

VOICES



THE WOMEN'S CENTER NEWSLETTER

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

MARCH 2004

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BY KATHERINE E. LEONARD

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This March we celebrate National Women's History Month, recognizing where we come from and where we're going. In 2004, the national theme is "Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility", challenging women to stand tall and reach for the stars with compassion and courage against great odds.

Starting in California in the 1970's, "Women's History Week" was started by the Education Task Force of Sonoma County to help raise awareness of the contributions of women to society. This took place the week of March 8th, International Women's Day, to make sure the events included a multi-cultural perspective, raised awareness of past contributions by women and encouraged a bright future for women. By

1980, President Jimmy Carter was encouraging and promoting the week, eventually making it "National Women's History Week". By 1987, demand from organizations, museums, libraries, youth leaders and educators around the country was too overwhelming for just one week. The House and Senate approved a National Women's History Month, which has been in affect since 1992.

Here at UConn, we put a feminist spin on the word "history" and changed it into "Women's Herstory", reminding one that history is made through the stories we each tell. In anticipation, the Women's Center is excited to bring some wonderful events to the community this March. Lea LeBel, coordinator of Women's Herstory Month and student employee at the

Women's Center, recognizes March as "a month to celebrate the women who have shaped the world as we know it through their contributions." She, as well as the rest of the Women's Center staff, would like to extend a warm invitation to all of our events this semester! Here are a few highlights to keep in mind. For time and place, please see page 2.

* March 1st, A'Lelia Bundles will give a presentation on the life of her great-great-grandmother, Madame C.J. Walker.

"As Madam Walker's biographer, and as a journalist who loves a well-told tale, I have always believed that her story deserved a large loom on which to weave the dimensions of her unusual life with the broad themes and major events (con't on p. 4)

RETURNING WITH A GUIDE DOG

BY KATHERINE E. LEONARD AND KAREN ALISON

Walking down the street with guide dog in hand is Karen Alison, student at UConn. Karen is a 7th semester Family Studies major, concentrating in Childhood and Adolescent Development who wants to get her masters in Social Work and work with people with disabilities.

She is also a student worker at the Women's Center completing her Women's Studies internship.

This semester, Karen brought back Jarvis, her guide dog to the UConn community. Jarvis is a beautiful black lab, turning 2 years old on March

28th. He comes to UConn from *The Seeing Eye*, the oldest guide dog school in the world, located in Morristown, N.J. When asking Karen about Jarvis, (con't on p. 3)



SOME EVENTS IN THE MONTH OF MARCH

Women's Herstory Month: Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility



1 On Her Own Ground— The Life and The Times of Madam C.J. Walker

A'Lelia Bundles is Madam C.J. Walker's great-great-granddaughter, an Emmy Award-winning network television news producer and former ABC News Washington Deputy Bureau Chief. In her national best-selling biography, *On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker*, Bundles reveals surprising and new information about this amazing entrepreneur, philanthropist and political activist. Co-sponsored by the African American Cultural Center. Konover Auditorium, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, Monday, 4-6 pm.

2 The Significance of Black Feminism

Dr. Evelyn Simien is a political science professor here at the university. She has developed a sophisticated measure of black feminist consciousness and has examined its impact on political behavior. Come join us as we discuss the impacts of black feminism in society and culture. This event is being organized by the African American Cultural Center. The Women's Center is co-sponsoring it along with Sister-to-Sister. African American Cultural Center Lounge, Tuesday, 7 pm.

16 International Women's Day Celebration

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

A Faculty Panel Discussion, "Women and Globalization" will be held at the Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center at noon. Lunch will be provided for the first 25 participants.

Evening Performances will begin at 7 pm at the African American Cultural Center. Please contact the Women's Center for further information.

18 Thursday Night at the Movies *One Woman, One Vote*

The 70-year battle for women's suffrage is the subject of this gripping documentary. *One Woman, One Vote* documents the struggles both of the leaders and the women who fought along side them. From Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Alice Paul, this film follows the fight for equal rights. A discussion will follow the film. Women's Center Lounge, Thursday, 6 pm.

22 A Multi-generational Perspective on Activism – A Panel Discussion

A panel of women from different generations will talk about what they think it means to be an activist and how future generations of women can get involved. Asian American Cultural Center. Monday, 6 pm

24 Sonia Sanchez

Sonia Sanchez is a professor, a poet, and is the author of 13 books, in addition to being contributing editor to *Black Scholar* and the *Journal of African Studies*. Please join us for a mesmerizing evening of poetry with this renowned lecturer and teacher. There will be a book signing following the program. This program is being organized by the African American Cultural Center. The Women's Center will be co-sponsoring the event. Konover Auditorium, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, Wednesday, 4:30 pm.

26 Yo Soy Latina!

YO SOY LATINA!™, the hit stage play, written, directed and produced by: Linda Nieves-Powell, is funny, honest and evocative. Through stories flavored with the Latina experience, Latinas are encouraged to think about how they self identify as a Latin woman living in America. Co-Sponsored with PR/LACC. E.O. Smith High School Auditorium, Friday, 7 pm.

29 MANIFESTA: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future with Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards

From Buffy the Vampire Slayer to the Power puff Girls, everywhere you look girl culture is on the rise. So why has the women's movement sometimes seemed so stalled? Join the editors of *MANIFESTA: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*, for a discussion on what a new generation of feminism - Third Wave feminism - is all about. Konover Auditorium, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, Monday, 3-5pm.



For a complete listing of Women's Center sponsored events, visit our website at www.womenscenter.uconn.edu.

RETURNING WITH A GUIDE DOG (CONTINUED)

(con't from p. 1) she says she has wanted a guide dog since the first time she saw one.

During her junior year, she decided it was time to start applying, and her first choice was *The Seeing Eye*. After filling out a paper application, Karen had an interview with a representative from *The Seeing Eye* who came to Karen's home. This representative wanted to see the type of environment she lived in and the work she did, in relation to how a guide dog would be helpful to Karen. The representative did a "Juno Walk": giving Karen a dog harness to hold, then walking in front of her, pulling on the harness as a dog would do. This walk helps the representative to get a feel for Karen's strength and how she would be able to handle a guide dog. After the interview, Karen received a letter of acceptance with the appropriate medical forms, requiring a physical examination. *The Seeing Eye* then required Karen to go to Morristown, N.J. for a class on working with a guide dog.

Since getting Jarvis, Karen says, "He's been a great help! Such a boost to my confidence and my parents are thrilled! They absolutely adore Jarvis."

In order to help with a positive transition for Jarvis into the UConn community, Karen has asked the Women's Center to include a few guidelines to keep in mind:

* Please do not pet, talk to, or otherwise distract the dog from its duties when he's in his harness. When a guide dog is distracted, their full

attention is not on the task at hand. This can put Karen in danger because the dog is acting as her eyes.

* If the dog is resting, and you would like to say hello, please ask Karen first. If she says no, please respect her wishes.

* Please do not stare at the dog. This is considered a challenge and in the wild, it is a major threat.

* Please do not feed the dog. Feeding the dog can cause problems to both the dog's health and work. If the dog is fed scraps, it will expect scraps from everyone. In restaurants, this can be especially problematic. Also, an overweight dog's working life is significantly reduced.

* When assisting Karen, please ask first. If she says yes, she will either have the dog follow you, or take hold of your arm. It is important for her to be able to give the dog the necessary commands to follow you.

Many of us don't know the proper etiquette when working with guide dogs, so these simple guidelines will be a help to us all, now and in our future experiences with guide dogs. So far, the UConn community is doing pretty good. On a scale from 1 - 10, Karen rates UConn at an 8. "People are actually really good, and leave him alone to do his job. Some people try to pet him but they usually stop when I tell them to. Only one time did I have to repeatedly tell someone to stop. Jarvis is a very friendly dog, with these big brown eyes that look up at you and it solicits a lot of attention. Now he wears a sign 'Do Not Pet Me, I'm Working' and that has really helped." ♀

DID YOU KNOW? A WOMEN'S HERSTORY FACT

The concept of an organized Women's Center at UConn was initiated in 1969 by a group of feminists who were interested in promoting feminist ideology and activism on campus. However, no formal organizing was done until the spring of 1972, when the Free Women's Collective was formed. One of their primary objectives was to establish a Women's Center on campus (researched by Lindsey Howie).

ONGOING GROUPS AT THE WOMEN'S CENTER

Grad Women's Group

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, as well as build a sense of community among participants. This support group offers objective reactions and fresh perspectives from a group of like-minded people, as well as a place to unwind and network with other students in a variety of disciplines. The Grad Women's Group meets in the Women's Center lounge on the 1st and 3rd Monday. For more information, please contact the Women's Center.



Women's Book Club

Got books? The Women's Book Club is looking for new members. Come and explore the world through the eyes and words of women. All meetings will be held in the Conference room of the Office of Special Programs (located on the Garden Level of the Wilbur Cross building). The next meeting will review Niagara Falls All Over Again by Elizabeth McCracken on Tuesday, March 23 at noon.



Between Women

A rap group for women who love women... or think they might! For more information call the Women's Center at (860) 486-4738 or email: betweenwomen@hotmail.com. Tuesdays in the Women's Center at 7 pm.



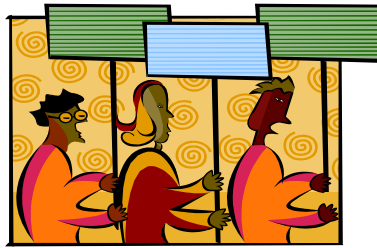
WOMEN'S HERSTORY (CONTINUED)

(con't from p. 1) of American history," says Bundles.

As the only author with complete access to Walker's personal letters and business records, Bundles provides an enthralling portrait of Walker's childhood, family life and business secrets, as well as her relationships with other early twentieth century giants like Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune and Ida B. Wells-Barnett. As a family member who has been able to draw upon a rich oral history and relationships with Walker's friends and former employees, Bundles brings an unmatched credibility and intimacy to the story.

* On March 16th, UConn will recognize our International Women's Day Celebration, a day of honoring women's contributions to the Arts worldwide. Although, the actual International day of celebration is March 8th, UConn will be on spring break. At noon on the 16th, a faculty panel discussion, "Women and Globalization" will speak about globalization in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Lunch will be provided for the first 25 participants. At 7 pm evening performances will begin in the African American Cultural Center. University Catering will be putting on an international buffet of Jamaican food, burritos, spring rolls and Middle Eastern pasteries, to name a few. Coordinator, Lea LeBel says its "a really, really good buffet!" Some performances will include Erika Avery, a UConn student, playing the Japanese Harp, the Indian Student Organization performing traditional dances, singing group Rubyfruit, and poet Stacey Ann Chin. LeBel says her performances are "phenomenal".

* On March 22nd, a panel discussion, "A Multi-generational Perspective on Activism" will feature a panel of women in ages ranging from a UConn student to an older woman in her 70's. This panel will discuss what they think it means to be an activist. LeBel hopes



that activists that go to this panel will learn from the history of previous activists. This event will also be great for those new to activism; hopefully inspiring future generations of women to get involved.

* On March 29th, join the editors of MANIFESTA as they explore the rise of girl culture from Buffy the Vampire Slayer to the Power puff Girls, in the discussion, "Young Women, Feminism, and the Future". What is a new generation of feminism- The Third Wave- is all about? If the First Wave comprised women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, and the Second Wave gave us Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and Shirley Chisholm, then the Third Wave includes young women who've grown up with the ideas of feminism but who are trying to define what it means for them now.

Encouraging young women to embrace both "girly culture" and political activism, MANIFESTA is a call to arms and a defense of the "I'm not a feminist, but" mentality. Feminism can include Helen Gurley Brown and Susan Faludi, the Spice Girls and Ani DiFranco. Young women don't have to discard their M.A.C. cosmetics and hip-hop records in order to call themselves feminists, the authors contend, but feminism can empower their lives by raising their consciousness, listening to their lives, and giving them the means to make a contribution.

There will be a book sale and signing after the discussion.

For more information about National Women's History Month, go to the National Women's History Project website: nwhp.org ♀

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES BY KATHERINE E. LEONARD

On Wednesday, February 11th and Thursday, February 12th, *The Vagina Monologues* was performed at von der Mehden recital hall. The play was written by Eve Ensler, after going around the world to large cities and small towns, asking women to talk about their vaginas! Funny enough, women loved talking about their vaginas, which gave Ensler much material for her play, *The Vagina Monologues*. This play goes from belly laughing, silly impersonations, to tearfully emotional accounts of rape, incest, battery and genital mutilation. The UConn performance was sponsored by SUBOG, the Women's Center and the UConn V-Day Campaign,

The National V-Day Campaign is a non-profit organization to promote a global movement to stop violence against women and girls. "V-Day is a palpable energy, a fierce catalyst that promotes creative events to increase awareness, raise money, and revitalize the spirit of the existing anti-violence organizations". Through the V-Day campaign, there are a variety of projects within the organization. The College Campaign is largely responsible for producing performances of *The Vagina Monologues*. This year, over 600 schools world-wide participated in the College Campaign.

This year's theme was "Celebrating Vagina Warriors", those who have witnessed or experienced violence and have dedicated themselves through effective means. This year's Vagina Warriors were Valencia Louis, Hoween Flexer, and Lisa-Marie Griffiths. Eve Ensler says, "In every community there are humble activists working every day, beat by beat, to undo suffering. They sit by hospital beds, pass new laws, chant taboo words, write proposals, beg for money, demonstrate and hold vigils in the streets. Every woman has a warrior inside waiting to be born."

For more information, visit the National V-Day Website at vday.org ♀

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Women's Center is to advocate, educate, and provide services for the achievement of women's equity at the University and within the community at large. Special attention is focused on women who face additional challenges due to their race, nationality, class, sexual identity, religion, age and physical or mental ability.



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Some Reminders... Some Reminders...

Join Our Listserv!

Want to keep up with the Women's Center on a weekly basis? Then join the UWomen-L Listserv, a weekly updated email featuring Women's Center events, on and off campus events, announcements and local, national, and international news. For information on how to subscribe, please call (860) 486-4738.

Check Out Our Website:

Be sure to visit our regularly updated website at: www.womenscenter.uconn.edu. You can find a complete list of events for the semester, learn about all of our ongoing groups, and get informed on issues such as dating violence and sexual assault. You can also find out what kind of resources we keep in our library. Past newsletters are also posted.

Greetings from the Editor:

Hello Readers,

Welcome to National Women's History Month! We are very excited to bring you so many inspiring and thought provoking programs this month. Many thanks to Lea LeBel for doing such a wonderful job!

March 6-15 also marks Spring Break here at UConn. Please, remember to be safe and have a great vacation. We look forward to seeing you when we get back!

Until next time,

-Kate



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VOICES

WHERE ALL THE PIECES COME TOGETHER