

VOICES

The Women's Center Newsletter

University of Connecticut

February/March 2005

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V-DAY COMES TO UCONN

By Julie DiMauro

Starting the day after Valentine's Day, UConn celebrated a "V-Day" of another sort. This February 15th and 16th, the University of Connecticut's chapter of the V-Day campaign brought Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* to the stage. According to the national campaign's website (www.vday.org), V-DAY is "a non-profit corporation, distributes funds to grassroots, national, and international organizations and programs that work to stop violence against women and girls."

This year, the national organization is spotlighting the women of Iraq as a group in dire need of protection and prevention of sexual violence.

In an event co-sponsored locally by the UConn chapter of V-Day, SUBOG, and the Women's Center, a cast and crew of over thirty young women took to the stage with a series of wonderfully performed monologues, narrations, and "Vagina Happy (and, Not-So-Happy) Facts." The show is at once both triumphant and elegiac: a celebration of all that it is to

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UConn FORMS UNIFEM CHAPTER

By Barbara Gurr

As the recently released *Millennium Declaration* recognizes, *real* reductions in poverty – meaningful and *sustainable* – depend on our ability and our willingness to acknowledge and attack the reality that half of the world's population, girls and women, are systematically and deliberately disadvantaged and subordinated. Around the globe and in our own country, girls and women can not find or afford the healthcare they need to remain healthy and raise healthy families, or the education they need to direct

their lives and control their destinies; they do not have the legal right to control their own bodies; they are systematically malnourished and overworked; they are mutilated, raped, and murdered with impunity. The UN Development Fund for Women, or "UNIFEM." seeks to help these women through concrete strategies including education and training, provision of affordable and accessible health and wellness care, job opportunities, and shelter when needed.

Study after study has shown that when women are healthy, educated, and

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CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

MARCH

Women's Herstory Month: *Women Change America*

2 Get Real: Unmask the Problem - Body Pride Fair

Join us for an evening of activities, discussions and giveaways from various organizations around eating disorders, body image and wellness. Refreshment will be provided.

Wednesday, 6-9 pm, Konover Auditorium,
Thomas J. Dodd Research Center

2 Coming Out of the Fridge - A Personal Look at Compulsive Eating

In this multi-media presentation, Lisa Currie describes her own experience with compulsive eating by sharing stories from her life in order to put a face to the facts about this less talked-about eating disorder.

Wednesday, 7-8:30 pm, Konover Auditorium,
Thomas J. Dodd Research Center

3 *The Good Body* by Eve Ensler

Join us as we listen to and discuss the new play, *The Good Body*, by Eve Ensler, creator of the *Vagina Monologues*. Co-sponsored with Student Health Services and SHAPE.

Thursday, 6 pm, Women's Center

15 International Women's Day Celebration

A day of celebrating women's contributions to the Arts worldwide. Join us for films, exhibits, food and performances. Co-sponsored with the African American Cultural Center, Asian American Cultural Center, Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center, Rainbow Center, International Center and SUBOG.

Tuesday, 7 pm, Student Union Lobby

16 Women and the Workforce

Join Barbara Potopowitz, Public Information Officer from the Connecticut Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Dr. Charlotte Pyle, Landscape Ecologist with the USDA and Lt. Regina Rush-Kittle from the Connecticut State Police for a panel discussion on the current status of women in the workforce.

Tuesday, 2 pm, Class of 1947 Room,
Homer Babbidge Library

16 An Evening with Gish Jen

Gish Jen received a degree in English from Harvard University, and published her first novel, *In the American Society*, in 1986. Her novels and short stories frequently revisit the American dream. The most recent novel is *The Love Wife*. Co-sponsored by the Asian American Cultural Center, the Asian American Institute, The College of Continuing Studies and the English Department.

Wednesday, 5:30 pm, Konover Auditorium,
Thomas J. Dodd Research Center

17 *Discovering the Intuitive You: Space Clearing*

The energy around us can affect our moods, our ability to concentrate, and also our health. Come learn some simple techniques and tools for becoming aware of these energies and how to cleanse/clear a space. Explore how to psychically clean house and keep it that way. Facilitated by

Dawna Martin, a healer of many modalities who thrives on helping people transform their lives through devoting time to the balance of their Body, Mind and Spirit, Being in the Now, and having fun.

Thursday, 6 pm, Women's Center Lounge

22 Sex, Power and the Media

Join us for an evening with Ann Simonton, founder and director of Media Watch, a nonprofit media literacy organization whose goal is to challenge abusive stereotypes and other biased images commonly found in the media. Her presentation will expose the media's blatant propaganda and teach people to become more critical consumers of the media.

Tuesday, 8 pm, Student Union Theater

23 *Hypocrite in a Puffy White Dress*

Join author Susan Jane Gilman, author of *Kiss My Tiara* and most recently *Hypocrite in a Puffy White Dress: Tales of Growing Up Groovy and Clueless*, for a hilarious and entertaining chronicle of a generation of women, with a focus on the "passions and delusions that we all experience for or another." The program will be followed by a book signing and a make-your-own-sundae reception.

Wednesday, time TBA, Student Union 304

24 Thursday Night at the Movies: *Constructing Public Opinion*

This film looks at how the media regularly uses public opinion polls in their reporting of important news stories. But how exactly do they report them and to what end? Exploding the myth that most Americans are moderate or conservative, *Constructing Public Opinion* demonstrates the way in which political elites help to promote the military industrial complex and how the media sustains belief in an electoral system with a built-in bias against the interests of ordinary people.

Thursday, 6 pm, Women's Center Lounge

28 *A Certain Liberation*

Gurudasi Mondol gave herself up to madness in 1971, during the Liberation War of Bangladesh. Thirty years later, Gurudasi continues to roam the streets of Kopilmoni, a small-town in rural Bangladesh, in quest of all she has lost. Through her indomitable presence, she has kept alive the spirit of the Liberation War. Discussion following with director Yasmine Kabir.

Monday, 7 pm, Asian American Cultural Center

30 *Time for Me: Yoga and Guided Meditation*

Join us for an evening aimed at providing an opportunity for you to take care of yourself and let go of some stress.

Wednesday, 6 pm, Women's Center

Please visit our website for complete
information and updates!

www.womenscenter.uconn.edu/events.htm

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be a woman, and also a respectful tribute to those women who have experienced violence.

From the exuberance of "My Angry Vagina," to the heart-rending horror of "My Vagina Was My Village" to the stirring climax—literally—of "Reclaiming Cunt," *The Vagina Monologues* is a rollercoaster of powerful emotion. The cast offered a heartfelt and energetic performance, and the audience responded in kind. Proceeds from the two performances were donated toward the Domestic Violence Program, United Services, Inc., the Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut, and V-Day Spotlight 2005: Women of Iraq, Under Siege.

Director Tara Maroney was impressed by the outcome of both nights. "Seeing the energy and enthusiasm that the cast and crew have for this important cause is inspiring," she says. She looks forward to being involved with the show again next year.

UConn V-Day also named four "Vagina Warriors" as a recognition of those working to end violence against women and girls in their communities. We would like to extend our congratulations to this year's Vagina Warriors:

Joyce Wood-Martin

Joyce Wood-Martin has been active in statewide organizations, testified in the legislature, and dedicated hundreds of hours to support women who have been assaulted. Joyce has served on the Victim/Survivor Advisory Board to the Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. since its inception in the fall of 1994, winning an award in January 2004 for her service.

Aurora Hannigan

On campus, Aurora is the Vice-President of the UConn Chapter of the National Organization for Women. She has also been the UConn intern for Planned Parenthood of Connecticut, working on grassroots activism. In 2004, she organized the UConn delegation to the "March for Women's Lives" in Washington D.C., which brought over 100

people from the Storrs community to the reproductive rights rally and march.

David Irving and Lindsay Chung

Together, David and Lindsay represented a disabled woman, who had fled from her abusive spouse in Latin America, in her asylum claim before the Hartford Immigration Court. David and Lindsay spent the semester learning about domestic violence and its effects on women, and developed a novel argument on their client's behalf. The immigration judge recently indicated that he will grant their client's claim.

MEN AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

By Kurt Graf

Men Against Violence Against Women (MAVAW) began on campus in 2000 as an extension of the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP). The work of MAVAW is based on the premise that men must work in alliance with women to end men's violence against women. All men are welcome! Please contact the Women's Center for more information.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PREVENTION PROGRAM

By Hilary Jones

The Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) is a group dedicated to educating peers on issues of sexual violence, body image, consent, dating violence, and relationship rights. This semester the program welcomes a new group of trained student facilitators. VAWPP will be involved in planning and volunteering during the events for Sexual Assault Awareness Month. We continue to provide educational and thought-provoking workshops such as "Healthy Relationships" and "Saturday Night Hook-Up" to the University community. Any instructor, community assistant or student group interested in hosting a workshop can contact Caitlin O'Brien at the Women's Center, (860) 486-4738.

NEW WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL GROUP

By Denise Letendre

Undergraduate and graduate UConn women of any denomination come together to deepen our faith and explore the intersection between feminism and Christianity. We are women connected by our belief in God, seeking to understand what it means to claim a Christian faith that empowers women. We desire to nurture women's spiritual development through study, discussion, prayer and action. Honoring the movement of the Spirit in the lives of women, we encourage and celebrate their theological, liturgical and ethical contributions.

The group will hold regular women's gatherings, retreats, and special events focusing on:

- Spiritual formation needs, such as prayer, meditation, Bible study, and spiritual direction.
- Topical discussions on women's issues, faith issues and social justice issues.
- Providing support and a setting for women to share concerns, frustrations and joys and for the continued self-development and personal and spiritual growth of members.

The group will meet bi-weekly on Fridays at 3:15 p.m. in the Women's Center Lounge. A spring retreat is being planned. Next meeting is Friday, February 25th. For more information, please contact Denise Letendre at: Noor137@aol.com or denise.letendre@huskymail.uconn.edu.

WOMEN'S STUDIES CONFERENCE

The 17th Annual Women's Studies Conference, co-sponsored by the UConn Human Rights Institute, focuses this year on Women's Human Rights, with speakers and presentations on topics as diverse as the use of microbicides in AIDS treatment to female circumcision and including in-depth examinations of breast-feeding politics, international trafficking in women and girls, and women and welfare in the United States,

among other timely issues. The keynote address will be delivered by Dr. Marjorie Agosin, Professor of Spanish at Wellesley College and recipient of numerous awards for her human rights work, including the Good Neighbor Award given by the Conference of Christians and Jews and the Jeanette Rankin Award in 1995. She has also received two prestigious prizes given to Latino writers: the Letras de Oro prize and the Latino Literature Prize for two collections of poetry.

This event will take place April 2, 2005, 8:30—6 pm, in the Math Science Building. The contact person for the conference is Barbara Gurr, Assistant Director and Conference Coordinator, Women's Studies. Pre-registration is required to participate in the lunch—please go to the Women's Studies Program website for further information:
<http://www.sp.uconn.edu/~womstu4/home.html>

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empowered to control their own lives, they raise healthier families and build stronger communities. UNIFEM is working hard to make this the reality for women around the world. You can be a part of this work.

A student chapter of UNIFEM is forming this Spring on the Storrs campus, and we invite you to be a part of this life-changing – indeed, planet-changing – work. What will being a student member of UNIFEM bring you? It brings you the world. Join UNIFEM-UConn to learn fund-raising and event-planning skills; to put something eye-catching on your resume; to work with like-minded activists in direct-action strategies both on and off campus; to meet women who are working every day to make the planet safer; but most of all, join UNIFEM-UConn to improve the lives of girls and women around the world.

Please email Barb Gurr, Interim Assistant Director of Women's Studies, for more information. Barbara.gurr@uconn.edu.

A FEW REMINDERS

Join Our Listserv!

Want to keep up with the Women's Center on a weekly basis? Then join the U-WOMEN Listserv, a weekly updated e-mail featuring Women's Center events, on and off campus events, announcements and national/international news. For information on how to subscribe, go to vm.uconn.edu/subunsub.html and enter UWOMEN-L.

Check Out Our Website

Be sure to visit our newly updated website at www.womenscenter.uconn.edu. You can find out about all our events for the Spring 2005 semester, learn about our ongoing groups, get informed on issues such as dating violence and sexual assault and find out what resources we have in our library. You can even find past newsletters on the site.

CONTINUING GROUPS

Women's Book Club

This group is open to students, staff, faculty and individuals from the surrounding community. The group selects books written by women, and discusses them on a monthly basis. New members are always welcome.

Between Women

A discussion group for women who love women...or think they might! Come and discuss fun topics, movies and more with women who share your feelings and experiences. This group meets every Wednesday, 7 PM, at the Women's Center. For more information call the Women's Center or email: betweenwomen@hotmail.com.

Graduate Women's Group

This is an ongoing, peer-led group that is intended to provide support, focus, ideas and problem-solving strategies for female graduate students at various stages in the process. The group meets the 2nd Monday of each month and topics will vary and may

include issues of motivation, competence, procrastination, anxiety, goal setting, dealing with advisors/committees, bureaucratic struggles, and finding a mentor. Vent, relax, give advice, and share stories

The South Asian Tree (TSAT)

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka. Do you identify with one of the countries listed above either through self or family? If so, come join in on dialogues of balancing South Asian heritage with North American ideologies and the implications it has on day to day experiences including life at UConn.

Facilitated by Bandana Purkayastha, Bidya Ranjeet, and Shanthi Rao. For more information contact Bidya Ranjeet at 6-5460.

VOICES



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VOICES

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