

VOICES

THE MARCH ISSUE



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Letter from the Editor

This semester, I'm living on campus. Storrs is damp and windy. It's comforting to know that some things never change (climate anxiety who?). I only have a little over a month before my time on campus comes to an end. Where before my virtual days dragged, they're all passing incrementally, bittersweetly faster now.

At our last staff meeting in February, we were asked to read up on activism and find examples of it to share with our peers. This is what our cover shows—we're a group with a lot of different ideas. It's an honor to compile our different experiences and share them with you through *Voices*.

In thinking about our recent event on activism (explored more in depth here by the wonderful Caitlin Rich!) and activism in general, I am continually in awe of the plethora of ways there are to draw strength from community. For almost a year now, my life has taken place through a screen. I'm tired. We're all tired. This is what we're working through in this edition—mutual exhaustion, even as we engage in mutual support. I am struck by how I and others have managed to continue learning despite everything. Through my work with the Center, I'd even daresay I've been inspired.

Everything has kept happening, and we continue to push back against so many things that need to change. Our virtual campus community is a microcosm; we are critically engaging with issues of [race](#) and [free speech vs. hate speech](#) that are reflective of the debates taking place in the world around us. As in the real world, there are no easy solutions—but that doesn't mean we won't come together around these issues. I have been surprised by how passionately my community continues to feel even as we are so disconnected from the place that unites us. At the Women's Center and beyond, discussions are being had on what the first critical steps are to address student concerns. In this edition of *Voices*, we share what these have looked like for us, and what we aspire to moving forwards. We are excited to continue taking these steps with you.

—Daniella Angulo



(Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Credit for our cover images from left to right goes to: Delphine Diallo, Johanna Toruño, #UNLOAD USA, Avaaz, Lindsay Chapman, Jody Thomas, and Juliana Huxtable

Letter from the Director

I'm tired. I write that with intent and not unmindful of the reasons I have to be grateful. I have been able to work remotely for the past year; those I love are safe and healthy; and I have the opportunity to work with dedicated, bright, and curious students, staff, and faculty.

I write that I'm tired hopefully in the service of those colleagues. I'm tired of being in virtual meetings where people feel they can't authentically articulate how they are doing when asked. I'm tired of hearing women, and particularly women of color, talk about feeling unseen, unheard, and unvalued. I'm tired of students continuing to feel as if the only way to see change is to put their pain on display. I'm tired of needing to remind people that gender matters when we are looking at not only the impact of the pandemics on our community, but who is taking on the labor of addressing those impacts.

I write in honor of "prickly women". Almost three years ago now, I received and forwarded the opinion piece, [*In Praise of Prickly Women*](#) from colleagues both in and outside of UConn. I've been reminded of this on several occasions over the last few months. "Prickly Women work hard. They are scrappy; they will sacrifice even when given little praise. They still have a lot of time left in the academic gig, and despite it all, they still want your institution to thrive and have contributions to make."

While the "prickly" connotations are arguably rooted in sexist and racist stereotypes, the qualities and characterizations are worth amplifying. Referencing back to *Emergent Strategy*, adrienne marie brown offers this as a "strategy for building complex patterns and systems of change through relatively small interactions." (p. 2) Prickly women are at the core of this strategy and these interactions. We ask for "a peace that is built on truth, accountability, and equity." (brown, p. 132)



(Image courtesy of AURIELAKI)

While we don't advertise it this way, I believe the Women's Center can be a training ground and a sanctuary for those that seek this same peace – for those that are considered prickly. We offer space to build skills to realize anti-racist practices; to dismantle barriers to access and representation; to uplift the myriad of forms of activism; and to ask the hard questions. As you read through this edition, we hope you will celebrate the work of these peace seekers, and perhaps find solidarity if you see yourself as part of the "prickly" women community.

—Kathleen Holgerson

Letter from the Writing Intern

This morning's horoscope provided my tired spirit with a little chuckle. It read, "what's left is life, don't miss it." If you are wondering, I am a Taurus sun, Leo moon, and Taurus rising, and I am at the point in my journey where I quote my horoscope.

This humored me because I do not know what to make of my life. I stay in my pajamas more often than I am willing to admit, and I cannot think of any accomplishments I have personally had within this year. I feel the most stagnant I have ever been, and yet everything has been shifting and moving. Although I am constantly staring at a screen, I have attended more university events this year than my past two years at UConn. Do I feel like a Husky? No, I do not feel like a Siberian dog, but I am more connected to and paradoxically more physically alone as ever. And as I see more of what our community is engaged with, I have realized that I am, dare I whisper, mediocre. Watching others fight social injustice or personal pain from the safety of my home, it is easy to feel as if I am not doing enough. This observation is not a self-deprecation, as that is a flavor I have lost taste for. Instead, I feel mediocre in a kind of amazing way.

Anyone who has written a piece within this newsletter can only give a glimpse into the Center (you truly have to come by). For me, I have felt privileged to hear or watch people who not only yield wisdom from their lived experiences, but openly share it with others. Although that is a level of healing that I cannot really fathom yet, we all have the capacity to reach into the depths of our identities and center those experiences in our lives. I hope anyone reading knows that you are enough; you are doing enough.

Even if you have just woken up, take a break. Use five minutes to breathe. Imagine wherever, whatever, or whoever feels like home. You deserve to feel that comfort and support in every space you enter. You can take an infinite number of naps and still be doing meaningful work. Your energy is often taken away because it is sacred. This year of isolation will not break you, but transform you. In your body and experiences, you have infinite wisdom that formal academics does not have anything on. Trust me when I say it simply feels lovely to know that someone like you exists.

Most of all, your voice matters. Our hope is that you see your own experiences and feelings reflected in this first 2021 edition of *Voices*. The year of 2020 can rest in hell.

—*Caitlin Rich*

**IF YOU ARE STAYING
HOME TODAY, IN
BED, ON A COUCH,
SLEEPING, RESTING
IN ANY WAY THAT
SUPPORTS YOUR
BODYMIND: YOU ARE
USEFUL, VALUABLE,
ENOUGH, AND WANTED.
YOU ARE PERFECT
AS IS.**

@ACCESSCENTEREDMOVEMENT

(Image courtesy of @accesscenteredmovement)

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN
UP TO?

Learning from Patrisse Cullors

On February 4th, the African-American Cultural Center, in collaboration with the Women’s Center, the Rainbow Center, the Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center, the Asian-American Cultural Center, and the Native American Cultural Program, began Black History Month with guest speaker Patrisse Cullors. Cullors, along with Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi, founded the [Black Lives Matter Global Network](#), which has been nominated for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize.

Something we frequently reflect on at the Women’s Center is just how frustrating activism can be. Bias and discrimination continue to take different forms; no matter how hard we strive for their future eradication, not getting discouraged from time to time is difficult. For Black Lives Matter (BLM) activists, I thought this frustration must be felt tenfold—especially as women.

While men make up the majority of Black death at the hands of the police, women—and Black trans women in particular—are especially vulnerable to violence. However, unlike the attention given to the unjust deaths of Black men, Black women victims of police brutality don’t often go viral. In December 2014, the African American Policy Forum (AAPF) began the [#SayHerName](#) campaign, which brings attention to the institutional violence aimed at Black women by holding vigils, providing space for community care, and by keeping the names of these women in the public eye.

Why is there such a great disparity between the attention given to these different victims? For Andrea Ritchie, author of [Invisible No More](#), misogynoir, or the intersection of gender and racial bias in regards to Black women, is only one part of the equation. The other is that

“...the story we’re told about state violence has its ‘protagonists,’ Black men and white police officers, or Black men and white supremacists. And the story we’re told about interpersonal violence is a story of white women and domestic violence and sexual assault. And Black women are invisible in both of those conversations and yet are experiencing very high levels of both forms of violence. And that’s in part because sexism is dictating how we understand state violence. It’s also because anti-blackness is dictating how we understand gender-based violence.”

However, even in spite of this institutional discrimination affecting how the public views Black women and violence against them, Cullors spoke to how she is “not interested in fighting or focusing on Black death. The movement is about our lives—not just surviving, but thriving. Yes, the way to get there is by fighting XYZ, but love is the framework we should be operating inside of...if you’re fighting all the time, you will burn out.” Rather than continue the narrative of constant fighting, Cullors shared how she views the work as “a prayer. It’s an offering; it’s a meditation in believing in the value of human life.” By actively choosing to work against the issues affecting Black women and men in a framework of radical love, Cullors believes it is easier to imagine bigger and broader visions of the future.

Cullors also mentioned the tools she thought were essential to working within this framework. Rather than succumb to “political immaturity,” Cullors said the movement advocated collaborating with Democrats in order to get Donald Trump out of office—even though the Democratic party has historically not followed through on its promises to Black voters. She described this collaboration as a “tactical alliance,” saying that voting is a right we are all obligated to exercise. Like everything else the movement does, this work was done with an eye to the future.

In thinking about how to move forward, Cullors spoke to how the prison industry is a public health crisis, citing the need for abolition (“of courts, police, prison, and surveillance”) in order to encourage care, accountability, and rehabilitation—ideals stemming from her activism fueled by radical love. BLM’s ultimate goal is to abolish what they define as a prison and police state through “non-reformist reforms.” Whatever they do, they ensure that their actions do not contribute to policing. To get to abolition, BLM hopes to introduce reforms that give people more power, and give the police state less.

Cullors ended her talk by sharing how allies can show up for Black women. Among other things, she mentioned the importance of following Black women’s leadership, being present in the work, and using our platforms to remind others how they can also contribute to these efforts. The foundation is there—it’s up to us to join Black women in their efforts and follow their example, looking ahead with radical love.

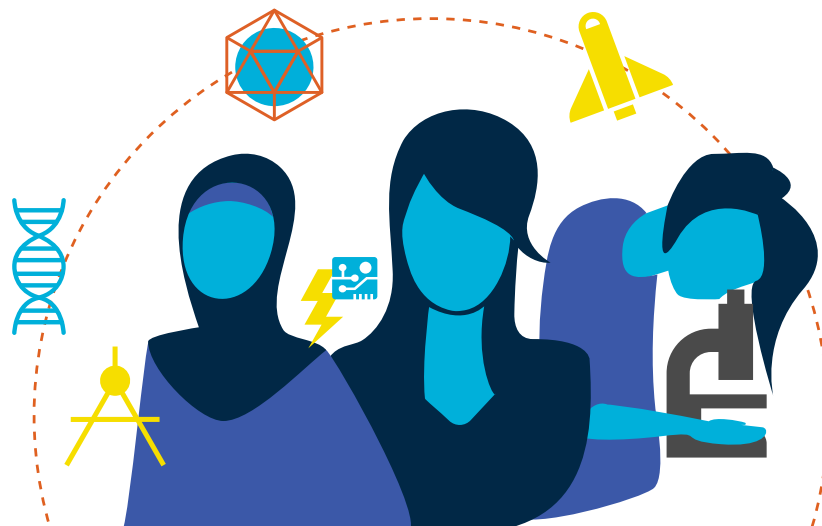
—*Daniella Angulo*



(Image courtesy of Maria Kutepova)

Program Update:

Women in STEM



(Image courtesy of Washington STEM)

The Women in STEM (WiSTEM) Mentoring program is an initiative designed to give underclasswomen pursuing STEM careers a support system by pairing them with an upperclasswoman mentor to guide them. Through the partnership, these women are given an online interface to interact with each other on Zoom in our biweekly meetings, where we discuss a myriad of topics. WiSTEM is run by two co-coordinators: Purna Dalal (she/her/hers) and Yinyin Tong (she/her/hers). Purna is a junior majoring in biology and sociology with a minor in molecular and cellular biology at UConn. Yin is a junior majoring in math and economics at UConn.

With one of the largest cohorts of 80 women in STEM, discussion revolves around giving support and resources to these individuals in several ways. Mentors are selected based on their expertise in STEM fields, but also their dedication to providing support for underclasswomen and commitment to fostering a relationship with their mentee. Mentees are chosen based on who would most benefit from the guidance of a mentor.

During COVID-19, WiSTEM has been working on Zoom to host biweekly, large-scale group meetings where insight is given on how to succeed in STEM. Throughout the past few semesters, workshops were given on how to secure research positions in and outside of UConn using several guest speakers, examining the importance of self-care in a cutthroat field, and emphasizing the importance of internships, all while prioritizing building a community within the group.

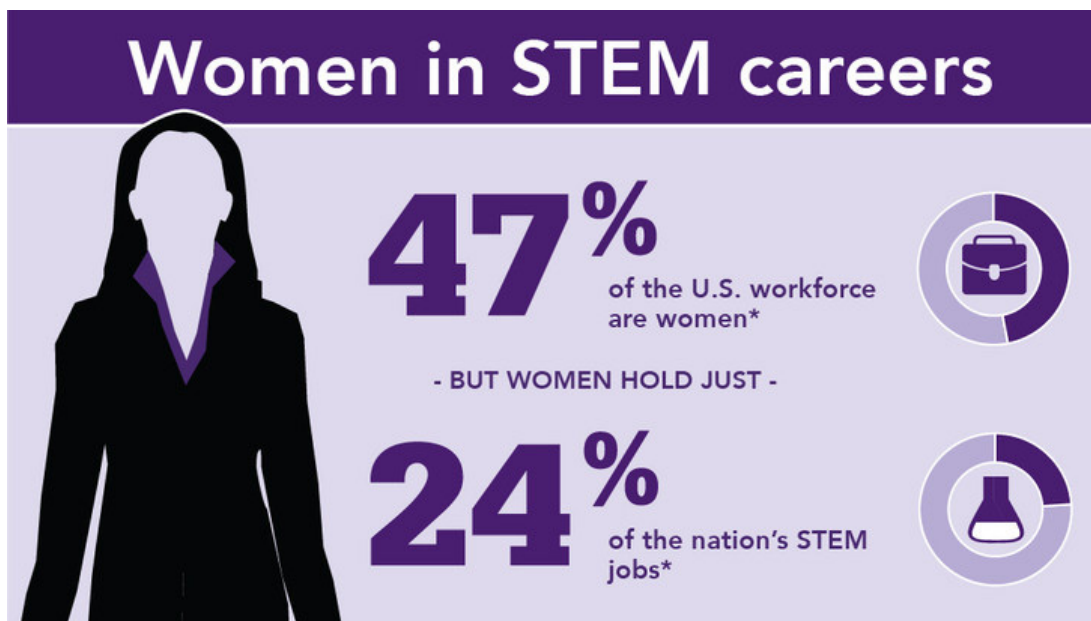
The members find bringing in guest speakers to be the most informative and influential in their growth, reinforcing their commitment to STEM fields. We tackle a number of topics and issues affecting women in male-dominated fields such as impostor syndrome, feelings of inadequacy, and disparaging comments made by male counterparts. By hearing about the success stories of women with intersectional identities, the members of WiSTEM feel more empowered and prepared to overcome gender barriers.

In addition to tackling gender barriers, various topics are also presented to contribute to the success of the UConn Steminist community, like how to succeed in research labs and ways to get there. Not only do professionals who are experts in their respective fields come in to speak, we have our upperclasswomen peers present their research and success stories to make them another point person to talk to. It is known that women often put down their accomplishments in order to look humble in comparison to men in their fields, but by encouraging members to share their achievements, we promote taking pride in our accomplishments. WiSTEM does not limit community relationships to the mentor-mentee pairing—we encourage pairings to branch out to other peers outside of their majors/research interests also.

Recently, WiSTEM facilitated a healthcare professionals panel where three powerful medical professionals from the UConn community shared their expertise and advice to the audience. Although the panel was centered on medicine and featured a physician, nurse, and surgeon, all three gave lifelong advice on how to succeed in any STEM field and being tenacious within future careers. On Thursday, April 1st, we'll be hosting a film [screening](#) of "Picture a Scientist," a movie chronicling the "groundswell of researchers who are writing a new chapter for women scientists" in the hopes of making science itself "more diverse, equitable, and open to all." This will be followed by a panel discussion with UConn scientists and members of WiSTEM. We hope to see you there!

At this time, applications for the WiSTEM 2020-2021 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 Women in STEM community, a potential future member, or are interested in learning more about issues surrounding women's issues in STEM and how to succeed, you can always email us directly at wistem@uconn.edu.

—Purna Dalal



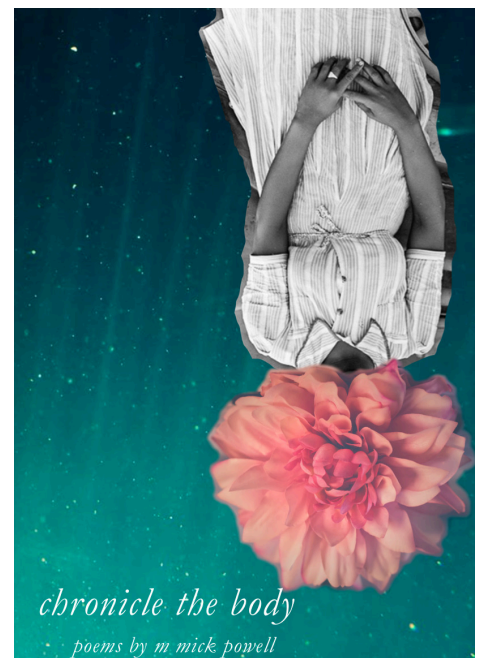
(Image courtesy of Kelly Bryan)

Reflecting on Artivism

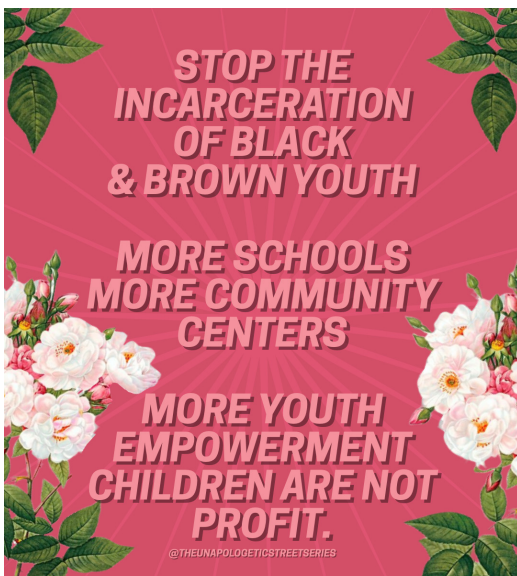
Thinking of activism, you might imagine recent BLM protests and marches, petitions and social media, or lobbying and the recent election. Reflecting on the present and reaching even deeper to our pasts, we can find that art has always been there to make us feel and heal, strengthen group identity, and move us to action. This February, the Women's Center, the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department (WGSS), and the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry co-sponsored an event about the intersection of art and activism: artivism.

The night was opened by Mick Powell, a Black femme feminist poet working at our very own University as an Assistant Professor in WGSS, and the publisher of *Wild Tongue*. She read Lucille Clifton's "won't you celebrate with me," which is a well-known poem that first gently asks and then tells us to celebrate the life that a person, both nonwhite and woman, has made in a place of exile. Setting a beautiful mood of resilience, this poem underscored the communities that artivism serves and the one created by our four panelists.

Our second panelist who inspired us with her work was Johanna Toruño, a community teacher of visual arts. Fueled by her experiences growing up in the aftermath of El Salvador's civil war, and inspired by Black and Brown communities that use the streets for public self-expression, she created the Unapologetic Street Series in New York. The public nature of her art is drastically different from museums and galleries that are often based in exclusion. With this art, Toruño likes how anyone can develop their own relationship to her work as it becomes part of their landscape.



(Image courtesy of Yemassee)



(Image courtesy of @theunapologeticstreetseries)

Zulynette, a poet and social worker, shared how she uses words, visuals, and performance as transformational tools. In regards to the pandemic, she reminded us that art has always been a form of support and is thus needed now more than ever. And, keeping the conversation authentic, she said it is not the job of an artist to make their work digestible to those the work does not center.

The next panelist was another artist from our community, specifically the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry, Felicia Cooper. Her work is rooted in community practice, social engagement, and radical curiosity. When performing, she considers the physical place, who the people are, and what they care about. She shared some history of puppetry with us, showing how multiple forms of art have always risen out of a specific context.

Through their discussion and Q&A, these talented individuals showed us how activism articulates emotions from deep anger to joy. This type of art exists alongside that of the past and will continue to exist within our future. Seeing how passionate artists have been working on ways for everyone to thrive, staffers at the Women's Center have been inspired to connect with the activists that personally resonate with us. Looking at the cover of this edition of *Voices*, we hope you enjoy all the activism our staffers have shared!

—Caitlin Rich

UConn WOMEN'S CENTER

IMAGINE WHAT IS POSSIBLE-ARTIVISM

"The function of art is to do more than tell it like it is – it's to imagine what is possible." – bell hooks

Artivism is the intersection of art and activism. It sparks the imagination to form new questions and new meaning in pursuit of a more just world. Join us as we talk with some amazing folx who are using their powerful creative skills for social change.

**TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 16
AT 6PM**

JOHANNA TORUÑO
is a Salvadoran born & New York based community taught visual artist utilizing the streets as a public platform and gallery.

ZULYNETTE
is a poet and social worker who uses words, visuals, and performance as transformational tools.

M. MICK POWELL
is a Black femme feminist poet and an Assistant Professor in Residence at UConn in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

FELICIA COOPER
is a puppeteer, teaching artist, and graduate assistant at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry with work rooted in community practice, social engagement, and radical curiosity.

Co-Sponsored with Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry

Raise the Vibration Review

In lieu of this year's global, widespread performances of *The Vagina Monologues*, V (formerly Eve Ensler), their creator, issued a challenge: amplify one another's voices, through a new event called *Raise the Vibration*. This is a "community-created artistic piece" with the goal of "creat[ing] a vibration that is powerful, beautiful, compelling through music, chanting, dance, drumming, original monologues, and more." In this way, *Raise the Vibration* hopes to spotlight new, critical voices in advocacy against gender-based violence—those from our own communities. On February 23rd, the Charter Oak Cultural Center, in collaboration with the Women's Center and other organizations, presented our community's version of *Raise the Vibration*. On April 22nd, we will be hosting another showing of this event with a talkback from the producer—mark your calendar!



(Image courtesy of the Greater Hartford Arts Council)

This event began with an introduction written by V and performed by Karleigh Webb. In this introduction, they juxtaposed the emotive performances with the context of worsening right wing nationalism, facism, and climate change and urged us not to be changed by that destruction, but to raise our collective vibration through love.

The artists explored topics such as loss, intergenerational trauma, familial dynamics, beauty, sexuality, democracy, perception, domestic abuse, and sexual assault. They coupled these topics with messages on finding happiness, letting go, choosing themselves over toxicity, and finding identity in the beauty of the earth. Further rooting their music and poetry in the vibrations of the body, each verbal performance incorporated the kinetic art of dancers. Whether the dances looked organic and fluid or quick and sharp, their movements and the other artists' words created moving images.

The ending video titled "My Revolution Lives in This Body" and performed by Rosario Dawson visually showed us how revolution is happening within women and for women around the world. Using global and historical imagery, they showed us a revolution that is nonviolent but fiercely resistant. It ended V-Day 2020 with, "go ahead love."

Moving forward, V's organization, V-Day, which aims to end violence against women and girls, hopes to transition out of performing *The Vagina Monologues* as part of their main charitable event and focus their energies on a new project, *Voices*. This project is a call for action. In February, V-Day collected submissions from Black women around the world in an effort to center their voices and experiences, culminating in another performance piece similar to the original *Vagina Monologues*, but rooted in depicting the full complexity of Black womanhood. In this way, V-Day aspires to give these voices a long-overdue stage that bears witness to their stories, and is the platform upon which new ones can be built. *Voices* will premier in the fall of 2021.

—Daniella Angulo and Caitlin Rich

WHAT ARE WE
THINKING ABOUT NOW?

Center Highlights:

Students of Color's Perceptions of the Center

Between Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, former Women's Center Graduate Assistant Yasmine Taha developed an assessment project with the following purpose: assess the perceptions that students of color at the UConn Storrs campus have of the Women's Center. This assessment was conducted via focus groups, a method in which groups of 8-10 students were interviewed collectively. The two focus groups interviewed were 1) Students **unaffiliated** with any racially affiliated club or Greek organization and not employed by any of the cultural centers/NACP, and 2) Students **affiliated** with any racially affiliated club or Greek organization and/or employed by any of the cultural centers/NACP. Below are the interview questions the focus groups were asked:

1. Have you ever utilized the space in any way (attended a program, group, or spent time in the space at all?)
2. The Women's Center strives to use an anti-racist, intersectional lens to create an environment comfortable for folks of all identities. How does this description align with your own perceptions of the Women's Center?
3. Some students of color have given us feedback about the Center "feeling White." Does that resonate with you at all?
4. Reflecting on your identity as a student of color, why do you choose to utilize the physical space or not utilize it?
5. What do you think are the primary functions of the Women's Center? Where did you get this information?
6. If you've attended any Women's Center programs, do you feel they reflect topics you are personally interested in?
7. What could the Women's Center do to make the space more accessible to students of color?

The data collected from the focus groups was recorded, transcribed, and coded in order to pull out and highlight recurring and/or salient themes. Here are some of the trends from the focus group of students **unaffiliated** with a racially based club/organization or employed by a cultural center:

Trend 1

Students of color assume that the space has a similar racial climate to UConn as a whole. Since UConn is a primarily white institution, students of color assume they would experience the same sense of "not belonging" as they do in other white spaces.

Trend 2

Students of color show strong interest in casual, informal programming that is designed to foster community among attendees; they would like to see the Center implement more of this kind of programming.

Trend 3

Students of color are less likely to feel comfortable, and also less likely to frequent Women's Center programs, if the majority of folks attending are white.

Trend 4

The lack of programming centering basic skills (such as how to do taxes or balance a checkbook) gives students of color the impression that the Center is overlooking the needs of working-class people and their contributions to society.

Trend 5

Students of color feel that the Women's Center should collaborate more often on programs with other cultural centers and student organizations.

Here are some of the trends from the focus group of students **affiliated** with a racially based club/organization or employed by a cultural center:

Trend 1

The presence of professional staff of color makes the Center more approachable.

Trend 2

The presence of student staff of color allows students of color to connect with the Center more. The more students of color access the Center with mostly white folks present, the more uncomfortable they feel reentering the space.

Trend 3

Students of color are less likely to feel comfortable at programs, and also less likely to frequent Women's Center programs, if the majority of folks attending are white.

Trend 4

Students of color feel like the Center is not a place they can hang out casually. Women's Center student staff approaching students that enter the space and asking, "how can I help you?" feels overly formal and gives the impression students must have a specific reason (such as attending a program) to enter the space.

It is worth noting that at the time of creating this assessment project, there was supposed to be a third focus group: Women's Center student staff. Due to campus shutdowns caused by COVID-19 in Spring 2020, this group of students was ultimately not interviewed. In hopes of rounding out this data, current Women's Center Graduate Assistant Tania Flores is working on creating a research project focused on the relationship student of color employees have with the Center.

—Tania Flores

Getting to the Roots of Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term that I've heard in all of my women's, gender, and sexuality studies (WGSS) classes. It's explicitly stated in both the Women's Center and the Rainbow Center's mission statements. It's mentioned at the start of many campus events such as keynotes, panels, and viewings. It's something that student organizations prioritize and strive to incorporate more fully in their work. It's something that departments, corporations, and fields are criticized for not doing enough for, if anything at all.

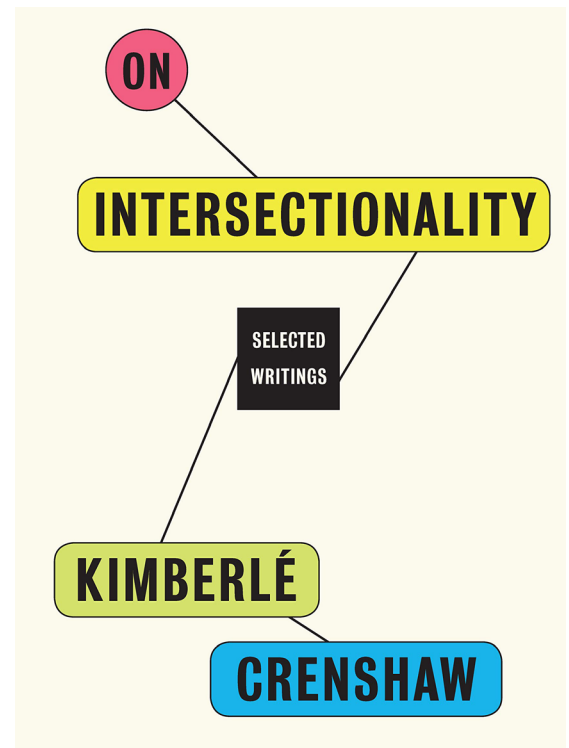
However, intersectionality might not be as thoroughly understood as it is widely used. So that begs the questions: what does it mean, and where did it come from?

African American lawyer, civil rights advocate, and UCLA professor Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw is credited with coining the term intersectionality. In an interview with the National Association of Independent Schools, she defines intersectionality as "a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood within conventional ways of thinking about anti-racism or feminism or whatever social justice advocacy structures we have." She goes on to say that intersectionality isn't a grand theory, but instead a frame, a lens, and a prism used to understand how a person's multiple identities shape their experiences with oppression and privilege.

Crenshaw developed the word and thinking behind intersectionality after coming across the case *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors* through her legal work. In this case, DeGraffenreid and other Black women claimed to have experienced both gender and racial discrimination while trying to be hired at a local manufacturing plant. The judge dismissed the suit on the grounds that, as the plant employed both white women and Black men, their claim was not legitimate. Crenshaw pointed job discrimination DeGraffenreid and others faced through an intersectional lens.

However, to think that the history of folx who pushed others to see the layered, interlocking nature of oppression starts and ends with Crenshaw is to do a disservice to the whole concept of intersectionality. While the word intersectionality may be recent, the work behind it is not.

In her book, *Black Feminism Reimagined*, Jennifer C. Nash points to how Black women have been talking about intersectionality for decades. For example, the Combahee River Collective, a Black lesbian feminist socialist organization located in Boston, centered their work around their firm belief that oppression compounds on itself. In their 1977 statement published over a decade before Crenshaw's work, they wrote, "the most



(Image courtesy of Amazon)

general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking.”

Before that, Frances Beal used the phrase ‘double jeopardy’ to describe how “race and gender collude to constrain the lives of black women” in 1969.

Before that, in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs describes how physical beauty was experienced entirely differently by white women and by Black women. She says that white women’s beauty “commands admiration” whereas Black women’s beauty put her at risk for sexual violence. Jacob’s experience in enslavement was just as much shaped by her being a woman as it was by her being Black.

Before that, in her 1851 speech entitled “Ain’t I a Woman?,” Sojourner Truth talks about how white women are treated as fragile, needing to be “lifted over ditches” while Black women’s womanhood is seen in an entirely different way. She says, “Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered in the barns, and no man could head me!” Her womanhood was inseparable from her Blackness and, as a result, the oppression she experienced couldn’t be separated from either.

Black women have been adamant that oppressions intersect and impact one another prior to Crenshaw’s necessary work on the concept of intersectionality. This emphasis isn’t meant to argue an origin story separate from Crenshaw, but to simply point out that the history of this work runs deeper and goes so much further than simply making a space “more diverse” in the misplaced hope of making it intersectional. Intersectionality is radical. Therefore, it demands a deeper understanding of systemic violence and a purposeful follow-through of collective action.

—Alex Taylor



(Image courtesy of Misty McPhetridge)

Save the Date:

Women's Advance Series

As a prelude to the annual Women's Advance Conference, the Women's Center will be hosting a series of workshops this spring that are designed to expand skills, increase knowledge, and enhance networks to promote a more inclusive and supportive working and learning environment. Our theme this year is *Forging New Paths – Manifesting Justice*.

March 11th

Forging New Paths through Conflict: Communicating with Clarity, Confidence and Compassion

Communicating in the midst of conflict can be difficult, particularly when we believe people are behaving inappropriately or unjustly, and/or our values and strongly held beliefs are being challenged. This interactive workshop introduces participants to nonviolent communication (“NVC”), a process grounded in compassion, empathy and authentic self-expression. The session is designed to teach communication techniques that de-escalate emotionally charged conversations, provide opportunities for more meaningful human connections, and a pathway to constructive resolution of conflict. This workshop will be led by Donna Douglass Williams, Ombudsperson at UCHC.

Thursday, 12:30pm – 2pm, <https://uconn-cmr.webex.com/uconn-cmr/j.php?MTID=md3bd011e-b6a953d13d4e1a68275be653>

March 25th

The Hill We Climb

Join the discussion with Rhonda Ward, poet laureate for the City of New London, as we use Amanda Gorman's poem as the springboard for discussion of, and reflection on, “the history that we stand on, and the future that we stand for.”

Thursday, 12:30pm – 2pm, <https://uconn-cmr.webex.com/uconn-cmr/j.php?MTID=m-9f706265567e8382a1ad233f926db89e>

April 8th

Impostor Syndrome: Tales from Successful “Frauds”

Join a diverse panel of successful women from across UConn at different stages of their careers as they reveal their experiences with “impostor syndrome” and share strategies for silencing that voice in your head that tells you that you aren't good enough. Spoiler alert: they were, and you are, too!

Thursday, 12:30pm – 2pm, <https://uconn-cmr.webex.com/uconn-cmr/j.php?MTID=m53e09d-1dc6f6c85b3e20a46c82f6c60d>

Save the Dates!
28th Annual UConn Women's Advance Conference
May 12 & 13

—*Kathy Fischer*

Save the Date:

Upcoming Events

The Center is excited to share upcoming events, application deadlines, and general program information with you. For the most updated information, check our [calendar](#), follow us on social media ([@uconnwomenscenter](#) on Instagram), and subscribe to the [Women's Center Weekly](#), our weekly email compiling upcoming Center events and announcements, as well as noteworthy news pertaining to women's issues both on and off campus. For further information about upcoming events, please contact kathy.fischer@uconn.edu.

March 8th–21st

AKL Ignite Fundraising Competition

Alpha Kappa Lambda's (AKL) national philanthropy is domestic violence awareness and prevention. UConn's AKL chapter is currently participating in a crowdfunding competition called Ignite, with the hope of placing among the top four of competitors and donating their proceeds towards the Women's Center. From March 15th–26th, they are exclusively soliciting [donations](#) from UConn alumni. AKL's fundraising efforts will continue until April 4th. Any and all contributions are welcome!

March 23rd–24th

UConn Gives Fundraising Opportunity

UConn Gives is the "first-ever university-wide online fundraising initiative to support UConn." Beginning at 12am on April 4th and continuing until 12pm on April 5th, this is a 36-hour opportunity to support UConn clubs, programs, or organizations like the Women's Center, with the added bonus of having your gift matched. [Make a donation](#) and spread the word!

March 30th

The Body is Not an Apology: Radical Self-Love as Transformative Action with Sonya Renee Taylor

Sonya Renee Taylor is the Founder and Radical Executive Officer of The Body is Not An Apology, a digital media and education company promoting radical self-love and body empowerment as the foundational tool for social justice and global transformation. Close out Women's Herstory Month with us and Women's Centers across the nation! Register [here](#).

April 5th

Start Smart Salary Negotiation

The Start Smart workshop is specifically designed to empower college students about to enter the job market with the skills and confidence to successfully negotiate their salary and benefits packages. By learning strategies and practicing effective language, participants gain valuable skills they can use throughout their lives—well beyond their next negotiation. Registration is required 3 days before the event—check our calendar for the latest information.

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