



# VOICES

## TOGETHERNESS, CHANGES, HAPPINESS, FEMINIST LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

To be “a generation of participation”... That was the call to our students from Hillary Rodham Clinton during her presentation here on campus. Participation and citizenship were key themes of her speech, and they have been key themes for the 2013 – 2014 academic year. Students here and on campuses across the country have joined together through social media and by forming new organizations to call for enhanced policies, procedures, and education around responding to and preventing violence against women. President Herbst and other campus administrators have participated in the establishment and implementation of key initiatives such as the [President’s Task Force on Civility and Campus Culture](#) and [the recommendations put forth by the Task Force](#). Members of the [Something’s Happening Committee](#) spent much of the year reviewing [the results of and making recommendations based on the Workplace Civility Survey](#). The Gender Wage Gap Task Force submitted [their report to Governor Malloy](#) calling for campuses to provide education on negotiation skills to women students. It seems as if the entire state participated in the cheering on of our women’s and men’s basketball teams as they made “herstory” once again. And this is the first time in my career that I can point to a call from the President of the United States to address sexual assault on campuses.

But most of the above is participation on an institutional scale, which is one element of how culture and social change happens. Institutional change is often sparked and supported by the individual participation in every day interruptions of the status quo. This week the student staff put a phenomenal amount of time and creativity into making the Center a vibrant hub of activity that was grounded in their commitment to education and advocacy around gender equity. They combined a candy bar from Sweet Emotions with free “This is what a feminist looks like” T-shirts and games exploring how to give and get consent. And the student community participated by showing up on the Thursday night before Spring Weekend to support ours, and all of the cultural centers’ open houses. Many thanks to the Spring Weekend Committee for their sponsorship of these events.

In this newsletter, you will find many examples of how individuals affiliated with the Center are participating. They are providing encouragement to incoming women considering STEM fields; providing leadership around philanthropy and community involvement; showing up to give input on the national agenda to address gender-based violence on campuses; exploring gender role socialization and how to unpack the box of what it means to be male-identified in our community; and creating opportunities for bearing witness to the impact of sexual violence. And that is just what we could fit into this edition.

### Inside this issue:

LUNAFEST Supporters	2
STEM Panel	2
Task Force on Civility and Campus Culture	3
Advisory Board Chair Heather McDonald	4
Senior Profiles	5
VAWPP Speaks to Senator Blumenthal	7
The Men’s Project	8
Brave Miss World	9
VAWPP	10
Letter from the Writing Intern	11
Letter from the Editor	12



Because, of course, it wouldn’t be complete without recognizing the students who are graduating this year. I was fortunate to be joined by some of our seniors to celebrate receiving one of the CONNSACS Outstanding Allies awards at this year’s annual meeting. The awards went to four Connecticut Women’s Center Directors who have collaborated with CONNSACS for a decade or more. At the core of those collaborations are the students. It is because we have students who care enough to be actively engaged in making a difference that we have programs to educate them on prevention models and best practices. As you read through the profiles of the seniors, you will see evidence of the “participation generation” that Hillary Clinton called for.

We wish them all the best on their continued accomplishments.

—Kathleen Holgerson

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

*We would like to thank everyone who supported  
LUNAFEST 2014!*

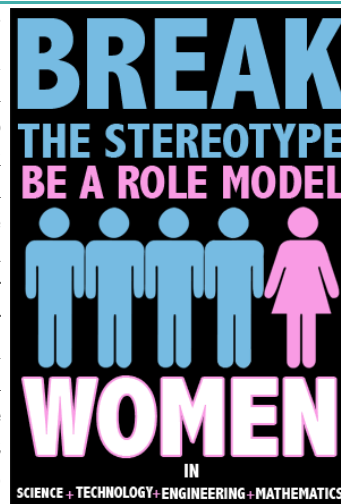
*It is through your support, attendance, and dedication to our events that we can continue the pursuit of gender equity. In addition to supporting the Women's Center, a portion of the proceeds will go to the Breast Cancer Fund.*

*A special thanks to our sponsors: Mansfield OB|GYN, UConn Dining Services, UConn Alumni Association, and League of Women Voters of Northeastern Connecticut*

## STEM PANEL

*Erica Jessen, a Chemistry major (CLAS '14) and a leader in the advancement of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields, organized a panel during Admitted Students' Open House, giving insight and discussing the necessity of gaining and retaining women in these fields.*

On Saturday, April 12th, the Women's Center participated in the Admitted Students' Open House with a panel of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields. The panel consisted of Marilyn Flanders, a Civil and Environmental Engineer, and Rebekah Marotta, a Biomedical Engineer, both from the Phi Sigma Rho sorority for women in Engineering. These women spoke about balancing the Greek experience with the time requirements of a STEM major. Alexandra Grant, a Math major, and Julia Hersum, a Physiology and Neurobiology major, came to represent the Women in Math, Science, and Engineering (WiMSE) Learning Community. Alexandra and Julia spoke about the First Year Experience classes connected to the Learning Community. They fielded many questions about the benefits of living in a learning community as a first-year student which included, strong friendships, help with classes, and great networking opportunities. Katya Sergan, a graduate student in Physics gave great insight from the perspective of teaching assistants. She iterated the importance of taking advantage of professor and TA office hours and indicated that most teaching assistants on campus are very open and willing to support students who are proactive about their education. The Women's Center was represented by Gian Grant, a Pathobiology major, and Erica Jessen, a Chemistry major. Gian was able to give insight into the Honors Program and the benefits of living in the Buckley dorms as a first year student.



A lack of mentors and difficulty networking presents issues for women in STEM fields. This panel was put together to represent the many facets of STEM and the academic and social groups that support women interested in these fields. The audience for this panel was incoming students to the University. For this reason, the panel was directed to discuss the programs already in place at the University to support women in STEM. The Women's Center recognizes that though UConn has many programs for women in STEM, it is still a group that needs support and attention. Seeing the future women in STEM interacting with current women in their fields of interest is a step in the right direction and is the type of cooperation needed to level gender representation in these fields.

—Erica Jessen

Image Credit: <http://megbear.com/2013/10/11/ode-to-women-in-stem-for-ada-lovelace-day-2013/>

## TASK FORCE ON CIVILITY AND CAMPUS CULTURE

*Recognizing the need for change, President Herbst announced the formation of the Task Force on Civility and Campus Culture. Part of creating the Task Force Report made was holding town-hall style meetings open to the campus community to receive campus-wide input and opinions on the existing culture and plans for the future. The meetings were to address issues that students face and the things they would like to see change at UConn to improve the quality of life for students by promoting safety, civility, and inclusivity. Students from all backgrounds, years, and experiences came to share their thoughts and learned about policies that are currently in place, while contributing their own input. The town-hall style meetings were great ways to get students involved in the process of creating the report. Since the Task Force Report became available this semester, with the recommendations and ideas the Task Force found relevant and influential to campus culture, we decided to ask students about what they know about the report and what they want to see.*

Women's Center students interviewed were at least vaguely aware of the Task Force Report. A common concern among interviewees was whether or not there would be follow-through. One student stated, "It's one thing to make a task force, but it's another for it to actually matter to us and have an impact on anything in the long run. I'm worried that that University is just doing it so looks like they did *something* and that's useless." When asked what students knew was in the Task Force Report, many couldn't say for sure. A university-wide email was sent out including links to the report, ensuring students, staff, and faculty all have access. Many students hoped it included recommendations about education. When it came to discussing consent workshops in New Student Orientation, students don't think it's enough or has a long-standing result. Students cited that some incoming first-year students may be learning about rape culture for the first time during orientation. So the importance of the consent workshop gets shrouded by all of the other things students are learning about being a Husky all in the same two days. Syeda Haider directed me to a [blog post](#) she read which encompasses her own feelings as the following:

*"it really is amazing how college campuses don't feel overwhelmingly ashamed of their complicity in protecting rapists - failing to expel [them], failing to streamline the reporting process, failing to provide resources for student survivors. just amazing how plagiarizing from wikipedia and underage drinking in dorms are more of an ethical and moral concern."*

Many other students felt similarly in light of the report. Some students cited Athletics as being held at a higher importance than experiences of students who aren't athletes, and being an unfortunate instrument in the perpetuation of rape culture. A Resident Assistant (RA), who asked to remain unidentified, believes that even RA training, regardless of how well-intentioned, doesn't grasp these sexual/domestic violence realistically or bring to the forefront the pervasiveness of these issues: "if a resident can't talk to their peer, their RA, their best point of contact, because they don't trust them, because their RA perpetuates rape culture, who can they talk to? What we have isn't good enough. We can do more."

A lot of what is in the Task Force Report already exists, just not on a scale that is recognized by the larger population of the University. The report discusses a lot about "expansion," because there are systems in place that focus on sexual/domestic violence, and the University is recognizing the need to enhance these programs. The Women's Center is home of the Violence Against Women Prevention Program, which includes workshops on bystander intervention, programming on healthy relationships, masculinity, and an assortment of other topics. The issue is not that these programs aren't available to students, it's that they aren't being sought out until a student is already in crisis. The Women's Center is a vastly under-used resource which is vital to student education.

The Task Force Report's recommendations are a great way to start a productive conversation across campus about sexual violence, opening the doors to activism, education and prevention. It is important that students collaborate on these issues to make their voices heard, and continue to challenge the University to keep itself abreast of student experiences and needs over time. Through collaboration from a top-down, and bottom-up approach, students and the Administration can all meet in the middle to find a common ground beneficial to everyone, thereby keeping campus safe and inclusive for everyone.

—Takina Pollock

## ADVISORY BOARD CHAIR HEATHER McDONALD

*Heather McDonald, Senior Director of Development for University Programs, who was a member of the Women's Center Advisory Board since 2006 and Advisory Board Chair beginning in 2013, will be stepping down from her position, making way for a new individual to continue on in the Women's Center's work toward gender equity. Heather is a valued member of the Advisory Board, and we are grateful for her service and attention to these issues.*

### What are your other roles at the University?

I am Senior Director of Development at the UConn Foundation. I oversee the University Programs Team which includes Student Affairs, and the Women's Center. That's a recent change that happened in December.

### As Chair of the Advisory Board, what kinds of things did you do?

Kathleen and I would strategize; she worked on developing agendas for board meetings and would seek my feedback. I also acted as a facilitator for conversations that we had during meetings. The Advisory Board was charged with critically supporting students, faculty, and staff in gender equity endeavors and awareness. We worked hard to ensure that we have a safe space for all people to learn and work; we worked to ensure that everyone is given equal opportunity to advance in an environment free of sexual violence/harassment. A bonus of my position is that I will read the bios for graduating seniors who are recipients of the Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award during the upcoming ceremony.



### What kind of impact do you think you left on the Women's Center and the University?

I hope to have been a voice that challenges negative perception of women and issues of gender equity on campus. I hope I improved philanthropic support, community involvement, as well as engagement with the Women's Center. But I also hope to continue doing all of these things, as I am not leaving UConn, but rather just stepping down as Chair.

### What do you hope to see happen with the Advisory Board in future years?

I would like to see more diversity in membership. I want to see more men, more faculty, and people of diverse backgrounds who can speak to a broader population and create a more enriched understanding of Women's Issues at UConn. I want to see more active participation in our programming and outreach. While I recognize that "active participation" is a loaded statement, I truthfully hope that we all do a little something more to make UConn a better place to live, learn, and work. Many hands make light work.

### What was the best thing about your position?

I was inspired to be in this position because of a past board chair named Deb Campbell who did a phenomenal job. I also worked closely with the Fundraising Committee. I'm most proud of student engagement, like Lunafest; it's great to see students partnering for something that is for women, and by women. It's also a great fundraising endeavor for the Women's Center and the Breast Cancer Fund. That encompasses what I would love to see happening more across campus — students taking the reins on something that has a marked impact. I know it's hard to drive people to attend these events, but if you hit the right group and get the right people motivated, it's really exciting.

### Do you have any advice for the next person to fill your position?

Think outside the box! The chance to enhance campus climate, build community, and lead by inspiring others to join forces is an exceptional opportunity. I hope people value the things the Center can offer across campus and will work to help achieve gender equity.

Image Credit: <http://www.education.uconn.edu/directory/details.cfm?id=358>

—Takina Pollock



# Congratulations Class of 2014!



## SENIOR PROFILE: ERICA JESSEN



I am graduating with a B.S. in Chemistry. I transferred to UConn from the U.S. Naval Academy, so I have been a part of the Women's Center for one year. During this time I worked on some of the initiatives promoting and supporting women in fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. The Women's Center was one of the highlights of my short time here at UConn. The experience taught me that feminism is about compassion and respect for all people no matter their sexuality, gender, race, or religion. I hope to carry what I have learned here with me while I pursue a career in medicine.

## SENIOR PROFILE: FERN FORMEL

I am graduating with a B.A. in Human Development and Family Studies with a minor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. I am a member of the Love 146 chapter on campus and a volunteer at the Women's Center. I first became involved in the Women's Center by taking part in the VAWPP course. Being a part of the Women's Center has been one of the best decisions I have made in my college career. I have learned so much about myself during my time here and have gained experiences I will carry with me for the rest of my life. After graduation, I will be working in Connecticut with the YMCA as a Transportation, and Supervised Visitation (TSS) staff member. I look forward to this new chapter in my life and will continue to support the Women's Center in any way I can.



## SENIOR PROFILE: REEMA MALHOTRA



Hey there! My name's Reema and I'm a Psychology major and Women's, Gender, and Sexualities Studies (WGSS) minor. In the two years I have been at the UConn Storrs Campus, I have been a member of UConn's only show choir, Harmonic Progressions, and have been a part of the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) for the past year. This past semester I have had the privilege of becoming a VAWPP intern through the WGSS internship program. I got involved with the Women's Center when I accidentally joined VAWPP in the beginning of my senior year. I took the Rape Education and Awareness WGSS course for an easy A, and it ended up changing my life. That course, as well as my current internship, has helped me realize what I want to do for the rest of my life, which is support victim-survivors of traumas such as sexual assault and domestic violence. My future plans include applying to grad schools while working at a sexual assault crisis center or a domestic violence crisis center in my hometown.

## SENIOR PROFILE: RACHEL STEWART

I am graduating with a B.A. in Psychology and a minor in Sociology. I've been involved with the Women's Center since 2011, when I started as a Summer Orientation Facilitator. I took the VAWPP class in the 2012-2013 school year and am currently working as a Teaching Assistant. During my time at UConn, I helped to start the organization Revolution Against Rape, was a member of the 2013 Leadership Legacy Cohort, and was involved with Peer Allies Through Honors and UConn Connects. I'm so grateful to have been involved with the Women's Center, as it has provided me not only with great friends, a community, and wonderful guidance, but it also helped me decide the direction I wanted my life to take. This fall, I will be pursuing an M.Ed at Harvard in Higher Education, where I hope to do an internship in their Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office so that I can continue to work towards ending sexual violence.



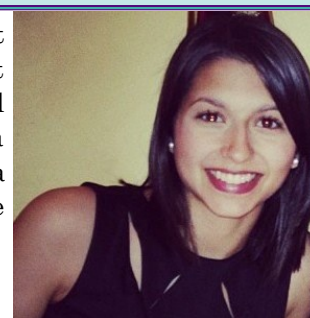
## SENIOR PROFILE: SYEDA HAIDER



I am a Political Science and Anthropology double major with a minor in Human Rights. I'm a Writing Intern for the Women's Center this semester. I'm also President of the Pakistani Community at UConn and am also a tutor at the UConn Writing Center. I've had an incredible experience working at the Women's Center. I've met some wonderful people, and have found a space that's warm and inclusive. I've learned so much about feminism, and about myself, in the short time that I've working here. I really wish I had started working here earlier, and I'm certain I'll keep in touch with so many people! I'm currently applying to jobs and am planning on applying to law school in the fall.

## SENIOR PROFILE: NATALIE SEQUEIRA

I am graduating with a major in Graphic Design and a minor in Digital Arts. Throughout my senior year I have been the Women's Center's Graphic Designer. I started my job at the Women's Center with the knowledge that I would be building my portfolio and continuing to refine my skills. However, I did not know that I would come away with a community of kind, generous and like-minded people who would help me to become a better person. In the future I plan to apply my skill sets to work that will improve the condition of society and make the world a little brighter.



## SENIOR PROFILE: GIAN GRANT



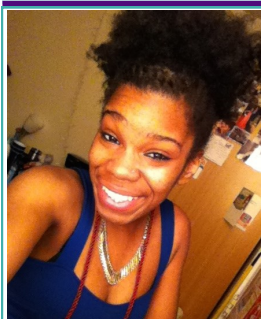
My name is Gian Grant, I am a graduating Pathobiology major and Human Rights minor. For the past three years I have worked as a Resident Assistant and have volunteered with Community Outreach extensively. Working at the Women's Center was very informative as I was able to learn more about women's rights on campus and on a national level. It also provided me with the opportunity to realize the intersectionality between international medicine and women's rights. Following graduation I plan on taking a year off before hopefully entering medical school. I would like to have a career as obstetrician or pediatrician working on international public health policy, specifically focusing on the Caribbean and Latin America.

## SENIOR PROFILE: JOSE FIGUEROA

I am proud to be graduating as a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies major with a minor in Latino Studies. I got involved in the Women's Center as a member of the Men's Project and joined the VAWPP program with the hopes of learning and forming my own feminism. Being a part of the Women's Center has given me the support and motivation to be active in multiple spaces on campus, serving as a proud member of organizations such as La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Incorporated, founding member of the Title IX Coalition, and as the facilitator of the Greeks Against Sexual Assault program. I am thankful for the experiences and the people I have met through the Center and will continue to spread the Center's message where ever life takes me next. We are the future!



## SENIOR PROFILE: TAKINA POLLOCK

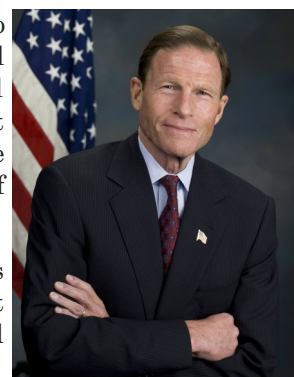


I am graduating with a B.S. in Allied Health. I have worked at the Women's Center for 2 years as Newsletter Editor, making this eighth edition my last, and I am also a Resident Assistant. I've participated in various clubs and organizations throughout my college career, but I think these two have held the most lasting impact for me. The Women's Center opened my eyes to a world of feminism I never knew existed, and my only regret is that I didn't get here sooner, but I got here just in time. I learned here, grew here, and even fell in love here. My future plans include continuing this work, raising awareness, raising questions and being an advocate in some way. I'm hoping to finish my first book in the next couple years, but in the meantime I plan to work hard, blog, travel, continue to grow, and get a puppy.

## VAWPP SPEAKS TO SENATOR BLUMENTHAL

On January 22<sup>nd</sup> of this year, President Obama initiated a [White House Task Force](#) to address sexual violence on college campuses, saying "The prevalence of rape and sexual assault at our Nation's institutions of higher education is both deeply troubling and a call to action." A few weeks later, Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut called for what would be a roundtable discussion with university students, staff and faculty so that he could bring recommendations to the Task Force. This particular discussion was one of seven roundtables held across the state.

As a future Social Studies teacher, one of my main goals is to develop my students as democratic citizens. So naturally when I, and five others from the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP), had the chance to go speak to Senator Richard Blumenthal about college sexual assault and its policies, we jumped on the opportunity.



The discussion was a significant learning experience for everyone. As we began to talk, we found out that the Senator is a former prosecutor. It was clear that this job influenced his outlook on sexual assault prevention. Blumenthal believed that strengthening the criminal consequences for sexual assault would reduce the crime. While I understand the logic of his argument, I don't necessarily agree with it. During the discussion several others and myself had the chance to explain how strengthening programs aimed at dismantling rape culture (like VAWPP) are key to ending sexual assault at universities. Research-proven methods should be used to prevent sexual assault, and more resources should be given to those researching and implementing methods. In the time we had, we were only able to touch the surface of the issues we would have liked to get to. My hope is that we were able to shift the Senator's ideas on prevention to a more cultural approach. We'll have to wait to hear from the Task Force now to see the result.

Image Credit: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Blumenthal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Blumenthal)

—Julian Shafer



## THE MEN'S PROJECT

*The Men's Project is a sexual assault primary prevention program that targets college men. Over the course of 11 weeks, male student leaders explore issues related to masculinity, privilege and gender-based violence. Learning outcomes include articulating the ways that the intersectionality of oppression and privilege shape their experiences; critically examining their personal behavior and the social construction of masculinity; interrupting sexism and reducing rape myth acceptance, androcentric language, and sexual and intimate partner violence; as well as empowering their peers to be empowered bystanders. Below is an interview with two of the students in the program. Peter is a senior with a major in Exercise Science, and Michael is also a senior, with a major in Finance.*

### What made you decide to take part in the Men's Project?

*Peter:* I decided to participate in the Men's Project in an effort to better understand the benefits of male focus groups on this topic. I felt that this type of program was a great first step in educating men on how to be effective allies for survivors of sexual assault.

*Michael:* I was introduced to the Men's Project through my supervisor in the Office of Community Outreach. Previously, I have come across various facts regarding rape culture but never had a strong grasp of what the topic entails. The Men's Project has allowed me to articulate my views in a thought-provoking manner.

### What has been the most important thing you've taken away from the Men's Project?

*Peter:* The Men's Project has mostly taught me patience and perspective. It is challenging to hear opinions that I would deem problematic. This experience has taught me the importance of intervening with care and educating from a productive lens. Also, the patience has surfaced in my exploration of the masculinity culture.

*Michael:* I now understand that rape victims include men and women, but men, more often than not, tend to be the perpetrators. I do not believe that every man is hard wired to be a rapist, but we all are victims of a socially synthesized view of what it means to be a man.

### What would you want other people to know about the Men's Project?

*Peter:* I would want men to realize the importance of a group like this and the impact that can result from these groups forming. The sense of self-empowerment that comes out of this program is inspiring. Men come out of this program genuinely wanting to stay involved and don't lose their place in the transformation of our current culture.

*Michael:* I want people to know that the Men's Project is more than just a group discussing rape and its consequences. It is about re-aligning the perspectives of its members and pushes them out of the "Man Box," a metaphorical representation of male stereotypes. It also allows us to challenge pre-conceived notions and see the world through a new lens.

### Do you think that going through this program has changed your worldview? In what ways?

*Peter:* I do not necessarily think that the program has changed my worldviews; I already identify with the mindset the Men's Project sought to uncover in its participants. This program has more so served to solidify my beliefs and the reasons that I have them.

*Michael:* While it can be difficult to accept, men tend to be the most privileged in every avenue of life. This is a realization I was unable to make until entering the Men's Project. There are men who must be educated on how their actions affect everyone. I will make it a life goal to advocate for equal treatment for women and to redefine what it means to be a man.

—Syeda Haider





## BRAVE MISS WORLD

(\*Trigger Warning: piece discusses sexual violence) **Brave Miss World** was shown during Women's Herstory Month, on March 27th, sponsored by Student Activities and the Mandell JCC Hartford Jewish Film Festival. Julian Shafer (Neag '13) was in attendance and discussed the importance of the film, as well as the drawbacks of particular aspects in the movie, and his personal recommendations. Films like these are important to telling women's stories accurately, and discussing sexual violence in the very real, often very different, ways that it occurs.



### What is Brave Miss World about?

It was about the Israeli Miss World, Linor Abargil, who, seven weeks before her Miss World competition, was raped by a man who turned out to be a serial rapist. It was about her experience as a survivor, and coming to terms with her experience in her own way. But it was also about learning about other people's experience with sexual assault and rape and trying understand how it affects people worldwide.

### What did you take away from the film?

For me personally, I took away how everybody who goes through sexual assault/rape really has very different experiences and how people cope in their own ways. I also got that there is really no single right way to deal with the aftermath because people have to do what's right for them. I almost didn't see Linor coming to that understanding until the end. And I kind of don't know if she did. I say that because there were 2 other women that she found that were raped by the same man, and one of them wouldn't come forward and testify. It didn't seem like Linor was very understanding immediately about why she wouldn't want to testify against the man who

raped her. She also put that victim-survivor on camera, and even though her face was blurred out, I saw it kind of as disrespectful to that woman. At first she didn't know she was being recorded. It was literally a coincidence since they didn't know how to find her — they just ran into her. I didn't like that; it seemed invasive.

### What do you think is important for other people to know about the film? Why should they watch it?

I guess to understand the different ways that sexual assault and rape can impact victims and survivors. I think that's an important thing for everyone to know. Whether people know it or not, they interact with someone that has been affected by sexual assault on a day-to-day basis.

### Would you recommend this film? Why?

I think as a critical viewer it was an interesting movie to watch. So yeah, I would recommend it for some people. I think, it was very much a personal story, and it needs to be viewed as one person's story and her coming to terms and understanding of sexual assault, but very much through her own lens — that's the important part — it's her story, her understanding. I think she, or perhaps the producer, tried to get a global perspective in the film, but the story was very much through the lens of Linor Abargil and her experiences.

### Why is this film important to the Women's Center?

*Brave Miss World* focuses on issues that the Women's Center is here to address. It gave the chance for people around campus to come and educate themselves further on sexual assault. Sexual assault is an issue that isn't really talked about enough publicly. Giving it a public space is also an important part of what the Women's Center does.

—Takina Pollock

Image Credit: <http://www.kent.edu/nursing/news/newsdetail.cfm?newsitem=CC46BA11-BBFA-525F-A2AB94656703FFE9>

# THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PREVENTION PROGRAM

## UConn Consent Day

The Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) is happy to be a part of the University's first UConn Consent Day. The purpose of the day is to promote awareness around sexual violence prevention, healthy relationships, and community and campus resources available to students and continuing the community dialogue around the prevalence and roots of sexual violence. Other organizations involved are Student Health Services, Counseling and Mental Health Services, the Health Education Office, and Campus Action Interns from Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. Activities were held for students to participate in on Fairfield Way on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from 1 to 4pm. VAWPP students lead activities like "50 Shades of Not Gray" where participants had to determine whether or not consent was freely and actively given in a scenario. "Consent Twister" was also played where participants played a round of Twister with others and had to ask permission to touch different parts of the mat, or other people.



*Image Credit: Patrick Comerford Planned Parenthood of Southern New England*

*—Brittnie Carrier*

## Project Unbreakable: It Happens to Huskies

This spring, VAWPP students held a sexual violence awareness event prior to Spring Weekend. The program incorporated elements from Project Unbreakable: It Happens to Huskies, which VAWPP first introduced last spring. Project Unbreakable is a photo project which highlights the experiences of victim-survivors of sexual assault. Victim-survivors are photographed holding posters with quotes about their assaults that were spoken by their attacker(s), family, or friends. The project was created by 19-year-old New York University student Grace Brown, and the photos were displayed on a [Tumblr blog](#).

UConn's version of the project sought to highlight the fact that there are many survivors of sexual violence in our student body by asking participants to wear UConn clothing or to be photographed in an iconic place on campus. As part of Project Unbreakable: It Happens to Huskies, the photographs were submitted to the larger [Project Unbreakable](#) blog.

Over the course of this semester, VAWPP sought out current or former UConn students who were willing to be photographed as a part of the project. The photos were compiled and displayed with poetry and notes of support for survivors in Homer Babbidge Library, along with resources and other information, the week before Spring Weekend.

*—Rachel Stewart*

## Take Back the Night

VAWPP was excited for this year's Take Back The Night program! This year's theme focused on community, and how the University community can get involved in eradicating sexual violence. There were performances by Poetic Release, Notes Over Storrs, and The UConn Dance Team. Our keynote speaker was Zerlina Maxwell, a political analyst and contributing writer for EBONY.com, Feministing.com, theGrio.com, BET.com, and RHRealitycheck.org. The event took place on April 30<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the Student Union Theatre. We were so excited to see so many of you there, representing our community and uniting to Take Back The Night!

*—Jose Figueroa*



*Image Credit: Natalie Sequiera*

## LETTER FROM THE WRITING INTERN

As recently as a year ago, I was hesitant about entering the Women's Center. I didn't know if I would have a place here, filled as it is with incredible, passionate people; I found myself to be an inadequate addition. My internship led me to find the courage to apply for a position here, and I can't be more thankful that I did, and regretful that I didn't join earlier. It has been a place I've found to be filled with warmth and safety.

Feminism has been important to me for a long time. It has made me love myself, and helped me understand what femininity means for me. The only thing I was lacking, I suppose, was support from others. Prior to working at the Center, I didn't have friends much interested in gender equity; I often felt I had no one to talk to. The Center became my home away from home. Here, I found friends and co-workers who recognized the racist and sexist systems that pervaded every aspect of our lives, whether we were discussing relationships, school, or our homes.

Working here for a semester, writing for *Voices* and the Women's Center blog has helped me to grow as a writer and as an activist. There were countless roadblocks I ran into while writing, including learning to examine my own assumptions and biases before I could represent the Center. It was certainly difficult meeting dates and deadlines, as the Women's Center is always a hub of activity. Receiving critiques and comments from Kathleen and Takina was an extremely valuable experience, and I'm indebted to the both of them for helping me mature as a writer and a member of the Center.

I'm incredibly sorry to leave the Women's Center, but I know it will continue to be a part of my life after graduation. There have been so many conversations here about building a community of practice, and I didn't understand what that meant for several weeks after beginning work here. The official definition of a community of practice here "requires that participants, through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group, learn from each other and create opportunities to challenge and develop ourselves personally and professionally." It was through both important and casual conversations that I was fully able to grasp this meaning. By creating both formal and informal places for students and faculty to gather, I found myself better able to achieve a greater understanding of gender equity and its related issues.



I'm so thankful to the Women's Center for allowing me to end my UConn career in the most supportive, caring space on campus. I will miss it extremely, and I wish the best of luck to all current and future members.

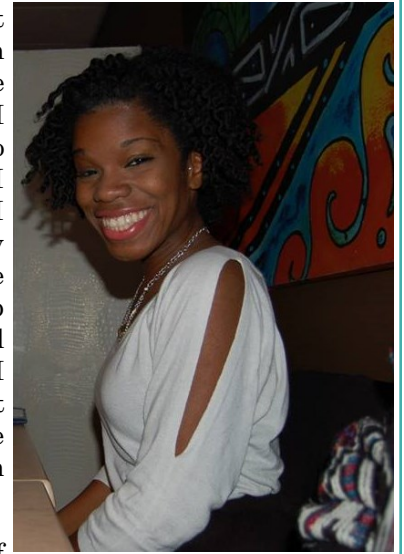
—Syeda Haider

*\*Editor's Note: I would like to thank Syeda for all of her help this semester and sparking some very important conversations in Voices, and around the Women's Center. She has been a great partner, and an excellent worker. Her attention to important issues and her hard work here does not go unnoticed. Syeda's involvement across campus and the pervasiveness of her feminism has made her a great member of the Women's Center and a pleasure to work with. I would like to wish her the best of luck upon graduation and continued success in the future. Congratulations, Syeda!*



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It's very hard to believe that I'm graduating already. I remember starting at Southern Connecticut State University my first year, and feeling too much familiarity in my surroundings, since I don't live very far. My roommate and I were high school best friends, and I knew many people from existing relationships. I wanted a different, newer experience than what I was getting, so I transferred to UConn as a sophomore. I remember that being the first "grown up" decision that I made on my own without consultations. I didn't tell anyone my plans until after I applied, as not to be dissuaded from going where I wanted. The summer before my junior year, I didn't think I would be finishing college because of unfortunate life circumstances, but due to God's impeccable timing, and thanks to Kathleen's help along the way, I will be graduating in a few short weeks. I think I accomplished what I was meant to accomplish at UConn. I learned so much about myself, and I grew up incredibly fast, and extremely well. I embodied my personal belief of not settling for less than I deserve, to be generous, loving, and to persevere despite the odds. I know working at the Women's Center has helped me for the better, and I'm so grateful for the experience.



I keep thinking about what kind of last word I want to have here, what kind of impact I want to leave on the Newsletter, and who will be charged with carrying on this work. I can only hope that they're as excited and enthusiastic about the Women's Center as I am. I'm very proud of what I've done with *Voices*. In looking through past editions, I can see growth in my writing, in my editing, and my attention to detail. I think the work I've done has had a tangible impact, and I love having been an integral part of the Women's Center.

I have had two Writing Interns in my time here. I learned a great deal about my supervisory style and grew to be a better manager. I was able to look at the same topic from different perspectives, and I really appreciate the various lenses I was able to work through. It was great being entrusted with a Writing Intern for a second semester after so much success with [Julie](#) - being able to delegate tasks and being confident that they will get accomplished effectively with my direction. Working with Syeda this past semester has been a pleasure, and seeing our different writing styles and hearing our voices come through distinctly and loudly has made for great pieces and subsequent conversations. We learned how to navigate and integrate our opinions and knowledge on different topics, while teaching and learning from each other. Syeda and I often had different opinions on certain things, and our experiences didn't always necessarily match up in the same ways, but the mutual respect and willingness to listen with the intent to understand was something unique and fun about working with her. Syeda is as passionate about writing and human rights as I am, and her talent exudes through every piece that she writes.

In reflecting on my work with the Women's Center these past two years, I do feel like I have made a difference. I feel very connected to the Center, and I know I will maintain these connections as an alumna. I think the Women's Center is valuable for gender equity in the UConn community. We work toward ending gendered violence, closing the wage gap, empowering women, while recognizing the intersectionality of oppression, which is so important to feminism. The work doesn't stop once I get my diploma. I know I will continue to work for women's rights, and work against misogyny, while growing as a feminist and a leader because I value this work and have a responsibility to keep moving forward. The work that I've done at the Women's Center is pervasive. Most people that know me associate me with the Women's Center and use me as a resource whenever they need to. I love that this association leads people to come ask me questions or send me news articles that they want me to weigh in on, or even allow me to help them reach resolutions in their personal lives. While it can be frustrating and taxing at times to do this work, I find it thoroughly rewarding.

It's great to be able to look back on the work that I've done here, to think about my experiences and how I may have helped others. I think everyone has a responsibility to pay it forward, and that often looks different for everyone. I was fortunate enough to be here, and I want the Women's Center to be able to have the same impact on future students. I hope to attend Women's Center events once I graduate if I live nearby, but near or far I know I'll continue to support the Women's Center however I can.

—Takina Pollock

# WOMEN'S CENTER



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

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

Dear Friends of the Women's Center:

As you consider donating to the University, we would like to encourage you to contribute to the Center in recognition of continued student work at UConn. Your gift can ensure that major activities can continue to exist and address areas of priority around gender equity, and pave the way for further progress.

Your gift can support:

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

For more information on ways to support the Women's Center, please visit our giving page at <http://womenscenter.uconn.edu/about/donate.php>

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

Women's Center: #20447 or 100 Years of Women Scholarship: #30231  
100 Years of Women Scholarship: #30231

### Need Help Now?



**contact the  
Community Response  
Team**

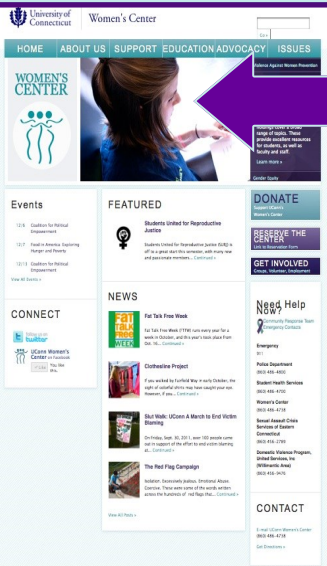
**Domestic Violence Program,  
United Services, Inc**  
(860) 456-9476 - Willimantic Area

**Sexual Assault Crisis Services of  
Eastern Connecticut**  
456-2759

**Women's Center**  
(860) 486-4738

**Student Health Services**  
(860) 486-4700

**University Police**  
911 or (860) 486-4800 (for routine calls)



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

*We welcome you to visit UConn's Women's Center!*  
We are located at:  
**Student Union, Room 421**  
**2110 Hillside Road, Unit 3118**  
**Storrs, Connecticut 06269-3118**

