



The Clothesline Project

Jessica Morneault with Caitlin Torino,
VAWPP

This semester's Clothesline Project, held the week of October 9th through the 13th, provided a means for both women and men to express their concerns around violence against women. It was difficult to walk by the Clothesline and not be affected by what was displayed. T-shirts were shown expressing the pain, anger, hope, and love of women and men who have been touched by some type of violence.

Volunteers came together to staff the table inside the Student Union and outside the Union on Fairfield Way; making the Clothesline visible to a mass of students throughout the campus. Because of the location of the project, many more students were able to view the t-shirts and learn about the project.

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Kaelah Gaskins (top), daughter of Women's Center Alum Shanté Powers, & Gabrielle and Kelly Fluckeiger (bottom), daughters of Kathy Fischer, Associate Director of the Women's Center at Cultural Explosion October 7th.

Voices Across Campus: *talking about feminism*

Tess Bird, newsletter editor

In the last issue of *Voices*, I introduced my objectives: to spend a good amount of time looking at feminism on the UConn, Storrs campus as far as what is being said and what else can be done to promote discussion and dialog about feminism. In the end my only answer to the latter is the very idea I began with: *talking about feminism*.

This is a collection of a wide range of voices. I sought out feminists from various levels in the University: professors, graduate students, Women's Studies majors, and staff at the Women's Center. I then went around to the cultural centers, asking whoever was available a few questions regarding feminism on campus. This provided me with a range of student voices and opinions that are mixed in with the opinions of other random students I interviewed around campus. I chose what I thought was the most interesting and diverse of the many comments I collected for this newsletter.

The following are the opinions of individuals, and are not necessarily reflective of my own opinions or those of the Women's Center. Students are anonymous, but I asked them for their semester and any other way they might want to identify themselves.

(Continued on pages 4 & 5)

Why Should Women Vote? Tess Bird with Kathy Fischer

Ads for *Women's Voices*, *Women Vote* remind us that politicians don't walk in our shoes. It's true, they don't. Each one of us has different experiences and distinct political needs we may not even be aware of. There are significant rights that are at stake and many women's priorities are not being represented. This is why we, as women, need to get out and vote so our voices are heard in the November 7th midterm election.

There are a number of reasons why women don't vote, including, but not limited to, the feeling that it won't make a difference (but it will! The last presidential election was decided by only 537 votes!) and feeling that they lack enough information about the issues to vote. Some helpful, non-partisan resources for candidate information are Smart Voter, produced by the League of Women Voters (www.smartvoter.org) and Project Vote Smart (www.vote-smart.org).

For reasons why women should vote, please read page 2...

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Here are three basic reasons why women should vote:



www.feministcampus.org/vote/

ONE: Our Reproductive Rights Are At Stake!

Roe v. Wade, which guarantees our access to a safe and legal abortion, is in danger of being overturned by the Supreme Court. The *National Women's Law Center* and *Women's Voices. Women Vote* remind us that "If Roe v. Wade is overturned, individual states could pass outright bans on abortion and the laws could be upheld by the courts. South Dakota already has passed a law prohibiting abortion even in cases of rape and incest. Another 12 states recently considered similar bans. Congress also could pass a nationwide ban."

Not just our right to a safe and legal abortion is in jeopardy. Birth control is also under attack.

"Some members of congress are pushing to limit access to family planning services, particularly for low income women. Family planning programs are underfunded, yet close to \$1 billion has been spent by the federal government since 1996 on programs that teach only about abstinence until marriage despite proof that they are not effective" (*National Women's Law Center* and *Women's Voices. Women Vote*).



Go to www.vwv.org and click the button to hear stories from actresses about their "first time" voting

TWO: What About Getting A Good Education?

Women are finally making great strides in their college educations, but without Title IX and federal funding it will become more and more difficult for women to get a college education equal to that of men.

The Feminist Majority Foundation notes that "critical civil rights issues are at stake. Federal lawmakers will decide to weaken or strengthen Title IX, the historic U.S. law that prohibits discrimination in federally funded educational programs. Affirmative action programs for women and people of color in employment and education are under attack in some states and at the federal level."

THREE: Working Women's Needs Are Not Being Addressed

Once women finish the education they can get and afford, they face discrimination and difficulties in the workforce. Women earn an average of 77 cents to every dollar earned by men, which is even lower for women of color (*National Women's Law Center* and *Women's Voices. Women Vote*).

Mothers lack the support they need for success:

"Nearly half (49%) of working mothers report that they do not get paid when they miss work to care for a sick child... Good childcare is often unavailable or unaffordable. The average cost of full-time care for one child in a center is \$3,000 to \$13,000 a year, depending on where you live and the age of the child" (*National Women's Law Center* and *Women's Voices. Women Vote*).

What about student loans and college costs?

"Congress passed a law that will cut federal student loan programs by \$12.7 billion over 5 years, Pell Grants are paying for a smaller and smaller share of college costs, and the President's budget proposes additional education cuts of 29% for next year" (*National Women's Law Center* and *Women's Voices. Women Vote*).

Without efforts like Title IX and affirmative action, these cuts are more likely to affect women!

"A college education is important to help women move into higher-paying fields and close the wage gap, but the Bush Administration is trying to cut programs that help women succeed in math and science" (*National Women's Law Center* and *Women's Voices. Women Vote*).

(continued from page 1)

The Clothesline Project



Over 50 t-shirts were made within the week the project was displayed, all of which contributed different and powerful messages. A board was created for both women and men to write quick notes on paper t-shirts to show their support of the Clothesline. Some of those who viewed the display gave feedback by sharing their emotional connection and gratitude to the project through their words or actions. Regardless of whether or not individuals made t-shirts, wrote a note of support, or silently observed the project, it can easily be said that a large emotional impact was felt by all.



The purpose of the project was not necessarily to make people sad or angry, but to raise awareness and let the public know this is not a silent issue. Silence only allows the problem to continue. By giving visual testimony to survivors of violence and their supporters, the Clothesline Project allows just one more way to give power and passion

to the movement to end violence against women. Those of us at VAWPP are greatly appreciative of all of those who showed their support for the project.

NEW!

The WC Theatre Presents...

This year the Women's Center is starting a new program: *The WC Theatre Presents*. During some Friday evenings we will be showing free movies. Come spend a relaxing night in the WC Program Room, eating popcorn and watching a film. Showings begin at 8 pm with discussions to follow.

The next two showings for this semester are as follows:

November 24th: *The Stepford Wives*

Joanna Eberhart (Nicole Kidman) and her husband Walter (Matthew Broderick) begin to suspect there's something wrong with their neighbors after the couple moves to the beautiful suburb of Stepford. All the wives of this little town seem to act, well, robotic.

December 1st: *Memoirs of a Geisha*

Based on Arthur Golden's novel and set in 1929, we follow Chiyo, who is sold to a geisha house as a child. After enduring harsh treatment from a rival geisha, Hatsumomo, she is rescued by another house mistress. She blooms in her role as a geisha, but with WWII looming, her privileged life may change forever.



We were privileged to have the opportunity to meet with Hu Shengxin, Chairman of the Board of Trustees from the Women's Academy at Shandong, China (Center). To her right is Dr. Eliana Rojas, Assistant Professor in Residence at the Neag School of Education and Women's Center Director, Kathleen Holgerson (far right),



Voices Across Campus: *talking* about feminism—Tess Bird, *newsletter editor*—(Continued from page 1)**WHAT'S BEING SAID? *Experiences with feminism on the UConn, Storrs campus:*****Teachers on Feminism:**

♀ “I can’t ask everybody in the class to entertain the idea of becoming a feminist... there are plenty of people who don’t want to take on the responsibility.” *Woman, professor & instructor of Women’s Studies, feminist parent.* She also expressed that she enjoys teaching introductory Women’s Studies because there are thirty-seven different majors, and therefore a lot of diversity in educational backgrounds. “Women’s Studies is integrated,” she said. “It has many perspectives.”

♀ “I hate to lose the power of the grass roots. When a movement becomes institutionalized, it becomes subject to all these other controls... But it also gives it validity.” *Barb Gurr, currently a graduate student in Sociology, former Director of Southern CT S.U.’s Women’s Studies program and former Assistant Director of UConn WS.* She appreciates the grassroots elements of the Women’s Center and Women’s Studies, and thinks they are more active than a lot of other campuses.

♀ “Feminism is so diverse that I hate to use such a limiting word.” *Graduate student and Women’s Studies instructor.* Preferring “feminisms” she thinks we need to “detoxify the word,” especially in introductory Women’s Studies courses. She asks, “How do you get people involved while dealing with that label?”

♀ *Nancy Naples, Interim Co-director of the Women’s Studies program,* thinks that WS is a strong program, particularly because of the availability of faculty to students and the opportunity for further involvement. However, she would like to see more attention paid to gender and science and gender and law.

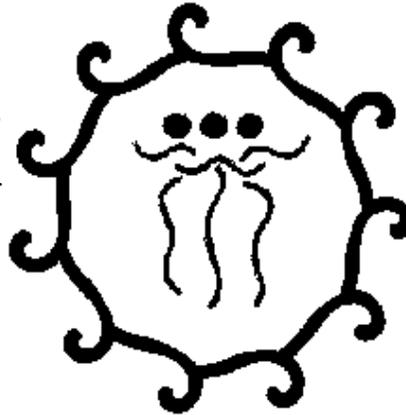
Students on Feminism:

♀ A *first year female* student noted that in high school, the roles of men and women didn’t seem as defined, but in college, you are more on your own, and the differences are highlighted.

♀ A *sophomore in her first semester at UConn and part of the Women’s Center staff* noted that there’s a “college-party mentality that’s questionable.” It objectifies women. But, she also noted, this is common on most campuses, particularly ones with a large athletics focus.

♀ “There are nuances in gender and nuances in gender identity” that affect feminism. “I want equality for women, I don’t want special treatment.” She was glad when men were allowed to march in Take Back the Night. She marched with her younger brother. *7th semester*

♀ “There’s a stigma that if a woman is sexually active and has multiple sexual partners, she gets called a whore or a slut or negative things like that.” *3rd semester, male, bisexual, Asian American.* Later, he noted, “There’s a stigma forming towards heterosexual men... Men have to be strongly into sports... competitive... emotionally detached, but if they’re the opposite, they’re considered less than men.”



♀ “There’s an overall general disrespect that women receive, especially on T.V., movies, the media... but they’ve gone too far with the [door holding issue]... Chivalry’s killed...” He thinks that this needs to come back so that men can learn how to respect women. *8th semester, Christian, white, male who grew up in a Jamaican neighborhood.*

♀ “You can be feminine and a feminist at the same time. They are not mutually exclusive.” *Junior.*

♀ “Feminism is what makes a woman a woman... A feminist is different. A feminist is someone who goes out of their way to defend female rights and who works towards female equality.” *First semester, female*

♀ “Back home in my culture [Puerto Rico] there’s a big issue with machismo, so I don’t see it the same way here.” *9th semester, Puerto Rican male.* He’s heard that feminism here is more active whereas Puerto Rico doesn’t emphasize it as a movement. In Puerto Rico, he says, “women try to find their place.”

WHAT CAN BE DONE? *Issues regarding feminism, including issues of race/gender/sexuality/class/age, that need to be addressed at UConn:*

♀ “UConn isn’t as diverse as other places. There needs to be more diversity, not only with students but with staff... I’m a minority in the school of business and there’s not really a higher person to represent me.” *7th semester, Women’s Center*

♀ “It’s very hard for women to get tenure for many reasons... When I was doing my post-doctorate, they wouldn’t let me leave to get my children.” *Professor & WS124 instructor, feminist parent, woman*



♀ “I’d love to see a LGBT Studies Program... there’s not an [academic] institute for the Rainbow Center like there is for the other cultural centers.” *Margaret Breen, Associate Professor, English and Women’s Studies*

♀ A 5th semester volunteer at the Women’s Center thinks it is important to fight misconceptions and stereotypes through talking. She says, “sit down and talk to people and listen to others; take the time to talk.”

♀ A sophomore, male student is taking a course on racism and thinks that we need to address the issue of making generalizations about people based on their physical appearance, and also, self-stereotyping.

♀ A sophomore, female student believes that not all people are equal because they have different experiences and thus understanding is the most important thing. “People tend to be very opinionated and just need to be open about other ways of life.”

♀ “We’re on the right track. I think, however, not through a fault of [the cultural centers], we need to up the fervor... people aren’t listening... We need to push putting a familiar face on these problems.” *7th semester*

♀ “There are fraternities and sororities that are racially oriented and the cultural centers, but to an extent, I think this is segregation.” *3rd semester, male, bisexual, Asian American*

♀ “We need to realize how diverse we are and how diverse we are not... [UConn] needs to reach out to a more diverse population.” *Junior*

♀ “We need to address that there *is* an issue [surrounding diversity and discrimination]... there’s a false sense of security between people... They hear it, but maybe more concrete examples are needed for people to understand.” *Fifth semester, staff member at the Rainbow Center*

♀ “This campus needs to be more open to culture. Teachers don’t know how to react [if you’re different].” *Senior, female, from Puerto Rico.*

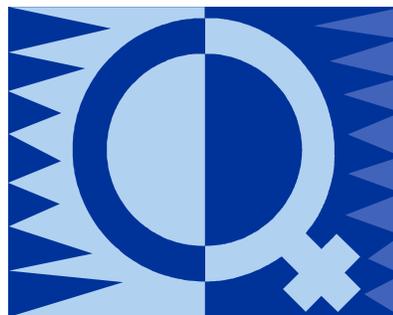
♀ “People won’t change their minds. For our time, we can only try to tell people the facts.” *9th semester, male, Puerto Rican.*

Conclusion: Ideas in the making

Within these extensive interviews there emerged, for me, an important issue in talking about feminism that is not adequately addressed in my collection of quotes: how do you teach people about feminism in an educational atmosphere that is, in many ways, full of resistance? Particularly because of a widespread resistance to the *word* feminism, one graduate Women’s Studies instructor noted that students also resist a complex way of thinking about issues like feminism because they want to take sides, claiming that you are either a feminist or you’re not. This sets up an *us-and-them* atmosphere that is not realistic. Critical thought processes about issues like feminism are not often encouraged in the public education of America’s youth. We learn to regurgitate what the teacher tells us for the exam, or how to take one side to write an *effective*, persuasive essay, neither of which encourage breaking down normative ideas or looking at all sides of a situation. Several instructors of WS 124: *Gender in a Global Perspective*, a popular course that fulfills a general education requirement, noted their frustration with the educational atmosphere. How can you teach feminism, and label it *feminism*, without first breaking down the resistance to critical thinking encouraged by years of public education? Of course, addressing the core of education is a very extensive issue all on its own. I only want to note the possibility that the educational *atmosphere* for addressing *feminism* is problematic.

Overall, the interviewing process for this collection of voices proved to be very stimulating. Not only did I enjoy listening to what people had to say, but countless interviews stretched on as people opened up a whole world of ideas. As one woman said, no one ever asks you what you think, and when they do, you realize you have a lot to say. I feel accomplished simply by allowing these women and men to have individual voices.

As for spreading the word about feminism on our campus... several times interviewees said "I never thought about this till you asked." Beyond the commonly expressed ideas of upping collaboration between and visibility of the Cultural Centers, we need to *talk* about feminism. Having conversions, asking questions, and promoting a dialog about feminism across campus is the first step... If we are talking about it, more people are thinking about it.





In Our Library...

November brings to mind final harvest feasts of thanks and perhaps even thoughts of pilgrims, but we can often overlook that Native Americans had a major role to play in the history of our country, before and after the arrival of Europeans. In honor of their history and our history, November is National Native American Heritage Month. The 2006 National Theme is "One People, A Diversity of Culture." Our library has many books that address Native American heritage, including:

The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the feminine in American Indian Traditions, By Paula Gunn Allen

Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History, Edited by Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois

Native American Women: a contextual bibliography, By Rayna Green

The Health Status of Women of Color, By Wilhelmina Leigh

Wisdomkeepers: Meetings with Native American Spiritual Elders, By Steve Wall and Harvey Arden

American Women Artists: From Early Indian Times to the Present, By Charlotte Streifer Rubinstein

Jaguar Woman and the Wisdom of the Butterfly Tree, By Lynn V. Andrews

Grandmothers of the Light: A Medicine Woman's Sourcebook, By Paula Gunn Allen

Lakota Woman, By Mary Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes

The following are novels written by and about Native American Women:

Tracks, By Louise Erdrich

Last Standing Woman, By Winona LaDuke

The Woman Who Owned the Shadows, By Paula Gunn Allen

The Jailing of Cecilia Capture, By Janet Campbell Hale

Please stop by the Women's Center
and visit our library!



EXPERIENCING FEMINISM

Chandra Waring

Describing my experiences with feminism is interesting. I didn't think I had any. I can start off by saying that I was raised by a strong, opinionated mother and she always made me and my sister feel like we are powerful women. I've always believed women are capable of doing anything men can do. As an intern at the Women's Center, I've come to define feminism as the empowerment of women, which is necessary for us to achieve equality because we have internalized, to a certain degree, our own oppression. Therefore, in order for us to break free from the oppression, we need tools in the form of empowerment, confidence and support.

With that said, I have always been a feminist, I simply never used the word feminist to describe myself. Why? The word feminist has a negative connotation. It is an emotion-packed word. To be honest, before coming to the Women's Center, I pictured extremes such as women burning bras near the White House, whenever I heard the word feminist. However, I now understand that the term feminist means different things for different people and even different women. For example, a disabled lesbian in the United States will have a drastically different life experience than an impoverished woman in a small Senegalese village. They might have different definitions of feminism, but each are still striving to achieve their own empowerment and freedom/equality.

What I now know for sure is that I am one, I am a feminist.



Chandra Waring is a 7th semester Sociology major. She is currently researching women's reproductive rights as part of her internship for the Women's Center. When I asked Chandra if she was a feminist she replied: "Definitely. All day, every day."



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Group Offerings and Calendar of Events, November/December 2006

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



GROUP OFFERINGS

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, November 14

♀ Tuesday, December 12

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. There is a new meeting day and time for the Fall 2006 semester. The group will meet *every Monday at 8:30 pm in the Women's Center.* For more information on weekly discussion topics visit our website or 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, please 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.

NOVEMBER

11th Reiki II—Saturday, 10 am - 5 pm, Women's Center
Course Fee: \$150 /\$100 for UConn Students & Staff and payable to Dawna Martin. The fee includes all materials, the Reiki Level Two Attunement, breakfast, snacks, tea, & juice. Please bring lunch and your Reiki 1 Manual or tell us if you do not have one. To register, contact Dawna Martin at Dawna@thewellspringcenter.net or 860/822-0880.
Registration Deadline: Monday, November 6th - 5 pm

13th Celebrate Women Brown Bag Lunch Series—
Update on Antidepressant Drug Therapy with Andrew Winokur, M.D., Assistant Professor of Psychiatry—
 Monday, 12 to 1 pm, CUE 320
 Dr. Winokur will discuss clinical features of depression that suggest the use of medication therapy. For more information, please visit www.celebrate.uchc.edu/webcast/

16th Artist Talk by Christa Donner—Thursday, 3:30 pm in room 106 of the Art building, 830 Bolton Road.
 Chicago area artist and educator, Christa Donner, will speak about her work which deals with women's body image as subject matter.

16th Thursday Night at the Movies – *The Education of Shelby Knox*—Thursday, 7 pm, Women's Center
The Education of Shelby Knox is a coming of age story about a teenage girl who joins a campaign for comprehensive sex education in the high schools of Lubbock, Texas.

DECEMBER

7th Stress Down Day—Thursday, 11 am – 2 pm, Towers
 Stress down before finals begin with activities, free massage, Yoga, healthy snacks, aromatherapy and more!

11th Celebrate Women Brown Bag Lunch Series -
PAP Smears, HPV, and the New Vaccine with Ursula Steadman, M.D., Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology—Monday, 12 to 1 pm, CUE 320
 Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is the cause of almost all cases of cervical cancer. We will discuss what a PAP smear is, why it is done, its relationship to HPV, and the new HPV vaccine recommendations. For more info, please visit www.celebrate.uchc.edu/webcast/

