



VOICES



THE WOMEN'S CENTER NEWSLETTER

University of Connecticut

November/December 2003

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REALITY FEMINISM: "ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE" BY: KATHERINE E. LEONARD

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On Monday, October 6, 2003, at 4 pm, I shuffled through heavy doors and into the Class of 1947 Room in the Babbage Library for the lecture "Reality Feminism: Reproductive Rights - What's at Stake?" I expected a heated debate. I expected to know the information. In truth, I expected to be a little bored. What happened, however, was beyond expectation: an eye-opening lesson about the strong women who came before us.

The lecture began with Aly Lanzone, the Reproductive Rights Program Assistant at the Women's Center, giving a brief introduction before starting the film "When Abortion was Illegal: Untold Stories" directed by Dorothy Fadiman and Daniel Meyers.

The film started by discussing that abortion was, in fact, legal up until the mid-1800's - prior to the phase of quickening (when the mother feels movement). The church even condoned abortion as a means to end unwanted pregnancy.

While the right to abortion was rescinded in the 1900's, the need for abortion was not. Women were then forced to resort to alternative methods of abortion, such as: inserting slippery elm bark into the uterus, vaginally inserting or orally consuming household poisons, such as bleach, and "coat hangering", where a wire coat hanger is vaginally inserted to puncture the womb in order to miscarry. Each method is horribly painful and can result in a massive loss of blood. Many women died as a result of these alternative procedures because they were forced to do them on their own since the government made abortion illegal. This included abortions that were medically necessary for the health of the mother.

The video contained the testimonies of elderly women, wrinkled with age, admitting the far lengths they had gone to obtain an abortion, as tears streamed down their face.

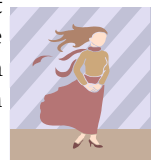
The eye-opening end of the film was followed by a presentation from Shanta Evans, a representative from Planned Parenthood of Connecticut. Evans spoke of the Mexico City Policy, (also known as the Global Gag Rule), which refuses foreign countries funds from US family planning, such as: funds of their own, abortion services, and information or counseling options. (This policy was discontinued by Clinton, in order to help other countries manage reproductive health, however, reinstated by G.W. Bush on his first day in office.)

Evans also spoke of the Hyde Amendment, which bans the use of federal Medicaid dollars for abortion in 28 states, including the District of Columbia, and limited public funding to cases of rape, incest and life endangerment.

The lecture ended on a inspiring note by Aurora Hannigan, secretary of CT NOW UConn chapter, with a message of activism, "One person can make a difference!"

In light of the recently passed Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003, named by conservatives and signed by Bush on November 5, 2003 - this lesson of the need for the rights guaranteed under Roe v. Wade is vital now more than ever.

So go call your congressperson. Write a letter. Shout at the top of your lungs! Do something!!! And know that yes, one person can make a difference.





SOME EVENTS IN NOVEMBER & DECEMBER



November

19th Reality Feminism- Waking up to Privilege Systems

Hugh Vasquez, Co-director of the Center for Diversity Leadership in Berkley, CA and Peggy McIntosh, Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, will look at several intersecting oppressions through the theoretical lens of privilege systems. They will discuss the developmental processes by which each of them came to understand that they benefited from unearned advantage in ways that they had been taught not to notice. They will look at the question of what keeps privilege so invisible to those whom it benefits. All members of the audience in this interactive session will be invited to analyze some of their own experiences of having unearned disadvantage and advantage, and to survey privilege as it impacts many aspects of social life and educational institutions. The aim is in part to empower people to use unearned advantage consciously in the service of their own ideals and values, both in the workplace and beyond.

Wednesday, 4 pm, Konover Auditorium, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center.

20th Thursday Night at the Movies - *The Hours*

The Hours is the story of three women searching for more potent, meaningful lives. Each is alive at a different time and place; all are linked by their yearnings and fears. Their stories intertwine, and finally come together in a surprising, transcendent moment of shared recognition. Discussion immediately following.

Thursday, 6 pm, Women's Center Lounge

December

3rd Month of Kindness Closing

Details to be announced. Check our calendar on our website at www.womenscenter.uconn.edu for updates.

4th Stress Down Day

Stress down before finals begin with free massage, Reiki, reflexology, aromatherapy and more!

Co-sponsored with the Health Education, Office of Special Programs.

Thursday, 11 am - 2 pm, South Campus

For a complete listing of Women's Center sponsored events, visit our website at www.womenscenter.uconn.edu.

Habitat for Humanity is having a coffeehouse at Husky Bean Café on December 5th from 6 - 9 pm. All our welcome to attend. Suggested donation is \$3. Interested in performing? Contact Lisa Goodwin at Lisa.Goodwin@uconn.edu.

*"It is better to light a candle than
curse the darkness."*

Eleanor Anna Roosevelt

December 10 is **International Human Rights Day**. It marks the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the cornerstone document of the modern human rights movement. The labor movement is mobilizing for a nationwide day of action and protest on December 10 to raise public awareness about the seriousness and extent of this problem. The AFL-CIO is looking for faculty members and students to organize pre-International Human Rights Day teach-ins at campuses around the country. For more information, contact Sarah McKenzie by phone (202) 639-6289 or email: Smckenzi@aflcio.org. Also check out the website: <http://www.aflcio.org/aboutaflcio/ecouncil/ec08052003h.cfm>

Announcements at UConn and Around the World
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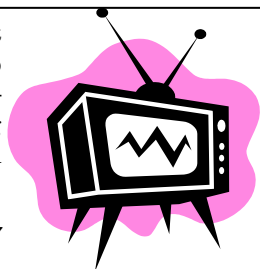


Feeling alone in a new country? Have language/cultural differences? Want to make new friends? Want to learn about American culture? Learn how to save money? Need to know about daycare/other issues regarding your children? Then come to the **International Women's Group** on Thursdays from 2 - 4 pm in the International Programs & Services Office (Alsop building). For further information, please contact Deborah Rea at DeborahRea@snet.net

ONE NATION – MULTIPLE REALITIES

ONGOING GROUPS AT THE WOMEN'S CENTER

What is bigotry? What can we do about racist behavior? What is considered racist behavior? How do we reach people to open their eyes and see **One Nation – Multiple Realities**? Sponsored by the Programming Committee of the Women's Center Advisory Board and the Women Studies program.



All showings are at 6:30pm in the Class of 1947 Room – Homer Babbidge Library.

11/04 *Essential Blue Eyed*

Jane Elliott conducts a workshop where an arbitrarily selected group of individuals is targeted to experience prejudice and bigotry. Based on the blue eyed-brown eyed exercise.

11/06 *Race - The Power of an Illusion: Episode 1 – The Difference Between Us*

The Difference Between Us examines the contemporary science - including genetics - that challenges our common sense assumptions that human beings can be bundled into three or four fundamentally different groups according to their physical traits.

11/11 *Race- The Power of an Illusion- Episode 2- The Story We Tell*

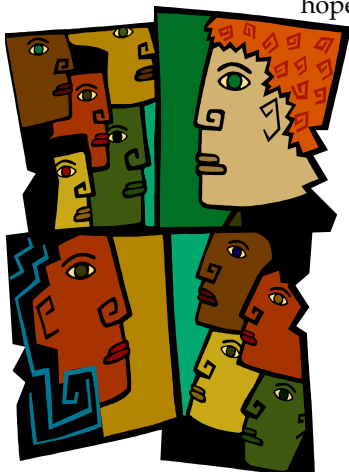
The Story We Tell uncovers the roots of the race concept in North America, the 19th century science that legitimated it, and how it came to be held so fiercely in the western imagination. The episode is an eye-opening tale of how race served to rationalize, even justify, American social inequalities as "natural."

11/13 *Race - The Power of an Illusion - Episode 3 - The House We Live In*

The House We Live In asks, "If race is not biology, what is it?" This episode uncovers how a race resides not in nature but in politics, economics and culture. It reveals how our social institutions "make" race by disproportionately channeling resources, power, status and wealth to white people.

11/18 *The Color of Fear: Part 1*

The Color of Fear is an insightful, groundbreaking film about the state of race relations in America as seen through the eyes of eight North American men of Asian, European, Latino and African descent. In a series of intelligent, emotional and dramatic confrontations the men reveal the pain and scars that racism has caused them. What emerges is a deeper sense of understanding and trust. This is the dialogue most of us fear, but hope will happen sometime in our lifetime.



12/02 *The Color of Fear : Part 2- Walking Each Other Home*

This sequel to *The Color of Fear* is about the remaining 23 hours that occurred on that incredible three-day weekend in Ukiah, California. *Walking Each Other Home* explores in greater depth the intimate relationship that the eight men had with each other. In this new sequel, the European American men have added opportunities to express how they felt when the men of color were angry, why they were afraid, and what they discovered about themselves and each other as men of European descent.

Grad Women's Group

An ongoing, peer-led group that is intended to provide support, focus, ideas and problem-solving strategies for female graduate students at various stages in the process, as well as build a sense of community among participants. This support group meets on the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month, to offer objective reactions and fresh perspectives from a group of like-minded people, as well as a place to unwind and network with other students in a variety of disciplines. The next meeting will be held on November 17 at 4pm.

Women's Book Club

Got books? The Women's Book Club is looking for new members. Come and explore the world through the eyes and words of women. Visit the "Groups" section of our website at: www.womenscenter.uconn.edu for dates and selections.

The South Asian Tree (TSAT)

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka. Do you identify with one of these countries either through self or family? If so, come join in on dialogues 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, call Bidya Ranjeet at (860) 486-4040.

Between Women

A rap group for women who love women... or think they might! For more information call the Women's Center at (860) 486-4738 or email betweenwomen@hotmail.com. Wednesdays at 7 pm.



NATIONAL SURVEY ON WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY:
THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES (CROWD),
ARTICLE COMPILED BY: KATHERINE E. LEONARD



I always felt like a neutral sex. It's like I'm not a woman, not a man. I don't know what I am because I was never approached like a woman and I guess that as I grow older and mature more, I have begun to proclaim that identity as a woman and thinking even if no man approached me, I am still a woman, I am still attractive.

36-year-old polio survivor with scoliosis.

Through a national study conducted through the Center for Research on Women with Disabilities (CROWD), women with and without disabilities were interviewed to examine the "Psychosocial Behaviors of Women with Physical Disabilities." Through this research, certain themes were identified, falling into six basic domains: 1) sense of self, 2) relationship issues, 3) information about sexuality, 4) sexual functioning, 5) abuse, and 6) general and reproductive health. With the assistance of national and local advisors, including consumers, researchers, medical professionals, social workers, and educators - the research team developed a questionnaire that represented all the primary themes from the qualitative study and issues raised in the literature.

The study identified 1,150 women with physical disabilities around the country who volunteered to participate in the study or who were recruited through independent living centers in each federal region. Two copies of this questionnaire were sent to each participant; one for her to complete and one for her to give to an able-bodied female friend to complete. Responses were received from 45% of this sample, a total of 946 women, 504 of whom had physical disabilities and 442 who did not have disabilities.

Five major findings were apparent through this research:

1. Women with disabilities have limited opportunities to establish romantic relationships.

Compared to women without disabilities, women with disabilities were less satisfied with how often they date and perceived more constraints on attracting dating partners.

Even when women with disabilities were outgoing with strong social skills and many friends, their friendships were less likely to evolve into romantic relationships than for able-bodied women.

The large majority (87%) of the women with disabilities had had at least one serious romantic relationship or marriage. Fifty-two percent were involved in a serious relationship at the time of the study versus 64% of the women without disabilities.

Among the women with disabilities who were not married or in a serious relationship at the time of the study, 42% said it was because no one had asked them. Only 27% of women without disabilities listed that as a reason for not being in a relationship.

2. Self-esteem in women with physical disabilities is more strongly influenced by social and environmental factors than by the fact of having a disability.

More than three-quarters of the women with disabilities had high self-esteem and a positive body image. Whether the woman had a severe disability or a mild disability, incurred disability earlier or later in life, or had ever been in special education didn't make much difference in self-esteem.

3. Abuse is a very serious problem for women with disabilities. They have even fewer options for escaping or resolving the abuse than women in general.

The same percentage (62%) of women with and without disabilities had experienced emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, but women with disabilities experienced abuse for longer periods of time.

In addition to the types of

abuse experienced by all women, women with disabilities were sometimes abused by withholding needed orthotic equipment (wheelchairs, braces), medications, transportation, or essential assistance with personal tasks, such as dressing or getting out of bed. Women with disabilities face serious barriers to accessing existing programs to help women remove violence from their lives.

4. Women with physical disabilities have as much sexual desire as women in general; however, they do not have as much opportunity for sexual activity.

Ninety-four percent of the women with disabilities had had sexual activity with a partner in their lifetime. Forty-nine percent were sexually active at the time of the study, compared to 61% of women without disabilities.

Forty-one percent of the women with disabilities believed that they did not have adequate information about how their disability affects their sexual functioning.

Women with disabilities reported significantly lower levels of sexual activity, sexual response, and satisfaction with their sex lives.

Level of sexual activity was not significantly related to severity of disability.

5. Women with physical disabilities encounter serious barriers to receiving general and reproductive health care.

Thirty-one percent of the women with physical disabilities who participated in this study were refused care by a physician because of their disability.

Women with physical disabilities reported considerable difficulty locating physicians who were knowledgeable about their disability to help them manage their pregnancy.

For more information:
http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/crowd/national_study/national_study.html

Our Mission

The mission of the Women's Center is to advocate, educate, and provide services for the achievement of women's equity at the University and within the community at large. Special attention is focused on women who face additional challenges due to their race, nationality, class, sexual identity, religion, age and physical or mental ability.



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Some Reminders...

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Join Our Listserv!

Want to keep up with the Women's Center on a weekly basis? Then join the U-Women's Listserv, a weekly updated email featuring Women's Center events, on and off campus events, announcements and local, national, and international news. For information on how to subscribe, please call (860) 486-4738.

Check Out Our Website:

Be sure to visit our regularly updated website at: www.womenscenter.uconn.edu. You can find a complete list of events for the semester, learn about all of our ongoing groups, and get informed on issues such as dating violence and sexual assault. You can also find out what kind of resources we keep in our library. Past newsletters are also posted.



Greetings from the Editor:

Hello Readers,

Welcome to another addition of VOICES. I hope that in reading the November issue, we have given you a few final events to participate in before the semester ends.

VOICES isn't just about the events though, its about raising your level of awareness in the world around you. "You must learn to be still in the midst of activity, and to be vibrantly alive in response." -Indira Ghandi. It is my wish to leave you with enough questions in your mind to go explore the answers.

Until next time, have a safe and wonderful break. Capture the world, make it your own and never forget to pay it forward.

-Kate





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VOICES

WHERE ALL THE PIECES COME TOGETHER

