaders who handle cases of sexual harassment, and frankly any civil rights issue — “The integrity of the court depends on the integrity and the character of every individual justice sitting on it.” Hill believed that her testimony would prevent Clarence Thomas from being admitted into the Supreme Court, where he would hold weight in future sexual harassment cases. Twenty-three years ago, that was not the case. However, when asked by a student if she thought the verdict would remain the same if her case happened in 2014, she responded “we live in a different country now”. Learn more about Anita Hill’s experience in “[Anita](#)”, a documentary directed by Academy Award winner Freida Mock.



Photo credit: Samantha Barrett

—*Samantha Barrett*

RECAP: KELLY TSAI

Kelly Tsai traveled from New York City to the University of Connecticut on Wednesday, October 22, 2014 for Domestic Violence and Asian American Heritage month. She exhibited a powerful spoken word showcase in the Student Union Theatre, entitled “The Opposite of Violence.” The award winning spoken word artist, playwright, and filmmaker performed many poems, with titles such as “Real Women I Know” and “Weapons of Mass Creation.” Her poems were no-holds-barred and incredibly smooth. The lines in her poems felt open ended, as they made the audience think about – or even reevaluate the positions they may have put other people in in the past, or situations they’ve experienced personally. Kelly is an amazing activist and artist with a voice that inspires all.

Before her spoken word showcase, Kelly facilitated a workshop that afternoon in Laurel Hall. The workshop was titled “Splitting the World Open,” playing off of one of her favorite quotes that says “if one woman were to tell the truth about her life... it would split the world open.” Kelly is talented in multiple forms of art and expression, so she opened her writing workshop with bodily stretches and vocal exercises. She began to speak with us, encouraging us to “make some noise” if something she said resonated with us. Her energy was truly out of this world. During the workshop, we practiced “listening with our bodies,” played with free association words, and “sculpted” another human into the time of our lives we felt most powerful. Then, and only then, did the writing start. Workshop participants were told to free-write three prompts, for a minute straight – no breaks. We weren’t allowed to cross anything out, as Kelly said, when we cross things out of our writing, we are listening to our inner critics. Right before we began, we all dusted our critics off of our shoulders. The three prompts written were “what you don’t know about me is...,” “I have the power to...,” and “I am here to say...” It was incredibly empowering to let go of our inner critics and write without hesitation what was really on our minds. At the end, Kelly asked us to go around and state one word for how we were feeling after completion of the workshop. Many people chose the word “inspired” or “empowered.” Others used “motivated,” “proud,” or “enlightened.” Overall, it was a valuable experience that we are sure not to forget.

—Samantha Barrett



Photo credit:: yellowgurl.com

THE CLOTHESLINE PROJECT



Photo credit:: University of Connecticut Women’s Center

The Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) hosted its annual “Clothesline Project” the week of October 20th, 2014. The Clothesline Project is “a traveling display of t-shirts made by survivors and secondary survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence to raise awareness about the prevalence of these violations of human rights,” according to Lauren Donais, VAWPP Coordinator. Students designed t-shirts to express their feelings revolving around domestic violence to be strung along clotheslines outside of the Student Union. Although the display had to be moved inside after the first day due to weather, the project still proved to be successful in raising awareness around this crucial issue. We thank everyone who played a part in making this project possible!

—Samantha Barrett

100 YEARS OF WOMEN SCHOLARSHIP

The Women's Center would like to congratulate this year's 100 Years of Women Scholarship recipients! We encourage readers to consider donating to the 100 Years of Women scholarship fund for future scholarship recipients (see link on opposite page).



Photo credit: Giorgina Pailla

Giorgina Paiella

Giorgina was raised in Avon, Connecticut and is currently a Junior at the University of Connecticut. She is an Honors student majoring in English, with a double minor in Philosophy and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. It is her goal to pursue a doctorate in English with a concentration in feminist theory, and become a university professor.

Voices: What role has feminism played in your life?

Giorgina: "Feminism has played an essential role in my life and upbringing. As a young woman, I believe it is crucial to advocate for gender equity because issues of gender inequality can affect every sphere of women's lives, from income to social treatment and lifestyle choices. As Gloria Steinem states, "A feminist is anyone who recognizes the equality and full humanity of women and men." Many people hesitate to identify as feminists despite the fact that feminism simply espouses equal consideration of interests. I believe that it is a moral imperative to raise individuals who view sexism in relation to the interconnected injustices of racism, classism, and speciesism, among other "isms." I try to reflect feminist values in my academic studies, work, and extracurricular involvement, as I owe so much of what I have to the female advocates and role models in my family, academia, and countless other walks of life."

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

Giorgina: "I am the chief organization officer of the [UConn National Organization for Women](#) (NOW), a chapter of the largest organization of feminist activists in the United States. NOW has a rich social and political history that has always interested me, and it is wonderful that UConn students can contribute to its legacy. We organize photo campaigns and movie screenings, table for events like Equal Pay Day, and participate in collection drives for local charities. I also work for the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department as a student assistant, designing newsletters, slideshows, and other event materials. My academic studies and independent research often engage with gender studies and feminist theory. For example, this summer, I conducted research and wrote a paper for a self-designed literary research project titled "The Woman Who is Not One: Incorporeal Femininity, Disembodied Cinematic Representation, and the Uneven Movement Toward the Cyborg Identity," which was made possible by a Summer Undergraduate Research Fund (SURF) award."

Voices: What/who inspires you?

Giorgina: "I am most inspired by passionate, dedicated individuals working to advance knowledge and opportunity in a variety of disciplines. Growing up, I was most inspired by the strong women in my family and historical figures who have worked to advance female opportunity. I have always loved literature and gradually developed a passion for authors like Virginia Woolf and Kate Chopin who explore diverse female experiences with profound depth and clarity. Gloria Steinem is a multi-generational inspiration within my family; meeting her when she visited for the Women's Center's 40th Anniversary Celebration was inspiring and touching. At UConn, I am grateful to have found a wonderful community of professors and staff members who have supported and encouraged my academic aspirations as mentors."

Giorgina: "I would like to thank our generous donors for contributing to the 100 Years of Women Scholarship! I hope to give back someday in support of a new generation of individuals working to advance female opportunity."

100 YEARS OF WOMEN SCHOLARSHIP

Rebecca Acabchuk

Rebecca is a 4th year PhD student in Dr. Joanne Conover's lab in the Department of Physiology and Neurobiology. Her research is focused on investigating the cellular changes that take place in the brain from repeated concussions, with the goal of better understanding how repeated concussions can lead to long term neurodegenerative disease. She currently resides in Hebron, CT with her husband and 3 daughters (ages 11, 9 and 9).

Voices: What role has feminism played in your life?

Rebecca: "I have always been drawn to helping women. It is like a deep visceral pull, hard to explain with words, that I have felt much more so after having daughters of my own. I've worked with women in a women's shelter in Hartford teaching them yoga. One of them commented to me that when I came to do yoga with them, it was like we were turning the shelter into a spa for the night. This comment moved me. I think one of the most satisfying feelings stems from helping other people feel better about themselves, whether that is through changing their mindset, building their confidence, or challenging them in a positive way. I can't say the word 'feminism' comes to mind much, but I am continually drawn to working with female groups because I think there is so much strength, power, and positive energy that can be cultivated by having a stronger female standing in society. If you define feminism as equality for all, supporting a woman's right to make choices for her own body (such as birth control) and her own future, I most certainly am a feminist! I believe the world would be a more peaceful place if more intelligent females were in leadership positions across the globe. I would like to see that happen. But I don't think we can just stand around and hope that it happens on its own. I think it's OK to start small. We need to support one another, and this highlights the importance of groups on campus like [Women in Math, Science, and Engineering](#) (WiMSE) and the Women's Center that are designed to support equality and address these issues."

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

Rebecca: "My experience supporting and vocalizing women's rights dates back to my youth. One experience that touched me greatly was participating in a series of theatrical productions as part of a global campaign to raise awareness of the plight of women in war-torn countries. My efforts in this regard, along with creating additional fundraising opportunities, helped raise several thousands of dollars. I have also been the Co-Director of WiMSE with Dr. Joanne Conover for the past 2 years. I've learned that all the really big accomplishments in life cannot be done alone. It is our systems of support, friends or family, whether they assist in large ways or small that make those really big things possible. Which is what makes WiMSE such an important group to have on campus. WiMSE helps you form a network of women, and men, who support you in your efforts to reach your academic goals. So when you hit a bump in the road, you have people who will help remind you that you can do it, you can stay the course, even when you feel like you just want to give up. Believing in yourself makes anything possible. Helping to remind one another of our strengths is an amazing gift to share. That is what WiMSE is for, to support one another as future leaders in the stems."

If you would like to support the
100 Years of Women
Scholarship, please [click here](#).



Photo credit: Rebecca Acabchuk

100 YEARS OF WOMEN SCHOLARSHIP

Lyn Alexander

Lyn is a Senior graduating in May, with concentrations in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, English, and Allied Health Sciences. She is from South Windsor, CT. Lyn plans on going for her Masters in Social Work and becoming a licensed clinical social worker. She also plans on participating in community organizing and individual level activism through therapy with individuals and families.

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

"I believe that feminism has changed my life for the better because it has not only facilitated the detoxification of my life and my politics from a sexist, racist, heterosexist, cissexist, ableist, etc. structure of institutions within our society, it has liberated and elevated my consciousness. I think more critically and feel and act with more empathy. It has helped me identify my goals and my needs for a fulfilling and dedicated career based on collective change."

Voices: *What/who inspires you?*

"I am inspired by the many activists around the world struggling against the odds to create change and equity, even when the work is very hard, long, tiring, and dangerous. With regard to individuals, my idols are Audre Lorde, Angela Davis and Leslie Feinberg, among others."

WC STAFF APPOINTED TO CT AAUW STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

We congratulate our very own Avery Desrosiers on her acceptance into the Connecticut branch of the American Association of University Women's Student Advisory Council!

When you click on the "What do we do" tab under [AAUW's website](#) you find the simply put, but undeniable statement, "AAUW Empowers Women" beneath it. AAUW stands for the American Association of University Women, and for 130 years it has been providing programming, funding scholarships, and building capacities within communities to encourage female participation and leadership.

Kathleen Holgerson suggested to me that I should apply to this group. I debated the idea for a day, it seemed like such a big initiative, and I wasn't sure how I might fit into their scheme or what in fact my contributions could be. After nervously submitting my application I waited to hear more. It was about a week later when Kathleen stopped me in the hallway to say congratulations. Having not read my email yet, I had to ask her to clarify for what. When she confirmed that it was on receiving the position on the Student Advisory Council for CT AAUW for the year I was shocked. I ran to check my email because I wouldn't allow myself to believe it until my eyes could confirm that it was true. It was. This begins what I am sure will be a year of self-empowerment, as well as advocacy for the empowerment of others.

In our first conference call, six other women chimed in excitedly on the phone. There were four of us who were new to our positions, and we took turns nervously rattling off our involvement on our respective campuses. I am so impressed by the women that I will be working with this year. We are still in the very beginning stages of planning what this year will look like, but already we have established that we are a team that can be relied upon. I see these women as powerhouses of their campus communities. I am thankful that I have a year to work beside them and learn more about how I can raise the bar for myself as I continue this work to empower women of Connecticut and beyond.



Photo credit: Avery Desrosiers

—Avery Desrosiers

STRONGER

Voices caught up with Maddie E. Barron, a Staff Psychologist at the University of Connecticut's Counseling and Mental Health Services, to get more insight on an ongoing group on campus she co-facilitates, called "Stronger." Stronger is a support and discussion group for students at the University of Connecticut who are survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking. For information on registration, please contact Maddie Barron (Maddie.Barron@uconn.edu) or Kit Maclean (Katherine.Maclean@uconn.edu). They can also be reached at CMHS at 860-486-4705.

Voices: *How would you describe Stronger?*

Maddie: "I would describe Stronger to be a safe and confidential space where individuals connect with one another on a weekly basis through their shared experiences of being a survivor of sexual assault, dating violence, and/or stalking. As the co-facilitator of Stronger each week I experience a great deal of gratitude to bear witness as group members connect with one another surrounding their shared experiences. I feel that it is an absolute privilege to be present and see the evolution of group members as they journey through their process of healing. It takes a tremendous amount of courage for group members to participate, and I am constantly marveled at the enormous amount of strength and resilience group members radiate."

Voices: *Is it comparable to group therapy?*

Maddie: "Stronger could be described as comparable to group therapy in that it is process oriented, focuses on building connection and cohesion among group members, as well as trust."

Voices: *What is the most unique thing about Stronger?*

Maddie: "The most unique thing about Stronger is the group members. Each group member brings a unique personality, sense of humor, intellect, and empathy to each meeting. All of these things combined is what makes Stronger what it is."

Voices: *What types of activities are held within the group?*

Maddie: "This semester in particular, Stronger group sessions have been predominantly discussion based. The co-leaders of the group work to meet group members' needs and their preference for the group such as discussions, introducing coping skills, as well as psychoeducation surrounding recovery from traumatic experiences."

Voices: *Are there themes to the meetings?*

Maddie: "Themes which have been present in meetings include individuals connecting with one another around the symptoms (i.e. flashbacks) which they manage day-to-day following their experiences with sexual assault, dating violence, and/or stalking. Other themes which are consistently present include aspects surrounding communication with an individual's partner or family members regarding their healing process or past experiences, as well as navigating emerging romantic relationships and how their past experiences impact these relationships. Group members actively strive to meet one another in regards to where each individual is in their healing process."

Voices: *If a person is intimidated and afraid to come alone, are they permitted to bring a support person along with them?*

Maddie: "The group is open to those individuals who are survivors to any type of sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking. Should an individual have questions, concerns, or any hesitations prior to attending the group we encourage those individuals to contact us at CMHS to schedule a group orientation appointment which is free of charge. During the group orientation appointment either myself or co-leader Kit Maclean will meet with the individual for 20 to 30 minutes to share with them information about the group, common discussions and presenting concerns which are present, as well as answer any type of questions or concerns they may have to assist them in their process."

Voices: *Once a person is registered, are they expected to attend every meeting?*

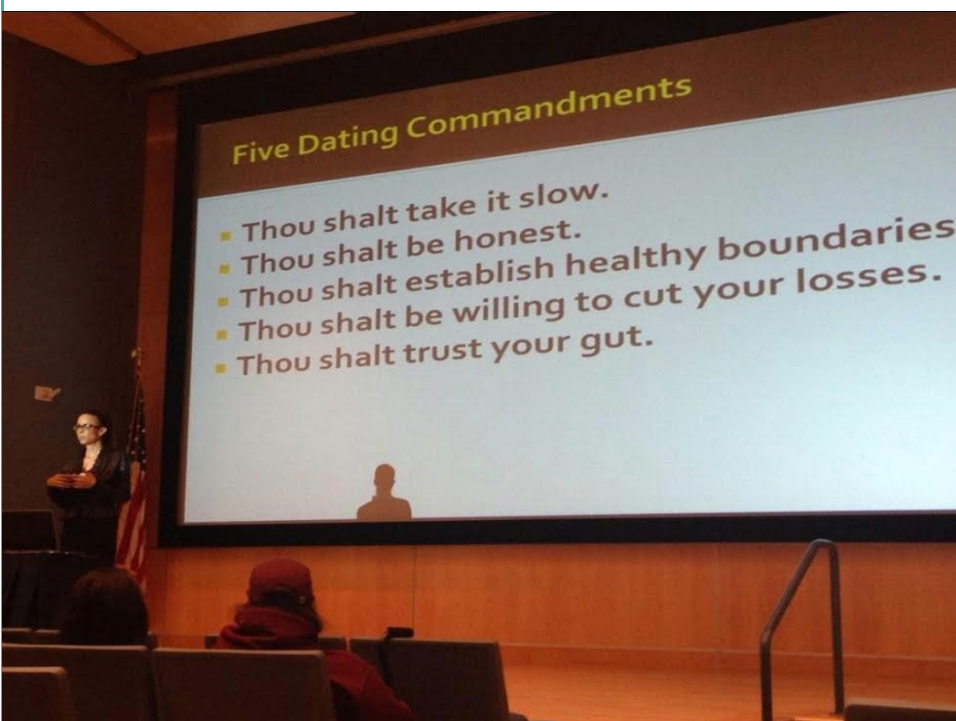
Maddie: "Stronger runs as a drop-in group format. However, we find when individuals attend group sessions consistently it assists the group in building cohesion and trust, as well as an overall positive experience among group members."

SILENT NO MORE: SIL LAI ABRAMS

On October 27th, 2014, Women's Center staff attended Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated's Domestic Violence Awareness Month keynote speaker event featuring Sil Lai Abrams. Sil Lai Abrams is an award winning author, renowned speaker, activist, and relationship expert for *EBONY* magazine online. Sil Lai has been featured on ABC, FOX, BET, Court TV, and TruTV, and was featured in Pune-Sol's "Powerful Difference" campaign, which celebrates women making positive differences in their communities.

Abrams is passionate about reducing the rates of intimate partner violence, and commits herself to spreading awareness as well as insight on how to handle domestic violence. During her lecture at

the University of Connecticut, Abrams proved to be extremely transparent about her personal life. She is an adoptee who fell victim to alcoholism during her teenage years. She experienced sexual assault and dropped out of high school in the 10th grade. Later on, she found herself stuck in a domestic violent relationship. She explained that domestic violence does not just equal physical abuse; it could mean emotional abuse, financial abuse, sexual abuse, etc. She uncovered the signs that someone may show if and when they become involved in a toxic relationship, and spoke about the cycle of abuse that occurs within these bonds. Abrams detailed the moment when she knew that she had enough in her previous domestic violent relationship: when her partner became physically abusive to their son. She displayed great strength, resilience, and extreme honesty whilst sharing her story. It was truly admirable that there was no hints of resentment in her voice as she spoke about the wrongdoing that her



abusive partner cast onto her. Abrams explained a process she coined "The Sepia Process," detailing how to healthily overcome negativity in your life. She pushed ideas of determining what is absolutely necessary and unnecessary in order to retain your goals and learning to keep your ego in check so that you remain teachable while doing so. Abrams ended her information-filled lecture with the 5 dating commandments she created for her book, "No More Drama." Students walked out of the event more informed, and more empowered. From hearing Abrams speak about overcoming her circumstances, we knew that we could also rise above anything toxic in our own lives.

Photo credit: Alexandria Hicks

—Samantha Barrett

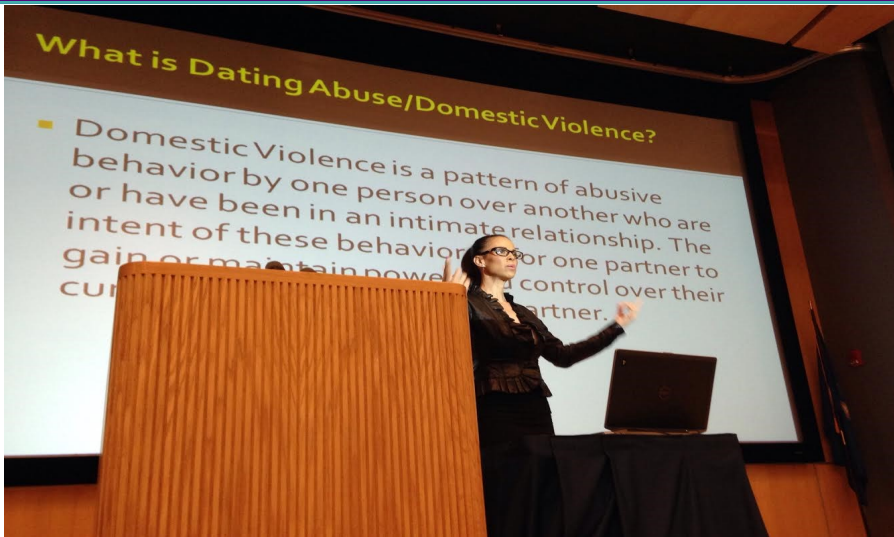


Photo credit: Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated

KEVIN HINES: CRACKED, NOT BROKEN

Kevin Hines is a global speaker, author, and mental health advocate. He is one of 34 (less than 1%) to survive after attempting to take his own life by jumping off of the Golden Gate Bridge. On Wednesday, October 1, 2014, Kevin Hines visited the University of Connecticut for Suicide Prevention Week. The following is UConn student Vanessa Kania's account of Kevin's lecture.

"Those who jump from the Golden Gate Bridge fall two-thirds as far as the tallest building in San Francisco's skyline, the TransAmerica building."

Kevin Hines's voice echoed through the Student Union Theatre, which was filled to capacity with students and UConn staff, after having to turn away nearly 200 more who were hoping to get in. "When you jump from that height, your body travels nearly seventy-five miles per hour... wind scrapes at the skin like shards of glass." The room was silent, and his words sent chills down my spine.



Photo credit: kevinhinesstory.com

During his keynote presentation, the culmination of Suicide Prevention Week, Kevin Hines read excerpts from his book, *Cracked, Not Broken*, which details his experiences both leading up to his suicide attempt and in the years after. It is intensely personal and powerful, made even more so by Kevin's charismatic nature and energy.

Kevin was adopted at the age of four, after living for several years with biological parents who, although loved him and his younger brother, suffered from bipolar disorder and drug addictions. They lived in a state of poverty and filth, which resulted in Kevin's younger brother, Jordache, passing away from an illness. In his book, Kevin describes his eventual adoption "almost like a fairytale."

However, despite having a loving adoptive family, Kevin was bullied in school and suffered greatly. He started experiencing psychosis in high school and relied heavily on alcohol to help him cope, despite beginning some psychiatric treatment his senior year.

Shortly after graduating high school, one of Kevin's teachers committed suicide, pushing Kevin himself into an even more fragile mental state. Three months later, he would jump off the Golden Gate Bridge.

When I first walked into the theatre to hear Kevin speak, I told myself I wouldn't cry. There was a point in Kevin's story, when describing the moments after the jump from the bridge, where he said that something in the water was helping to bump him up to the surface. He later found out that the something was a sea lion, and it was one of the many amazing miracles that contributed to his survival.

That was the point where I realized tears were falling down my face.

As someone who both has experienced the trials of mental illness and is part of a student organization that works towards mental health advocacy, I was indescribably awed after hearing Kevin speak so openly about his struggles. I connected with his story on such a personal level and felt such immense gratitude for Kevin and for everyone in the audience.

Needless to say, Kevin Hines received a standing ovation. Now, he tours around the country, advocating for mental health and suicide prevention, as well as working to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness. Kevin has also been featured in radio, film, and television, in addition to writing articles that appear in several well-known magazines and medical publications.

—Vanessa Kania

PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL

Pray the Devil Back to Hell is the extraordinary story of a small band of Liberian women who came together in the midst of a bloody civil war, took on the violent warlords and corrupt Charles Taylor regime, and won a long-awaited peace for their shattered country in 2003.

As the rebel noose tightened upon Monrovia, and peace talks faced collapse, the women of Liberia – Christians and Muslims united – formed a thin but unshakable white line between the opposing forces, and successfully demanded an end to the fighting – armed only with white T-shirts and the courage of their convictions. The film demonstrates the power of unity and perseverance among women. There is a lot of islamophobia, racism and sexism in our country; *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* offers a new perspective for young women in the U.S to look to. If we can embrace our differences and recognize each other's struggles, we can band together to change the world.

The Women's Center hosted a screening of *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, co-sponsored by Love 146, Revolution Against Rape (R.A.R.), and UCONN Change Lives, on November 19, 2014. The event was a success in that over 30 people came and over 20 stayed for a discussion about the film. There was excellent discourse on how to bring what we saw in the film to UConn and other activist spaces. Many people welcomed the idea of peaceful protesting and admired the women in the documentary for their assertion and perseverance. Ultimately, what can be taken from the film is that women of color, Muslim women and Christian women, women of all backgrounds, can change the state of their country.



Photo credit: rachelqwest.com/

—Rosemary Richi

UConn FOR EQUALITY

Over fifty years ago, protests, demonstrations, and marches put students at the University of Connecticut at the forefront of the free speech and civil rights movements. Then, in 2014, students at the University came together once more in the name of social justice. In that name, La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc., in collaboration with all five cultural centers on campus, aimed to rekindle the same passion experienced by those in the 1960s through the means of art and expression — UConn for Equality was held on November 14th, 2014 on campus at the Alumni Center. Hermano Kevin Yong, a member of La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc., said, "we hope to gain support on this program as it aims to educate, inspire, and ignite new student activism on the UConn campus." With over 150 attendees that night, students stood together as they reflected on what it means to be a student activist. UConn For Equality grew and became more than just an acknowledgement of past activism that catalyzed the creation of the cultural centers starting in the 1960s. It

became a stage to reflect on our current issues. Hermano Kevin Irizarry, Vice-President of La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc. said, "we felt that student voices are imperative to create change in our communities, so we decided to create this event in hopes to reflect on the past efforts toward social justice." As a result, a new generation of student activists has begun to emerge to help address some of the most pressing social issues on our campus.

The Women's Center piece displayed at UConn For Equality (pictured left) was executed by Mikhail Gilbert, Huong Nguyen, Avery Desrosiers, Rosemary Richi, and Lyn Alexander. The visual concept was inspired by the VAWPP logo, the Women's Center logo, as well as the three guiding values of the Women's Center, which are to educate, advocate, and support to promote gender equity. The message of the piece is to remember our roots as we continue to progress. In between the tree trunks are photos displaying defining moments in our Women's Center herstory, dating back to 1972. Also displayed in the piece is a three dimensional cage, partially dismantled, representing the birdcage of oppression individuals face daily due to the intersectionality of race, gender, religion, social status, etc.



Photo credit: Samantha Barrett

—Kevin Irizarry, Samantha Barrett

SOMETHING'S HAPPENING COMMITTEE

The Something's Happening Committee, includes representation by the Women's Center, Human Resources, UConn Unions, the Offices of Audit, Compliance, and Ethics and of Diversity and Equity, UConn Police and the Office of the Provost. It is a cohort of professionals who advocate for civility in the work environment at the University of Connecticut. As part of this effort, the committee invited Dr. Robert Cipriano, a recognized and published scholar on collegiality, civility and managing of conflict, to share with faculty and staff his experiences and knowledge on how to facilitate a collegial campus environment.

Among Dr. Cipriano's publications, it is noteworthy to mention his two books, *Facilitating a Collegial Department in Higher Education, Strategies for Success* and *A Toolkit for Department Heads*, in addition to articles that have been profusely read, including "Strategies For Dealing With A Certified Jerk" and "Collegiality As A Fourth Criterion For Personnel Decisions."

Dr. Cipriano presented two seminars, one targeted to department heads and deans, and the second one to a more wide-range audience. During his first presentation, which was attended by 16 participants, he emphasized the key role of the department head in promoting civility in our spaces. There was a consensus on how important civility is for the good functioning of a department. Part of the discussion focused on diverse strategies used by each

individual department head to foster civility among faculty and staff. The Something's Happening Committee will send a questionnaire as a follow-up to the attendees on whether this seminar provided support or sparked new ideas to deal with incivility at the departmental level.

The second lecture, which was attended by a number of faculty and staff, was focused on general practices of civility among all University personnel, and several examples of non-civil behavior were presented. There was much discussion among the attendees of the meeting in which specific questions to very specific situations were asked.

Overall, Dr. Cipriano's visit was very productive. The members of the Something's Happening Committee agreed that this type of event is absolutely valuable and completely appropriate to make all University employees aware of the importance of promoting civility in the workplace. Whether we are considering supervisors or workers, faculty or staff, or members of the upper administration, collegiality and civility should be central for the proper functioning and well-being of the University.

—*Maria Luz Fernandez, PhD*
Member of "Something's Happening Committee"

Our People

Promoting Respect and Civility

Questions to ask yourself:

1. Do I recognize and value the contributions of all the positions that make up our employee community?
2. In the process of making my decisions, do I consider everyone who will be affected?
3. Have I treated others as they wish to be treated?
4. Do I think about how my behavior can negatively impact another employee's perception of their value?



What you can do:

- Speak up.
- Talk to your supervisor.
- Contact one of the sponsoring organizations.

Sponsored by:

Office of the President & the Something's Happening Committee
Department of Human Resources
Women's Center
AFSCME (NP-3)
UConn Police Department
CEUI (NP-2)
UCPEA
Office of Diversity & Equity
Office of Audit, Compliance & Ethics

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Photo credit: respect.uconn.edu

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Photo credit: Zuleika Candelaria

As we wrap up the Fall Semester, I'd like to recognize an overarching theme that has arisen and become the strongest I have ever seen on the University of Connecticut's main campus here in Storrs – student activism for social justice and equality. Social issues have always been a concern among my peers at UConn; however, I have never seen this amount of passionate activism displayed throughout campus, and student voices expressed, as I have this Fall – and I must say that I cannot be prouder of the action that is taking place. Whether it is through creative expression, organized marches, sit-ins, or campus “town meetings”, students have taken the time this semester to express the real issues we are facing every day at the University setting and beyond. UConn students have been shedding light on issues of unjust racial profiling by authority figures as well as police brutality, with the recent murders of Micheal Brown, Eric Garner, John Crawford, and countless other African American men and women in our country who have been viciously killed while unarmed by police officers.

Closer to “home”, tensions concerning race and gender have seemed to come to a head this semester on campus, following a racially charged incident involving a historically Black sorority and a traditionally white fraternity. Inter-cultural Greeks, as well as non-Greek affiliated students have taken the opportunity to speak up, and express their personal experiences of living as “the other” at our predominately white institution, and the prejudices we face daily. Via campus town meetings, solidarity was found in many European American students, reminding others to “check their privilege.” Through this, diverse groups of students have united to become social justice organizers, and those who are less aware are being enlightened about the oppression their peers face, especially through the intersections of race and gender. This is significant to the values of the Women's Center, as one of it's principles is advocacy. The Women's Center primarily strives for gender equity, but realizes that this is not possible without recognizing the many intersections of oppression that individuals face, and how unique everyone's experiences are because of this. I have seen a special kind of unity created between diverse groups of students who are ready and willing to advocate for other students on campus whose voices aren't being heard to the extent that they should be. These movements on campus are reminiscent of the Title IX activism that occurred here in recent years. Students are reclaiming this campus as their own, and demanding that civility, diversity, and equality be apparent and upheld as a priority in our campus culture.

The same demands can be seen throughout the world, from Ferguson, Missouri to Mexico City to Palestine, as civilians just like you and I fight for what we believe in. This year has truly been the year of social justice – or lack thereof – as outrage across the globe (and rightfully so), and injustices everywhere have been made more visible thanks to social media, sparking public outcry and inspiring wants for real change within institutional systems. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Vine have given people who are “on foot” at the sites of action an outlet to deliver real time documentation of the events that are occurring. This has been key in spreading truth and creating solidarity far and wide. Although the events leading up to these outcries have not been pleasant, I am excited to be alive in these times to witness and take action in what will seemingly be my generation's civil rights movement.

TOGETHERNESS, CHANGES, HAPPINESS, EQUALITY

—Samantha Barrett

SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S CENTER

EDUCATION | ADVOCACY | SUPPORT | GENDER EQUITY

Dear Friends of the Women's Center:

We would like to encourage you to give an end of the year gift to the Center to ensure that the major activities we execute can continue to address areas of priority around gender equity. You can do so on our [new giving page](https://uconn.givecorps.com/causes/740-the-women-s-center), found at: <https://uconn.givecorps.com/causes/740-the-women-s-center>

UConn

 FOUNDATION

\$25 \$50 \$100
 \$250 \$

Donate

SHARE THIS



Support the continued work of UConn's Women's Center!

Making a difference in our community.

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 innovation, leadership, global engagement, and diversity. While we are proud of our successes, we need your help to support and enhance this work.

ATTENTION

WOMEN'S CENTER ALUMS:

We need your help! Please consider taking on a volunteer role to reach out to former Women's Center students. Many alums do not know that they can donate directly to the Women's Center. We need help spreading the word in order to continue to fund effective, cutting edge programs at the University of Connecticut. The volunteer role consists of calling and emailing fellow alums! Training will be provided, and time commitment is manageable.

For further information, please contact Lynn Santiago-Calling (UConn, Class of 1998) via phone or text at (617) 875-3313, or via email at lynn_calling@hotmail.com (please use the subject line "Women's Center Volunteer").

Thank you in advance!

"What should I do after an assault?"

24/7 Resources

UConn Police Department: 860-486-4800

Student Health Services Advice Nurse: 860-486-4700

CT Sexual Assault Crisis Services: 888-999-5545

Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline: 888-774-2900

sexualviolence.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 through Thursday;
8am-5pm on Fridays

