

# VOICES

THE FALL EDITION



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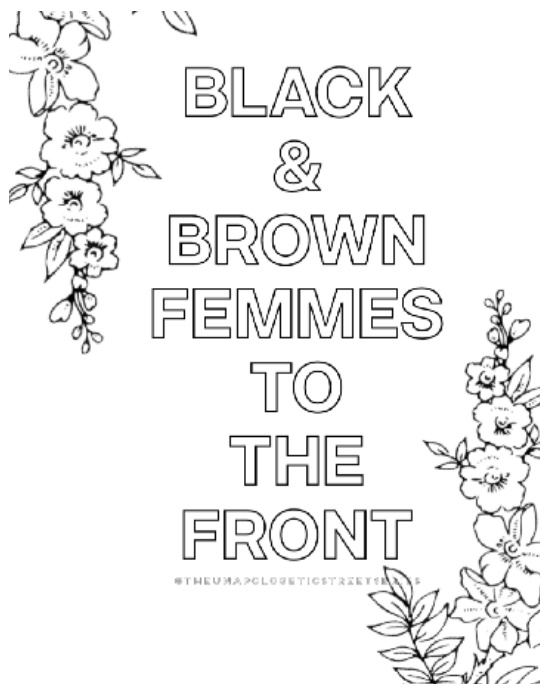
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# Letter from the Editor

After a certain point, there are only so many ways to express continuous shock. “Unprecedented times” comes to mind. Or “uncertain times.” “Trying circumstances.” In short, it hasn’t been easy to live out this year. It’s not easy to reflect on it right now.

This is my senior year. I’m living at home, separated from my friends and classes and work. I spend most of my day at a desk, staring at a screen. I’ve been here since March; I’ve watched it go from late to early winter here, and I still have a hard time believing that so much time has passed. So much has happened—the vandalism of the Spirit Rock on campus, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris’ historic election, the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and her swift replacement. These last events especially have made me reflect. While it is important to celebrate a sign of changes to come and mourn the loss of a great feminist, it is equally, if not more necessary to commit ourselves to analyzing such things through a critical lens. We must complicate the legacies and present events making up our world to examine our feminism, our antiracism, our intersectionality, and make it better.

I say this even as the world is undoubtedly sufficiently complicated—everything has changed even as the same struggles continue. Outcries against racism and police brutality, a flawed, racist and elitist healthcare system, gender inequality and gender-based violence are only some of the issues that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought into the mainstream. It is time for radical change like never before. The work cannot stop now; we must take care of ourselves and each other as we continue. This is something I think the Women’s Center is excellent at, which is just one of the many reasons I’m so grateful to be working here in this current historical moment.



*(Image courtesy of @theunapologeticstreetseries)*

My relationship with feminism hasn’t always been easy. Growing up, the strong women around me didn’t display their strength in the ways I’d been taught by others to value, and my limited understanding of feminism tested what I considered to be truly ‘feminist.’ It wasn’t until I entered college that I learned about intersectional feminism, which recognizes and values the lived experiences of different kinds of women based on the relationships between their various social identities. This completely changed my understanding of feminism, and myself through it. I became obsessed with learning more and doing more—which, thankfully, led me to the Women’s Center.

Even as we’re all separated from one another in isolation, the Center remains a community. I have been pushed to grow in ways that I hadn’t thought possible. Making connections and supporting everyone’s work in this virtual environment have made me into a more thoughtful, active, and appreciative writer and feminist. I am continually amazed and inspired by my fellow students and professional staff members as they’ve continued to do wonderful work for women at UConn, even in the midst of all this chaos.

I have always loved writing, and having the opportunity to write in this wonderfully feminist space about our collective empowerment is such an honor. This edition stands as a testament to the Center’s resilience, a commemoration of where we have been, and, hopefully, a guide for how we can move forward together.

For our cover page, I asked staffers to send in pictures of favorite sites, things, places, or people that had made them happy during isolation—hence the pictures of sunsets, hikes, pets, food, etc. I hope the things that have brought us joy also make you smile.

—Daniella Angulo

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*In recognizing the loss of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, we would like to share a poem from one of our student staffers. Affectionately known as the “Notorious R.B.G.,” Ginsburg had stood for many as a champion of women’s rights and a strong liberally-minded voice on the Supreme Court. At the time of her death, Ginsburg was a feminist cultural icon. It is thanks to her efforts that women are guaranteed equal protection under the law; without her pioneering work, the modern workplace and the status of women’s rights would look entirely different.*

*Although R.B.G’s passing was unrelated to COVID-19, it also accentuated just how fragile life has become and pushed back against the idea of returning to ‘normal.’ Even in spite of her [shortcomings](#), she meant so much to so many; with her passing comes even more uncertainty about what comes next. In the aftermath, we can and must build from the change she began. To do more, and to do better.*

“RBG”

We knew the news was coming.  
We knew all life comes to an end  
But should one life ending cost us our rights?

Why did one person hold all the power?  
To protect us?  
To save us?

What power do we have?  
What power does one person have?  
When we fear the worst

We loved her, admired her, cherished her.  
However her very passing reminds us that  
Our rights are on a cliff.

We miss her  
We miss her protection and power.  
We are afraid

We are not alone.  
We have a piece of her all in us  
We can be the future.

—Brielle Berkowitz

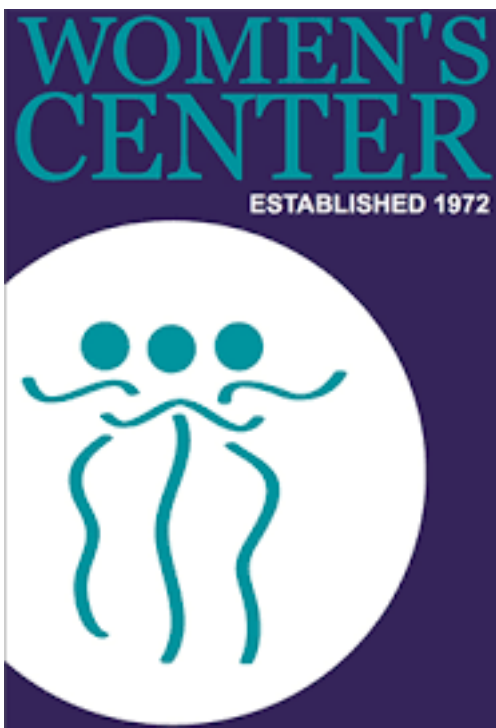


(Image courtesy of The New York Times)

# Letter from the Director

When I wrote my last letter in May, I had no idea how much the world would continue to shift and erupt in the six months that would follow. In addition to COVID, the nation began a much more public reckoning with anti-Black racism; wildfires spread through the Western states; and we experienced one of the most divisive elections certainly in my lifetime. To be honest, I've struggled with writing this article for a few weeks. Partially because it's been difficult to find a chunk of time to write and reflect, and partially because I didn't feel as if I had anything to share.

I write this as I am listening to a panel of women student leaders organized by our Programming Committee. I wish you could hear the amazing conversation. These women offered insights on creating supportive communities, using your voice, how race intersects with gender to inform the leadership experience, and a call for addressing the racism embedded in our organizations and institutions. The energy that was generated among them from the conversation was a much needed breath of fresh air (metaphor intended...)



This comes days after we learned that Kamala Harris is the Vice President Elect. I remember the first I heard of her. A few years ago, students at the Center organized a Women's Herstory Month Photo Gallery the goal of which was to share the stories of notable women from Herstory who have made strides in achieving equality or otherwise committed their life work to social justice issues that deserve recognition. They then had students from the cultural centers dress as the women-identified persons from Herstory to not only tell a story of accomplishments from the past, but to acknowledge the potential that our students have in their own activism and passions. One of those pictures was a student representing Kamala Harris. I had no idea then that five years later we would be recognizing her as the first Black, first South Asian, and first woman Vice President.

The women on tonight's panel are current leaders at UConn and the future leaders of this nation and beyond. That's the work of the Women's Center... to create these spaces to engage in authentic and challenging conversations that move our campus and our world to be a more welcoming and inclusive community.

—**Kathleen Holgerson**

*Note: As you will see throughout this edition, much of our work is about learning new tools and revisiting how we approach our work given the pandemic and the shift to the virtual world. In light of this, the December edition has been a work in progress since late September and reflects the moment in time when each article was written.*

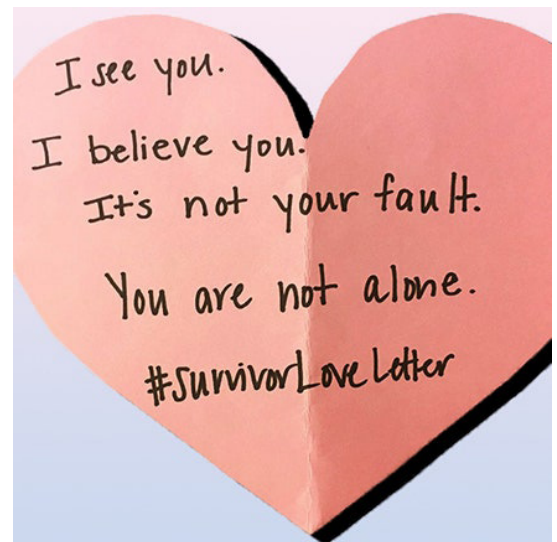
# Letter from the Writing Intern

During my first semester at UConn, I took a women's, gender, and sexuality course and fell into a deep infatuation without realizing it. Coming from a private, Catholic high school, women's, gender, and sexuality studies (WGSS) had everything I didn't know was missing in my education. That first class started to change my perspective and—not to be dramatic—but how I would act in the world. Fast forward two years, and I declare WGSS as my major. This declaration and the Writing Internship Program at UConn has led me here, and I am so thankful to work on this newsletter and find community with our many staffers and fantastic Newsletter Editor, Daniella.

Seeing how much heart each member of this community dedicates to the mission of gender equity, I highly regret not being involved sooner. While being at UConn, there were several times I should have sought support from others but simply didn't. I forewent using any resources because I felt exhausted and believed ignoring anything and everything I was struggling with would be the best strategy for my personal life. Sounds like excellent decision making, right? Being more involved in a campus community, I know my experience is a common one for college students and now have the privilege to work with a small group of the many students who dedicate themselves to bettering the resources we have and the environment we create with each other.

Feelings of isolation and helplessness are exacerbated by multiple factors that will continue to affect each of us differently. While this pandemic has made us all feel precarious, we should never forget that it has been marginalized identities that have and continue to experience higher levels of loss, trauma, and economic hardship. And it is women globally who have faced more severe and higher levels of domestic violence. Although the idyllic photos on university websites might make it seem that college is a place removed from this issue, most students know that isn't true. Because of student activism across colleges and universities, it is hard to ignore how institutions of higher education fit into society as inevitable replicas of longstanding inequalities. At UConn, collectives of students continuously express their grievances with administrative members, cultural centers (including ours), UConn Police Department (UCPD), Student Health and Wellness (SHAW) - Mental Health, and the student body's broader cultures of hostility. These issues and student voices not only motivate us to educate and raise awareness, but also drive us to tangible action.

For anyone reading this newsletter, I hope you find three messages: you deserve to feel supported during this time of stress, media-fatigue, and contention; no one person has the key to bettering our Center and University; and student activism is always powerful. With that, please do not be like me! Get involved with the Women's Center as soon as possible. Join us in discussing what students need right now and how to create a community of acceptance, learning, trust, and solidarity.



(Image courtesy of @aelizabethclark)

—Caitlin Rich

# New Staff Introductions



**LINDSEY CHAPMAN**, Class of 2022

***In-Power Co-Facilitator***

Double major in psychology and sociology; minor in women's, gender, and sexuality studies

“My passion for activism, particularly surrounding support for victim-survivors is what inspired me to want to be a part of the Women's Center staff. As an In-Power co-facilitator, I help run weekly meetings with the wonderful Isabel Alvarez-Diaz in order to provide a space of healing and growth for victim-survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. I am really looking forward to meeting new people in the group and to get the privilege to provide resources to help people in their healing process.”

**COLLEEN COOGAN**, Class of 2022

***VAWPP Facilitator***

Major in psychological sciences

“I am so excited to be apart of the Violence Against Women Prevention Program since it is a cause that I am personally passionate about. To be able to go into First Year Student classes and teach them all about consent and the complexities of gender is an honor. I am so glad I have the ability to make an impact on UConn's community and be a part of the Women's Center. I have known I wanted to be involved at this Center since freshman year, and I am so glad I found a way to do so.”



**PURNA DALAL**, Class of 2022

***WiSTEM Co-Coordinator***

Double major in biology and sociology

“[I will be] planning and organizing the Women in STEM Mentoring Program (WiSTEM) and providing mentors and mentees with different resources to help advance their STEM careers at UConn! Also educat[ing] and promot[ing] women's issues, gender equity and stereotypes, and female representation in STEM fields. I was a member for the past 2 years and wanted to help other [women] who were in the same position as I was as an underrepresented woman of color in certain fields! I'm looking forward to making a community of female empowerment and solidarity with all members of WiSTEM!”



**SAMANTHA DOOLEY**, Class of 2023

***VAWPP Facilitator***

Major in allied health sciences; minor in Spanish

“As a VAWPP facilitator, I facilitate the FYE Consent 201 workshop. I came to UConn as a transfer student and decided to get involved with the Women’s Center because I was very interested in the work they were doing. I am really looking forward to being a part of the Women’s Center community and facilitating discussions in the workshops.”

**TANIA FLORES**, Graduate Student

***Graduate Assistant***

Major in higher education and student affairs

“I knew I wanted to work in the Cultural Centers, so I was excited when I received an offer from the Women’s Center. In undergrad, I attended a women’s college while abroad, and once I graduated, I worked as a teacher at an all-girls school. This next step felt like a natural progression towards the intersection of anti-racist gender work I care about. I have a lot of flexibility as a graduate assistant and get to work on several projects that further nurture this work and my development as a student affairs professional.”



**SARAH LAZOR**, Class of 2023

***VAWPP Facilitator***

Major in psychology, pre-health interest

“[I will be f]acilitating the FYE Consent 201 course. I came to the Women’s Center after partaking in the Consent 201 course in my own FYE class and seeing what a great job the facilitators did.”

**JOYCE LIN**, Class of 2022

***Marketing Co-Chair***

Major in political science; double minor in communications and philosophy



“Throughout my time at UConn, I have always been inspired by the programs and initiatives that the Women’s Center has put on. I wanted to be part of such a passionate and driven community that is not only a resource for anyone, but most importantly, a safe space. I am co-chairing the Marketing Committee with the wonderful Mia Flynn, and we are really excited to continue our outreach and expand our presence in this increasingly virtual setting.”





**CAITLIN RICH**, Class of 2022

***Writing Intern***

Major in women’s, gender and sexuality studies

“As a writing intern, I curate the Center’s weekly email and write content with our wonderful Newsletter Editor, Daniella. This past summer, I started looking for a writing internship to develop nonacademic writing skills and work in a professional environment. Although I was not involved with the Center my past two years at UConn, I love being part of this supportive community with people I can grow with.”

**ALEX TAYLOR**, Class of 2021

***VAWPP Facilitator***

Double major in human rights and women’s, gender and sexuality studies; double minor in art and English

“Being a VAWPP facilitator involves leading online Consent 201 workshops for First Year Experience (FYE) classes. We ask questions and go through scenarios that encourage participants to think about power, gender as a social construct, consent, and identity, among other topics. I got involved with the Women’s Center because I wanted to be a part of the Women’s Center community and because I wanted to take what I’ve learned throughout my WGSS and Human Rights coursework to have the types of conversations that we have through VAWPP and get involved with collective action. I’m looking forward to working with the other VAWPP facilitators and adding facilitation skills to my toolbox that I can use when I (hopefully) become a teacher.”



**YINYIN TONG**, Class of 2022

***WiSTEM Co-Coordinator***

Major in applied math and economics



“My position entails planning meetings for WiSTEM with Purna and support[ing] our mentor and mentees to achieve in the STEM fields. I worked in the Women’s Center last year in the VAWPP and found out [about] WiSTEM program which I’m very interested in and passionate about. I’m looking forward to seeing how WiSTEM can help more women in STEM to stay in STEM fields and feel more supported by other women! Also I look forward to seeing how the different program structure (everything online!) will bring creative changes to our meetings and differences to WiSTEM.”



**MIA TORRES**, Class of 2023  
*VAWPP Facilitator*  
Major in animal science, pre-vet interest

“My position entails facilitating the FYE Consent 201 workshop. I attended the workshop in two of my own FYE classes, and I liked the topics that were being discussed so openly, and I thought I would [be] great in the position. I look forward to facilitating thoughtful discussion with students.”

**OUR OTHER NEW STAFF MEMBERS INCLUDE RILEY COHEN, EDYMAR DE LA CRUZ, EMILY NASSIFF, AND KYLIE RAMIA (NOT PICTURED HERE). WE ARE EXCITED TO HAVE THEM ON BOARD!**

WE MAY NOT BE TOGETHER ON CAMPUS, BUT WE HAVE GONE VIRTUAL WITH OUR PROGRAMS AND SERVICES SO WE CAN CONTINUE TO SUPPORT AND EMPOWER YOU!

**WE'RE HERE!**

MONDAY- FRIDAY 8:30-4:30!

## Senior Spotlight:

# Meet Georgina!



My name is Georgina, and I am a senior at UConn double majoring in sociology and psychology. I have worked as a Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP) Facilitator for two semesters and been the VAWPP TA during my time at the Women's Center. I cherish every moment at the Center as I helped to plant the seed of gender-based violence prevention and met awesome people. After finishing my school programs, I hope to continue doing related work promoting gender equality in some way.

*While we're sad to see Georgina go, we are also so appreciative of her passion and the time she spent here at the Center! If you're interested in joining us, we encourage you to check out our "[Join Our Student Staff](#)" webpage, where we upload available job postings. We would love to work with you!*

WHAT WERE WE  
THINKING ABOUT THIS  
SUMMER?

# Women's Affinity Group – Summer Recap

As the COVID-19 pandemic caused most of us to work from home, the Women's Affinity Group (WAG) wanted to continue to provide an online space to empower and connect women faculty and staff. WAG first introduced Empower Hour, a weekly virtual series, throughout the month of May where faculty and staff could have a virtual gathering place to come together to discuss topics related to how our professional and personal lives have been impacted while working remotely during the pandemic.

Our weekly series in May covered topics such as “Staying Connected While Setting Boundaries,” “Healthy Eating,” “Coping with Stress and Anxiety,” and “Implications of COVID-19 and Social Distancing on our Work.” We had guest speakers for some of the Empower Hours such as a cooking professional, Terry Walters, for our “Healthy Eating” hour where she shared tips such as using clean food as a tool to maintain health and recipes for the “quarantine kitchen”. David Francis from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) shared advice during our “Coping with Stress and Anxiety” hour. These topics were shared by our members as the top concerns we were experiencing while adjusting to working remotely. The Empower Hours served as a way to stay connected online where we could exchange ideas, offer support, and inspire each other while working from home (WFH).

Our May series were well attended with an average of 25-30 attendees, so we offered the series throughout the summer as well. We ended the summer Empower Hour on a light hearted note by offering a pet therapy party in July where we had a special canine guest—our very own campus canine officer Tildy! Officer Tildy and her handler got a chance to “virtually meet” other UConn pets. In August, we had to reschedule our “Celebrating Unsung Heroines at UConn and Beyond” due to the tropical storm that caused several employees to lose power. We were able to host this event in September where we got to enjoy a trivia game honoring the many past and present contributions of women faculty/staff. Tania Flores, who put together the trivia for this event, expressed that it was a lot more difficult to dig up women's history than she anticipated, and this really speaks to the unseen labor that women constantly do but are not recognized for and was really reflective of the “Unsung Heroes” theme.



Although we are all still adjusting to the new challenges of WFH, we hope to serve as a place where we can continue to connect virtually. WAG looks forward to the day that we can reunite and host Empower Hours in person!

WAG is actively recruiting members to join the Women's Affinity Group Planning Committee. If

you are interested in promoting an inclusive, positive, and supportive working environment at UConn for women, please contact Lisa Famularo at [womensaffinitygroup@uconn.edu](mailto:womensaffinitygroup@uconn.edu). WAG has opportunities for members to get involved in the areas of event planning, administrative support, volunteering at events, social media and publicity efforts, and web development.

—*Katerine Pais*

# *White Fragility* Discussion

Last year, as part of our ongoing discussions about centering an anti-racist feminist perspective in our work, the staff of the Center recognized that more conversation and education was needed with white folx about our role in addressing racism. To that end, this spring, and again this summer, the Women’s Center hosted book discussions on Robin DiAngelo’s *White Fragility*.

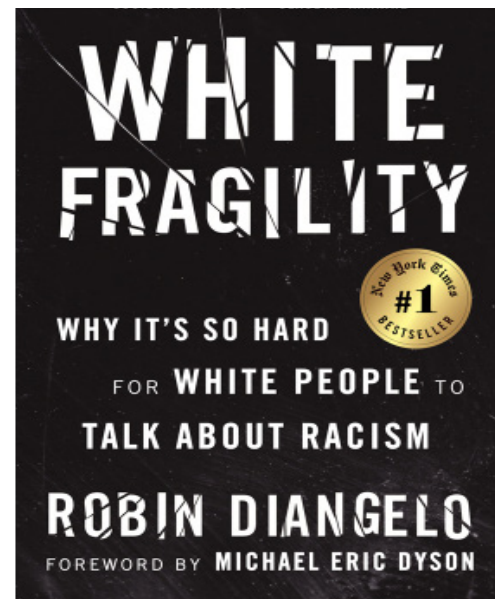
There is a great deal to discuss in and about this book. I will highlight two major points that DiAngelo makes that resonated throughout our dialogues - “All systems of oppression are adaptive; they can withstand and adjust to challenges and still maintain inequality.” (p. 48) and “...the most effective adaptation of racism in recent history: the good/bad binary” (p. 71). The example she uses to help us to understand this is how the narrative “adapted” following the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Racism moved from being a socially acceptable practice to being defined intentional acts of prejudice and violence by individuals. This has meant that good, well-intended people cannot be racist.

The result of this is that we become defensive when challenged about our racism. We rely on denial to cope, and therefore don’t recognize that we have any responsibility for ending racism.

Much of our discussions came back to these 2 overarching points.

We were able to look at some of the structures and practices that scaffold these core concepts and how they function in society and, more importantly, in our lives. Some of the learning participants shared included: “understanding how whiteness is normative”; “how to sit with my discomfort when having discussions of race as a white person”; and “the importance of being honest with your colleagues to promote further learning.”

In order to end racism and break down barriers to access, white folx must work on ourselves, learn about the history and lived experiences of people of color, and acknowledge our unearned privileges and the ways in which systems and norms maintain this. We must hold ourselves accountable to those we seek to support and to each other. This is difficult and lifelong work, yet the most important and liberating work that we can do in our quest to create a more just world.



*(Image courtesy of HumanKind Fair Trade)*

—Kathy Fischer

## Our Summer Reading:

# *Emergent Strategy*

A recent practice at the Women's Center is having all staff members enjoy one summer reading book that informs our activism during the year. For the past couple of summers, the Center read bell hook's beautiful *Feminism is for Everybody*. This summer, our professional staff agreed that we would read *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* by adrienne maree brown.

Although it was written in 2017, this book is timeless, focusing on how we can adapt to and work with change. Change, besides being one of the only constants in our personal and collective experiences, is especially important in 2020 while our campus and world reacts to a global pandemic and an outburst of civil unrest. Perfectly, brown intends this book to be “for those of us seeking to transform the crises of our time, to turn our legacy towards harmony” (p. 5) At the Women's Center, we actively try to incorporate many of brown's emergent strategies to promote deep connections at UConn.

### **Elements in Practice**

All of brown's elements of emergent strategy are rooted in how natural systems teach us ways to build community and meaningfully work in a group. Thus far, I have noticed two elements that are especially important at the Women's Center—interdependence/decentralization and transformative justice.

In one of our first meetings, we reflected on how a flock of geese migrate. Understanding how these birds are successful through their shared work and shifting leadership, we remember that each of us has a different skill set to bring to the Women's Center. In order to work effectively and avoid burnout, we must collaborate, communicate, and ask each other to utilize our unique roles. In line with the “[personal is political](#)” ideology, this work of interdependence relies on the expectation that our community members practice the Center's mission to advocate, educate, and support in our personal lives. As a result, the work of growing our feminism continues even after we hop off of a Zoom meeting.

Transformative justice is a particularly useful strategy to think about now as students increasingly feel harmed by the administration and the institutional inequities at our school. At the Women's Center, we can follow brown's steps to transformative justice. The first is to acknowledge University harm and then, second, look for organic ways to address harm. In this context, organic means methods that rise out of our current needs. After this, a community that transforms the root causes of violence must be created and sustained collectively. Some of our programs already rely on this practice. For example, workshops and programs centering on rape education at the Center emerged in [1979 as a response from students and staff to a brutal assault on Storrs campus](#). Since then, our rape education programs have evolved into the [Violence Against Women Prevention Program \(VAWPP\)](#). This semester, we will use transformative justice to specifically address the racial injustices that affect our university.

### **Radical Love**

An underlying thread in *Emergent Strategy* is radical love. To give a basic definition of radical love, it is the opposite of western socialization, which prompts us to focus on degrading and shredding the ideas of others

for self-advancement. Instead, radical love emphasizes trusting others and listening without assumptions or defenses. Radical love urges us to focus on the culture we would like to grow whereas western socialization encourages cancel culture. At first, this seemed impossible to me; how can love be actualized in a 413 year old state of physical and emotional violence?



(Image courtesy of ReLOVEution Facebook)

In trying to actualize this broadly, we start small: our community at the Center. One of our group principles is to treat each other with grace.

This acknowledges how we are in a constant learning process and the way we each practice feminism will look different and maybe imperfect to someone else. Another principle is self-care, which includes reflecting on our emotions, understanding the root causes of our pain, exhaustion, or happiness, and sharing that vulnerability with each other only if we want to.

The context we find ourselves in can inform how we practice the act of radical love. If anyone is trying to be an ally—to any marginalized community or person experiencing personal pain—it is helpful to recognize when your pain is not from being a direct target. An ally, in any privilege that they have, should never expect a target or recipient of direct harm to exhibit radical love while angry/sad/confused, but rather show radical love to them (through ride or die solidarity) and their antagonists (by holding them accountable) when victims cannot. This interdependence with others should create a balance of displaying radical love when possible but not being burdened by radical love as a responsibility when hurt.

HOWEVER: radical love should never keep us from letting go of abusive individuals. With those who are abusive, there is a time to recognize that they are not ready to change—nor can you change them—and your pain is too exhausting. At such a point, it is completely valid to let them go, mourn their loss, heal, and then let yourself feel peace.

### **Visionary Thinking**

*“The more people who grow understanding and vision together, the more people will feel at home in the resulting experiments” (p. 183)*



(Image courtesy of University of St. Thomas)

*Emergent Strategy* focuses on a vision. Amidst changing conditions, we want to be able to return to our shared mission: educate, advocate, and provide support services for the achievement of gender equity at the university and within the community at large. In all of our work we consider: how should we react to change? What actions does our global change necessitate? And finally, what is the next elegant step that will create more movement towards our goal? Believing in the above quote, the more students who can interact with the Center, the better we can support each other.

—Caitlin Rich



WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO  
THIS FALL?

## Program Update:

# Greeks Against Sexual Assault

The Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA) program has a goal to educate members of the UConn Greek community so they can positively influence their peers by challenging social and cultural norms that promote gender-based violence on campus. GASA is run by two co-facilitators: Bruna Basso (she/her/hers) and Frankie Anile-Santiago (he/him/his). Bruna is a senior majoring in allied health sciences on a pre-med track, and she is a sister of Gamma Phi Beta at UConn. Frankie is a senior majoring in secondary social studies education and is a brother of Alpha Kappa Lambda at UConn.

Dialogue will be created around issues of privilege, gender, intersectionality, sexual assault, and interpersonal violence to engage the spring cohort of 25 Greek-affiliated individuals. Participants, who are selected based on diverse representation and expressed interest for learning, are prepared to become positive advocates of change in the UConn Greek community.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, GASA will continue to run virtually. The program is now looking at how to deliver content and engage participants in a virtual scenario for the upcoming academic year. GASA also educates and advocates in the community by holding workshops for fraternities and sororities throughout the fall and spring semesters on issues of sexual misconduct such as consent, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence. The program is currently in the process of revamping the workshop content and transitioning into virtual facilitation. In this transition, GASA is utilizing a virtual platform called [Mentimeter](#) which allows for participants to engage in a virtual workshop by asking questions and responding to facilitator prompts. GASA is also taking many activities from in-person workshops, such as consent scenarios and the gender box activity, and adapting them to fit efficiently into our virtual workshops.

We are focusing on not trying to emulate in person workshops, but rather optimizing virtual workshops through different mediums of dialogue and facilitation.



*(Image courtesy of the CFSD)*

Recently, GASA facilitated a practice workshop for the Women's Center staff, the Center for Fraternity and Sorority Development (CFSD) staff, and GASA alumni/ae to think about how our workshop can be improved and more accessible for participants. Participants provided strong comments and suggestions that are currently being implemented into GASA's new virtual workshop.

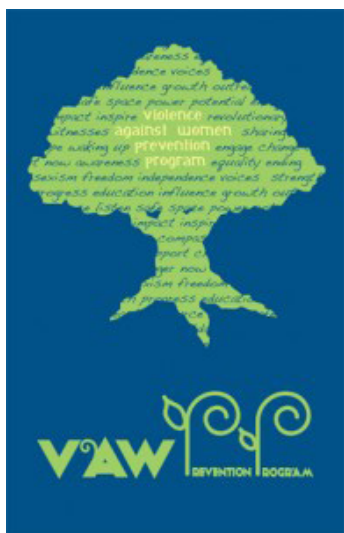
At this time, applications for the GASA spring 2021 cohort have now closed. If you would like to talk about the program and/or are interested in being a positive advocate for change in the UConn Greek Community as a future participant or are interested in learning more about issues surrounding Greek life, sexual violence, power dynamics, etc., you can always email us directly at [gasa@uconn.edu](mailto:gasa@uconn.edu).

—*Bruna Basso and Frankie Anile-Santiago*

## Program Update:

# VAWPP

With the announcement that classes would remain mostly online this fall, many professors, students, and university staff alike were lost with no idea how to convert their classes—and their lives—to an online format for the foreseeable future. Among those were leaders of the [Violence Against Women Prevention Program \(VAWPP\)](#), known across campus for its heavily interactive Consent 201 workshop that takes place in First Year Experience (FYE) classrooms in the fall semester.



I have been facilitating these workshops for three years; I started as a sophomore and am now the Graduate Assistant for the program. When I was hired for this position, I thought I was going to be working with the same Consent 201 we knew and loved my whole time as an undergraduate. Instead, we were working hard to come up with a version of this tried and true workshop that would translate to Zoom University and have the same impact it always has. Kelly Flannery and Jennifer Jackson, respectively the Women’s Center’s former VAWPP Special Assistant and MPH Practicum Student, worked hard this summer to create a workshop that is as dynamic and relatable as the one used in semesters past. Kelly suggested we use the program Mentimeter, which allows participants to vote and submit responses in real-time for the workshop’s various activities that deal with consent in daily life, gender norms and expectations, and sexual consent.

We have received tons of positive feedback on the workshops at this point; students and instructors love the interactive format and the activities we chose to include. Facilitators are becoming more comfortable each day with using a brand new toolbox full of facilitation techniques and tricks that work for a virtual audience. Each week at our VAWPP debrief meeting, we discuss if anything needs to change based on in-class experiences, and we have been through several rounds of tweaking the workshop. Nothing is ever perfect, we know, but we are so proud of what we have put together given the circumstances, and it seems that the workshop is just as impactful as ever.

No matter the format, VAWPP remains dedicated to one day putting an end to gender-based violence on the UConn campuses. Our goals and mission have not changed, though we are very excited to facilitate FYE classrooms in-person as soon as we can. If you or anyone you know is interested in getting involved with VAWPP, please email [vawpp@uconn.edu](mailto:vawpp@uconn.edu) for more information.

—*Miranda Garcia*

## Center Highlights:

# Fall Staff Retreat

Saturdays are for the boys? Not anymore... Saturdays are for a six hour staff retreat over Zoom. Did anyone's eyes get weary? Definitely. But although sitting in front of a computer for this long does not sound like an ideal weekend festivity, this annual retreat gave us a chance to connect despite COVID-19 and brainstorm some tangible ways we can practice intersectional feminism and work towards an equitable campus. We even had some fun with a guest DJ, Justis Lopez from [Just Experience](#). To get a sense of what working at the Center feels like now, below are some reflections from our new staffers on what they most appreciated from the retreat.

“Breaking out into small groups to think of actionable plans and make the ‘first domino’ was my favorite part.”

“I think the fact that we have such a diverse staff is a wonderful asset to the Women’s Center. I feel like having so many different perspectives really helps us embody intersectional feminism.”

“I feel like everyone was very respectful of each other’s comments and supportive of one another. I loved how everyone was hyping each other up during Justis’ presentation.”

“The part that was the most useful was the connections we made to *Emergent Strategy* because this was a new concept that I learned through the book we read, and it has helped me shape how I facilitate my work.”

“The group discussion with other staff influenced my perception of how I will take that next elegant step. I thought that the first step is never elegant, but my peers made me realize that things don’t have to be perfect to be great.”

“When we broke into groups to talk about the feeling circle activity... I was able to get to know some other Women’s Center staff personally. It also gave me a chance to reflect on how I was feeling.”

“I was in groups of almost exclusively women of color, which was so great. They were all very open and willing to engage with me, so a lot of the anxieties I was facing began to melt away.”

“We all had a common goal, which was valuing innovation and creativity in different works of the Women’s Center.”

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(Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

—Caitlin Rich

## Center Highlights:

# AKL's Philanthropy

With the fall 2020 semester being extremely different than what we normally see at UConn, Alpha Kappa Lambda's philanthropic efforts needed to look different as well. Over the course of this semester, Alpha Kappa Lambda still wanted to continue to raise funds to support the Women's Center mission on UConn's campus. In doing this, we had to adjust our traditional in-person events such as Late Nights at Husky Village, where we would cook and sell food, and the weeklong event called AKL & AXO's Week of Giving.

In regards to AKL & AXO's Week of Giving, we usually table on Fairfield Way or on the Student Union Street during October for Domestic Violence Awareness month. This year, we decided it would be best to create a virtual Week of Giving. Therefore, we made the week consist of events such as Tie Dye Shirts, in which sisters of AXO took order requests through a Google Form and made the shirts in the backyard of their sisters' apartments. We also utilized forms of fundraising like Punch cards, where people can send money over Venmo to our brothers and sisters, and they would receive a shoutout on Instagram. We also did a trivia night where we invited the Greek Community to attend an online Kahoot!, where we asked questions about domestic violence impacts, as well as statistics to bring awareness of this important issue to the Greek community. Our next event involved the brothers of AKL volunteering to receive donations; for each donation made, they would dunk a bucket of water on themselves along with any additional requests from donors. This was one of our most effective events because it was engaging and allowed donors to request more of what they wanted rather than have AKL decide for them. This event helped AKL and AXO raise \$1,012 for the UConn Women's Center!



*(Image courtesy of AKL)*

Later in the month of October, AKL paired up with Gamma Phi Beta to sell apple cider donuts and coffee through a delivery system. In this event, the sisters of Gamma Phi Beta packaged donuts and prepared the coffee, while brothers of AKL delivered the donuts and coffee to those who ordered them. We called this event "AKL & Gamma Phi's Early Morning"; we were able to raise \$237 which was evenly split between the UConn Women's Center and the Gamma Phi Foundation, "Girls on the Run".

Overall, this semester and the near future looks more different than ever before, but Alpha Kappa Lambda is more committed than ever to raise funds to support the UConn Women's Center in achieving its important goal of creating gender equity and ending gender-based violence.

*—Frankie Anile-Santiago*

## Center Highlights:

# Women's Leadership Panel

On Tuesday, November 10th, the Women's Center hosted its very first "Women In Leadership" panel in collaboration with the Undergraduate Student Government (USG). The women who were on the panel were Neha Kataria, Zoe Butchen, Mita Kale, Colleen Keller, and Archeline Youte. What inspired the panel was a desire to partner with USG and think more deeply about women in leadership, especially in regards to what this means to the Women's Center. Women hold more masters and doctorate degrees than men, but rarely hold executive board positions. There are certain stereotypes that go with women in leadership, namely, that a woman has to be aggressive to be heard, yet, if she's too aggressive, she's bossy, even if she is the boss. Women in leadership are held to higher standards and have to work twice as hard to get to where they are today. We see glass ceilings being broken every day, but how hard do these women work to get there? How many times have they been told they aren't good enough or that they don't deserve to be there?

The panel reflected women from all parts of campus life, from elected senators to cultural center leaders, advocacy club presidents, and sorority leaders. It was important to the Women's Center to understand perspectives of all women, ranging from those who are in coed clubs, in elected positions, or in all-female organizations. In some ways, some clubs that are meant to be co-ed were actually made up of all-women; Archeline Youte reflected on an NAACP consisting solely of Black women when she first joined. However, there were huge similarities between the women in the doubt they faced internally and the feeling of imposter syndrome. What helps create this feeling of self doubt? Is it because of the existence of mostly white male executive boards? Is it because virtually every director is the same white man? Is it the long history of Americans' sexist and racist tendencies that make women from all backgrounds afraid to lead? Mita Kale reflected on strong women in her life who have broken barriers, and how these examples encouraged and supported her to do the same.



*(Image courtesy of @usguconn)*

An inspiring moment in the panel came from Senator Neha Kataria when she said that women have the power to take over the world; we should never be afraid to use our voices. She was unapologetically herself and spoke with passion and transparency to recognize the racism and sexism that exists, reiterating that you must never be afraid to use your voice and be who you are. It is also important to remember to be comfortable being the only woman in the room; know your voice is important, and value the importance of your ideas. UConnPIRG President Colleen Keller reflected on entering an all-male room of Tier 1 organization leaders and encouraged women to share their ideas instead of sitting on them.

Even though this meeting was held through a Webex Panel room, a feeling of unity and compassion was tangible through the computer screen. We all knew what it was like to not feel "good enough" or that we had to go to every event to be qualified. It was important to recognize the intersectionality of race and gender and

how our work needs to continue to be anti-racist. The panelists spoke about the recent social justice movements and how they impacted their work, as well as how to know when to use their organizations for advocacy versus when it was a time to listen. The panel was an amazing source of information and gave insight as to how different organizations are adapting to the current pandemic and continuing day-to-day operations. Panelists advised others to always use your voice, apply for any positions you may be interested in, and cautioned that a lot of leadership comes from time and being in leadership roles. Zoe Butchen mentioned how her leadership evolves by using self-reflection, as well as online tools to identify her best qualities; this affirmation gives her reassurance. Archeline Youte also reflected that a lot of her leadership comes from herself and the quality of women around her, as well as an understanding of the value her personal experiences bring to any space. It was helpful to learn that there are so many women, online tools, and webinars to use as resources to learn more about what leadership is; there is support out there. We hope to continue that support here at the Women's Center and on our campus here at UConn.

—*Brielle Berkowitz*

Women represent only 24% of the U.S. Congress.  
Women of color represent only 9% of the U.S. Congress.  
Women are just 5% of Fortune 500 CEOs.  
Women of color are only 4.7% of executive- or senior-level officials and managers in S&P 500 companies.

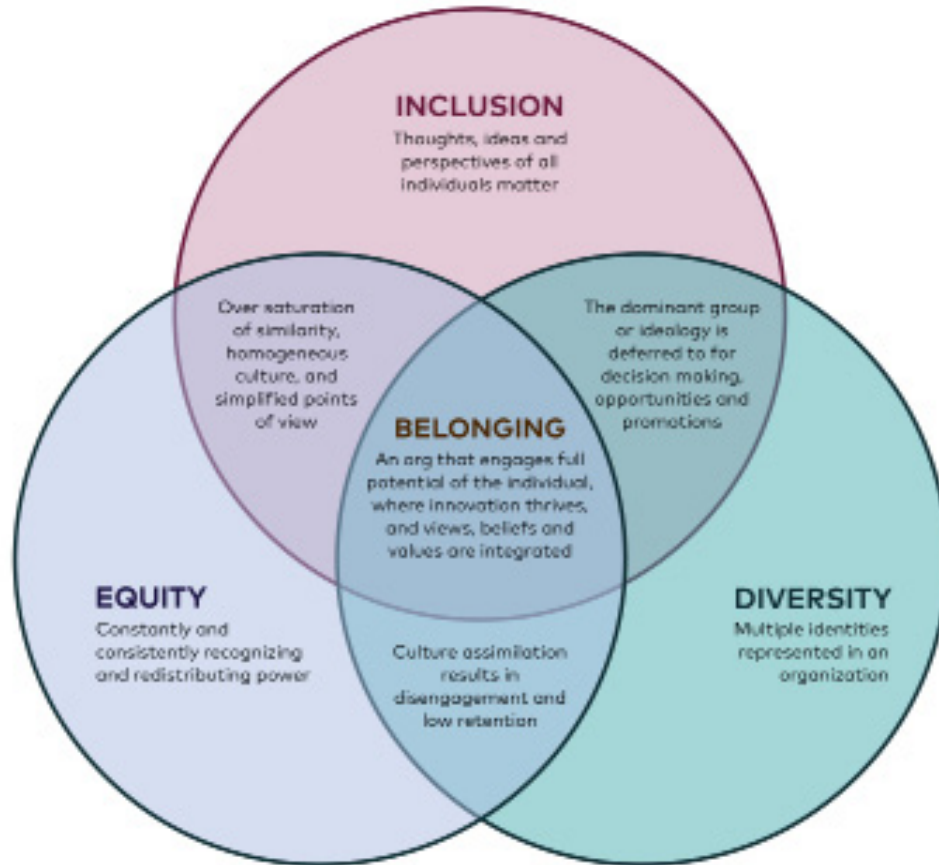
**Why do these discrepancies exist?  
Join us on Nov. 10 to discuss.**

WHAT ARE WE BRINGING  
INTO THE SPRING  
SEMESTER?



## Looking Ahead:

# Reflecting on the ODI Retreat



*(Image courtesy of Turner Consulting Group)*

As part of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion’s (ODI) ongoing work to achieve equity across all University programs, Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Frank Tuitt, hosted a virtual retreat for the student staff of our African American Cultural Center, Asian American Cultural Center, Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center, Rainbow Center, the Women’s Center, and the Native American Cultural Program. Immediately, Dr. Tuitt set a tone of radical honesty, explaining how race and Blackness is inextricably connected to his worldview. This honesty was important for the retreat’s subsequent discussions on racism in higher education, plantation politics, intersectional approaches to inclusion, and all the work students deeply feel needs to be done. Our guest facilitators, Dr. Raquel Wright-Mair and Dr. Liliana Rodriguez, helped address student discontent by reframing the “us versus them” narrative and recentering our work to focus on accountability and mutual dedication between all members of our University’s community.

To start our discussion, Dr. Wright-Mair and Dr. Rodriguez brought up plantation politics. Although it might sound unfamiliar, it names the common white supremacist structure of higher education that often allows universities to tout diversity while not compensating people of color—especially Black people—with the very minimum of what everyone deserves. Named by Frank Tuitt in collaboration with other scholars, plantation politics relates higher education to the exploitative structure of—you guessed it—slave plantations. From seeing students rebel against administration at a previous university post, Tuitt and others found that protests occur when

universities use Black bodies while not ensuring a comfortable, safe, and equal environment for Black people. This recognition that the past is ingrained in every single one of our institutions must always be remembered. Acknowledging that structure helped us contemplate how we can all work towards diversity from a point of knowledge and empathy.

The first step is to recognize our faults. We discussed where ODI's areas of improvement, beginning by examining where we felt UConn's culture rated on a scale of different stages of inclusivity. For the most part, students felt UConn upholds a monoculture, where a single group/perspective/belief dominates. UConn, along with the majority of its peers in higher education, is a predominantly white institution (PWI); this shows in students' opinions on how open and accepting University culture really is. What could be the next step in working towards the goal of equity?

In reflecting on this question, we discussed the need to avoid "preaching to the choir," and bringing in those from the majority group into the conversations we're having at the centers. Of course, this comes with its own challenges: how can the centers attract those from outside of their bases? How do we do this work while avoiding the time-honored burden of those from marginalized groups having to educate others? Some ideas we had involved 'marketing' diversity and inclusion by adding incentives for students to attend center programs, addressing intra-center social pressures like 'qualifiers' that might make students not involved with the centers uncomfortable, and, most importantly, backing up our efforts with tangible support from the University administration. To this end, we discussed the need for a more diverse faculty and curriculum; physical and mental health services; and greater accessibility for our language and promotional materials. In thinking about what ODI specifically could be doing to help improve the University's social climate, we expressed a desire for more visibility and connection between the Office and students, as well as making diversity and inclusion trainings mandatory. Students were unhappy with the administration's response to the [vandalism of the "Black Lives Matter" Spirit Rock](#), and expressed the need for ODI and the administration to rethink approaches to bias-related incidents to hold ourselves and others accountable. The University must explicitly state its allyship and make tangible commitments to support its rhetoric.



*(Image courtesy of NBC CT)*

By reflecting on our current position and areas of growth, we were able to have an honest, thoughtful conversation about what we hoped to see from ODI and each other. As students, we were also excited to have the opportunity to connect with student staffers from the other cultural centers. On this, Dadrion L., another student employee with the centers, reflected that the retreat was essential to "connect so many isolated communities. It was a great opportunity for ethnic groups and cultural centers to acknowledge outstanding issues and collaborate on possible solutions." We left the meeting dedicated to promoting cross-center collaboration now and in the future. After all, intersectionality is key. Our work cannot be achieved without true and inclusive allyship across our different identities. We're very much looking forward to next semester, where we will continue these conversations and, together, further strengthen our communities.

*—Daniella Angulo and Caitlin Rich*

## What We're Thinking About:

# Domestic Violence & COVID-19

When COVID-19 began to spread across the globe earlier this year, country after country issued stay-at-home orders. While this was intended to stop the spread of the virus, many individuals found themselves trapped at home with their abusers, with little chance of reprieve. One of the many unfortunate side effects of this pandemic has been the increase in domestic violence cases. As more and more cities were placed under lockdown, domestic violence hotlines braced themselves for a major uptick in calls; however, they experienced just the opposite. In some places, the number of phone calls dropped almost 50%, although not for the right reasons. [These organizations found](#) that this decrease in phone calls was not reflective of fewer domestic violence cases, but rather that people no longer had a safe space away from their abusers where they were able to call for help.

Isolation is a major tactic used by abusers in order to have power and control over victim-survivors. Limiting where they can go and who they can see [ensures emotional dependence](#) on the abuser and makes it more difficult to leave the abusive situation. On top of this, the lack of social interaction that comes with being stuck at home all day can lead to [the degradation of support systems](#), leaving victim-survivors even more isolated. Abusers have even [played on fears of contracting COVID-19](#) as a way to discourage visits to friends and family.

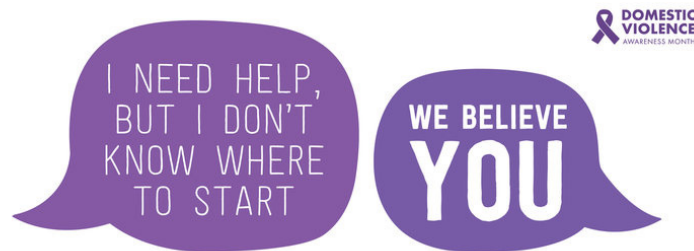
Abusers will also frequently use economic abuse so that victim-survivors are financially reliant on them. When victim-survivors do not have financial independence, [they are unlikely to leave](#) the abusive situation because they would not be able to support themselves or their children if they lived on their own. During the pandemic, this has been exacerbated by the fact that many people are losing their jobs, especially women, [immigrants](#), [BIPOC](#), and those without college or high school degrees. Most of these demographics also happen to be at a higher risk for domestic violence. Additionally, the increased unemployment rate can lead to added stressors in the home which [may escalate already violent situations](#).

When victim-survivors are able to get away from their abusers, it often takes far longer than it would have before the pandemic. A study at [Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston](#) indicated an increase of patients showing extreme physical trauma like internal organ damage that resulted from intimate partner violence. This suggests that not only are cases of domestic violence increasing in frequency, but [also in intensity](#). The number of safe havens available for victim-survivors have been limited, as shelters are afraid of the virus being introduced by new families. A Y.W.C.A shelter in Illinois tried to remain open with reduced staff and limited their services to families that were already there before the outbreak. However, there were still concerns that they could not isolate these women and children if someone contracted COVID-19, so they were forced to close their doors and [relocate everyone to hotels](#).

The question now is how to support victim-survivors during this critical time. The National Domestic Violence (NDV) hotline remains open 24/7 at 1-800-799-7233, and there is also the option to text LOVEIS to 22522 if it is unsafe to speak on the phone. The NDV [website](#) has a plethora of resources for victim-survivors to help them identify signs of abuse, as well as safety plans to help them escape unsafe relationships. Friends and family of victim-survivors can also find information on how to help loved ones and, since the start of the pandemic, they have updated their resources to include information that is specific to COVID-19. Additionally, Futures Without Violence's [website](#) has a comprehensive list of other available national resources.

For students in the UConn community in need of support for domestic violence, the Women's Center has a weekly peer-led support group called [In-Power](#) that welcomes victim-survivors of sexual assault, stalking, and/or domestic violence. The program is open to any UConn student regardless of gender identity, at any point in their healing process. If you're interested in getting involved, contact [In-Power@uconn.edu](mailto:In-Power@uconn.edu) for more information. Other local resources include the [CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence](#) (1-888-999-5545 ENGLISH, 1-888-568-8332 ESPAÑOL) and [SafeConnect](#) through Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (888-774-2900).

—*Lindsey Chapman*



*(Image courtesy of Rape Recovery Center)*



*(Image courtesy of CBS Austin)*

**On behalf of the  
Women's Center staff—  
thank you for reading!**