



VOICES

TOGETHERNESS, CHANGES, HAPPINESS, FEMINIST

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

This May marks the end of my 21st academic year here at UConn. During those two decades, I have had the privilege of working with hundreds of bright, engaged, inquisitive students. These students cared about making a difference in the campus community. They have taken that commitment with them into their post-graduation lives in how they conduct themselves as employees, citizens and family members. One lesson that I continue to be reminded about in our work with students is that you never know what words will make a difference and what actions will impact their lives. I am in awe when students report back how they reflected on some statement I made, especially in those moments I didn't perceive as particularly transformative. And it's then that I realize that it's not about how profound we may or may not be (if only!), and all about how students make meaning in their lives. For example, Sam's letter takes an everyday kind of conversation here at the Center and turns it into a call for action on sustainable, social justice movement building.

This year we celebrated Carol Millette's 30 years of service to the University community. Carol has worked in University Publications, Facilities, Career Services, and for the past 15 years, here at the Women's Center as our Administrative Assistant. Students are consistently in her office seeking support, guidance, and someone to listen as they navigate their personal and academic experiences. In fact, she ran into a former student in an airport recently who indicated that if it hadn't been for Carol, she never would have made it through her last semester here. And that is just one student of many who found solace and understanding through their connection with Carol. Another example of the difference we can make in the lives of our students.



Photo Credit : Patricia Geissler

This edition of *Voices* captures the inter-generational nature of the Women's Center and our work on campus. Going back to our beginning, we pay tribute to Cathy Havens, the first full-time Director of the Center, and mourn her loss to the University community. We then continue to connect that past and the present by exploring the role Women's Center alums played in the crafting of the affirmative consent definition in the Student Code of Conduct, an accomplishment made over a decade ago and a statewide legislative effort today. We also examine the mixed sentiments connected to the decision to move the session facilitated by our Violence Against Women Prevention Program peer educators from Summer Orientation to a mandatory session for all First Year Experience classes. Finally, as it should be, the majority of the articles focus on the creative programming devised by this generation of Women's Center students; celebrates their accomplishments on campus; and, for our seniors, marks the start of their journey as a Women's Center alum.

—Kathleen Holgerson

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TAKE BACK THE NIGHT



Photo Credit: Charlie Smart, [WHUS](#)

was “together we grow through the stories we share.” The event opened with a heartfelt video featuring various students on campus explaining how VAWPP has impacted them during their time on campus. It was amazing to see and hear the sincere sentiments from so many students of different gender identities, ethnicities, and class standing. Following the video were appearances by the Men’s Project and Greeks Against Sexual Assault, and performances by VAWPP II students, Poetic Release, and the Notes Over Storrs singing group. Finally, everyone set out to the streets.

The march around campus during Take Back the Night is the most empowering, for me. Walking around campus at dusk, chanting explanations against date rape and sexual assault, along with the campus community, elicits energy that cannot be explained. Hearing people drive by in their cars honking in support, and seeing people peering out of their windows to see what is happening assures me that our messages were being heard, loud and clear — “Whatever we wear, wherever we go, YES means YES, NO means No!” and “Shatter the silence! Stop the violence!”

Following the march around campus, is the Speak Out that happens every year, where survivors get the chance to share their stories, without judgement. The Speak Out is the most valuable portion of the night, in my opinion. Having survivors trust us (the audience) enough to stand on stage and share what has happened to them in the past is something that I have never taken lightly. I am inspired by the courage and resilience of every single person who graced the stage at that point and glad that they are alive, willing, and able to share their stories with the audience.



Photo Credit: Yanira Claudio

Take Back the Night has consistently been one of my favorite events held on the UConn campus, even before I became part of the Women’s Center. Although a great amount of people attend, somehow it always ends up feeling immensely intimate. Take Back the Night brings our campus together in a way that I have not yet seen or felt within any other space. As you’re sitting in the audience, you feel the silent support of every person in the room – you feel safe. You feel capable. You get this burst of courage and motivation to stand up for what you believe in regarding sexual and relationship violence. Take Back the Night is a vital event, and I hope that it will never stop happening at the University of Connecticut.

The Women’s Center’s Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) hosted it’s annual “Take Back the Night” event on April 15th, 2015 as a part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This year’s theme



Photo Credit: [The Daily Campus](#)

VAWPP Teaching Assistant, Rosemary Richi, helped to put together this year’s Take Back the Night event, and said “Take Back the Night means a lot to many people. It has been and continues to be a movement of healing and empowerment for me, and I know that it is an important aspect of survivors’ healing.” Stephanie Lumbra, who is also a VAWPP Teaching Assistant who helped to coordinate the event said “Take Back the Night is a very rewarding experience. It is always sobering to see how many people that are close to you that are affected by this kind of violence — the issues that Take Back the Night focuses on really hit home. I appreciate the levels of support, community, and solidarity the event always brings. It creates a closeness among everyone that transcends a lot of the hate that goes on here.”

- Samantha Barrett

CHANGES IN VAWPP AHEAD

Ever since 1991, the Violence Against Women Prevention Program has played a key part in the Summer Orientation program for incoming first year and transfer students. The content and format of the workshops have evolved over time. What began as presentations by 2 peer educators to groups of 100 or more, most recently included small group discussions, with a cohort of 20 or more facilitators. Starting this year, however, there will be no summer VAWPP program. Wellness and Prevention Services is working on creating and implementing a more holistic program that will center around wellness, prevention, and care for self and others. VAWPP facilitators will now go into First Year Experience (FYE) classes in the Fall to give similar, but more condensed workshops. This change has caused much debate within the Women's Center. The Summer VAWPP Orientation is considered by many to be a crucial part of the UConn experience, and some are concerned about how the delay until the fall FYE courses will affect incoming students. Others are more optimistic that the new program arrangement will be both comprehensive and appropriately timed.

Women's Center intern, Sarah Walsh has concerns about the absence of the VAWPP component during Summer Orientation: "The Summer VAWPP program does a lot more than teach incoming students about consent, a much needed seminar. It takes first years and pulls them into the cultural center, exposing them to a community that is strong, engaged and welcoming. For many students a cultural center is a second home and a second family, but for so many more students there is this lack of knowledge about cultural centers. They were never exposed and lose the chance they could have had. Taking away the summer VAWPP forces students to find the centers on their own, without a foot in the door."

Former Summer VAWPP facilitator, Varun Khattar, is also disappointed by the elimination of Summer VAWPP: "I was devastated by the decision to eliminate Summer VAWPP. I will always remember my experience facilitating consent and bystander intervention workshops at Orientation as a major turning point in my life. It helped me find my voice and instilled in me a sense of purpose and community. I will carry the lessons I learned and connections I made that summer with me as I pursue a career in activism and education. It saddens me that future generations of UConn students will not have the same opportunity I did."

Student staff member, Lori Carriere shared her opinion on the upcoming changes regarding VAWPP: "I think that what tended to happen in VAWPP Summer Orientation workshops is that we spent so much time going over the definitions of sexual assault, consent, intimate partner violence, and stalking and teaching students about bystander intervention that there was often less time to explore why gender and power matter in these issues. This was understandable considering that a lot of this information is new to students and our primary job was to teach them that information. Now that the VAWPP workshops will happen in the Fall, after students have already been introduced to the definition of consent and bystander intervention strategies, there will be more opportunities to broaden students' understanding of why these are gendered experiences, how gender socialization impacts the sexual scripts that can lead to assault, and how rape culture helps facilitate and excuse sexual assault. There might also be an opportunity to encourage more reflection on what the sex lives of the participants in the VAWPP workshops actually look like and how gender might be playing a role. In terms of bystander intervention, there is more opportunity to discuss ways that participants can be institutional bystanders and work to dismantle rape culture."

- Emily Cantor

JACKSON KATZ

On Tuesday, April 28th, Jackson Katz came to UConn to present his lecture *More Than a Few Good Men*. Katz is the co-founder of MVP, or Mentors in Violence Program that has been implemented in countless colleges, athletic programs, and military services. He is also an accomplished author and filmmaker, perhaps most famous for his documentary *Tough Guise: Men, Violence and the Crisis in Masculinity*. Katz's belief that women's issues are also men's issues was the foundation of his presentation. He covered a wide array of subjects ranging from bystander awareness to gender-based violence. Using personal anecdotes and clips from the media he illustrated how our culture is producing and promoting a violent form of masculinity that perpetuates violence against women. He also emphasized that there is and has been enough widespread awareness about these issues for a while; what society really needs to do is take action.

Student staff member, Lyn Alexander, shared her thoughts on Katz visiting the University: "Jackson Katz's presence is important in a way that cannot be understated. As a white, heterosexual, hegemonically masculine individual to come out in support of feminism and gender-based violence prevention practices, his voice is integral to helping reach those who need to hear a voice from a particular social position in order to find it legitimate; the more individuals we can help educate and who choose to support activism surrounding these issues, the more effective we can be in achieving lasting, wide-spread change."

- Emily Cantor

WOMEN'S HERSTORY PHOTO GALLERY



Photo Credit: Samantha Barrett

This gallery was inspired by a version that one of my friends who attends Emerson College in Boston participated in last year. I was on Facebook and saw how students dressed as women of the past to honor Women's History Month — "Herstory Month," and I was enthralled by it. I wanted to bring the same thing to the University of Connecticut because I felt that it was a really nice way to celebrate women's contributions throughout the past and present.

While putting it together, we thought about compiling a list of notable and worthy women by asking each cultural center to nominate women from their cultural Herstory that they felt deserved to be represented. As a result, we received suggestions of diverse and often unsung women whose political engagement, contributions to science, math, industry, or activism in various areas established them within their field, and paved the way for future women to contribute as they had. We were excited to see how many

students came to the opening call where they had a chance to select who they would like to represent in the gallery. This was a really great process to watch unfold because many of the students had never heard of some of the women on display and were inspired to read their description. People felt connected in some way to the woman they chose to represent, which was a really great feeling for the organizers who had hoped that this event would spark a deeper understanding of Women's Herstory through direct engagement.

One of the fun things about this event was that in the scheduling system we used, the photographers could only see the name of the figure they were shooting; so their appointment calendar looked like: Beyoncé 1pm, Hillary Clinton 2:30 pm, Frida Kahlo 3:00 pm — this was really fun to play with because the photographers were excited about their meeting and treated the women in this way. During the photo shoots, some of the models mentioned how they researched more about their significant person and really connected to their life's work and accomplishments. This added a whole new level of depth to how they portrayed the



Photo Credit: Samantha Barrett

model — they weren't just dressed as them, but rather they embodied them in their honor. Other student models came up to me after their shoot and expressed how in a way it was very empowering.

Many of the models were told to look directly at a camera and hold a powerful pose. This is not something we are encouraged to do as women. Many women who admitted that they were camera shy found it empowering to have to look dead at a camera and pose for their picture. While it was not the original intent, I am so pleased that this campaign became a body positive event for the women who took part. They are truly an inspiration, and I am glad that in taking part in this project, they experienced Herstory hands on.



Photo Credit: Samantha Barrett

- Avery Desrosiers

MAKE YOUR OWN DAMN SANDWICH

This year, as part of the Spring Weekend Cultural Center Open House, the Women's Center held their event, entitled "Make Your Own Damn Sandwich." Students were invited into the Center to learn about the oppressive behaviors we encounter every day in society. Each station corresponded with a different sandwich component, and students had to "make their own sandwiches" by collecting every "part" of the sandwich. At the bread table, students learned about job equity and the pay gap. The cheese table covered intersectionality, and the lettuce table went over consent and victim blaming. Also featured was the Wall of Good Vibes, where students wrote on sticky notes how they choose to practice self care. At the end of the event, participants could trade in their "sandwiches" for a real sandwich and a free t-shirt proclaiming "This is what a feminist looks like." The event was a success, and garnered many positive reactions from those who came.

We would like to acknowledge Avery Desrosiers for her wonderful idea, as well as everyone who participated in the development of the program and the execution of it this past month! Everyone did an awesome job at creatively and enthusiastically educating the campus community on these important gender related issues.

- Emily Cantor



Photo Credit: University of Connecticut Women's Center

PROJECT UNBREAKABLE

Project Unbreakable was displayed in the library this year from April 21st to April 25th. The exhibit consisted of a variety of mediums, including posters, t-shirts, pictures and poetry by UConn students and members of the community who have had experience with sexual and gender-based violence. The purpose of the project is for survivors to share their stories, and express their own feelings in a way that allows them to heal from their experiences.

This is the third year VAWPP has participated in UConn Project Unbreakable, inspired by the national photography project that began in 2011. It was originally created by Grace Brown, a photographer living in New York, for the function of spreading awareness and providing healing for survivors of sexual assault. It has since then expanded to include submissions from survivors of child abuse and domestic violence.

"Having my picture represented in the display helped me feel heard by the UConn community." - Rosemary Richi, VAWPP Teaching Assistant

- Emily Cantor



Photo Credit: <http://project-unbreakable.org/>

SENIOR PROFILES

Avery Desrosiers

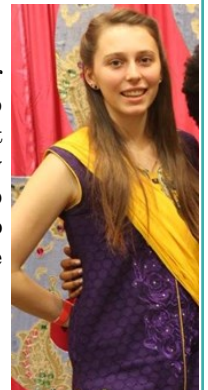


I only had to walk into the Women's Center one time to realize it was where I would become most involved on campus. The energy was busy but focused, and everyone had such great ideas and visions on how to make campus a more accepting, safe, and informed community. I wanted to get involved right away — and I have been since that first step inside junior year. Since then, some of my favorite projects to work on have been the Herstory Month Gallery and the Make Your Own Damn Sandwich Campaign. Both of these projects have fostered impactful conversations, and community-wide actions. They have become more than an idea with the gentle expansions of many minds working to provide the best version of what they could envision. Yet, as one project closes so do the others, and that once distant graduation is soon after that — too soon to really comprehend. In September, I will be attending Boston University's Public Health Masters Program with a concentration in Maternal and Child Health. I must credit a great deal of this decision to the Women's Center. Not only has my passion for women's issues heightened over the past few semesters by working here, but the support, advice, and encouragement that I received pushed me to believe that my farfetched goals were within reach. I am excited for this next step, but melancholy about leaving behind my home away from home on the fourth floor at UConn. I have learned so much about myself and my community through the Women's Center. I am proud of my time here, and I hope that the next round of active minds to come

through are passionate, driven, and ready to work. I am excited because I am about to enter a different kind of work in Public Health, however, the interconnectedness with equality, fostering of diversity, and advocacy is critical to be able to do this work well. My tool box from the Women's Center is coming with me on the next leg of this adventure, and I am ecstatic to see what will be built next.

Sarah Walsh

As well as being an intern at the Women's Center, I am a member of University of Connecticut Empower and Women's Rugby, and I serve as a Library Specialist at Homer. I came to the Women's Center to learn, so I really enjoy every time I get to have a thoughtful, intelligent conversation about current events and topics. I feel like I work with very smart and well informed people that I always walk away having learned something. After Graduation, I will be raising my two younger sisters as they finish up high school. I want to continue the mission of the Women's Center by educating them on healthy ways to think about their bodies and sexuality, as well as gaining confidence academically and within the business world.



Lyn Alexander

I'm graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in English and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and a Bachelor of Science in Allied Health Sciences. My most memorable time at the Women's Center was participating in the Violence Against Women Prevention Program during summer orientation. Not only was I able to have an impact on incoming first year students, I was able to forge amazing connections that I still have to this day. My plans after graduation are to work for a year or two and then enter a MSW program, focusing in clinical social work. My goal is to work with marginalized populations and continue my activism. I hope to continue on with the work I have begun at the Women's Center, working for gender equity and violence prevention, and developing communities of practice in my workplace.



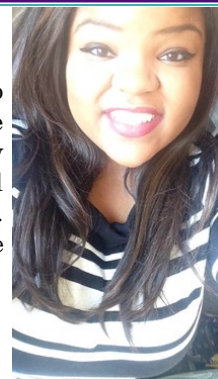
Janisse Bruno

I am going to miss the energy of the Women's Center at UConn. It is a community that has educated, inspired, and listened to me. My next step is law school, and I'll be taking my critical feminist lens with me.

SENIOR PROFILES

Martina Powell

Mick is a senior majoring in Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies and Africana Studies. She will also be receiving a Concentration in Creative Writing. She is a cofounder of the Title IX Coalition, the facilitator of Between Women, and a member of Poetic Release's performance crew. She is endlessly grateful for the love, support, and inspiration she's received from the Women's Center as a physical space, the full-time and student staff at the Women's Center, and the members of Between Women. She looks forward to remaining a part of the community post-graduation. After graduation, she will be attending Southern CT State University for her M.F.A. in Creative Writing focusing on poetry.



Brittany Carrier



I'm graduating this May with a degree in Psychology and English, and a minor in Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies. After graduation, I hope to go into education and aspire to become a secondary English teacher. I ultimately hope to create a classroom invested in social justice and having my students develop holistically. While I've loved my time here at the Women's Center, my most memorable moments at the Women's Center has been all of my time with the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP). In my involvement, I was really challenged with setting clear goals and expectations for myself and others. It's what got me thinking about becoming a teacher! Outside of the Women's Center, I've spent most of my time with directing

UConn's very own Horse Lincoln Improv and working towards performing social justice based comedy.

Hannah Kalichman

I am a senior Latino and Latin American Studies Major. I am a sister of Alpha Epsilon Phi, and have been through the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) and Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA) programs. I worked as a VAWPP Orientation facilitator and as one of the Teaching Assistants for the VAWPP class as well as the student Program Coordinator. My plans for the future include taking a year off from school to work and study for the LSAT, as well as have an internship with a women's advocacy firm. I then hope to go to UConn for Grad school pursuing a dual degree in social work and law. My favorite memory here at the Women's Center has been getting to know all of the amazing people who work here and really growing in this community of practice. I plan to advocate for marginalized folks and continue the Women's Center's mission of support and advocacy through education.



Rosemary Richi



I'd have to say my most memorable moment at the Women's Center was recently when we put on Take Back the Night. Sometimes we forget why we do the work we do, and this event reminded me of just how important the Violence Against Women Prevention Program and the Women's Center are. This past year has gone by so fast with my involvement in Community Outreach as well as the whole restructuring of VAWPP. I'm going to miss being involved in a community whose values align so much with mine. As graduation grows closer, I am looking forward to taking my activism and experiences beyond UConn to other organizations like the YWCA (an organization dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all), or other NGOs. I cannot say where I'm going to be three weeks from now, let alone a year from now, and I'm okay with that. My ultimate goal is to enjoy the adventures of life and see where they take me.

SENIOR PROFILES

Mikhail Gilbert



“I’m graduating” are two words that send shivers up my spine. They’re the anxious, yet excited kind of shivers. Because who really wants to leave the cradle of academia that we’ve all existed in for so long? It’s comfortable. And yet, I’m dying to walk across that stage, graduate, and see what’s next on this crazy ride called life.

Aside from taking the next 100 years to pay back my student loans, I look forward to finding a job in my field (3D Animation and Visualization), and continuing to create until I’m old and gray and consistently yelling at the neighborhood children to stay off my front lawn. I also look forward to having an amazing front lawn. But I know I’ll be able to look back on this important chunk of my life and wonder how I made it out with my sanity after 5 years. I may have lost just a bit of my mind along the way, but I owe it to my friends, family, and professors for helping me through it all and helping me to discover what it was exactly that I wanted out of life.

I appreciate the individual I’ve become after all this time at UConn. I’ve learned about myself and who I am as a scholar and as an individual playing his part in this society. I owe a good bit of that to the School of Fine Arts and the spaces I traveled in during school such as Poetic Release and the Women’s Center – all of which played a pivotal role in my development artistically. And with all of that artistic energy, I hope I can carry on into the world impacting my surroundings positively – there’s still a lot of change that needs to occur and art has always been one of the greatest ways to accomplish the task.

The Women’s Center, particularly, played a large role in the social evaluation I hadn’t taken the time to do in life yet. I now know the importance of being a practitioner of what I know to be just, fair and equitable and perpetuating that community of practice will hopefully affect those around me and the way they see things. I’m glad I can now be a cog in that machine of justice.

I think I’m ready to exist beyond myself in a new world I will soon have a hand in shaping and that I will partially be responsible for. I’ve been in the corner of the room in my mind trying to work out a master plan for some time now, and it’s about that time for me to set out and dive into the rest of my life. Here’s to hoping I’m a good swimmer.

Samantha Barrett

I am graduating this Spring with a Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies. Along with being the Newsletter Editor here at the Women’s Center, I also work as a Technology Learning Assistant for the Engineering department on campus. I am a Sister of Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Incorporated, and serve as our chapter’s fundraising and public relations chairs. I am a fellow of Students Engaged in Academic Leadership (SEAL), and I am a proud Student Support Services (SSS) student. During my time at UConn, I have had the privilege of Studying Abroad twice, and being able to explore London, Paris, and the island of Martinique. After graduation, I plan to take some time to work and save up some money before I pursue a graduate degree (possibly in Clinical Mental Health Counseling) next Spring. I’d like to get into working with individuals who live with obsessive compulsive anxiety disorders, and ultimately become qualified to practice exposure therapy.



I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to be affiliated with and work within the Women’s Center for the final year of my undergraduate career, and I wish I had become part of the Center earlier. I have truly enjoyed the atmosphere of the Center, and appreciate all staff for being so welcoming and supportive. I’ve come to admire many individuals throughout my time here, and I will forever be inspired by the concern, passion, and activism regarding feminism and social justice that is consistently demonstrated in the Center. I will continue to spread awareness concerning gender related issues in my day to day life, and will remember the lessons I’ve learned in the Center for the rest of my life.

SENIOR PROFILES

Tina Andrzejewski

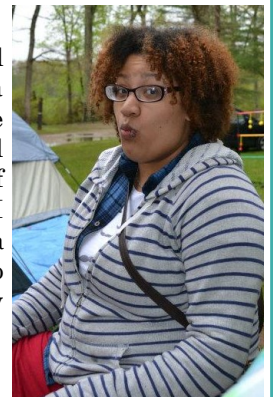


My name is Christina (Tina) Andrzejewski, and I am a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Human Rights double major, and a History minor. I am a founding member of the Gamma Phi Beta sorority, an organization that is close to my heart due to its philanthropic message: Building Strong Girls. In my chapter, I was elected as the PACE (Personal and Chapter Enrichment) Chairwoman, and organized events that educated sisters on health and safety, career options, and self-help. This led me to become a participant of Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA) in 2013, and I was a co-facilitator for the program this Spring. I have maintained a spot on the Dean's List for three consecutive semesters. Perhaps one of the most humbling experiences I have had during my time at UConn has been through the Honors UConn in Cape Town, South Africa study abroad program. During my time abroad, I worked at Gender DynamiX: the first human rights organization in Africa, which solely focuses advocacy on transgender, transsexual, and gender non-conforming individuals rights and ingress to services. Since my time at UConn began, I have also been the co-host of the WHUS Radio program "The Morning Show with Mike and Tina" where I discuss current events, communicate news stories, and play a variety of music.

The Women's Center has been a place where my feminist studies has been put into action. I feel fortunate to have worked in a community amongst like-minded individuals inciting change and that I had the opportunity to work collaboratively with people of different majors, organizations and groups on campus, as well as different perspectives and life experiences. Although I am saddened to have only been a part of the Women's Center for a semester, I cherished the time spent working collectively with the Center and the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life and working towards creating a better campus climate. I look forward to seeing how GASA develops and the impact it will have at UConn for years to come.

Stephanie Lumbra

I'm a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies major from Waterbury, CT. I love napping, cats, and being warm. Being a part of the Women's Center has helped me to grow a lot as a person and as a feminist. For me, the most valuable experience I've had has been my involvement in the Violence Against Women Prevention Program. It's given me the skills to be a better communicator and leader, given me the passion to pursue a career in community work, and an amazing group of friends and support network. My plans after graduation are to find a job that I don't hate, and I dream to eventually co-establish a feminist, anti-hierarchical commune that also serves as a healing space for queer/trans people who are victims of violence. After graduation, I hope to continue the Women's Center's mission by advocating against oppression in my own community and working to end violence against oppressed groups in some way.



Steven Lean



I am a Biological Science major and a brother of Pi Delta Psi Fraternity, Inc. My time in the Women's Center gave me the opportunity to live out my college career in being more involved around campus. I transferred to UConn in the beginning of my junior year, so figuring out where to go or what to do became a real issue. I went out to see all of the cultural centers and other organizations found within the Student Union and eventually walked into the Women's Center. I really liked the environment because I was welcomed by the staff, and I started spending my time doing some work in the Student Offices area. In Fall 2013, I was accepted into the program GASA (Greeks Against Sexual Assault) that was led by a collaboration of both the Women's Center and the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life. After the program, I became more involved with the issues around the campus community and wanted to do something about it. In Spring 2015, I became one of the co-facilitators for the GASA program educating fellow Greek members on the prevalent issues our community is facing in regards to rape culture and sexual violence. It brings me great satisfaction that I was able to contribute what I could to the Women's Center for my short time here, and I hope to come back and see all the wonderful new programs done by the Center. I will always keep the mission of the Women's Center with me wherever I go.

AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT



Photo Credit: University of Connecticut Women's Center

Ahadu Chernet (Class of 2004) played a key role in the process. Here, he shares his memories of being involved:

"In my time at the Women's Center, I was instrumental in founding the Men Against Violence Against Women group and spent a great deal of time doing outreach, with Shanté Powers Gaskins. We were peer educators for the Women's Center and educated our community on the topics of relationships and sexual assault. Our outreach was not limited to students in dormitories, but also included athletic teams, incoming freshmen and students at other universities. During my time at the Women's Center, the affirmative consent model was constructed, and our jobs as peer-educators was to deliver this information to our peers and fellow students in the format of programs developed and offered by the Women's Center. The challenges I faced implementing this policy was dealing with the frustration and confusion of the students and peers hearing this information. At times these discussions became debates, got intense, and argumentative. Sometimes people got upset and walked out. In one of my last summers at UConn I was working with the Women's Center doing Summer VAWPP. It was at this point when I realized what the real problem is. It was then when I realized that I wasn't just looking at a large group of bright eyed freshmen. I was looking at a large group of victims. They were all victims, men and women. Of course one would suspect that I'm talking about being victims of sexual assault. No, it was that they were victims due to a lack of education. A majority of these students never had this conversation before and it was obvious by the expressions on their faces and their reaction to the statistics that it was already too late for a lot of these students."



Photo Credit: University of Connecticut Women's Center

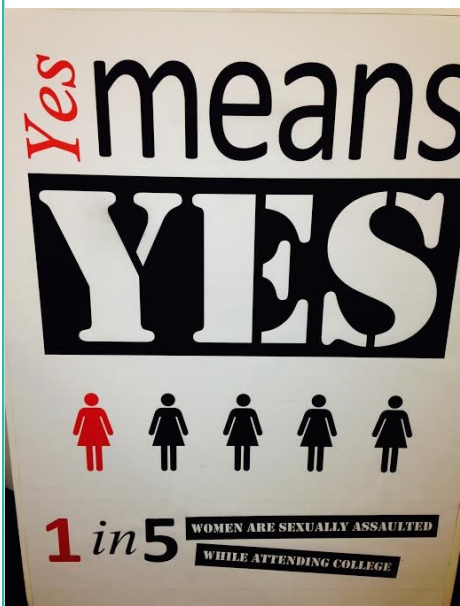


Photo Credit: University of Connecticut Women's Center

Ahadu spoke more on the changes he witnessed on campus after the model was adopted. "Just because laws change, it doesn't mean that people will change. Unfortunately, by the time most of these young adults come to college they have already formulated their own opinions, and are already stuck in their ways. I think the only way we will ever see any progress is through Education, Education, Education." Representative Haddad has stated the [following](#) about the bill: "Too often, silence of a lack of outright protest is misunderstood to be consent. This bill rejects that standard and establishes a simpler, smarter and safer 'yes means yes' policy on Connecticut's college campuses."

If the affirmative consent bill is passed, Universities across the state will then adhere to the policy, hopefully decreasing the victim blaming that unfortunately occurs when sexual assault cases are investigated.

- Emily Cantor

THE MENS PROJECT

The Men's Project is an eleven-week sexual assault prevention program for male-identified student leaders on campus. The goal of the program is to provide a space for participants to learn more about gendered and sexual violence, as well as to introduce participants to bystander strategies and activism around these issues. The program is geared towards male-identified individuals due to the fact that sexual assault prevention education has a history of being directed at female-identified individuals. The Men's Project seeks to encourage more men to get involved in the conversation so that they can become part of the solution to the prevalence of sexual assault both on and off college campuses.

During the course of the Men's Project, we explore topics like gender socialization and sexual education and how these might be connected to sexual assault. We aim to provide space for members to engage in personal reflection on the messaging around gender and sexuality that they've received. We explore affirmative consent and healthy interpersonal and sexual relationships. We discuss rape culture, and the ways in which cultural attitudes on gender and sexuality facilitate sexual assault. We also talk about positive bystander strategies and ways that participants can help change the culture to prevent sexual assault. This semester the Men's Project also went as a group to Take Back the Night and rallied on campus to protest sexual assault.

I came to the Men's Project through VAWPP, the Violence Against Women Prevention Program. After teaching workshops on consent, intimate partner violence, and bystander intervention during orientation for a summer, I found myself looking for another opportunity for me to continue growing in my understanding of these issues and how to facilitate conversations around these issues. I also really liked the idea of working within a (mostly) all male space.

It would be virtually impossible for me to pick a single most rewarding experience in the Men's Project. Every week co-facilitating the Men's Project with Varun Khattar has been a rewarding experience for me. I'm not 22 anymore and being on campus past business hours after being there all day, quite frankly, makes me more tired than I care to admit, but I would find myself reenergized at 7pm when I walked into the Asian American Cultural Center (AsACC) for the Men's Project; and I would leave feeling rejuvenated and refreshed. Every week I was continually floored by the way in which the participants of the Men's Project were able to come together as a group to create a truly inclusive, non-judgmental space in which to tackle some of the hardest topics there are in the world to talk about. Every week the group managed not only to do this, but to do it with such compassion and grace. Every week, I benefited from the dedication and insights of Varun Khattar whose conversation helped me be a better facilitator, for sure, and probably a better person. Every week, I was thankful to learn and grow from the members of the Men's Project. These are just the most special people, and I am convinced if the world could be anything like the AsACC was for two hours every Wednesday night, it would be a vastly better place. Varun, wholeheartedly agrees with me, saying "Facilitating the Men's Project has been one of the most fulfilling experiences. It's rare to see progress happen before your eyes, but I believe Lori and I have witnessed progress this semester. I'll never forget observing the members of the group connect and engage in open, honest dialogue about gender role socialization on the very first day. It gives me hope in a future that is less violent and more inclusive for people of all gender identities and expressions. To be honest, we can't take full credit for the success of the group.



We've been blessed with a terrific group of students that are invested in learning and bring a diverse set of knowledge and experiences."

Photo Credit: <http://www.ldswave.org/?p=1114>

- Lori Carriere

GREEKS AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA) meets weekly in the Women's Center Program Room at 6:30pm every Tuesday evening. Voices reached out to Tina Andrzejewski, a member of Gamma Phi Beta Sorority, and a co-facilitator of the program to ask some questions about what GASA actually does and what the experience is like.

Voices: *What exactly does GASA do?*

Tina: The objectives of GASA are:

- To understand how sexual violence and rape culture creates problems within the Greek community;
- To know resources within the Greek community, Women's Center and UConn;
- To have the ability to provide accurate information and support one's Chapter;
- To understand the facts about sexual victimization, confront myths about rape and find ways to challenge rape culture within the Greek community; and
- To promote awareness about Greeks Against Sexual Assault within the Greek community and UConn.

This is done by having two hours worth of conversations weekly that build off of readings, current events, and lessons meant to inform individuals about the unique role of Greeks as students at the University of Connecticut, as well as members of society.

Voices: *Why do you think a program like GASA is needed?*

Tina: GASA is certainly a necessary step towards educating the Greek community about issues that are pertinent to Greek organizations. By addressing topics related to gender identity, expression, sexuality, and rape culture, as well as societal and Greek norms and values, my hope is that participants will become informed on these matters. GASA's goal is to inspire them to use their voices to incite not only individual change, but collective change within their respective organizations, Greek life in general, and the University of Connecticut campus as a whole.

Voices: *What is the most rewarding thing you've gotten from co-facilitating GASA?*

Tina: I am constantly reminded of how inspiring it is to work with likeminded individuals. After every session, I am left roused and enthusiastic by the stories and conversations had in GASA. These conversations not only challenge my own views, but allow me to widen my own perspective, which is refreshing. It is my hope that others feel the same and that the conversations had in GASA are put into practice, even when the program is out of session and the participants have "graduated."

Voices: *How will you carry out GASA's lessons in your everyday lives to Greeks who do not come to the meetings?*

Tina: One of my hopes for the future of this program is that all Greeks will one day have access to these types of lessons and conversations. The intent of the program is to be able to educate these individuals and have them bring this knowledge to their respective Greek organizations, but also to their spheres of influence. I will continue to keep the spark of GASA alive by listening to peoples' stories and engaging in these types of conversations, challenging societal norms and the media whilst demanding that justice be met. This is a lifelong process and certainly will not end once the eight weeks are done.



Photo Credit: <http://greeklife.uconn.edu/>

WOMEN'S CENTER STAFF ROCKS!

We want to dedicate a portion of this edition of **Voices** to celebrate our wonderful staff who are constantly accomplishing great things, and making us proud!



Haddiyah Ali

Our very own student staff member, Haddiyah currently presides as Miss African American Cultural Center 2015!

Congratulations, Haddiyah!

Huong Nyugen

The UConn Leadership Office hosted their first annual "Lead the Way" Conference this past March. This was "an opportunity for UConn student organization leaders to build skills, network and renew their dedication to student empowerment." I, along with my co-presenter, presented at the conference. Our presentation was entitled "Think Outside the Box: Gender in Groups." Our workshop presentation encouraged students to "think outside the box" and gain a better understanding of how gender dynamics affects groups. We provided take away points to create an inclusive group environment for leaders.

Also, I will be interning at the College at Brockport over the summer with the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). "The Arthur O. Eve Opportunity for Higher Education Program and The College at Brockport is committed to offering the highest educational opportunities to New York State high school graduates and GED holders who do not meet regular applied admissions criteria, but have demonstrated the potential for post secondary academic success. The Educational Opportunity Program is committed to enhancing student success through legislative and institutional funds provided to assist in meeting the cost of direct financial aid, supplemental instruction, and counseling. Student learning and success is our goal."



Awesome work, Huong!

22nd Annual SCHOLARS DAY CEREMONY

2014 New England Scholars

Lyn Alexander, Hannah Kalichman, Avery Desrosiers & Mikhail Gilbert

Congratulations to you all! We are proud of you.

A celebration of academic excellence

WOMEN'S CENTER STAFF ROCKS!

University of Connecticut Student Life Awards Nominees & Recipients

Maha Saleem — Andrea Dennis LaVigne Scholarship for Advancing Diversity Finalist

Brittany Carrier — Matthew B. Schechter Scholarship Recipient

Avery Desrosiers — Donald L. McCullough Leadership Award Finalist



We are so proud of you all!

Jovonne Pullen

On March 8, 2015, I became a sister of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated, a historically Black Greek organization. Joining this sisterhood was part of a dream of mine, and I can't even express the happiness I have to wear these letters across my chest. Along with becoming a member, I have also taken on the role of President of the Nu Mu chapter here at the University of Connecticut. I hope that I can continue the legacy and good reputation of the chapter, as well as help girls reach academic success and help build the campus through the work that my chapter will perform. With the Greek-related turmoil that is occurring on campus amongst races, I hope to be one of the individuals that brings change and unity to Greek life on this campus.



I also passed my exam to join the WHUS radio station team, which provides me the opportunity to express myself and have creative license with my own show. Being someone who took Fine Arts for 8 years, having this chance to let my creativity flow really makes me happy — it allows my inner artist to come back out and hopefully impact other people.

Congratulations, Jovonne!

Lyn Alexander

Recipient of the Frances and Irving Seliger Memorial Award from Judaic Studies, the Kristie Ann Wood Endowment Scholarship from the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies department and the African American Cultural Center Extraordinaire award.

Congratulations, Lyn!

Carol Millette

Our Administrative Assistant, Carol, was honored at an Employee Appreciation Banquet, where she was recognized for her 30 years of service to the University of Connecticut.

We are grateful to have you, Carol!

LAVERNE COX

The excitement was palpable as students waited for Laverne Cox to take the stage at Jorgensen on Wednesday, April 22nd. A renowned advocate for transgender rights, Laverne Cox is a source of inspiration and empowerment for the trans community. She is most famous for being the first trans woman of color to produce and star in her own television series *TRANSform Me*. She is also the first trans woman of color to play a lead role on a mainstream television show. Her role of Sophia Burset on the popular show *Orange is the New Black* earned her an Emmy nomination, and *Time Magazine* named her character as the 4th most influential fictional character of 2013.



Photo Credit: Yanira Claudio

Ms. Cox began her speech by quoting Sojourner Truth's famous line "Ain't I a woman?" She shared with us the story of her childhood and the difficulties of growing up trans. She spoke about the feelings of freedom and relief she had when she finally began her transformation, and how she wishes more of the trans community could feel that relief without first suffering from bullying and self-doubt. She urged the audience not to rely on the current expectations of gender that society teaches us because they cause more harm than good, especially to young trans people.



Samantha Barrett, Newsletter Editor, attended the event and offered her remarks: "Having a celebrity such as Laverne Cox come to campus is very cool. Beyond being 'cool', I think that having her enter our community to speak couldn't have happened at a better time. I think that it's important, visibility wise, to have someone like Laverne Cox come share her story. Considering the hateful climate that has encapsulated our campus effecting the Black student population as well as the LGBTQ population, it was perfect to have someone with such impact who identifies with both to come share her story and spread messages of love and acceptance. Laverne Cox speaks in poetry. Her words flow so easily from her soul and I'm sure that they touched every single person sitting in Jorgensen that evening,

Photo Credit: <http://www.lovewarriorcommunity.com>

and opened their eyes further to the struggles that individuals with intersectionalities such as hers face — both as a person, and as a celebrity. I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to hear her message, and I hope that my peers on campus remember everything that she said, and share it with others."

Student staff member, Lyn Alexander, shared her remarks about Ms. Cox's speech: "Laverne Cox visiting UConn's campus in the wake of so many different forms of violence perpetrated on campus, from the spirit rock defacings to the graffiti put on the Rainbow Center's art exhibit, expressed much needed views that the community as a whole needed to hear. Her eloquence, primary grounding in feminist of color praxis, and subtle and nuanced take on the numerous forms of discrimination and violence she experiences as a Black trans woman were at once wonderful, validating, and thought provoking. I can only hope that we as students remember her as the brilliant activist that she is, and take her words to heart."

LAVERNE COX

APRIL 22, 2015

JORGENSEN PROGRAM 7PM

DOORS 6:30PM

TICKET INFO

Undergraduate UConn Students:

- FREE
- 1 Per UConn ID (must have ID)
- Tickets must be picked up beginning @ 10am 3/23 - 4/22 at the Jorgensen Box Office

Faculty, Staff, Graduate Students, & Public:

- \$25
- Tickets on sale beginning @ 10am 4/6 - 4/22
- Tickets available online at jorgensen.uconn.edu, by phone (860-486-4226), or at the Jorgensen Box Office

Limited number available, get your tickets early!

jorgensen.uconn.edu

Other Co-sponsors:
 African American Cultural Center,
 Asian American Cultural Center,
 Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center,
 and the Women's Center.

- Emily Cantor

If you require accommodations to participate in this program, please contact the Student Activities Office at (860) 486-3422 or safo@uconn.edu 48 hours prior to the event.

CATHY HAVENS TRIBUTE



Photo Credit: Legacy.com

We mourn the recent passing of the first Director of the Women's Center, Catherine Havens. We are indebted to her vision and leadership during the early years of the Center and for her continued involvement in the Women's Center herstory during her tenure at UConn.

Cathy's good friend, Bessy Reyna, provided us with her sentiments of Cathy that she wished to share with you all.

"It's hard to put into a few words everything that Cathy Havens did for the Women's Center, and women at UConn. Hard, because having known her from the moment she started working as the Center's first director in 1974, until her death March 27th, 2015, I saw first-hand how Cathy dedicated her life to mentor and educate women, as well as relentlessly advocating against issues affecting and discriminating women.

I'm sure that the students currently involved with the Center probably never heard of the fire that destroyed the first Women's Center established at UConn. It was a lovely house, our triumph after a long struggle for recognition from the administration. Those of us who were there, were sure that the fire had been set intentionally during the Thanksgiving vacation. We were able to survive the chaotic weeks that that hateful crime produced, because of Cathy's dynamic leadership. I remember the Center's books, files and papers all over the front lawn of what had been "our house" the volunteers trying to salvage everything, particularly the log we kept by the typewriter which was a daily record of the life of the center; our herstory. I also remember Cathy working with the ROTC, and thanks to that collaboration we were able to have a temporary space to re-group and plan a new strategy, to continue to be a visible presence on campus.

Cathy used to have the poem *Mountain Moving Day* by Japanese poet Yosano Akiko in her office at the Center. Cathy framed the charred remains of that poem and hung it in her office at the School of Social Work when she left the Center. Every time I visited her at that office, I would see it. It was a constant reminder for both of us that no matter how hard someone tried to destroy us, obliterate our work, we would fight back.

Cathy called me one day last summer, laughing because she had found the Christmas present she bought for me in Ireland. We had lunch and she gave it to me. Inside a small wooden frame there was photograph with a quote from the first stanza of a beautiful Ode by British poet Arthur O'Shaughnessy "*We are the music makers and the dreamers of dreams...*" It is now on my desk, a constant reminder that we must continue to keep our dreams for a better world and share them with others, like Cathy did.

I was overseas when Cathy went into the hospital. Going to see her was the first thing I did upon my return. By then she was in a coma. I stood by her bedside, gently touching her arm, listening to her struggling to breathe, while reminding her of all she had done for so many, and how sad I was that her first grandchild would never get to know the extraordinary woman she was.

I hope that those of us who knew her, can maintain her memory alive, not just for that baby but for all the women who will walk into the Women's Center in the future. If there is a door there now, it is because Cathy held it up, while the rest of us put it in place.

I am citing the poem *Mountain Moving Day*, in hopes it will inspire others, as it did us at the beginning of our struggle."

*The mountain-moving day is coming.
I say so, yet others doubt.
Only a while the mountain sleeps.
In the past all mountains moved in fire,
Yet you may not believe it.
Oh, man, this alone believe,
All sleeping women now awake and move.*

- Yosano Akiko (1878-1942)

LETTER FROM THE WRITING INTERN

It's strange to think that the spring semester is almost over. It feels like just a couple of weeks ago I was attending the new staff orientation, learning about the mission of the Women's Center. My time as the writing intern has been incredibly valuable, and I'm so glad I had the opportunity to work here. I've been introduced to aspects of feminism I never knew existed, and in the process learned a lot about myself. The Women's Center has opened my eyes to so many things, and I hope to stay involved in the upcoming 2015-2016 academic year.

HOW TO GET A BIKINI BODY:



PUT A BIKINI ON A BODY

Photo Credit: <http://www.simplybe.co.uk>

Some of the concepts I was introduced to at the Women's Center this semester are self-love and self-care. Though I didn't have a clear understanding of them at first, I soon learned how important these practices are. Life can be stressful, especially for college students, and I love the idea of taking the time to put yourself above everything else, if only for a little while. I think we often get so caught up in getting others to love us that we forget how important it is to love ourselves too. I've been inspired by what I've heard in the Women's Center to practice self-love more often, especially during the upcoming summer months. With warm weather comes the societal pressure to look a certain way; suddenly everyone is expected to have a "beach-body" or to wear specific kinds of clothing. The expectations the media places on young people in particular are extremely narrow, leaving anyone who doesn't fit the norm feeling ostracized or less-than. It can be hard to self-love in the face of all this, so I'd like to leave you with a few pieces of advice to help you remain confident in spite of these societal pressures:

The only beach body you need is the one that's covered in sunscreen. Shave or don't shave, just remember that your worth isn't measured by the number of hairs on your body. Wear the outfit you want, when you want, as long as you feel comfortable in it. Exercise because you want to, not because you think you have to. And if all else fails: hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. *- Emily Cantor*

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As I am graduating this month, this is my final newsletter, and thus my final letter. Throughout my editing process of every newsletter, I always leave the development of my letter for last, because I find myself indecisive about what I want to base it on. Deciding on the direction of this, my final letter, has taken the longest. I struggled with what I wanted my very last sentiment to be, until Kathleen said something to me that has been on my mind since she's said it. One day, a few student workers and I were convened in the student office, and Kathleen came in, asking us what we thought of the most recent letter sent out by President Susan Herbst regarding the defacing of the spirit rock, as well as the UConn Speak Out display. My coworkers and I expressed our feelings of fatigue surrounding the outward expressions of discrimination on campus. We also had concerns that the momentum of student activism addressing these issues would die out due to many student activist leaders/student body organizers graduating and Summer break that is rapidly approaching.

Kathleen listened to all of our concerns, and reminded us how important story telling is. She told us that we wouldn't have to worry about momentum being lost within the student body if we keep sharing our stories and experiences. A lot of us who have stepped up to organize and fight for the student body are graduating and physically parting from this campus, but we still hold the responsibility of "passing the torch" to the students who will still be here and able to continue the work. It's important to keep talking about the efforts that have been organized to make a statement, and how they were made possible. It's important to keep talking about what led up to student outrage and the protesting that followed, especially from this past academic year. It's important to keep talking about the back and forth between students and administration. In order to continue the work that has been started, we have to remind people of what's already been done. We must make new students aware of the campus climate that they are entering and how they can become active in changing their campus for the better. We still have a lot of work to do.



"If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree." — Michael Crichton

- Samantha Barrett

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

Making a difference in our community.

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

ATTENTION

WOMEN'S CENTER ALUMS:

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

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

Thank you in advance!

"What should I do after an assault?"

24/7 Resources

UConn Police Department: 860-486-4800

Student Health Services Advice Nurse: 860-486-4700

CT Sexual Assault Crisis Services: 888-999-5545

Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline: 888-774-2900

sexualviolence.uconn.edu

We welcome you to visit UConn's Women's Center!

We are located at:

Student Union, Room 421

2110 Hillside Road, Unit 3118

Storrs, Connecticut 06269-3118

(860) 486-4738

www.womenscenter.uconn.edu

Hours: 8am-9pm, Monday through Thursday and
8am-5pm on Fridays during the academic year

