

VOICES

The Women's Center Newsletter

University of Connecticut

April 2002

SNEAK PEEK

A Quick Guide to What's Inside

Women's Center's 30th Anniversary

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From the beginning: two women share their stories about the Women's Center in its earliest stages

Part 2 of a 4 part series
By Joy Pachla

In the early 70's a group of women at UConn decided that enough was enough. They could no longer ignore the inequality of women at the university. In order to bring awareness to women's issues they formed a group called the Free Women's Collective, which would eventually evolve into the UConn Women's Center.

For the second article in our four part series on the herstory of the Women's Center, two women, Bessy Reyna and Catherine Havens, share their unique

experiences in helping to establish the Women's Center 30 years ago.

Bessy Reyna, a graduate of the UConn Law School and the School of Family Studies, came to UConn as a graduate student and first became involved with the Women's Center when several feminists formed a group on campus.

"A group of women had decided that something had to be done about the condition of women on campus and they started a small group," Reyna said.

Reyna who was part of a lesbian collective on campus at the time, was invited to a

meeting with the feminist group.

"I went to the meeting thinking they would not want us to be a part of the center, but instead they embraced us," Reyna said.

Soon the group of women, which was known as the Free Women's Collective, were given a home in the office of Betty Roper, Director of the Office of Continuing Education of Women at the time. She shared her office space in the Bishop's Center. Roper is considered one of the key founders of the Women's Center.

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Christy Haubegger is helping to change the image of Hispanic women

By Joy Pachla

Christy Haubegger has no tolerance for typos. The founder of *Latina* magazine, the first bilingual magazine geared toward Hispanic women in the U.S., checks each article in the magazine with an eagle's eye for a simple reason—the bar is simply higher at *Latina*.

"If someone finds a spelling mistake in the magazine they'll think 'those girls can't speak English well,'" Haubegger said.

Haubegger has been striving for and achieving this type of excellence in order to realize her dream of creating a magazine for Hispanic women. She shared her story of entrepreneurial ingénue with an audience at UConn at the Thomas J. Dodd Research

Center on March 4, 2002. Haubegger helped to kick off the nation's month-long

celebration of women's history.

Born in Houston, Texas, Christy was adopted by a "tall, blond family," (her own description) and grew up in an area where she didn't see a lot of people that looked like her. When she began reading teen magazines she felt left out because there were no depictions of women resembling her.

Haubegger attended the University of Texas at Austin where she received a B.A. in Philosophy at the age of 20. She went on to earn her Juris Doctorate from Stanford Law School, where she was president of her class.

While attending Stanford, Haubegger took a marketing course in which she wrote a proposal for a product that didn't exist. It was the beginnings of her plan for *Latina*

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Calendar of Events

September

Thursdays in Black

Thursdays in black is a campaign to raise awareness about abuse in relationships. Students, faculty and staff are asked to wear black to acknowledge the impact that relationship violence has on our community. Buttons, stickers and information will be handed out every Thursday in October in the Student Union Lobby.

7 Cultural and Racial Barriers

Join us for a panel discussion about the barriers faced by the African American, Latina, Asian and Native American communities. Monday, 4 p.m.-6 p.m., Asian American Cultural Center

8 Massage & Reiki *Part of the Life Balance Series*

Atlantis Therapeutics will provide massage and mini-Reiki Sessions on a first come first serve basis. Co-sponsored with Health Education, Student Health Services. Tuesday, 6:30-8 p.m., Women's Center Lounge

10 16th Annual Women's Health Update- *Women's Moods*

Sponsored by the School of Nursing and the Women's Center
La Renaissance, 53 Prospect Hill Road, Route 5, East Windsor, CT 2:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

10 Andrea's Voice

Join Tom and Doris Smeltzer as they discuss the loss of their daughter to an eating disorder. Co-sponsored with Student Health Services

14-17 Clothesline Project

The Clothesline Project is a visual display that bears witness to violence against women. Each t-shirt on the clothesline is a woman's story. Survivors and secondary survivors including family and friends are invited to decorate a t-shirt to add to the display. T-shirts can be made at the Women's Center.

15 Sponsors for Educational Opportunity Informational

Find out about internship and career opportunities with the SEO Career Program. Co-sponsored by the cultural centers. Tuesday, 4-6 p.m., African American Cultural Center.

16 Love Your Body Day

Poster contest

17 Last Chance for Eden

Director Lee Mun Wah presents and conducts a workshop on his film about the pain and anguish of racism and sexism on individuals and their families.

Co-sponsored with the Asian American Cultural Center, African American Cultural Center, Rainbow Center, Puerto Rican-Latin American Cultural Center, Asian American Studies Institute, Institute for African American Studies, FYE, Office of Multicultural Affairs, CAP, and the Dean of Students Office. Thursday, 3:30-6 p.m., Von der Mehden Recital Hall

21 The Yellow Dress

Performance depicting a young woman's relationship that ends in tragedy. Co-sponsored by the Domestic Violence Program of United Services. Monday, 4 p.m., Konover Auditorium, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center.

23 Film Series- *Fresh Blood*

A vibrant look at modern Jewish life. Co-sponsored with Hillel and the Rainbow Center. Wednesday, 7 p.m.

24 Young Women's Day of Action

Location to be announced.

22 Women Creating Their Own Business

Discussion on the business potential of health and beauty. Co-sponsored with the Asian American Cultural Center, African American Cultural Center, Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center and the Rainbow Center. Tuesday, 7 p.m., Asian American Cultural Center.

26 Kate Clinton

Serious laughs with a bright political comedian. Co-sponsored with the Rainbow Center. Saturday, 8 p.m., Von der Mehden Recital Hall.

29 Month of Kindness Opening-Arun Gandhi

Join the grandson of the legendary peace fighter to kick off the Month of Kindness. Co-sponsored with Hillel.

31 Men's March Against Domestic Violence

March will begin at the African American Cultural Center and end at the Women's Center. Thursday, noon.

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magazine.

At the time, Haubegger thought of the proposal as nothing more than a class project. She was more concerned with becoming a civil rights lawyer or an immigration lawyer, occupations in which she felt she could help her people.

“I wanted to hopefully change the world in a slightly different way,” Haubegger said.

However, a meeting with a professor made her think differently about her role in affecting changes in the world. The professor told Haubegger to make changes from the top, rather than trying to generate changes through the law. It made her reconsider the proposal for a Hispanic magazine she had crafted in her business course. After graduation she decided to create a business plan for *Latina*.

“I always think what would I rather remember—that I went out one night to a great party or that I stayed home and got a good sleep?” Haubegger said. “If I tried something huge and failed spectacularly, I’d rather remember that.”

Haubegger soon began her efforts to raise money for *Latina*. She would need thousands of dollars in investments. Haubegger wanted to create *Latina* in order to change the perception of Hispanic women in America. However, when trying to find investors for the magazine she found that her vision was not shared with many. Haubegger knocked on 197 doors seeking investors and got only 4 takers.

“People invest in businesses to make money, not because it’s something nice to do,” Haubegger said. “My very personal dream was not a compelling investment reason.”

In order to appeal to investors, Haubegger gathered facts about the Hispanic community that proved her magazine would be a financial success. According to Haubegger, the Hispanic population had not been explored yet. A 1990 census showed that the Hispanic population was the fastest growing population in the U.S. Over ten years, the Hispanic population had grown 58 percent while the non-Hispanic white community had grown only 3 percent.

However, it was not until a friend of a friend of a friend introduced Haubegger to Ed Lewis, founder of *Essence*, the magazine for African-American women, that someone believed in her idea. He agreed with Haubegger that the time was right for the Hispanic community to have a magazine. He ultimately helped her launch *Latina* magazine.

While creating the first issue of *Latina*, Haubegger came across another obstacle. This time it was in finding advertisers.

“We thought readers would be hard to attract and that advertisers would be easy—who wouldn’t want to

advertise to a Hispanic woman? We use more hair products and lipstick than other women,” she said.

Haubegger set about proving to advertisers that the Hispanic community uses more than their share of products. Haubegger said that Hispanic households contain 3.8 people compared with the average 2.6 person household. Also, she claims that Hispanic people are more brand-loyal than other Americans. Still in the first issue there were only 16 advertisers.

“I realized that we weren’t in the sales business, we were in the education business,” Haubegger said. “The people we were dealing with were not Hispanic and they had stereotypes. They asked if our readers could afford their products.”

Latina magazine was launched in 1996 with Jennifer Lopez gracing the first cover. At the time she had never been on a magazine cover before. Today, *Latina* has a quarter million subscribers and a readership of one million.

Haubegger ended her lecture with encouragement and words of advice for the audience.

“This generation of Latinos is the first to be successful. Many people will go to their first Latina dentist or banker,” she said. “Career-wise, we’ll be the first generation striving to do normal, interesting things.”

Take Our Daughters To Work Day Celebrates 10th Anniversary

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Take Our Daughters To Work Day. In only a decade the event has become an institution, with thousands of companies and millions of girls participating. The point of this one Thursday each April is to expose girls to the opportunities that women are now offered in the workplace. It is a chance to show a girl what she can be, rather than telling her.

In a recent study conducted by The Ms. Foundation, Take Our Daughters To Work Day is shown to benefit girls long after they go home for the day. The program has helped to create a more equitable workplace.

This year the Women’s Center is coordinating UConn’s 9th annual Take Our Daughters To Work Day on Thursday, April 25. The center is focusing on UConn staff bringing their daughters, granddaughters, nieces and other young women to work with them.

During UConn’s Take Our Daughters To Work Day, girls will have the opportunity to check out a variety of jobs. Girls can learn what it takes to be a police officer or firefighter at the UConn Police Department and Fire Department. Also, girls can get a hands-on experience with studio equipment at the UCIMT television studio, take part in a simulated nursing lab experience, learn how to create their own webpage and more.

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“She was a wonderful woman who supported feminist issues to the end of her life,” Reyna said.

Reyna, along with other women in the Free Women’s Collective, strived to bring awareness to the issues of inequality facing women at the time.

“Then, like now, the condition of women, salaries and general gender-based oppression was a reality we were very aware of,” Reyna said. “There was nothing like [the Women’s Center] at the time, and we felt that women needed a space where they could be supportive of each other and explore issues affecting us all.”

Catherine Havens was the first person hired by the University to work for the Women’s Center. In 1974 she became Director of the Center and stayed until 1977. Havens is still at UConn working in the School of Social Work as an Associate Dean and an Assistant Professor of Community Organization, where she continues to focus on women’s issues.

Betty Roper was chairwoman of the search committee that hired Havens. Havens remembers Roper as a leading force in establishing the Women’s Center.

“She played a key role in taking dissent at the University and forming it into something that could make a difference,” Havens said. “She was known as the ‘godmother of women’s issues’ at UConn.”

When Havens became Director at the Women’s Center she, and everyone else involved, had plenty of issues to deal with because there had never been any kind of group to check the inequality of women on campus before.

“Before the Women’s Center was established there were very few women in administration or faculty at the University. Title IX had just been passed so there were not athletics for women,” Havens said. “So we had to be there to deal with all these kinds of issues—hiring, athletics, etc.”

As Director of the Women’s Center, Havens sought to establish it as a legitimate department that could be a resource for women in the community.

“We were involved in developing programs in Women’s Studies and hiring the first head of that department,” Havens said. “Also, we developed counseling support services, outreach services and a rape crisis service.”

Most importantly it was a place where women could come and feel supported.

“We were really an oasis where women could feel welcome and safe,” Reyna said.

However, it was not without struggle that the Women’s Center came to be the viable establishment it is today. Those involved with the Women’s Center met obstacles in the University and within the Center.

“Among the top levels in the University there was an

agreement to [support the Women’s Center], but they were hesitant to see the Center as legitimate,” Havens said. “Also, there were internal struggles because of the various ideologies at the time.”

Reyna also remembers some of the roadblocks she met along the way.

“There was machismo, homophobia—a general attitude by the administration of ‘how dare you threaten the status quo,’” she said.

After 30 years neither of the women are surprised that the Women’s Center is still going strong.

“It was a creature of the time and many centers did not sustain,” Havens said. “Ours has survived because of the commitment of women at the University,” she said.

“I am just surprised that [the Center] is still dealing with some of the same issues we discussed back then,” Reyna said.

See what people had to say about *The Vagina Monologues*...

-The play was very enjoyable, and it covered what seemed to me many women’s views

-I loved it!

-Thanks for helping women love their vaginas.

-They all performed brilliantly, I’m impressed!

-Fantastically powerful program! Excellent presentation! I am so very glad I came here.

-I came with my partner and we discussed issues on the way home. It was uncomfortable and helpful for us.

-I hope this program takes place every year. It makes me proud to be a woman.

-Excellent job! Very entertaining.

-I liked it and I wish I had participated in the play.

-Very fun and informative—do it again next year.

-Finally I got to see what my boyfriend was talking about.

-The *Vagina Monologues* was awesome. You couldn’t have picked a better cast for the roles.

-I thoroughly enjoyed the program—thank you!

The *Vagina Monologues* was performed on Feb. 20 at UConn. The event was co-sponsored by SUBOG and the UConn V-Day campaign. The play was directed by Valencia Louis, who is part of the Women’s Center student staff.

Some Reminders...

Join Our Listserv!

Want to keep up with the Women's Center on a weekly basis? Then join the U-WOMEN Listserv, a weekly updated e-mail featuring Women's Center events, on and off campus events, announcements and national/international news. For information on how to subscribe, email j06374@yahoo.com.

Check Out Our New Website

Be sure to visit our newly updated website at www.womenscenter.uconn.edu. You can find out about all our events for the spring 2002 semester, learn about our ongoing groups, get informed on issues such as dating violence and sexual assault and find out what resources we have at our library. You can even find past newsletters on the site.

Ongoing Groups:

Between Women

A rap 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. For more information call the Women's Center or email betweenwomen@hotmail.com.

Sexual Assault Survivor's Group

A support group for women who have experienced actual or attempted sexual assault at any time. Co-sponsored with Mental Health Services. Contact Jen Fox at 486-4705 for information and registration.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

By Courtney Carbone

The purpose of dedicating an entire month to sexual assault awareness is to educate people about the magnitude of the problem of violence against women. We at the Women's Center want people to be aware that sexual assault is an ongoing crisis, although people may not realize just how many women are survivors of sexual assault.

Another goal of Sexual Assault Awareness Month is to aid in the healing process of sexual assault survivors. Here, there is an important distinction to make. Just as people with AIDS are "living with" AIDS, women who have been raped or sexually assaulted are "survivors." Women who have died as a result of sexual assault are considered victims. The word "survivor" emphasizes the strength of women living with the memory of sexual assault.

The events sponsored by the Women's Center this month are designed to both educate and heal. The most important event of the month, which combines both of these goals, is the annual Take Back the Night Rally, March and Coffeehouse. This event allows both women and men an opportunity to speak out against sexual assault as well as an opportunity for survivors to break their silence.

We at the Women's Center encourage everyone to attend April's events to learn more about sexual assault.

For a listing of Sexual Assault Awareness Month events, please see the Calendar on page 2.

Greetings from the editor

As the new editor of *Voices* this year, I hope to continue the tradition of informing the readers and subscribers of this newsletter about important current events and issues as well as programs and events sponsored by the Women's Center. I intend to ensure that this newsletter remains a creative outlet for students, faculty, staff and readers.

I encourage people to contribute articles and suggestions on how to improve the newsletter. With hard work and determination, I know we can make a fantastic newsletter. I hope all readers and subscribers continue to enjoy *Voices!*

VOICES

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VOICES

THE WOMEN'S CENTER...WHERE ALL THE PIECES COME TOGETHER

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