



# VOICES

*TOGETHERNESS, CHANGES, HAPPINESS, FEMINIST*

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

On Sunday, October 11<sup>th</sup> we celebrated the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP). UConn is fortunate to have been in the forefront of addressing gender-based violence on campus for many years. In 1980, the Rape Education Program (REP) was established in response to a community conversation on violence against women at UConn. At its core, REP was committed to public awareness. Students spoke in residence halls and classes to raise awareness on the issue of sexual violence. During the past three and half decades this program has maintained the commitment to awareness, education, and support and has grown exponentially. In 1994, REP became the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) to more accurately reflect the spectrum of violence we address, as well as to foreground our commitment to prevention. In the early 1990's we established one of the few Summer Orientation sessions in the country. In the late 1990's we secured one of the first grants from the Department of Justice to address violence against women on campus. While many states, including Connecticut, are proposing affirmative consent standards on campus, we worked with Community Standards many years ago to update UConn's definition of consent to reflect this paradigm. The program has grown in scope to include the Men's Project and Greeks Against Sexual Assault. And most recently, we have established Consent 201, a mandatory workshop for all First Year Experience courses. But most of all, it is the work with and for the students that has been our most significant contribution.

It was wonderful to have alums from as far back as the mid-90's to recent grads all together in the Center. For me, it served as a reminder of how much of an impact the Center has had on people's lives. Folks shared stories of their time here, and talked about the difference between the climate and culture of the Center and many of the spaces in which they now find themselves. The differences primarily centering on our commitment to intersectional feminism, to being able to have respectful and challenging discussions around identity and oppression, and to the support and sense of community that they felt being a part of the Center.

As a staff we have sometimes wondered if we are doing our students a disservice by setting an expectation that they can work in an environment that is focused on social justice, flattening the hierarchy, operating by consensus, and committed to giving space for all voices to not only be heard, but given consideration and influence. A disservice in that most of the world doesn't operate from those foundational principles... in that our institutions by and large still reflect their racist, sexist, and heteronormative roots... in that anti-racist feminist leadership practices are often seen as overly biased and/or impractical. Wouldn't it be so much easier for our students if they fit neatly into the world that currently exists? But so many of our students cannot authentically fit into that world – their lived experiences of violence, micro and macro aggressions, and differential treatment require us to challenge the status quo.

In this edition, you'll find examples of programs that encourage our community to examine how gender matters. You'll hear from our student staff about our annual Fall retreat and all of the reasons they chose to come spend their time working here at the Center. And finally, we share our students' accomplishments beyond the Women's Center.

*-Kathleen Holgerson*

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## NEW WOMEN FACULTY LUNCH

On Monday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, the Center hosted our annual welcome luncheon for new women faculty. Eight years ago, we established this event as a way of connecting specifically with women faculty to welcome them to the community; to inform them about our services and programs; and to learn how we can support their research and teaching. Each year, we have a host committee to assist with the program. The host committee consists of the faculty who serve on the Women's Center Advisory Board and sub-committees, as well as some faculty "friends" of the Center. Our goal is to have at least one faculty member from each of the schools and colleges. Our sincere thanks to this year's committee for their feedback and for their outreach on behalf of this year's event.

### Host Committee:

Laura Burton  
Associate Professor, Sport Management,  
Department of Educational Leadership

Edna Brown  
Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies

Lindsay Cummings  
Assistant Professor, Theater Studies

Davita Silfen Glasberg  
Professor, Sociology and Associate Dean,  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Lucy Gilson  
Professor, Management and Academic Director,  
Geno Auriemma Leadership Conference

Kathleen Holgerson  
Director, Women's Center

Andrea Hubbard  
Associate Professor, Pharmacology and Toxicology and  
Associate Dean, Pharmacy

Leslie Shor  
Assistant Professor, Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering

Jennie Talbot  
Community Member  
Women's Center Advisory Board Secretary

Steve Zinn  
Professor and Department Head, Animal Science

The attendees represented a spectrum of departments from Accounting to Physiology and Neurobiology. The conversations at each table were lively and included everything from what influenced individuals' decisions about where to live, the continued search for accessible day care, and whether or not we weather the winter with a snow blower or not. New faculty made connections with more senior faculty, both within and outside of their schools/colleges. The senior faculty reconnected with colleagues across the institution. We even had one new faculty member reconnect with the Advisor for her Individualized major as an undergraduate here at UConn.

Here are some thoughts from some of the attendees:

"It was not only a lovely lunch, but a wonderful way for women on the faculty, especially those in departments and colleges where there are relatively few women, to network and meet all the amazing women there are on campus!"

-Davita Silfen Glasberg, Associate Dean of Social Sciences and Undergraduate Education, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

"This luncheon serves an important function in that it brings together women from across campus to help build community; it provides a forum for women who are new to the University to meet some of their more experienced/seasoned colleagues; and at the same time, the luncheon introduces a whole new generation of faculty to the important work being conducted at the Women's Center."

-Lucy L. Gilson, Management Professor and Department Head

We believe creating an opportunity for new faculty to meet other new faculty; for them to begin to create networks within and across disciplines/departments; and to provide an overview of the programs and services of the Women's Center are important retention strategies that we are providing early in their tenure at UConn. We look forward to continuing this event in the future and to creating more opportunities to support our women scholars.

*-Kathleen Holgerson*

## FEMALE ORGASM

The popular sex education program “The Female Orgasm” was brought back to UConn for two nights on September 8th and 9th. Sex educators Rachel Dart and Marshall Miller used humor and honesty to tackle a subject that society has, for the most part, rendered invisible.

This is the second year I have attended the “Female Orgasm,” and I would attend it again given the opportunity. It is the most sex-positive, feminist-friendly program I have ever experienced, and it is something I would recommend to any student on campus. The program was inclusive to multiple genders and sexualities. At one point they asked students who identify as men to leave the room for a separate talk with Marshall, but it was purely voluntary. Those who remained shared personal stories about how and when they achieved their first orgasm.

Throughout the program, Dart and Marshall gave numerous tips on how to achieve or give a female orgasm, all while promoting the ideas of consent and comfort. They shared their own experiences with the female orgasm, and encouraged the audience to share as well.



While pleasure was their main discussion topic, they also provided useful anatomical information about the female body. In a country where students usually receive abstinence-only sex education in high school, a program like the “Female Orgasm” is crucial. Even schools that go beyond the typical abstinence-only approach usually only teach about the male orgasm, completely eradicating the existence of the female orgasm. This is problematic for people who want to explore their bodies, but either don’t know how or have been shamed away from doing so. This program combats that in an entertaining and beneficial way. If the “Female Orgasm” returns next year (and I hope it will), I sincerely hope that every seat will be filled.

Photo credit:

<http://www.sexualityeducation.com/femaleorg/index.php>

*-Emily Cantor*

## CONSTITUTION DAY

Constitution Day was an all-day event consisting of smaller events throughout the day. The smaller event I took part in was the student panel. We talked mainly about what the first and fourteenth amendment meant to us and how we see the protections of those amendments in our everyday lives on campus. The events took place in the Dodd Center and was facilitated by Professor Kimberly Bergendahl.



As I stated previously I was the student representative for the Women’s Center, and myself, along with two other young women, Haddiyyah Ali and Sarah McManus, answered questions from the facilitator and the audience, which was mostly made up of students. We were asked questions about what is the most important amendment to us, which I answered the thirteenth. We were asked how we make the Constitution more inclusive, or how to change it to apply to everyone.

I thought the event was great; I really appreciated being asked to participate. I think the facilitator was really thoughtful about the questions she asked us, and when we stated our opinions she encouraged and supported them. She let us speak freely, and I felt very comfortable saying what I wanted.

Photo credit: Kathy Fischer

*-Kayla Edwards*

## FALL CULTURAL CENTER OPEN HOUSE

On Wednesday, September 23rd each of the Cultural Centers hosted an open house. The Women's Center participated and held activities that were facilitated by student staff members Alexa Lugo and Chelsea Meagher. Alexa Lugo shares with us the different activities that took place:

"For the Women's Center open house, we put on a game night. We had three stations. One was Women's Center jeopardy focusing on Herstory. There were questions about women in pop culture, cultural movements, famous images and events. The people participating had to answer three questions to move on to the next game. The next game was heads up. The cards contained Women's Center related material such as the Center's symbol. Contestants had to give clues to the proctor so that the proctor could figure out what it was. The last game was a bowling station. On each pin was a different identity. The facilitator picked up two pins, and the contestants had to give an example of how the two identities related to each other.

There were also chips, salsa and lemonade and the participants could take home a tumbler or a tote bag. I thought the event was pretty successful as we had over 400 people come in. I thought that many people understood what the Women's Center is centered around and learned a lot from the games."



Chairperson Irma Valverde

Photo credit:

<http://usg.uconn.edu/2015/10/>

*-Alexa Lugo, Emily Cantor*

## WOMEN'S CENTER FALL RETREAT

On September 13th, student staff, VAWPP students, our Graduate Assistant, and Women's Center full-time staff gathered once again for the Women's Center's annual fall retreat. The day was filled with discussion and reflection about intersectionality and feminism and how it applies to the community of practice within the Women's Center.

This year's main activity was facilitated by our very own graduate assistant, Huong Nguyen. Students were asked about their different identities, such as race, gender, age and political status. They were then asked to reflect on why they value certain identities over others, prompting a conversation about individual values and privilege.

Returning student staff member Haddiyah Ali shared her thoughts about the retreat:

"This year's staff retreat was an amazing experience, filled with new and familiar faces and as always, an opportunity to grow as a feminist. The Identity and Values activity in particular was very reflective and showed how intentional the Women's Center is about acknowledging oppression and privilege. This is my second year at the Women's Center, and it seems staff retreats get better every time."

New to the Women's Center this semester, Bennett Cognato reflected on the retreat:

"As a new worker at the Women's Center, I learned a lot through this semester's orientation. From the beginning to the end of the day, we worked through activities to explore cultural differences and understand identities in ways I hadn't thought of before. We also started signing up for and discussing new projects and events for the semester. Ultimately, I'm excited to get started on all the new work this semester and to learn more about incorporating anti-racist feminist perspectives into all my work and advocacy."

*-Emily Cantor*

## SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

The theme of this year's Suicide Prevention week was "Listening Is Prevention." There were multiple events throughout the week to promote awareness and prevention.

The keynote speakers this year were Kevin Berthia and retired Sgt. Kevin Briggs. Sgt. Briggs worked for the California Highway Patrol for over 20 years and is known as the "Guardian of the Golden Bridge." He helped over 200 people who were on the bridge contemplating suicide. Kevin Berthia was one of those people.

Kathy Fischer, Associate Director of the Women's Center, had this to say about their talk:



Photo credit:  
<http://suicideprevention.uconn.edu/event>

"Both men shared their stories and both talked about the importance of listening as prevention. It did and can make all the difference."



Photo Credit: UConn File Photo

Also for Suicide Prevention week this year was the Field of Memories, or The Be Aware Show You Care Flag Exhibit. Thousands of flags placed in front of the Student Union provided a visual representation of the number of suicides that occur on college campuses in the U.S. every year. Students were encouraged to personalize a flag in support or in memory of a lost loved one.

*-Emily Cantor*

## THE MAKER'S FILM SERIES



# MAKERS

Stories From The Women  
Who Make America

This year the Women's Center is sponsoring a six part film series focusing on women who have made breakthroughs in their fields and reshaped American institutions. The first two films have already been shown, with a third planned for November. The final three will be shown during the spring semester.

The first was "Women in Comedy," which tracked the rise of women comedians starting in the 1970's and building to today's comedic scene.

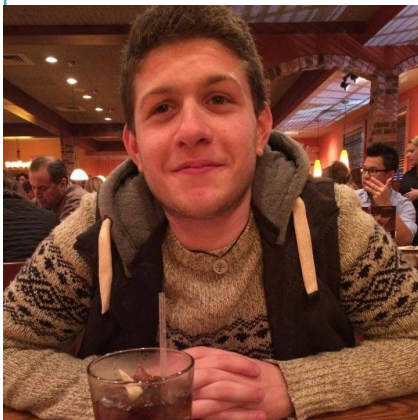
The second film shown was "Women in Hollywood." It showcases the women in show business, beginning with the start of cinema and reaching today's entertainment.

The third film shown this semester was "Women in Space," which follows the history and progress of women in the U.S. Space Program.

*-Emily Cantor*

## NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHTS

*We are delighted to welcome a host of new staff here at the Women's Center!*



### **Bennett Cognato**

"I am a senior Political Science major from Danbury, CT."

#### ***What is your position here at the Women's Center?***

"I am an Administrative Assistant with the Women's Center."

#### ***Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?***

"I applied to work here at the Women's Center because I saw the work some of my friends were doing here, and I wanted to be able to help with the work, learn more as an ally, and to figure out better ways to incorporate anti-racist feminist perspectives into the work I will do moving forward after graduation."

#### ***What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?***

"In addition to helping with, and participating in all the great work and programs the Women's Center organizes, I'm looking forward to learning more about anti-racist feminist perspectives, how to be an effective ally, and to add positively to the feminist dialogue on campus and among my peers."

### **Brianna Devivo**

"I am a Political Science and WGSS double major from Mansfield, CT."

#### ***What is your position here at the Women's Center?***

"I'll be working on programming, specifically Elect Her and Women's Herstory Month."

#### ***Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?***

"I applied to work at the Women's Center because during my past two years at UConn, I was always fascinated by the amazing events and activities the Center presents to the UConn community. As someone who is passionately feminist, I wanted to become part of that legacy."

#### ***What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?***

"I'm looking forward to taking part in some of the Women's Center's signature events, like Herstory month and Take Back the Night, and getting to know like-minded people in the process!"

### **Kayla Edwards**

"I am an Africana Studies student from Hamden, CT."

#### ***What is your position here at the Women's Center?***

"I am a Women's Center Assistant."

#### ***Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?***

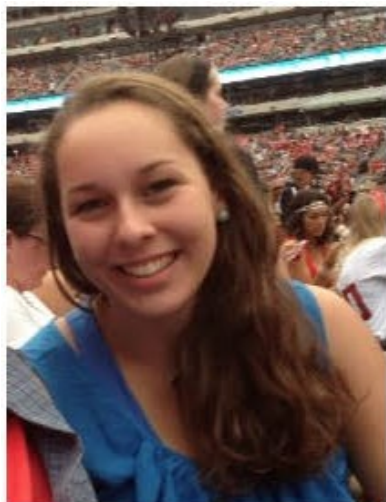
"I thought this would be an interesting place to work and that it would teach me about things I didn't know before and introduce me to some new people."

#### ***What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?***

"I am looking forward to working with like-minded people and educating the UConn community about the Women's Center and all the great things we do here."



## NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHTS



### Fallon Foster

"I'm an Accounting major from Trumbull, CT."

#### *What is your position here at the Women's Center?*

"I am a co-facilitator for Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA)."

#### *Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?*

I participated in GASA last semester (Spring 2015) and found how informative and rewarding the program was. I wanted to get more involved with the Women's Center after learning about all the other great programs they provide to the student body and felt that becoming a facilitator for GASA would be a great fit for me!"

#### *What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?*

I am most looking forward to getting to know the other employees in the Women's Center and to help grow the GASA program. I am also excited for LunaFest in the spring and can't wait to assist in helping put the event together."

### Eve Lemma

"I am an English major from Easton CT."

#### *What is your position here at the Women's Center?*

"I am the current facilitator of Between Women."

#### *Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?*

"I applied to work at the Women's Center because I feel very passionate about creating a safe place for queer women here at UConn."

#### *What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?*

"I am looking forward to fostering a brave space where individuals can share their experiences and learn from other people's experiences."



### Mary Olmsted



"I'm a Communications major from Woodbury CT."

#### *What is your position here at the Women's Center?*

"My position at the Women's Center is the Graphic Design Specialist."

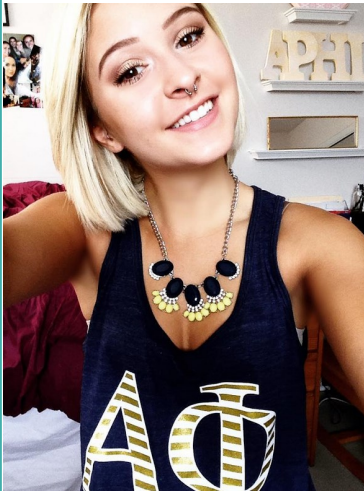
#### *Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?*

"I applied to work at the Women's Center so I could get more experience with design while working with a group that has a strong message and whose goal it is to make a change around campus."

#### *What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?*

"I am looking forward to being able to help everyone in the Center, but in the end I am hoping I can make a change around campus."

## NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHTS



### Alyssa Pingitore

"I'm a Psychology major from Cranston, RI."

#### *What is your position here at the Women's Center?*

"I am a co-facilitator of Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA)."

#### *Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?*

"I was a participant in GASA last semester and wanted to do more work with the group and get deeper involved in the Women's Center."

#### *What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?*

"Getting to know the diverse group of peers I will be working with this semester-both learning from them and sharing my own opinions and experiences in order to make our work as effective as it can possibly be."

### Chelsea Meagher

"I'm a Cognitive Science major from North Branford, CT."

#### *What is your position here at the Women's Center?*

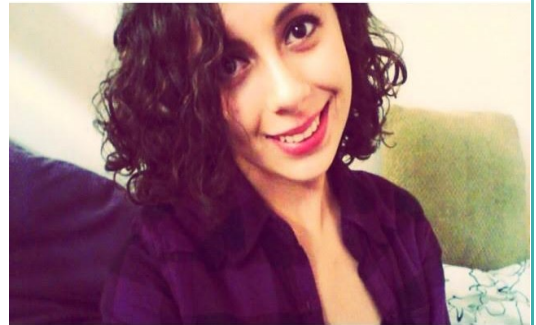
"Assisting with programming and facilitating events."

#### *Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?*

"I applied to work at the Women's Center because I want to improve myself as a feminist while also helping to create a safe space for students of all gender identities at UConn. I take a personal interest in gender issues and hope that, through the programs I help to facilitate, we as a team can create a more inclusive environment while also combating gender equity issues seen on campus."

#### *What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?*

"I am looking forward to meeting my amazing co-workers while seeing myself grow into a more confident leader. Through my experience at the Women's Center, I hope to become more familiar with feminist issues so I can continue to advocate for equal gender rights both in and outside my workplace."



### Alexa Lugo

"I am a Finance major from New York, NY."

#### *What is your position here at the Women's Center?*

"I work as an assistant specifically focusing on body image, health, and mental health."

#### *Why did you apply to work at the Women's Center?*

"I applied to work at the Women's Center because I wanted to be involved in a community that made a difference on campus in terms of gender equality."

#### *What are you looking forward to most in your experience here?*

"I look forward to participating in programs at the Women's Center and to learn more about gender equity."



## VAWPP REFLECTION

The Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) has seen many changes over the last year. As VAWPP coordinator Lauren Donais explained at the VAWPP 35th Anniversary Reunion:

“While it was decided, last spring, after 22 years of VAWPP facilitated Summer Orientation, that first-year students would now participate in a session that takes a holistic approach to wellness, prevention, and care for self and others, we are proud to share that nearly 4,000 first-year students will be receiving VAWPP’s *Consent 201* workshop this semester in their First-Year Experience courses. This workshop, along with the rest of our work, continues to center the gendered nature of gender-based violence by addressing its root causes in sexism and other forms of oppression.”

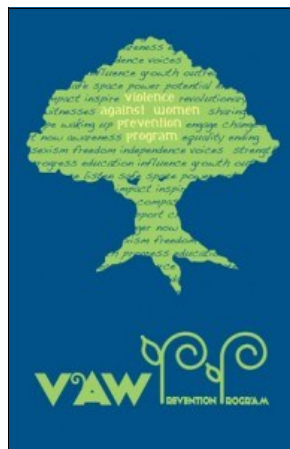
New to VAWPP this semester, Matthew Brush reflects on his experiences with the program so far.

“Though it is only my first semester with the Violence Against Women Prevention Program, I can already sense the great importance of and need for the program on our campus. Each of the students who attend our facilitations brings a unique set of morals, reasoning, and experiences that contribute to the discussion as a whole. As a result, each facilitation is unique in its own ways, which is one of the many reasons I enjoy facilitating.

Admittedly, the hardest part about these facilitations is breaking the ice and getting students to have a conversation amongst themselves, rather than looking to us as ‘teachers.’ As you may imagine, many students are apprehensive when it comes to talking about sexual violence, let alone with a group of their peers. Some have never discussed sexual violence before and are uncomfortable with the subject, while others have personal experiences related to it that may trigger them during the workshop. Ultimately our goal as facilitators is to ask students to push through their discomfort in order to address this issue, while simultaneously allowing students to practice ‘self-care’ should they need to remove themselves from the discussion.

My work as a facilitator has consisted of much more than just creating conversation amongst my peers and dispelling rape myths. I feel that by facilitating discussion we give each person in attendance the unique ability to incite social change by identifying and working to eliminate rape culture and myths in their day to day lives. Additionally, I believe VAWPP allows students and their peers to reflect on how sexual violence has affected their life, and to further understand the importance of, and urgent need for, more education and discussion about the issue.

Finally, I have come to realize that I, too, must practice some self-care as a facilitator. This consists of coming to terms with the fact that not every person on this campus (or anywhere) feels so passionately about ending sexual violence as we do. My self-care often requires introspection into my day-to-day actions, the language I use, and the stereotypes and preconceptions I hold about others. It also involves coming to terms with the pervasiveness of rape culture and sexual violence, as well as taking time away from the subject to reflect and think about positive social change and progress that has already been made. Though there is still much work to be done, I am thrilled to be a part of the VAWPP program and am looking forward to the continual change and discussion we are helping to create on campus.”



## UNFOLDING THE STORY

In May of 2014, the Women in Math, Science, and Engineering (WIMSE) faculty group arranged for Barbara Minsker, Professor of Civil & Environmental Engineering at the University of Illinois, to conduct an all-day workshop on the path to becoming a 'Joyful Professor.' We had also extended an invitation to the new hires who had been invited to our New Women Faculty Luncheon the previous March. At the workshop, one of the faculty at my table was a new professor of Performance and Directing for Puppet Arts – Margarita Blush. At the time, I didn't know that a little more than a year later, we would be collaborating on a grant and a panel talkback as part of an original puppet theatre production—*Unfolding*.

Similarly, that same Spring, I was contact by Lindsay Cummings, Assistant Professor of Theatre Studies, with a request to hold a panel discussion entitled, *From Power Suits to Power Pink: Professional Women in Pop Culture*, here at the Center. This panel was part of the activities planned in conjunction with the Connecticut Repertory Theatre's production of *Legally Blonde: The Musical*. Of course, we agreed, and the program was well-attended and covered everything from what women should expect in hiring situations, to legal cases in involving discrimination based on a woman's appearance, to the tension between images of professional women in popular culture and expectations in the board room. At that time, I again didn't know that our paths would cross as part of the story to tell one woman's journey of a lifetime.



Photo by Robert Blush

This past summer, while in discussions about our upcoming reading for the Open Doors Series (more about that in the next newsletter), Lindsay mentioned that Margarita was working on a new project, a puppetry play that uses a fairy tale narrative to explore issues of women's wisdom, empowerment, and self-discovery. The three of us met and had an animated discussion about women's roles in the genre of fairy tales and the narrative of the hero's journey; how women's agency is defined and enacted; can we embrace the notion of the feminine or femininity and be queer and trans inclusive? This discussion became the foundation of the ideas to be explored in a talkback panel after one of the performances.



Photo by Robert Blush

According to Margarita's press materials, "The idea for *Unfolding the Story, A Journey of Her Own* was born out of the quote 'We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us' (Marcel Proust).

Looking at my life – past, present and future - as a woman, an artist and a mother, I find myself compelled to examine the idea of discovering wisdom through a journey into the deep feminine where our wise, wild woman awaits. My desire is to create a puppet theatre production that will help empower women to find their voice and strength, and to remind them of their deep insight of the world we live in."

I had to the opportunity to see the show twice, and was glad that I had. There was so much I had missed in the first performance. The set design was extraordinarily beautiful – multi-dimensional and multi-purpose. The performers served as the protectors and challengers during the woman puppet's journey. The story told the journey from maiden, to matron, to crone – asking us to question the universality and uniqueness of women's experiences. Having the chance to talk with colleagues and the audience after the second show opened dialogue around women's roles in the academy and the language we use around masculinity and femininity.

So much about this project reflected the values of how we do our work at the Women's Center. Collaboration – across departments and among faculty and staff. Critical reflection – examining language, identity, power, and privilege. Celebration – joining together to acknowledge the contributions women are making to their disciplines. And finally – connection – turning workshops and outreach activities into sustaining working relationships.



Photo by Robert Blush

# 35TH VAWPP ANNIVERSARY

This year marked the 35th anniversary of the VAWPP program at UConn. As part of the Huskies Forever Weekend, VAWPP and Women's Center alumni/ae were invited back for a day of reconnecting and reminiscing. Alumni/ae shared stories about life after UConn and how their time at the Women's Center and VAWPP has stayed with them since graduation. The reunion culminated with a presentation by Lauren Donais, the current VAWPP coordinator, and a video of VAWPP students reflecting on how VAWPP has changed their lives for the better.



All photo credits: Defining Studios

## 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!*

### Varun Khattar

I recently had the incredible opportunity to co-organize and facilitate a three-day, intensive social justice retreat for undocumented high school students hosted at the Guest House Retreat Center in Chester, CT from Sept. 18-20. This retreat was sponsored by Connecticut Students for a Dream (C4D), a youth-led network fighting for the rights of undocumented students and their families. We led workshops on storytelling, the history of the undocumented student movement, identities and intersectionality, power and oppression, gender and sexism, queer and trans politics, and community organizing. There were quite a few tears shed, especially as we viewed the 2011 documentary "Precious Knowledge" on youth organizing in Tuscon, AZ in response to the local government's decision to brand the public school district's ethnic studies or Mexican-American studies program as anti-American and eliminate its funding.

Ultimately, it was a weekend of love, healing, and inspiration, as we reflected on the violence and injustices we've experienced as migrants and people of color and developed community action plans. Several of the students left the retreat and immediately took action. One made the brave decision to come out of the shadows as undocumented to her peers on social media. The experience forced me to grow as a facilitator, as I encountered challenges with recognizing my biases and privileges, managing my self-care needs, and creating an inclusive learning environment for folks with different abilities and language preferences. Photo Credit: Varun Khattar



To conclude the retreat, we joined hands and recited Luis Valdez's poem based of indigenous Mayan tradition entitled "In Lak' Ech." It reads in English: "You are my other me. If I do harm to you, I do harm to myself. I love and respect myself." I hope we can apply this message of empathy and solidarity to our work at the Women's Center and make it a priority to uplift the voices of undocumented immigrants as we continue to fight to end gender-based violence.

*Awesome work, Varun!*

### Maha Saleem



Maha was recently selected to serve on the 2015-16 National Student Advisory Council for the AAUW. She is one of ten council members selected from across the country.

*Congratulations, Maha!*

Photo credit: <http://www.aauw.org/2015/10/12/sac-squadgoals/>

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*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!*

### **Banu Bayraktar and Bennett Cognato**

For those who have not heard about the SAFE campus act, it is a bill in the works in a congressional committee that would keep universities from handling sexual assaults on campus, unless the victim chooses to go report it to the police. I think it is pretty obvious that this bill poses a serious threat to survivors of sexual assault by dramatically minimizing their options to just two; report or stay silent. Not only does this bill jeopardize the student body, but it inadvertently protects offenders. It is true that in the past our University has had problems with handling cases of sexual assault, but overall I've commended the fact that the University is able to make proper accommodations for survivors of sexual assault, regardless of whether or not they wanted to report the incident to law enforcement. It genuinely frightens me that if this bill passes in Congress, the University could take action against someone who cheats on me in class, but not someone who rapes me.

In response to this (un)SAFE campus bill, Bennett Cognato, the CLAS Senator in the Undergraduate Student Government and Women's Center employee, and I passed a statement of position against this damaging bill. It is important to recognize that this bill jeopardizes the safety and recovery of survivors. As an organization, USG senators voted in favor of our proposed statement of position. This reflects the universities values and shows that as the flag ship University of Connecticut, we stand with victims and believe they have the right to options and recovery. I'm very proud of this legislation and how as a University, we will take a firm stance in opposition to things like this that post an incredible threat to our student body.

***Awesome work, Banu and Bennett!***

### **Meteyana Miller**



Recipient of the 2015-16 Heist Family Endowed Nursing Scholarship.

***Congratulations, Metey!***

Photo Credit: Defining Studios



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Enjoy the little things. That's what people like to tell you when you're feeling down, or when they think you need a fresh perspective on life. Don't worry about the big things, they say. It's the little moments in life that you'll remember.

And they're right. When we look back at our lives, most of what we'll remember will be those moments.

Moments like last week, when my supervisor told me a rape joke because he thought I looked sad, and he wanted to "cheer me up."

Moments like last month, when the cops had to be called because a guy put his fist through my neighbor's window.

Moments like last year, when I entered my dorm and was followed by a male student asking me personal questions, something I later learned had happened to multiple girls in the building.

Moments like in high school, when a teacher walked into the classroom, singled out my friend and told her "Ni hao!," completely ignorant of the fact that she was adopted from South Korea when she was a baby.

Moments like last night, when I went online and scrolled through hundreds of comments blaming the young black girl who was brutally thrown from her desk by a white, male deputy in South Carolina.

These are the moments that stand out to me, and they are ones of violence, sexism, and racism. And it's sad that most of them happened at UConn, but I'm willing to bet that the majority of students on campus have experienced these kinds of oppression before, maybe even daily. So if it's the little moments that matter, what does it say about our society that these experiences form the foundations of so many people's lives?

Well, it says a lot. It says that people still don't take rape seriously. That men are raised to believe that violence is an acceptable method of expressing emotion, and that women exist to be objectified. It says that white men are valued more than women of color.

The work we do at the Women's Center is essential to combating these ideas, but sometimes our sphere of influence isn't far enough. How do we reach out to that young boy still in grade school and teach him that having feelings doesn't make him less of a person? Or to that girl in middle school who already hates herself because she's been teased about her body? What about when we enter the work force and have to deal with institutional oppressions without the support system we had on campus?

I don't necessarily have the answers to all of these questions. All I can say is it's going to take time. It will take years of fighting and protesting before we can make headway on any of these issues and get society to a place where people don't have to live in fear because of their race, gender, or sexuality. It will take many more Take Back the Night's, #SAYHERNAME vigils, and generations of Women's Center and VAWPP students.

But I do believe it can happen. I believe that people like those at the Women's Center will make it happen. And when I'm looking back at the little moments, I'll be glad to say that many of them happened here, in a place that's working towards a world I want to live in.

ENJOY THE  
l i t t l e   t h i n g s  
FOR ONE DAY  
YOU MAY LOOK  
BACK AND REALIZE  
THEY WERE THE  
**BIG THINGS**

*-Emily Cantor*

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



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

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SHARE THIS

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](mailto: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
- [titleix.uconn.edu](http://titleix.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](http://www.womenscenter.uconn.edu)

Hours: 8am-9pm, Monday through Thursday;  
 8am-5pm on Fridays

