



{ March 2006 }

Voices

Where All the Pieces Come Together

{ This is *Our* Community }

This statement was composed by the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) Peer Educators and read at a forum on sexual assault held on February 16th, 2006. The forum was co-sponsored by USG and VAWPP and was designed to get students engaged in taking greater responsibility for violence prevention on campus.



{ Who Can You Trust? Where Are We Safe? }

VAWPP representative Liz Strohecker comments, "Although most people would see this situation as having one victim, it has thousands of victims. Something like this disrupts the safety of campus and community and affects all of us. Whether or not you personally feel your safety is in question, someone around you feels that way. Since we are all connected the effects will resonate, it's not just 'someone else's problem, it's all of ours.' Unfortunately, what this case highlights is the grim reality that we are in more danger in the company of our classmates than we are walking alone on the street at night. An estimated 85% of campus sexual assaults are between acquaintances. So, who can women trust? Where is it written that when someone goes home with you that they are entitled to "getting action?" What gives a person the right to take someone else's choices into their own hands?"

(For the full statement, please see the newsletter insert.)



{ Letter from the Director }

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Our new editor, Paul Lizak, asked me to write a few words about the Center and some of things we have been working on lately. I can tell you, on behalf of our staff and our Advisory Board, we have been having, yet another, busy year. In addition to all of the speakers, films, and discussions that are sponsored by the Center, we also just completed an external review process. During early November 2005, our student staff, full-time staff, Advisory Board and sub-committee members, and many of our collaborators and supporters from across campus, met with a team of reviewers from both on and off campus. It was great to know that so many folks were willing to take the time to support the Center during this effort. We are using the reviewers' report to inform the process of updating our strategic plan that we began with an Advisory Board retreat this February. In addition to reflecting on the work of the Center as a result of the review process, last semester we had been asked to comment on many issues related to the climate on campus - the visit by Ann Coulter; the production of *The Campus Cuties* calendar; the new policy at Princeton University to automatically add a year to the tenure clock of any faculty member who becomes a parent; and the perceived lack of connection of students, staff, and faculty across disciplines, departments, roles, and identities, etc.

(Continued on page 5)

{ A Film Review by Julie DiMauro }

Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Prices

On November 16, the Women's Center, the UConn chapter of the National Organization for Women, and the Women's Studies Program co-sponsored the screening of *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*. Producer/Director Robert Greenwald's scathing documentary examines the personal stories of the women, men, and their families struggling within and against the world's largest retailer. From the small-town families of the U.S. heartland to the deeply impoverished sweatshop laborers of China, Bangladesh, and Honduras, individuals speak out against the burden of the growing economic crisis that the Wal-Mart corporation has left in its wake.

Wal-Mart, described in the film as "aggressively anti-union," has, according to former employees, been known to engage in illegal surveillance of American workers to discourage attempts to unionize. It is not this way in all countries, however; in Germany, where attempts at unionization have proven successful, one employee expressed her shock and dismay at the American branch's hostile suppression of employee organization. Wal-Mart's unethical practices of dismantling worker movements have left employees with few benefits, and often arbitrary adjustments in wages. The medical insurance that Wal-Mart has (in at least some cases) been able to provide is often too expensive to accommodate employees' budgets. As a result, many Wal-Mart employees have been forced even, according to some testimonies in the film, encouraged by supervisors—to rely on government-funded health insurance programs, such as Medicaid.

Female employees related personal stories of being passed over for promotions and struggling with unequal wages as a result of the corporation's institutionalized gender discrimination. One former employee claimed being repeatedly asked to clean the store's bathrooms on days when it was not her turn. Another described complaining to her supervisor about being continually passed up for promotions, stating that the supervisor had told her, "There is no place for people like you in management." When she asked whether he meant "people like you" to mean women or black people, he allegedly replied, "Well, two out of two ain't bad."

As Wal-Mart discriminates against its women and minority employees in their American stores, it also exploits and neglects the international laborers hired in the manufacturers' sweatshops. Where a certain Wal-Mart product may cost approximately \$0.18 to build, the same item is sold overseas in

the West for upwards of \$14.00. Meanwhile, employees of this outsourced labor may receive wages of no greater than \$3.00 per day. Chinese laborers are made to live in corporate-owned dormitories, the cost of boarding, which is taken out of their wages automatically, while they are forced to pay extra for utilities. Workers are encouraged to lie to inspectors about their working conditions, and one inspector examining a Honduras sweatshop even suffered retaliation from Wal-Mart for honestly reporting inhumane conditions.

Wal-Mart has also been cause for concern among environmentalists due to the corporation's failure to meet sanitation standards. The film interviews Donna Lisenby, the appointed Riverkeeper of the Catawba River in South Carolina. She took on the corporation when she discovered that North and South Carolina Wal-Marts were leaving bags of toxic pesticides in their parking lots, allowing the chemicals to leak into rainwater and contaminate the tributaries of the Catawba River. Lisenby's numerous attempts to grab the corporation's attention, along with a description of Wal-Mart's "track record of violating the Clean Water Act," are documented on her web log, which can be found at www.catawbariverkeeper.org/wal-mart.

The film draws to a close around a less expected, but incredibly troubling issue. Wal-Mart stores often have insufficient security precautions outside the buildings themselves, leaving their patrons with almost no safeguards against parking lot assaults. According to records, within the first seven months of 2005, over 60 attempted crimes had been reported in Wal-Mart parking lots within the United States, including armed robberies, murders, shootings, purse snatchings, carjackings, rapes, molestations, and abductions. Approximately 80% of Wal-Mart crimes occur outside the building, and the employment of roving security guards in parking lots has been shown to drop crime rates down to almost 0%. Unfortunately, many Wal-Marts do not invest in these outdoor security measures at all.

This film has garnered a great deal of attention and discussion, and not undeservedly so. Greenwald's film effectively deconstructs corporate propaganda to reveal the trail of financial, environmental, and personal ruin that Wal-Mart leaves behind it. For more information on DVDs and future local screenings, or to find out how to host your own screening of *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*, you can visit the film's official website at www.walmartmovie.com. ♀



{ Sounding Off }

a student's opinion on the
state of Roe v. Wade in
2006 > > > > >

“ In my opinion, Roe v. Wade should continue to stand. With the President that we have now, we will have to continue to work together and work hard to keep our rights to do to our body what we please. Although I do not agree with abortion, I am still a strong advocate of having personal discretionary control of our bodies. I am afraid that with the addition of the President's newly appointed justices, we may soon see this precedent overturned.”

Veronica Peña, Student Staff Member

{ Highlights of Upcoming Events }

{ March } Women's Herstory Month

All Month – *Extreme Makeover* – Women's Herstory Month Addition

22: *Break the Silence. Stop the Violence.* with Alyx Kellington - 4 pm, Konover Auditorium, Dodd Center

23: *Herstory* - International Women's Day Celebration - 7 pm, Konover Auditorium, Dodd Center

25: Reiki II – Registration Required - 10 am - 5 pm, Women's Center Lounge

28: *Speak Out: I Had An Abortion* - Encore Presentation! - 6 pm, Class of 1947 Room, Homer Babbidge Library

30: Not Just A Statistic - Arte Sana & Take Off the Mask - 6 pm, Asian American Cultural Center

31: The Dinner Party - Women's Herstory Month Closing, 6:30 pm, Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center

{ April } Sexual Assault Awareness Month

5: Don McPherson: *What Does It Mean to Be a Man?* - 4:30 pm, Chemistry A120

11: Are You Cyber-Safe? - 4 pm, Student Union 304A

13: Thursday Night at the Movies - *Crossing Borders* - 6 pm, Class of 1947 Room, Homer Babbidge Library

17-21: Clothesline Project - 11 am - 4 pm daily, Women's Center

19: Take Back the Night: For Yourself - For The People You Love - 7 pm, Student Union Lobby

20: Women's Power Circle: An evening of empowerment, transformation & healing - 5 pm, Women's Center Lounge

25: Diane Fujino - 5 pm, Rome Ballroom, South Campus

27: *North Country* - Drive-In movie, 8 pm, Women's Center (raindate: 4/28)

29: Sweet Honey In The Rock - 8 pm, Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts

{ May }

5: Outstanding Academic Achievement Awards Ceremony, 4 pm, Great Hall, Alumni Center

10: UConn Women's Advance – Real Women, Real Connections, Real Community - *The Conversation Continues*

17: Opening Doors - A networking event - 5:30 pm, UConn School of Business, Hartford, CT

Visit the Women's Center's website for complete calendar listings, descriptions & sponsors

www.womenscenter.uconn.edu

{ New Student Staff }

The Women's Center is pleased to announce the addition of several new members to the staff for spring semester. Currently in her fourth year at UConn, **Salma Kamal** is majoring in Political Science and minoring in Women's Studies and Human Rights. For her work with the Center, she is interning, working primarily with the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP). **Ann Marie Karwowski**, also a fourth-year student at UConn, who is majoring in English with a minor in Women's Studies, is interning at the Center this semester. During her term here, she hopes to enhance her event and workshop planning skills through coordinating her work here with that of other cultural centers on campus. **Saben Littlefield**, a graduate student in the Higher Education and Student Affairs program, plans on devoting time to VAWPP, as well as contributing a great deal of computer savvy to the Center's publications. Majoring in Philosophy with minors in Human Rights and Women's Studies, **Joe Piggot** is a fourth-year student who will be interning with the Center during the spring. He is interested in contributing his Philosophy training to particular applications at the Center. **Jessica Smestad** is a graduate student in the Higher Education and Student Affairs program who will be working with VAWPP this semester as an intern. She has already had experience with the Clothesline Project and with Take Back the Night and is excited to be able to be a part of these programs again. Majoring in Sociology with minors in Business Administration and Women's Studies, **Lee Anne Thompson** is a fourth-year student who is interested in applying her Marketing and Public Relations skills to her work with the Center. We are delighted to have so many new staff members this semester and know that this will only serve to enhance the Center's work within the community. ♀



{ Group Offerings }

{ 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. Meets every Tuesday at the Women's Center. For more information, please email betweenwomen@hotmail.com.

Tuesdays, 8 pm, Women's Center Lounge

{ Stronger } *New!*

A support and discussion group for UConn Women.

"I've lost myself."

"What is a healthy relationship?"

"How do I 'get strong' after an abusive relationship?"

"How do I heal from sexual assault or abuse?"

For more information and to register for the next group, contact Betsy Cracco at 486-4738 or elizabeth.cracco@uconn.edu.

{ Among Women }

This group is a monthly opportunity to network and facilitate community building among women across disciplines, divisions and experiences at the UConn.

3rd Wednesday of the month, noon, Women's Center Lounge

{ Support Staff Brown Bag Lunch }

This group is a monthly opportunity for support staff to come together for professional development and networking, with the goal of enhancing the workplace climate, to support the personal and professional growth of women, and to share common concerns and challenges. Bring your lunch – drinks and dessert will be provided. For questions, contact Carol Millette (6-4738) or June Foran (6-2315).

Tuesday, March 28 and April 25, noon, Women's Center Lounge

(Continued from page 1)

In all of these discussions, we have tried to focus on how the Women's Center can add to these discussions. And in more than one meeting, I have found myself referring to one of the more recent acquisitions to my bumper sticker collection – "The most radical thing you can do is introduce people to one another." This statement – simple, yet with the potential for such profound impact – feels very at home at the Women's Center. I hope that as we reflect on our successes, evaluate our areas for growth, and plan for our new adventures that we can continue to serve as a space for people to feel connected, informed, and engaged with each other and with the continuing efforts to achieve gender equity at UConn and beyond. ♀

{ 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. To sign up, go to vm.uconn.edu/subunsub.html and enter UWOMEN-L. ♀

{ Check Out Our Website }

Visit our regularly-updated website where you can find a complete listing of events for the semester, learn about all of our ongoing groups, and get information 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 and calendars are also posted. www.womenscenter.uconn.edu. ♀

{ Save the Date! }

Wednesday
May 10, 2006



The Conversation Continues

8:30 am – 4:30 pm, Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, Ashford, CT

Watch for registration materials in the mail
in early April.

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