

VOICES

[from the Women's Center]

University of Connecticut—October 2006

Campus Feminism: Where is it and what's needed to spread the word?

An Introduction by Tess Bird—Newsletter Editor

So many students (not to mention university faculty and staff) have no idea what feminism is, let alone that it does exist in small pockets across the UConn campus. What are people saying about feminism and is there a way to make feminist voices more widely heard?

I REMEMBER VERY WELL WHEN an article printed last year in *The Daily Campus*, which denied a need for and even the very existence of feminism, provoked a series of responses from the feminist community on campus. I never questioned the existence of modern feminism, but after this, I did begin to ask, is there *enough talk* about feminism on the Storrs campus? Most feminists respond with a resounding “No!” I’ll begin my questioning with the *talk* that I have recently witnessed.

Discussions at the recent Women Center student staff retreat noted that our University, after several decades of working for gender equity, has a relatively active feminist community, at least in comparison to other universities. But leave the feminist community, at the Women’s Center, in Women’s Studies, in some student organizations like NOW, and a few other pockets around campus, and you will not hear discussions about feminism.

I have a friend who informed me, when I asked him to define feminism, that feminists were outdated and unnecessary, because being a feminist simply meant being a good person. As he continued to express contempt and appreciation for feminism and me in the same explanation, he suddenly stopped and said, “Women’s Studies is [legitimate] though,” as if to make up for personally attacking my own experience.

One woman, a sophomore at the University, passionately told me about her experience of getting to know feminism through an introductory Women’s Studies and Gen. Ed. course,

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**Bring Back
Feminism!**



*Righteous Women Take
to the UConn Streets!*

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We're Going Electronic!

If you would like to keep receiving the newsletter, please sign up for our listserv, UWomen-L!

Go to http://listserv.uconn.edu/uconn_womens_issues-l.html and click on “join or leave the list (or change settings)”

You will be emailed twice a semester with a link to the newsletter, also available on our website at www.womenscenter.uconn.edu

If you do not have computer access and would like to keep receiving a paper copy, please call the Women’s Center at 860 486 4738.

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Gender in a Global Perspective. "Ask any [woman at UConn] if she's a feminist and she'll say no, but ask her if she believes in equality... there's no question," she said. Why are students (and faculty/staff) so disconnected from the word feminism when many believe in feminism's core values?

Many young women are not aware that there is a vocabulary to discuss a range of feelings of subjugation and violation that address a variety of cultural and class experiences. Feminism is not one insight into these experiences, but rather, provides room for individual experiences and a range of vocabulary that addresses gender equity along with issues of race, class, and sexuality. There are many young women who come into college having a vague sense of something called feminism and knowing that they have had a continuously different and often underprivileged experience from their male counterparts, even if these experiences were different from those of other women. Feminism can provide a vehicle, and a vocabulary, for understanding and holding discussions between groups of individuals. Education, many campus feminists agree, is the best way to get this vocabulary out there and spread awareness of feminism and feminist concerns.

Several educational outreach programs have already been implemented. Last year, Tonya Reid, a volunteer at the Women's Center, set up a forum for different groups and individuals on campus that addressed what was working and what wasn't in terms of feminist activism at UConn. The group ended up consisting of mainly NOW and Women's Center representatives, apart from two reporters from *The Daily Campus*. "It ended up being a venting session," Tonya said, noting that many were frustrated with the apathy on campus, "but it was constructive." She said they are seeing more interest this semester in NOW and a new pro-choice group that she is involved with: *Vox: Voices for Planned Parenthood*.

When I asked Kathy Fischer, Associate Director at the Women's Center, what else has been done through the Women's Center to promote awareness of feminism, she provided me with an impressive list, which included, but is not limited to VAWPP, various campus groups, FYE workshops about the Women's Center and a range of issues impacting women, workshops and training for faculty and staff, faculty lunches, representation on committees, tabling at various campus functions, and the encouragement of student staff to pursue projects.

Then a question arises for me, something that I have asked my male friends again and again: "do you know what it is like to spend the last twenty minutes of a night class worrying about how you are going to get home?" This is the question that says to me, yes, campus feminism is vital. Yes, there is a need for education. Yes, a woman's college experience often is drastically different from that of

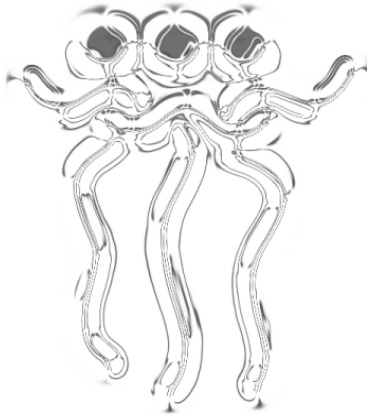
a man's on account of her gender. From a butt-slap to rape, I risk the violation of my body every time I enter *their* world, and maintaining a social life on this campus often demands entering that alternate, male-centered world on a regular basis. I know this may not be the thought process of every woman on campus, but this does not erase the many that do have very legitimate fears and it does not mean that violations do not occur. Feminism is different for everybody, but as bell hooks titled one of her books, "feminism *IS* for everybody."

It is not just violence against women that continues to threaten gender equity. Reproductive rights, for instance, with abortion now facing the possibility of becoming illegal, as well as access in many parts of the country becoming more restricted are important considerations. The portrayal of women in the media is also something that should be questioned. These issues are vital for women of the college age to consider because they affect us, our relationships, and our future. So why are students not outraged? Why are they remaining vastly silent around the issue of women's rights?

With the subsequent newsletter, I hope to talk to a variety of individuals in depth: both men and women - from different cultural backgrounds; sexual orientations; ages; and positions at the university, and have their voices present in a discussion about ideas, stereotypes, and misrepresentations of feminism and what possibilities they see in making feminism a widely considered topic on the University of Connecticut campus(es).

If you would like to have your voice included, please contact me at:

tess.bird@uconn.edu. ♀



NEW STAFF FALL 2006

After a large amount of the student staff graduated last spring, the Women's Center is pleased to announce the addition of twenty-three new student staff members and three new interns. Coming from various academic disciplines and semesters, they are working on a variety of projects, from general work to VAWPP.

- **Beth Barbeau**, *Graphics Specialist*, majoring in Photography and Women's Studies. Beth wants "to do something that I love for a cause I really believe in."
- **Alissa Becker**, fourth semester, Environmental Studies. Alissa is the chair of the Clothesline Project '06.
- **Alison Berk**, *VAWPP*, junior, Philosophy and English.
- **Tess Bird**, intern, *Newsletter Editor*, junior, Women's Studies with a concentration in Creative Writing and a minor in Anthropology.
- **Christina Burke**, Physiology and Neurobiology with a

Letter from the Director

Kathleen Holgerson

In 1998, the University administration developed a plan to move all of the cultural centers into the soon-to-be renovated Student Union. The hope was that by being in the "hub" of campus, that the vitality, energy, and programming of the centers would enhance the new building and be better served in a more high traffic location. On June 22nd and 23rd, the plan finally came to fruition. We are now in our new and expanded location on the 4th floor of the Student Union.

In the short time that we have been in our new home, we have already seen more visitors to the Center and an increase in requests to use the spaces within the Center. We also have the opportunity to more fully accommodate our extensive library collection of books, journals, magazines, and videos. Finally, our student staff definitely has more space to do the work of organizing programs, educating the

community on issues related to gender equity, and all of the other activities that go on here at the Center.

If you haven't stopped by to visit yet, please consider this a standing invitation! We encourage students, staff, and faculty to come by and see what the Center has to offer you.

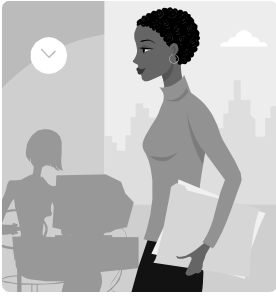
Finally, I want to express my gratitude to the Women's Center staff, who forged ahead with "business as usual" even in the midst of unpacked boxes, computers and printers that needed to be hooked up, and all of the decisions about decorating the new space. So another reason to stop by is to thank Betsy, Carol, and Kathy (as well as Jessica and Beth) for their continued commitment to serving others; ensuring access for all; and the pursuit of equity and justice.

minor in Psychology. Christina "wants to get more involved on campus."

- **Emily Corradina**, first semester, Nursing. Emily "admires the efforts and goals of the Center."
- **Kristina "Krissy" Dolce**, first semester, English. Krissy wants to "be involved with something meaningful."
- **Lauren Donnelly**, sophomore, Political Science. Lauren is "interested in the importance and empowerment of women at UConn and in society."
- **Ashley Fail**, senior, Psychology. Ashley "wanted to get involved during my last semester."
- **Rodelyne "Rhody" Gracia**, *VAWPP*, third semester, Occupational Therapy or Physical Therapy, minor in Psychology. Rhody came to the Women's Center because she likes working with people.
- **Shan Hu**, *Statistician*, first semester graduate student, Statistics. Shan expressed her desire to learn more about feminism.
- **Deanne Kopp**, senior, English and Communication Disorders. "Volunteering at the Women's Center," Deanne says, "gives me an opportunity to actively help those around me [and] to learn more about women's issues on campus and in the community."
- **Estela Lopez**, intern, *Computer Specialist*, senior, Women's Studies. Estela is also very involved with *VAWPP*.
- **Lovely Lorde**, third semester, Political Science. Lovely is "interested in anything new and challenging."
- **Marlene Monteiro**, sophomore, Women's Studies, minor in Sociology.



- **Colleen Rogers**, sophomore, Nutrition Sciences. Colleen is "passionate about women's issues."
- **Katie Roy**, third semester, Community Health and Welfare, Nutrition, minor in Human Rights. Katie "wants to be an active, positive influence in my community."
- **Ajay Shenoy**, *Computer Specialist*, junior, Math and Political Science. Ajay intends to "wage perpetual [non-violent] war against dysfunctional technology."
- **Anastasia "Stacey" Tepelidis**, *Co-facilitator for the Between Women group*, junior, Molecular Cell Biology.
- **Karina Toledo**, sophomore, Biology.
- **Caitlin Torino**, third semester, Allied Health and Occupational Therapy.
- **Vu Tran**, *VAWPP and MAVAW*, senior, Chemistry. Vu "has a strong interest in gender equality."
- **Jaelyn "Jackie" Vanase**, junior, Women's Studies, minor in Sociology. Jackie was involved last year in *VAWPP* and decided to continue her work at the Women's Center.
- **Chandra Waring**, intern, seventh semester, Sociology. Chandra working with issues regarding women's reproductive rights.
- **Manna Wu**, third semester, Pre-Pharmacy.



Don't Cancel Your Class: An Alternate to Canceling Your Class When You Have a Scheduling Conflict

The Women's Center, in an effort to promote education and awareness of women's issues, is offering a new program for faculty and teaching assistants. The Women's Center staff is available to provide guest lectures during those times when instructors are not available to teach. The staff can work with instructors to develop a presentation tailored to the specific course content or instructors can select from one of our sessions designed specifically for this initiative.

For faculty that are scheduled to attend a conference or professional meeting, have personal or family obligations that require attention, this program can replace class time with a meaningful guest lecture. Topics include, but are not limited to:

- sexual harassment
- workplace issues/climate
- women's rights: what you need to know in the political sphere
- how to be an ally
- and diversity.

Sessions are designed to examine current events while enhancing knowledge and critical thinking skills on the intersections of these topics and gender and diversity locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. They also serve to cultivate skills and knowledge that serve to support the academic success and future productivity of students as employees and citizens.

Lecturers include Elizabeth (Betsy) Cracco, Ph.D. and coordinator of the Violence Against Women Prevention Program; Kathy Fischer, Associate Director; and Kathleen Holgerson, Director.

If you are interested, please contact the Women's Center at 486-4738 or by email: womensctr@uconn.edu.



Group Offerings:



Between Women

A discussion group for women who love women... or think they might.

Come and discuss fun topics, movies and more with women who share your feelings and experiences. The group meets *every Monday at 8:30 pm in the Women's Center.*

For more information on weekly discussion topics visit the www.womenscenter.uconn.edu.

Contact betweenwomen@hotmail.com for further information.

Stronger

A support and discussion group for UConn women.

"What is a healthy relationship?"

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

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

For more information and to register, contact Betsy Cracco at the Women's Center at 486-4738 or

elizabeth.cracco@uconn.edu.

The South Asian Tree (TSAT)

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka. Do you identify with one of the countries listed above either through self or family? If so, come join in on dialogues of balancing South Asian heritage with North American ideologies and the implications it has on day to day experiences including life at UConn. Facilitated by Bandana Purkayastha, Bidya Ranjeet, and Shanthi Rao.

For more information contact Bidya Ranjeet at 6-4040.

Phenomenal Women

Tired of all the pressure to have the "Perfect Body?" Sick of feeling like you're not enough: thin enough, tall enough, pretty enough, blonde enough, tan enough?

Then come join Phenomenal Women—a fun, supportive group of UConn students who are learning to appreciate themselves, feel more confident, and love their bodies.

Tuesdays, 3:30 to 4:30, in the Women's Center.

For more information contact Kathy Hampton at 6-4705.

Support Staff Brown Bag Lunch

This group is an effort to bring support staff together for professional development and networking, with the goal of enhancing the workplace climate and to support the personal and professional growth of women. Bring your lunch – drinks and dessert will be provided.

All meetings will be held at the Women's Center.

For questions, contact Carol Millette (6-4738).

Meeting Dates –

♀ Tuesday, October 10

♀ Tuesday, November 14

♀ Tuesday, December 12



Calendar of Events, October 2006

For more information on events and co-sponsors, please visit the Women's Center website: www.womenscenter.uconn.edu

OCTOBER is Domestic Violence Awareness Month!

SOS—Stop Over Stressing (SOS) is a series of stress reducing programs to help you survive midterms.

10/3—**Massage:*** Tuesday, 6 pm – 7 :30 pm, Women's Center

10/10—**Aromatherapy:** Tuesday, 6 pm – 7:30 pm, Women's Center

10/17—**Massage:*** Tuesday, 6 pm – 7:30 pm, Women's Center

10/24—**Guided Meditation:** Tuesday, 6 pm – 7:30 pm, Women's Center

*Atlantis Therapeutics will provide massage a on a first-come, first-served basis.

7th – Cultural Explosion—Saturday, 11 am – 2 pm, Fairfield Way—Join us for entertainment, food and fun.

9th & 10th—LUNA Bar College Tour—Monday and Tuesday, 9 am – 3 pm, Fairfield Way

The LUNA Bar College Tour 2006 is traveling to 16 different colleges to promote whole nutrition for women.

9th-13th—Clothesline Project—Daily, 11 am-3 pm, Fairfield Way (Rain location – Student Union Lobby)

The Clothesline Project is a traveling visual display of t-shirts made by survivors and secondary survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence.

11th—Dinner with Gail Dines—Wednesday, 5 pm – 6:30 pm, Women's Center

This event is free, but space is limited. Please **RSVP** to the Women's Center by October 6.

11th—Sex(ism), Identity and Intimacy In A Pornographic Culture—Wednesday, 7 pm, Student Union Theater

Dr. Gail Dines, Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at Wheelock College in Boston, is co-editor of the best-selling textbook *Gender, Race and Class in Media* and co-author of *Pornography: The Production and Consumption of Inequality*.

12th—The Political Process... -Thursday, 7 pm, African American Cultural Center

Join us for a discussion of how and why the political process matters to college students.

16th—Celebrate Women Brown Bag Lunch Series - *Confronting the Myths of Domestic Violence* with Kerry Conroy, Director of Community Education, Interval House—Monday, 12 to 1 pm, CUE Room 320

For more information, please visit www.celebrate.uchc.edu/webcast/

18th—9th Annual Love Your Body Day—Wednesday, TBD (for times and locations, check the website)

Help us take ACTION with postcards to advertising companies and in making a quilt by creating a square for why you love your body!

19th—Thursday Night at the Movies – *CHISHOLM '72: Unbought & Unbossed*—Thursday, 7 pm, Women's Center

This is the first historical documentary on the Brooklyn Congresswoman and her campaign to become the Democratic Party's presidential nominee in 1972.

26th—National Young Women's Day of Action

National Young Women's Day of Action is a call for women to unite in solidarity, across movements, to feel our power and secure our freedom. Activities will take place all around campus throughout the day. Check the Women's Center website at www.womenscenter.uconn.edu for updated information.

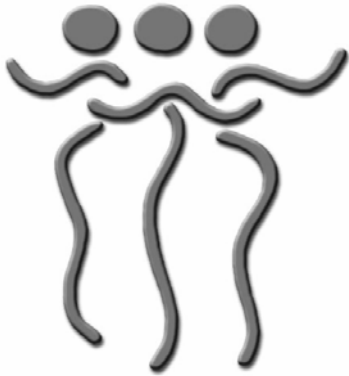


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