

# VOICES

THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



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# 50TH ANNIVERSARY

# MEET THE NEW STAFF



NALA DAVIS

she/her/hers  
Class of 2025  
Favorite Activist: Angela Davis  
VAWPP Facilitator

Nala conducts UConn's Consent 201 Workshop. She wants to be able to give her peers the tools to be able to successfully communicate with their partners, since it is incredibly important to her that all sexual action taken on campus is safe and consensual with all parties involved. With compassion, patience, and her ability to be receptive to other's feelings, Nala has confidence in addressing those difficult topics. In her free time, Nala enjoys singing and writing poetry, and she dreams about visiting Paris.



KATIE HOLMES

she/her/hers  
Class of 2025  
Nursing Major  
VAWPP Facilitator



At the Women's Center, Katie facilitates educational workshops about sexual consent and gender-based violence. Creative, energetic, approachable and inviting, Katie hopes that she can raise awareness about this difficult topic and provide resources and support for those affected. When she isn't working at the Women's Center, Katie is either playing field hockey, working in a hospital, or spending time with her three sisters.



KASIDY QUILES

she/her/hers  
Class of 2023  
Allied Health Science Major, Global Studies Minor  
Favorite Activist: Malala Yousafzai  
WiSTEM Program Coordinator



As a WiSTEM Program Coordinator, Kasidy's goal is to be able to provide interactive, informational, and resourceful meetings to both mentors and mentees. By preparing for and hosting STEM related presentations, workshops, and networking events, Kasidy aims to support women in STEM by keeping them involved and engaged. Outside of the center, Kasidy enjoys nature through gardening and hiking, and from time to time, she enjoys watching documentaries. In the future, it's particularly important to her that she'll own a chicken farm.



## DANIELLE GORDON

she/her/hers  
Class of 2025

Pre-Social Work Major, Minor in Psychology  
Favorite Activists: Baby Rose and Lil Nas X  
VAWPP Facilitator

Danielle wants to be able to provide a space for honest conversations. Safe communication within a sexual environment is important to her, and by helping others do this, she can also discover herself and her passions. Danielle's current passions are listening to music and dancing.



## MORGAN KEATING

she/her/hers  
Class of 2025

WGSS and Psychological Science Double Major  
Favorite Activist: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
VAWPP Facilitator

Morgan runs the Consent 201 Workshop with the goal of educating others about the many different facets to healthy and consensual sex. She also wants to be a provider of resources to those who are faced with gender based violence. A bubbly and welcoming person, she hopes that she can bring the conversation to those from all different backgrounds and identities. Her big-but-not-so-big-secret is that she is Taylor Swift's number one fan.



## MCKENNA ROOK

she/her/hers  
Class of 2025

MCB & PNB Double Major  
Favorite Activist: Sojourner Truth  
VAWPP Facilitator

Working towards educating and spreading awareness, McKenna's perseverance and dedication to creating a real change with others drives her in her role of a Consent 201 workshop facilitator. She hopes that her presence in outreach and FYE courses can inspire students to explore all the great resources provided at all the cultural centers, not just the Women's Center. McKenna is a fan movies and fall weather, and from time to time she misses the big farm with her horses she calls home.





## LEINA RASCON



she/her/hers  
Class of 2025  
Political Science Major, Crime and Justice & WGGG  
Double Minor  
Favorite Activist: Cesar Chavez  
In-Power Co-Facilitator

With her goal of wanting to provide a safe space on campus for survivors, Leina acknowledges that the discussion of gender-based violence needs to be continued. As a part of a cultural center dedicated to uplifting and educating students, she runs a support group dedicated to building a gender-inclusive community that welcomes victim-survivors of sexual assault, stalking, and/or intimate partner violence at any point in their healing process. By focusing on empowerment, autonomy, and resilience, this group aims to help participants claim agency over their own stories and experiences. Just as gracefully as she navigates these hard conversations, Leina could also gracefully destroy anyone at volleyball!

## AHONA MUKHERJEE

she/her/hers  
Class of 2025  
Chemistry Major  
Favorite Activist: Audre Lord  
VAWPP Facilitator



Ahona helps host workshops about consent and related topics, and she directs her determination and organizational skills and talents to helping the Women's Center reach the student community in a positive way. But when Ahona has time for herself, she spends it knitting, crocheting, and reading books. If you think you recognize her on campus, make sure to double check—she's got a twin brother!



## KAYLANI PEARCE

she/her/hers  
Class of 2025  
HDFS & Communications Major  
Favorite Activist: Too many, can't pick!  
VAWPP Facilitator



Kaylani joined the Women's Center as a VAWPP Facilitator because she wanted to be able to provide support and important information to others here on campus. By bringing companionship and support to the Women's Center, she loves making friends and being able to support others in an effort to build a better community. She spends her free time catching up on much needed sleep or listening to her favorite kind of music.



## JESSE HAGGARD

she/her/hers

Class of 2024

Sociology & Psychology Double Major, Minor in Communication

Favorite Activist: Ruth Bader Ginsburg

GASA Facilitator

As a GASA Facilitator, Jesse attends sorority and fraternity chapter meetings to educate and talk to students about sexual assault in direct relation to greek life. Because of her involvement with greek life, she feels that she possesses a broadened perspective and understanding that allows her to connect well with others. When she isn't having these tough conversations, Jesse likes to hang out with her friends and go shopping.



## ANTHONY FIGUEROA

he/him/his

Class of 2025

Sociology & Statistics Double Major

Favorite Activist: Oluwatoyin Salau

Men's Project Facilitator

Anthony is working towards putting together the Men's Project. Actively recruiting members, Anthony's goal is to co-facilitate a space where discussion about gender-based violence and other things pertaining to men can take place between men. An easy person to talk to, Anthony's open mindedness helps him in contributing to community where everyone is heard and understood as he prioritizes the comfort of those around him. After a long day, Anthony might spend his time playing basketball video games, or he might be people-watching on public transportation. But above all, he enjoys the time he spends with his loved ones the most.

## JAKE DAIGNAULT

he/him/his

Class of 2025

Political Science Major

Favorite Activist: Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Men's Project Facilitator

As a Men's Project Facilitator, Jake wants to help create an overall healthier and happier environment, especially when it comes to helping masculinity play a bigger role in positive societal progression. In the coming spring, Jake will run a group for students who identify as men to work on recognizing issues within the masculine culture, as well as discussing the different ways to fight and challenge these stereotypes and gender roles to further a healthy culture as opposed to a toxic one. Jake aims to use his fun personality to cultivate an engaging and action orientated environment of change. Jake is also passionate about working out, chilling with friends, and traveling anywhere he can with his dog.





**EMILY UREN**



**she/her/hers**  
**Class of 2025**  
**Animal Science Major**  
**VAWPP Facilitator**

Emily hopes to become a better activist and educate students on their rights as not only a UConn student, but also as the individuals that they are in society. Currently, she is facilitating Consent 201 workshops to First Year Experience classes to give students a better understanding of sexual assault, victim blaming, consent, gender norms, and more. She aims to make an impact in the way students look at VAWPP workshops with her communication skills, as well as being able to provide students a more comfortable environment to learn and engage on these difficult topics. Emily strongly believes that students deserve a safe space to ask questions that aren't frequently asked elsewhere in our society. In her free time she loves to watch true crime videos on YouTube, do her makeup, and she is also learning how to crochet! She also has a beautiful tabby kitten named Auggie Beans.

**NAOMI TOMS**



**she/her/hers**  
**Class of 2025**  
**Biological Sciences Major, Astrophysics Minor**  
**Favorite Activist: Malala Yousafzai**  
**VAWPP Facilitator**

Naomi hopes to be able to introduce new students on campus to a safe space filled with trustworthy people, in case they need it. She facilitates Consent 201 workshops to first year FYE courses and let them know about the Women's Center! As an optimistic person who is also a realist, Naomi thinks that attitudes play an important part in how change is made in the world. To recharge, Naomi loves to listen to music, hike, and play the piano, but she absolutely cannot stand any type of seafood!



**ISHA PATEL**



**she/her/hers**  
**Class of 2023**  
**Economics & Human Rights Double Major**  
**Fall Intern**

Isha wants to broaden her understanding of a lot of women's rights issues, as well as her thoughts and views in her time here at the Women's Center. Currently, she is working closely with the Center's Associate Director on the Women's center Herstory in preparation of 50th anniversary. Isha also loves traveling, and she wants to explore thirty countries before she turns thirty. At the moment, she only has thirteen more to go. When she isn't flying all over the globe, Isha can be found spending time with her friends or working out.





## JOLA BUFI

she/her/hers  
Class of 2024  
Political Science & WGGSS  
Favorite Activist: bell hooks  
In-Power Co-Facilitator



Jola is working towards accomplishing a community built around care, love, and healing especially in relation to survivors of gender-based violence. To Jola, healing is not linear, and she wants to ensure that victim-survivors have a space to share and be heard at wherever they are in their journey. As a co-facilitator for In-Power, she conducts a support group for survivors of gender-based violence. By leading discussions and activities focused on self care and finding the power that already exists within everyone, Jola's emotional intelligence and effective communication help her build a community where boundaries, openness, empathy, and understanding can flourish together to create a safe space for all. For her own self care, Jola likes to do a bit of journaling, meditating, reading, traveling, and nature walks. She was also born in Greece, and she moved to the United States from Albania at the age of 12!



## BELLA HARRINGTON

she/her/hers  
Class of 2025  
Psychological Science Major, Cognitive  
Science Minor  
Favorite Activist: Malala Yousafzai  
VAWPP Facilitator

Bella's goals here at the Women's Center are to build confidence in both herself and others by giving Consent 201 workshops to UConn first-years. In fostering a clear understanding of what is and is not consensual, Bella is working towards educating college students building a community of people with healthy mindsets towards sex. Bella's humor, openness, and her upbeat personality is what makes her a great facilitator and a greater friend. During her free time, Bella enjoys reading, playing on her XBOX, and going out with friends. She also has a ten year old red Chow Chow named Finn!





## DIPA DAS



she/her/hers  
Class of 2023  
Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences Major, Communications Minor  
Favorite Activist: Malala Yousafzai  
GASA Co-Facilitator

In her position as the GASA Co-Facilitator, Dipa’s work is guided towards teaching students affiliated with Greek life how they can promote and educate other students on gender-based violence in an effort to reduce its commonality. In her time at the Women’s Center, Dipa is looking forward to learning more about advocating for women’s rights and teaching students here at UConn about the resources and help that the Women’s Center provides. Outside of the Women’s Center, Dipa enjoys yoga, running, and weightlifting— she can lift almost double her body weight!

## KAYLA SIMON



she/her/hers  
Class of 2023  
English Major, Communication & Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Double Minor  
Favorite Activist: Audre Lorde  
Writing Intern

Kayla is thrilled to have helped put together this newsletter as the Women’s Center’s Writing Intern. In her writing work at the Center, Kayla is hoping to spread the word about all the amazing things the Women’s Center brings to UConn and the greater community. Through her writing abilities and her enthusiastic attitude, Kayla’s goal is to provide positive contributions to the Women’s Center’s supportive environment. When she has free time, she loves writing poetry or reading; she read 109 books last year, and is hoping to surpass that number in 2023!



## JESSICA TUSA



she/her/hers  
Class of 2025  
English Major, Communication Minor  
Favorite Activist: Amanda Gorman  
Programming Committee Co-Chair

In her new role as a Program Committee Co-Chair, Jess is looking forward to planning programs for people to attend and get more involved in the Women’s Center. She has an eye for creativity and is excited to apply that to Women’s Center events in order to get more people involved. Jess’s favorite female artist is Stevie Nicks, and her favorite movie is *Little Women* (2019). When she’s not working, Jess loves catching up on TV shows and movies, reading books, crocheting, and traveling wherever she can!

## KLAUDIA SPAHIU



she/her/hers  
Class of 2024  
Political Science & Human Rights Major, Sociology Minor  
Favorite Activist: Kimberlé Crenshaw  
GASA Co-Facilitator

As a GASA Co-Facilitator, Klaudia works to bring awareness about sexual assault on college campuses, especially within the Greek community. Through her work at the Women's Center, she trains sorority and fraternity members on challenging social norms that promote gender-based violence and model effective bystander interventions. Klaudia believes that if the world was a more compassionate place, we would all be able to see more of each other's achievements and struggles, and with this mindset, she brings enthusiasm, teamwork, and compassion to her work. Klaudia is also a reality TV show enthusiast who enjoys playing sports and hanging out with friends in her free time. A fun fact about her is that she has the same birthday as Jonathan the Husky!



## HANNAH STENSTROM

she/they  
Class of 2026  
Actuarial Science Major, Philosophy Minor  
Favorite Activist: X Gonzalez  
Programming Committee Co-Chair

As a Programming Committee Co-Chair, Hannah's job is to plan and run the various events held by the Women's Center; she plans to host many fun outreach events such as paint nights and yoga nights, as well as bigger events like speaker panels, fundraisers, and empowerment workshops. With their prior experience in many sects of advocacy, including working for Planned Parenthood and lobbying for more inclusive education, Hannah intends to continue her ongoing efforts to create a more knowledgeable and inclusive world. She hopes to push UConn to be a more accessible and hospitable community to people of all genders, especially for non-cis people who are generally not included under the mainstream blanket of feminism. In their free time, Hannah loves reading, watching movies, hiking, and dancing, and she once went hiking on the Appalachian Trail!





**ANJELI JOSEPH**

**she/her/hers**  
**Class of 2024**  
**Physiology & Neurobiology Double Major**  
**Favorite Activist: Kimberlé Crenshaw**  
**WiSTEM Program Coordinator**



Anjeli is involved in the recruitment of mentors and mentees for the WiSTEM program. She helps plan and present bi-weekly WiSTEM meetings throughout the year. With her organizational skills, creativity, and attention to detail, Anjeli's priority is to help students feel that they belong to something bigger than themselves within the UConn community. Anjeli also enjoys drawing and taking long walks outside, as well as anything chocolate!



**DANIELA INIESTRA  
VARELAS**

**she/her[s]/ella**  
**Graduate Class of 2024**  
**M.A. Higher Education & Student Affairs**  
**Favorite Activist: Kimberlé Crenshaw**  
**Graduate Assistant**

Daniela is a First-Generation Mexican immigrant college graduate who grew up in Georgia. As a Graduate Assistant, she helps oversee student staff while strategizing with the full-time staff to lead student development in trainings and retreats, and many more responsibilities. Daniela aims to grow our student involvement, whether it's through collaboration or outreach. At the same time, Daniela herself is working towards developing her own identity as both a supervisor and lifelong learner. She believes that supervision should

be more than just giving people direction, so she aims to focus on it with a holistic lens in which she can help students plan out goals, find resources, and ask for help when needed. In her free time, she enjoys listening to music, going to the beach, spending quality time with others, TikTok, finding new recipes to cook, and trying new cuisines. She is the oldest of four daughters, and she was born in Mexico, has been to 3 Bad Bunny concerts, and her unofficial love language is cooking. If you see her on campus and you have some time to spare, she can probably recite verbatim the *White Chicks* movie if you're brave enough to ask!

**WE COULD  
NOT DO THE  
WORK**

**THAT WE  
DO  
WITHOUT  
OUR**

**STUDENT  
STAFF**

**thank you!**

# OUR PROGRAMS

## BETWEEN WOMEN

**Thursdays 6-8pm**

A discussion group for women who love women... or think they might. Come and discuss fun topics, movies and more with women who share your feelings and experiences. For more information and the link to join, please email [BetweenWomen@uconn.edu](mailto:BetweenWomen@uconn.edu).

## IN-POWER

**Thursdays 6-8pm**

In-Power is a student-led support group dedicated to building a gender-inclusive community that welcomes victim-survivors of sexual assault, stalking, and/or intimate partner violence at any point in their healing process. Through a focus on empowerment, autonomy, and resilience, the group aims to help participants claim agency over their own stories and experiences, as well as the direction of the group. We'll be accomplishing this with a variety of discussion topics and self-care methods. If you are interested in joining the group, please reach out to facilitators at: [in-power@uconn.edu](mailto:in-power@uconn.edu).

## WOMEN IN STEM

The Women in STEM (WiSTEM) Mentoring Program is an initiative designed to support underclasswomen pursuing STEM degrees through the mentorship of their upper-class women peers. The program spans the full academic year and is structured around monthly meetings designed to provide both the mentor and mentee with resources to flourish in the STEM fields. If you are interested in being a mentor or a mentee next year, please reach out to our facilitators at:

[WiSTEM@uconn.edu](mailto:WiSTEM@uconn.edu)

## MEN'S PROJECT

**Spring Semester**

The goal of the Men's Project is to train students who identify as men to positively influence their peers by challenging social norms that promote gender-based violence; understanding their connection to survivors of gender-based violence; and role modeling effective bystander interventions. The weekly meetings will focus on topics related to gender socialization, masculinities, social justice and gender-based violence. Previous year's participants shared that the program was transformative, challenging, and that after the program their implementation of bystander intervention strategies greatly increased. This group is co-sponsored by the AsACC. If you are interested in joining the group next year, please reach out to our facilitators at: [MensProject@uconn.edu](mailto:MensProject@uconn.edu)

## GASA

The goal of Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA) is to train members of fraternities and sororities so they can then positively influence their peers by challenging social norms that promote gender-based violence, understand their connection to survivors of gender-based violence, and role model effective bystander interventions. The weekly meetings will explore issues of gender, privilege, social justice and how we can stop sexual assault and interpersonal violence, specifically within the Greek community. This program is co-sponsored by the UConn Women's Center and the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life (OFSL). For more information, please email [GASA@uconn.edu](mailto:GASA@uconn.edu).

**COME  
VISIT US**

**HOURS**

**MON-THURS:** 9AM - 8PM

**FRI:** 9AM- 5PM

**SAT-SUN:** CLOSED

(860) 486-4738

STUDEN UNION, 4TH FLOOR  
ROOM 421  
2110 HILLSIDE ROAD  
UNIT 3118

# Director's Letter

by Kathleen Holgerson  
Director of the Women's Center

**M**y last letter was at the time we began our celebration of the 50th anniversary, and I shared some of the founding stories we pass along to provide context for who and what we are today. During the fall, we were in community with some of those founding mothers, as well as past and present staff and long-time supporters of the Center. This edition serves as a record of some of that celebration.

Throughout these pages, you can hear from Ara, Kellie, Anthony, and Heidi who share their perspectives on the connections between our past and their present and some of the people they were able to meet during our 50th celebrations. You can read the profiles of our student staff from this year who are shaping the work of the Center today and adding their imprint to the legacies of tomorrow. We were also fortunate to have campus collaborators who organized events to recognize our 50th – a special appreciation to Amanda Douberley from the Benton Museum, Kelsey Brown from the Homer Babbidge Library, MaryAnn Brescia from the School of Nursing, and Anne Hill from University Events and Conference Services.

This anniversary, as well as those before it during my tenure at the Center are important to me both professionally and personally. As I noted in my remarks at the keynote for our 50th Anniversary Celebration weekend, I first came into the Women's Center's orbit as a senior undergrad back in the late 1980's. My first anniversary with the Women's Center as a staff member was our 25th in 1997. The majority of my career has been here at the Center. Just like the student authors, there is a connection between the Center's past and my past and present. I am grateful to the Center's founding activists and past professional staff such as:

Marcia Lieberman, a former faculty

member in the English department, whose career was put on the line because of her advocacy for women's locker rooms in the field house and the first athletic scholarships for women.

Bessy Reyna, a student organizer that was instrumental in the establishment of the Women's Center, along with the many other women, such as Cathy Belanger and Barbara Lederer, who were involved in actions on campus to create consciousness around gender equity.

Myra Hindus and Elizabeth Mejia, who were the Director and Associate Director when I joined the Center and paved the way for the Center's programs to become more expansive over time and unapologetically a space where students' voices are elevated and power is shared.

Now that 2022 has passed, we are looking to the next 50 years. We will continue to focus on impact, presence, and our future aspirations. Part of our impact is to make the connections between the continuing and evolving ways sexism and gender discrimination manifest in our individual lives and across the systems we live and work in. We are working to make the Center space more visibly a place of respite, welcome, and celebration for anyone who is impacted by and/or thinking about how gender matters. And as far as aspirations, we'll likely spend at least the next 50 years working to dismantle systems, policies, practices, and behaviors that are barriers to anyone, particularly those who have been historically marginalized, being able to show up as their authentic selves, to realize their academic and professional potential, and to feel affirmed and like they belong.

# A Thank You Letter to the Women's Center (Herstory)

by Ara Huynh  
This Edition's Editor



Over the summer, I came to terms with my gender identity rather suddenly – as an assigned female at birth (AFAB), I'd been raised to be a woman all my life, and because I was socialized that way, I believed that to be true about myself for a long time. But when I learned about gender being a spectrum, it didn't take me long to realize that I really felt disconnected with being a woman sometimes – and that this feeling fluctuated in intensity.

Now, I identify as girlflux, but I seldom discuss it when talking to others. The easiest way to explain it would be a sense of gender fluidity between feeling femme and feeling non-binary. On some days, or over a course of a few weeks, being perceived as a femme individual bothers me immensely and makes me want to crawl out of my skin and into a body that looks something like those ambiguous person icons you'd see as default profile pictures. Gendered expectations tend to make me feel unseen. Most of the time, I really just feel...like me. And I just want to do things I want to do, without hearing someone's assumption.

If I hadn't started my work at the Women's Center and taken the time to understand these social nuances and constructs that society had created, I would have never really realized who I was and why I felt so uncomfortable to be boxed in the way I was. I would have considered myself a woman because I felt that *half* the time. And then the other half of the time, I wouldn't have considered myself anything. I'm pretty grateful to have been a part of such an open-minded and welcoming community

when I came to this realization.

If fifty years ago, Marcia Lieberman, Betty Roper, Cathy Havens, Bessy Reyna, and all the other women and gender non-conforming people didn't protest, speak out, and fight for what's now the Women's Center, my life, as well as the life of many other individuals, who not only work here, but have come to rely on the safe and supportive space that we as a Center provide to students, would have been completely different. Fifty years ago isn't really that long of a time, either – and the progress we've made since then has been huge, even though it still feels like we're fighting the same fight sometimes. Herstory isn't just her story, it's where we can hold history accountable for everything overlooked. It's where truth comes out to those who are willing to listen, and it's still writing itself to this day. It's crazy that we still have to fight for some of the things that should have been ours from the start – like being able to pick the toy truck at the toy store instead of the Barbie doll, or being able to decide one's own bodily autonomy.

Sometimes it doesn't feel like there's an end to our activism – we fight and make the changes we can make, no matter how big or how small, and then we pass the torch to the next generation to stand on our shoulders so that they can stand a little taller. To push a little farther. To speak a little louder. To demand more. It's how we make the difference in the lives of who come after us, and for those who come after them.





# How Words on a Page Shape Stories Off the Page

by Kayla Simon  
Writing Intern

Gender and sexuality bleed into my own writing when I least expect them. I start a poem about my body dysmorphia and end up writing about my first crush on a girl when I was a teenager. I try to write an essay for my LGBTQ+ literature class and instead, I write way too many sentences conflating my own experiences with the protagonist's. I brain-dump ideas for my Letter from the Writing Intern and find myself unable to talk about anything except my experiences with gender and sexuality in my writing.

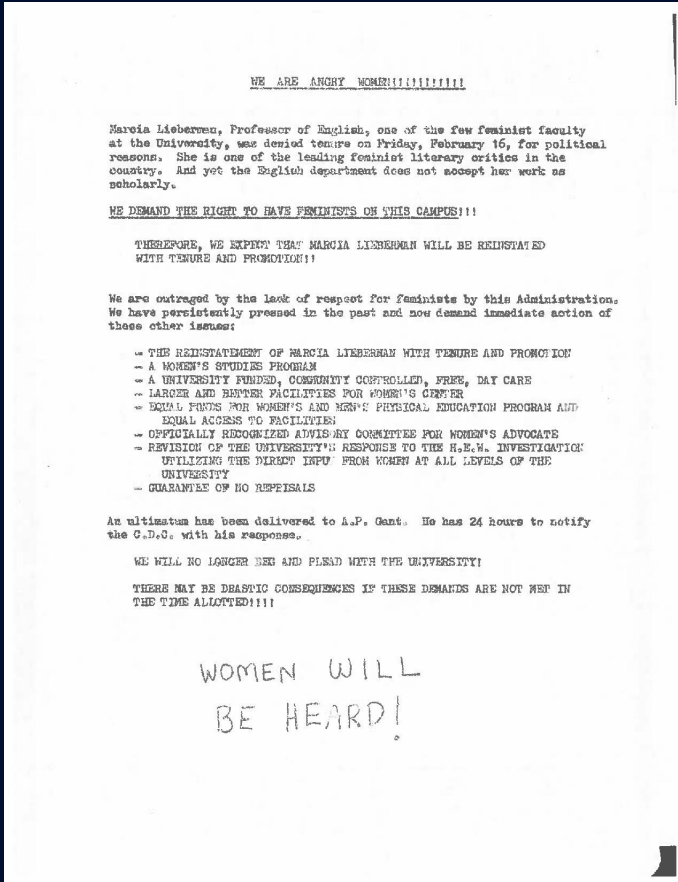
My lived experiences relating to my own gender and sexuality are crucial parts of my individual existence as a woman and as a person; I don't shed these parts of myself when I approach a writing project or a piece of media I'm consuming. And when I read, I find myself drawn to materials written by women *for women*, and I love reading books about bisexual characters or characters that have struggled with their mental health. Representation matters, and I love being able to see myself in what I read. But participating in the Women's Center book club and reading the UConn Reads book *Light From Uncommon Stars* reminded me of how important it is to read narratives that don't center my own experience. We feel seen when we read books that are about us, but we *learn* when we read books that are about others.

That's why the space the Women's Center

creates is so important; it gives room for *all* experiences. We can't live in a bubble comprised only of our own identities; we need to learn from the experiences of others. We need to be encouraged to widen our horizons, to experience the world from the perspective of identities other than our own. Writing for the Women's Center has made me more conscious of how I can create diverse and inclusive spaces in my own writing, as well as the writing I consume. The very fact that this newsletter covers such a wide range of experiences at the Women's Center and in the world at large is crucial. Having students, staff, and the community write about their experiences allows valuable space for conversation, creativity, and learning that could not be accomplished alone. I am so grateful to the Women's Center for creating a diverse and inclusive space both on and off the page for the community to engage and learn.

Words shape how we experience the world. Our language creates us. It would be a mistake to think that how we write doesn't matter and doesn't have the potential to make a huge difference in the world, or even in the life of just one person. And writing *about* these topics is crucial too, so people can see that others have shared their experiences and they are not alone.

# 50 years of HER STORY



decades; it is the dedication and tenacity of the feminist community of students, staff, and faculty that brought us into existence to the important work that is continuing to be done across campuses today. Our story is multifaceted and incomplete. It is comprised of countless individuals and their diverse experiences, perspectives, and voices. We will continue to engage the University community, our alum, and our friends, so that we may honor the work of many through the years and today. As we collectively envision alternative possibilities, we inspire one another to participate in creating opportunities to affect positive social change through meaningful action.

—Written by Kathy Fischer, Women's Center Associate



Over the past year, the Women's Center has dedicated a significant amount of time to going through materials, reading articles and newsletters, and talking to some of the original organizers whose activism led to the founding of the Women's Center and significant changes around gender equity at UConn. Our goal was, and continues to be, to develop our most complete origin story. It has been an amazing journey.

In the early 70s, women across campus – students, staff and faculty – worked together in a variety of different ways to challenge the many institutional barriers they faced. This included consciousness raising groups, protests, creating ad hoc committees, doing research to support women's experiences, and even lawsuits.

Our work has been, and will continue to be, dedicated to recognizing, honoring, and sharing the impact of the work of the Women's Center over the last 5

Feminists occupy Gulley Hall

See story on page 6

UConn Women Get New House

STORRS — The University of Connecticut Women's Center has been given new headquarters near the middle of campus, to replace its building destroyed Nov. 30 by a fire.

About 60 women connected with the Women's Center voted Tuesday to accept the administration's offer of a three-story house on Whitney Road, about a block from the old center.

Continuing education for women, women's studies and child care development programs also will move to the new building within the next two weeks.



But this structure left his two benefits showing from most University housing - gutters and rain, retaining water, heat, and indoor plumbing.

Women at UConn Back Fired Provost

By ROBERT STEPNO

STORRS — University of Connecticut Asst. Provost Gail Shea and representatives of women's groups on campus plan to appeal to the UConn Board of Trustees for Ms. Shea's reinstatement as an advocate for women's rights at the university.

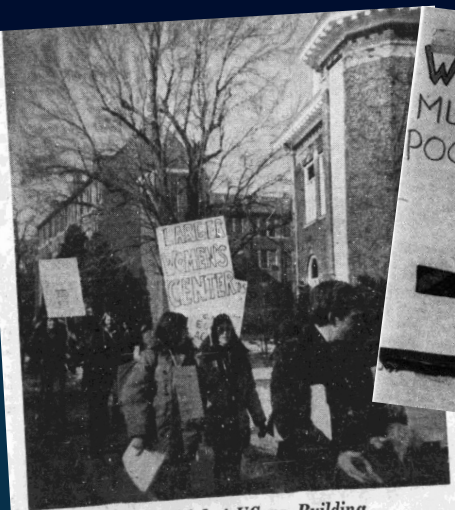
Their statements were released to a Thursday afternoon press conference, at which representatives of two women's groups called the university's action ending Ms. Shea's job "an outrageous political reprisal," "a suppression of freedom of speech," and a sign of discrimination against women.

Ms. Shea did not attend the press conference, but her written statement delivered there confirmed earlier reports that she received a letter from Asst. Provost William Orr Monday, saying her one-year appointment to the UConn staff was terminated.



GAIL SHEA ... Fights UConn Ouster

and Professional Women, the UConn Women's Council and the New Women's Collective. Ms. Shea said that, based on Orr's letter and a subsequent meeting with him, "I can state that the administration has informed me that I will not be See AIDE'S, Page 2, Col. 6



Women Picket UConn Building

About 50 women, angry over what they called the political firing of an active feminist professor at the University of Connecticut, Monday picketed Gulley Hall, UConn's executive office building, Tuesday the women returned to the hall to await a response from Acting President Edward Gant to their demands. Unhappy with the response, the women were still in the building Tuesday night (Stepno Photo).

turned to the hall to await a response from Acting President Edward Gant to their demands. Unhappy with the response, the women were still in the building Tuesday night (Stepno Photo).



Women join men in Field House

All athletics under one roof: What does the change mean?

Page 8 Connecticut Daily Campus, Tuesday, September 16, 1970

Connecticut Daily Campus

Serving Storrs Since 1896

Monday, Nov. 2, 1970

uconn women's lib ... free 'men as well'

range open to the general public which usually feature a speaker. Such a meeting, held here last Monday, included a panel discussion on "Day Care - Enrollment or Neglect?"

The membership is divided into small groups of eight to ten women which function as either discussion groups or task forces. Ideally, each group meets weekly and periodically elects a representative to the monthly staff. This com-

own right, we not only recognize, but encourage divergence of opinion. We therefore recognize that we may have different groups working toward a common goal but taking separate paths."

Members of the task force which had worked unsuccessfully with Administration, have succeeded in establishing day care in the area, but not under the auspices of Women's Liberation. Most of these women retain their membership in Women's Liberation although the center in Women's Hill Road is independent

is planned. One woman has expressed the purpose of the Movement as "opening up options for each individual, not only as to job but as to what kind of role one plays in life. The objective is not to make women like men, but to allow each individual to be himself." Another member feels that "even political change to grant women more equal rights would not be sufficient to accept an equal role. The Women's Liberation Movement is to help women realize their potential." A common opinion of members is that "the liberation of women means that 'the men as well.'" They suggest

Women's Center Given Gilbert Road Building

STORRS — University of Connecticut women's groups ended a year and a half search for a building of their own Friday. UConn said the Women's Center will soon be housed in a brown frame duplex near the center of campus. The building is on Gilbert Road, a central street near the Humanities Building and several dormitory complexes. In making the announcement, UConn President Glenn W. Ferguson said part of the new facility will be available before the end of the semester. He said the new Women's Center is one step toward meeting the needs of women within the university community. The building will house a

newspaper (journalism, agriculture, nutrition), reviewed to attend

range of activities and offices for women's affairs. Currently, the Women's Center is in two rooms in the university's Commons buildings. The Women's Center has complained that being tied to the Commons has limited the hours they can keep the center open. Since the search for a permanent center began in August 1972, the women have said they needed larger facilities for counseling, baby-sitting, study area, a library and other activities. Currently the Department of Psychology has research activities in the Gilbert Road building, but these will be relocated when the department moves into its new building during the summer.

HELLO! WE ARE ALIVE + WELL!

Yes, there was a fire destroying 75% of the Women's Center and Center for Education for Women's House on Saturday morning, November 30. The newspaper and other media have probably informed you of the grim details. Not much was left but the remains are located in the ROTC hangar floor. Most of the files are reorganized. The wet and burnt will need to be retyped and we appreciate them giving us a room with a telephone line included, the number is 486-4738. We need help in typing mailing lists, repairing files and a way for us supporting one another. It's another struggle but a way for us to continually build unity among us. We're having a GENERAL MEETING December 10, at 7:30 pm to discuss our future plans. Your input is important. PLEASE COME! We are continuing to offer referrals and supportive services to women plus the following programs:

1. PEER COUNSELING will continue. Call to find out when counselors are available. Definite hours will be set up after semester break.
  2. HEALTH COLLECTIVE a. Self-Help cancelled - the slides were lost in the fire. b. General Meetings will continue - look for notices.
  3. CHILD CARE COLLECTIVE is still working on their proposal.
  4. WORKSHOP ON FEMALE SEXUALITY continued after semester break.
  5. LIBRARY in needs of repair but accessible.
  6. CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING will continue.
  7. RAPE CRISIS will continue Mondays at 7:30pm (after semester break, time and day may be changed).
  8. COFFEEHOUSES will continue.
  9. REFERRAL AND INFORMATION AVAILABLE - regular staffing hours.
  10. SPECIAL PROGRAMS will go on - look for notices.
- KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US = 486-4738  
OUR HOURS WILL BE = 9-5 MONDAY-FRIDAY  
WE NEED TO SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER NOW. COME AND SEE US!  
In Sisterhood and Struggle,  
UConn's WOMEN'S CENTER



A center for women comes and goes

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE COLLECTION:

# celebrating art by women

@ THE WILLIAM BENTON MUSEUM OF ART

It seems fitting that the earliest work in the exhibition, *Encounters with the Collection: Celebrating Art by Women*, is a self-portrait, a genre that has long provided artists with an opportunity to show off their skills and reflect on their place in the world. Given the relative invisibility of women in the history of art, we might even consider self-portraits as acts of defiance. Anna Maria van Schurman created her self-portrait in 1640. An artist, scholar, and feminist, it served as the frontispiece for an edition of her writings. Through this image, she seems to say, "I made this. I am worthy of your attention."



Anna Maria van Schurman (Dutch, born Germany, 1607-1678), *Self-Portrait*, 1640, Engraving, William Benton Museum of Art.



Installation view, *Encounters with the Collection: Celebrating Art by Women*, August 30, 2022 to July 28, 2024, William Benton Museum of Art, Storrs, CT

*Celebrating Art by Women* brings together work by 45 women-identified artists, designers, and collectives from the Benton's collection for a two-year celebration of two 50th anniversaries at UConn: that of the Women's Center and the Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center. The exhibition's title can be read in two ways. On the one hand, it implies all the joy and festivity of a party. At the same time, however, a celebration can be a commemoration or salute, a memorial or tribute. These twin impulses of joyful festivity and somber commemoration are held in tension in the exhibition, which touches on the challenges women artists have faced, in addition to their achievements, as a reminder of the work still to be done.



Installation view, *Encounters with the Collection: Celebrating Art by Women*, August 30, 2022 to July 28, 2024, William Benton Museum of Art, Storrs, CT

**TheBenton**  
THE WILLIAM BENTON MUSEUM OF ART

Courtesy of [benton.uconn.edu](http://benton.uconn.edu)

The exhibition took shape through a research project undertaken by museum staff to learn more about the artists in the Benton’s collections. Collecting art by women has long been a priority at the Benton, and many of the museum’s most celebrated early acquisitions were by women artists, including Mary Cassatt, Angelica Kauffmann, Gabriele Münter, Ellen Emmet Rand, and Käthe Kollwitz. At the same

time, women-identified and non-binary artists represent less than twenty percent of named artists in the Benton’s collections. This sobering statistic underscores the enduring weight of systemic gender discrimination, and the need for the museum to do more in support of gender equity.

—Written by Amanda A. Douberley, Ph.D., Assistant Curator/Academic Liaison, @ UCONN’s William Benton Museum of Art

## Visiting the Benton...

*I used to think that the building adjacent to Rowe simply as the Benton cafe, but little did I know it was a museum with so many layers. I’ve never been to the Benton Museum prior to the Women’s center visit, but I still really enjoyed it. The brief presentation about the history of the museum was interesting and super informative. While looking at the art, I found the upside down women falling from the sky my favorite piece of work by Rosemary Laing. I was astounded to find that the work had no digital manipulation, and the individual in the photo was a real-time stunt person. For twenty whole minutes, I was trying to determine how the photo was created the way it was and understand Laing’s meaning in her art. I have a few theories, but honestly, not knowing is what made the entire speculation so fun. I appreciated the artist’s small description that was placed near the work and many of the arts elusiveness. Being able to create a own narrative of the work based on your perception and individual experiences was captivating and powerful, and it’s been a while since I’ve done that! I would definitely recommend others to visit the Benton museum in their free time and take a friend!*

H John Voorhees III via Hearst Connecticut Media

—Kas Quiles



# WOMEN'S WORDS LIVE ON!



## ***Honoring the Contributions of Women Writers, Scholars, and Visionaries***

Provided from the Women's Center's archives and placed in Homer D. Babbidge Library, this collection displayed literature written by or about women and issues affecting women. This exhibit will be recreated for viewing on the fourth floor of the Student Union next to the Women's Center.

# CONSCIOUSNESS COLLECTIVE!

**I**n the fall, I had planned several group discussions for what we call the *Consciousness Collective*. The idea to start this group came from our Associate Director, Kathy, who wanted to introduce the consciousness raising process to a new generation of UConn students. Consciousness raising is a form of activism that was popularized by feminists during the women's liberation movement in the 1960s. It consists of individuals gathering together to share stories from their life about various topics, offering support for one another, and analyzing their personal experiences in the context of broader political, institutional, and social structures. This serves as a way to collect data about individual lives in order to use it as evidence for oppression experienced by a certain group.

At UConn, consciousness raising had an active role in the establishment of the Women's Center in 1972. In the late 1960's, women across campus had started joining together to discuss feminist issues relating specifically to their experiences on campus. One of the many concerns at the time was that women did not have access to facilities in the field house. Through consciousness raising groups, UConn faculty Dr. Marcia Lieberman and Wendy Chapple were able to spread

awareness about the lack of equity, and a group was established to bring this concern to the UConn administration. Ultimately, the group was successful, and a women's locker room was installed in the field house. As seen through this example, consciousness raising created a foundation for women to fight for feminist issues at UConn as long as 50 years ago.

To pay homage to the successes of consciousness raising, we decided to start the Consciousness Collective; a group that meets several times a semester to discuss various topics. For one of our meetings, we talked about sexism and how it has impacted each of our lives at various stages in time. The discussion was very successful, and we were able to make connections between our stories despite being from different backgrounds which was very insightful to see. Consciousness raising is important because it lets women know that they are not alone in their experiences and creates a safe space to get a deeper understanding of why things are the way they are. With knowledge comes power, and consciousness raising allows us to learn more about systems of oppression so we can be better equipped to fight them.

—Written by Kellie Sartoris



# THE FIGHT FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

— *let's start with reproductive justice.*

To many, the overturning of Roe V. Wade at the end of June last year came as a surprise, but to many feminists and women activists, this was expected. Roe V. Wade had made abortion a constitutional right for anyone who possessed the ability to bear a child, and while the initial case was ruled just about fifty years ago in 1973, the fears and uncertainties about bodily autonomy and choice that were prevalent in the 60's and 70's are now resurfacing and growing as a result of recent events.

I sat down with our Women's Center Director, **Kathleen Holgerson**, who was a key panelist in the Reproductive Town Hall at UCONN. We discussed what reproductive justice is, how it could be applied to the worrisome current events, and most importantly, what actions can be taken to persevere through this setback.

Reproductive justice, even though it is heavily tied into the abortion argument relevant today, includes more than just the right to not bear a child. It also includes the right to have a child, as well as the right to parent the child in a safe environment.

Simple enough, right? But Kathleen urges us to think about this more broadly. It is "larger than childbearing, quite frankly. I certainly understand that as a core piece, but there's a lot of ways in which we just have to have really nuanced conversations about this." In short, we need to view reproductive justice as "making decisions about what happens with your body."

It's also important to acknowledge that the lack of abortion access directly affects more than just their reproductive health. Without proper reproductive care, completing college can prove to be a huge struggle. "Community colleges are really good at supporting expectant and parenting students, but most traditional kinds of colleges and universities are not. Students who are parents are much less likely to continue their education to attain a degree. That's going to impact your financial future – your financial future, not only for you, but for your children, too." She also makes the point that one's "ability to control whether or not this is the right time can really help or hurt with the ability to navigate life in general."

According to Pew Research, as of 2022, about

61% of Americans believe that abortion should be legal. A majority in the US believe in the right of a woman or individual with a uterus to make their own choices. But if that's the case, why was it overturned?

***"People have been organizing for a long time to reverse Roe V. Wade... But the organizing and the voices that were loudest were the ones that were able to manipulate the situation so that the decision would be overturned,"***  
— ***Kathleen Holgerson***

Even Connecticut, a state that has consistently voted blue in all our congressional elections and state elections for over a decade and is a safe harbor for those seeking abortions from out of the state, may not always be this safe. It's important to keep reminding those in office what we, as Connecticut citizens, want. "While we don't have the ability to vote in the Supreme Court, we do have the ability to vote in the people who are going to make the decisions about who are going to the Supreme Court. This is also about voting at every level, because now what's happening is state by state decisions... your governors and your state senate – those are the folks now who are making the decisions about what does Connecticut look like versus Texas versus Florida versus – wherever."



Women protesting for abortion rights, image Courtesy of Center for Reproductive Rights



If you're worried about your rights or the rights of those you care about in relation to reproductive healthcare and bodily autonomy, I urge you to learn more about reproductive healthcare with the goal of contributing to the ongoing conversation in professional and personal spaces, as well as through social media. Gathering information from spaces like the [Center of Reproductive Rights](#), [Innovating Education](#), and [SisterSong](#) are good places to start. You can also look for any local [donation funds](#) in your [area](#) supporting the [right to choice](#), bodily autonomy, and [healthcare](#) and contribute what you're comfortable with.

For resources regarding reproductive healthcare on UConn campuses, [SHAW](#) provides resources, appointments, checkups, and more. Please check with your provider if these services are covered by your insurance.

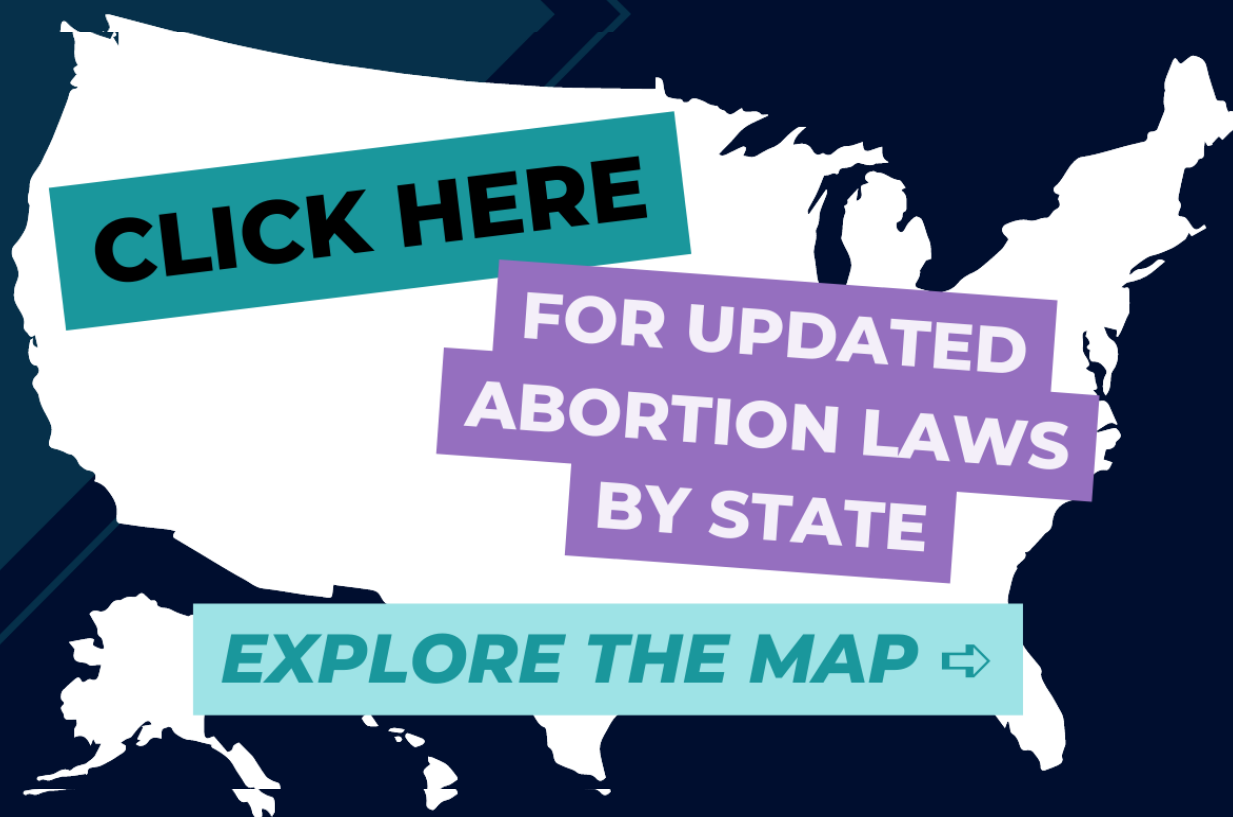
The fight for reproductive rights isn't one that seems to have an end. Sometimes it's discouraging when we've made a step forward only to be pushed back and met with resistance. But it's critically important to keep fighting for the future we want, as we are standing on the shoulders of everyone else who has fought before us.

—Written by Ara Huynh

# ABORTION IS A HUMAN RIGHT.



Protest and Pro Choice Graphics, Images Courtesy of Canva



Click the image above or click [here](#) to see an up-to-date map on abortion laws by state.

# MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY

PROFESSOR,  
MAYA ANGELOU  
PRESIDENTIAL  
CHAIR

Wake Forest University

FRIDAY, NOV 4th  
@ 7 PM  
JORGENSEN  
CENTER FOR THE  
PERFORMING ARTS  
Registration required.



UConn  
WOMEN'S  
CENTER  
50  
YEARS

womenscenter@uconn.edu



\* If you require an accommodation to participate in this event, please contact the Jorgensen Box Office at (860) 486-4226.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

On November 4th of 2022, the UConn Women's Center hosted Melissa Harris-Perry as a guest speaker in our space. Melissa is a seasoned professor, radio host, and political scientist. You may know her from her successful news and opinion show that ran on MSNBC from 2012 to 2016. Since then, she has

transformed her content to be more accessible and digestible, in the form of her podcast-radio show: *The Takeaway*. Additionally, she's done a great amount of work speaking as a feminist all around the country, and her time here was just amazing. The objective of her time at the Center was for her and the staff to become more acquainted with each other and for her to get a full grasp on what exactly we do here. Furthermore, she acted as a fountain of knowledge and expertise regarding the world of anti-racist feminism, and she was not afraid to spill. When she entered the room, you could hear a pin drop. Everyone was so nervous in her presence. However, she did such an amazing job of making everyone feel comfortable and secure and even called us out for not being talkative enough – and that made people want to talk. Melissa was interested in everyone in the room, and she wanted to know what we do here at the Center. You could tell that people felt heard when she talked because she is an awesome active listener. When the Women's Center staff posed our questions to her, she answered with raw honesty. She also took it upon herself to elaborate more and more with each answer she gave. For example, I asked her to give a suggestion as to what our university can do to help better attack the issues we face in the Center, and she started by giving us a not-so-brief synopsis of her professional career, which helped with the context of her answer. Then, she gave a list of a couple of things that could help with regard to my question. Later that night, she took her expertise to the Jorgenson Center, where she led another fascinating talk. I think I can speak for everyone when I say Melissa Harris-Perry made a strong impact on our Women's Center community as a great role model for the kind of person we all want to be.

—Written by Anthony Figueroa

# NOV. 4TH 50TH ANNIVERSARY ALUMNI BRUNCH



## THE THREE MAGDELENAS!

*Pictured Left to Right  
Magdalena Silver (Interim Chief of Police), Bessy Reyna (One  
of the original organizers of the WC; a poet, author, and  
activist), and Heidi Magdalena Pineda (President of  
D.A.M.A.S.)*

**A**t the Women's Center 50th Anniversary Brunch, I had the unique opportunity to connect with Magdalena (Bessy) Reyna, who helped establish the Women's Center, and Interim Chief of Police Magdalena Silver, who also contributed to the Center's lasting legacy. Bessy was not only instrumental in the founding of our Center, but she also contributed to the gay movement on our campus in addition to supporting the students who founded the Puerto Rican and Latin American Cultural Center (PRLACC). Then there's me, the 3rd Magdalena.

Connecting with Bessy was an affirming experience, as we share Central American, feminist, and queer identities. Her activism and involvement in the founding of the Women's Center and PRLACC has provided me with the opportunity to find and build community within these spaces as the President of Distinguished and Motivated Academic Scholars (D.A.M.A.S.). D.A.M.A.S. provides academic and professional support to Latina/x students and aims to celebrate the intersections that exist between PRLACC and the Women's Center through our programming. Bridging communities, like D.A.M.A.S. attempts to do, was a central focus of the event.

Associate Director Kathy Fischer, alongside Bessy, highlighted in their co-presentation of the Women Center's Herstory the importance of coalition building. Alliances built between collectives such as the Black Women's Collective, the Child Care Collective, the Counseling Collective, the Lesbian Collective, the Library Collective, and the Writers' Collective gave way to the Center's founding. This work continues today, in organizations such as D.A.M.A.S. and programs such as Between Women, Moms4Moms, the Women's Affinity Group, and the Women of Color Collective to name a few. As we look forward to the next 50 years of the Women's Center, I'll leave you with the following from Bessy:

*"We haven't stopped building, and we won't until we have all of our rights – until the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) is passed, until women can have complete control over their bodies, and we are treated with dignity and the humanity that we deserve."*

*—Written by Heidi Magdalena Pineda*

# Happy 50 YEARS UCONN WOMEN'S CENTER 50th Birthday



*Front, left to right: Bessy Reyna (Original Organizer of the WC), Cathy Belanger (Original Organizer of the WC), Myra Hindus (Former Director), Kathleen Holgerson (Current Director).*

*Back, left to right : Lauren Donais (Former VAWPP coordinator). Elise Delacruz (VAWPP Director), Daniela Iniestra Varelas (Current GA), Judy Lopez (WC Assistant), Carol Millette (Former WC Assistant), Kathy Fischer (Current Associate Director) and Jacqueline Cobbina-Boivin (Former Associate Director).*



*Bessy Reyna and Kathy Fischer*



*Left to Right: Tania Flores (Former GA), Lauren Donais, Carol Millette, Cathy Belanger, Janna Pedersen, Bessy Reyna, Jacqueline Cobbina-Bolvin, and Myra Hindus*



*Elise Delacruz & Jacqueline Cobbina-Boivin*



*Kathleen Holgerson & Bessy Reyna*



*Kathy Fischer delivers a presentation on the WC's Herstory*

# STAY TRUE TO YOUR SHELF



...AT THE WOMEN'S CENTER BOOK CLUB



Something new to the Women's Center this semester is a Book Club discussing this year's UConn Reads book, *Light From Uncommon Stars*. [UConn Reads](#) is a program for members of the UConn community to engage in discussion around a specific book for the year. This year's pick motivated Edymar De La Cruz, the Administrative Assistant at the UConn Women's Center, to begin a book club to foster conversation around this book. Edymar and I had a conversation about what it was like for her to start a brand new book club at the Women's Center and discussed the importance of a book like *Light From Uncommon Stars* to the book club and the greater UConn community.

I wondered first about why Edymar wanted to start a book club and why *Light From Uncommon Stars* was their inaugural book. Not only was the sense of community that arises from hosting a book club important to Edymar, but she also felt another benefit would be that "a book club would really bring more people into the Women's Center." More specifically, Edymar felt that *Light From Uncommon Stars* would bring important

topics to the table for conversation while reaching people who could relate to the characters in the book. "There's a lot of queer representation and also Asian representation in the book and I feel like that facilitates a lot of discussion... When I was reading the book, I was already writing down, 'oh, this is gonna be a great thing to talk about,' but if I was reading it on my own, I wouldn't really have anybody to talk to about it."

Edymar clearly understood the importance of sharing a diverse book with her community. "With the topics that this book brings, I would want people to feel more educated or just enlightened and to overall hear about trans people's experiences and queer people's experiences. Even if it is fictional characters, it's still representative to folks and some people might resonate with that," she told me. "I don't know anybody's identity in the book club, but if there are people that relate to the characters in the book, that brings a lot of representation and it's good to talk about."

"When you think about feminism, there's a lot of people left out of that conversation and most of [the people left out] are minority identities, but everything about this book is a minority identity," Edymar pointed out to acknowledge the importance of this story and how the book features a trans girl as the main protagonist. "Especially with trans women, they are often left out of the conversation of feminism. And when it comes to trans issues, there are not enough people fighting towards that." Bringing these issues to light in a book club allows these crucial conversations to reach a wider audience.

On March 6th, Edymar ran a fantastic first official meeting of the book club to discuss the first 10 chapters of the book. The dialogue focused on sparking a nuanced dialogue with her thoughtfully crafted discussion question. The small group discussed violence, sexuality, romance, queerness, Asian identity, allyship, consent, performativity, and representation—all in one sixty-minute meeting!

Though Edymar is graduating at the end of this semester, she hopes the book club has a lasting legacy. "I definitely want this to be something permanent."

— Written by Kayla Simon

# LIGHT FROM UNCOMMON STARS

*Light From Uncommon Stars* by Ryka Aoki tells the story of Shizuka Satomi, a violin teacher who has made a literal deal with the devil, and her newest student Katrina Nguyen. Shizuka only needs one more violin prodigy's soul to trade for her own freedom, and Katrina, a teenage transgender runaway with a depth of passion and talent for the violin, seems to Shizuka to be the perfect final contender. Add Lan Tran to the mix, a captain and mother new to Earth from an interstellar location, and things get a bit more complicated as Shizuka starts to crush on this unlikely woman who went from running a spaceship to running a donut shop. How will these three characters handle the intersection of their lives and the magic, love, and change their relationships bring?

I wasn't sure how I was going to feel about this book initially based on the summary I read on the back cover. Donuts, interstellar refugees, and violin playing? While I love donuts, I don't always love reading this genre of fantasy. But I am so glad that UConn Reads and the Women's Center Book Club brought this book to my attention because I absolutely loved it. I flew through the writing and couldn't wait to find out what was in store for our main characters, Katrina, Shizuka, and Lan. Their relationships felt so real to me and I loved how genuinely I cared for each one of the characters and their outcomes by the end of the book. This is a story about talent, fate, and love; about finding your own family; about discovering what's important in your world; about identity, and breaking free. It's a weird

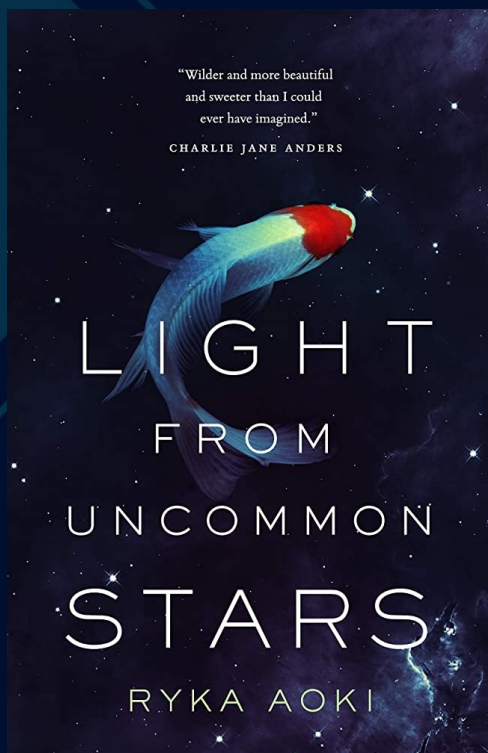
read, yes, but in the best possible way. Not to mention I was *definitely* craving donuts by the time I finished the book.

Beyond its compelling narrative and beautiful, eccentric prose, one of the most significant aspects of this book to me was the diversity its characters brought to the narrative. The book brings the vibrant Asian community in

California to life as the characters traverse different areas of the coastline, bringing in different languages and cultures. Perhaps most notably, the story features a protagonist Katrina who is transgender and details her experiences in one of the most genuine and heartfelt ways I have read. Woven between the fantasy elements of the book is the strikingly real experience of a trans girl who has left home and is trying to survive and thrive in a world of her own making. *Light From Uncommon Stars* doesn't focus on just one letter in the LGBTQ+; the book brings a cast of queer characters, featuring a same-sex relationship and highlighting different members of the community throughout its narrative.

Fifty years ago, a book like *Light From Uncommon Stars* would not be featured in bookstore recommendations and bestseller lists. Even 10 years ago, it might not have been able to achieve the success that it has this year. But we are lucky enough here at UConn to have this beautiful book as our UConn Reads and Women's Center Book Club book, and I cannot recommend it enough to anyone who might be considering picking it up.

— Written by Kayla Simon





# FEMINIST FREQUENCY

## AN INTERVIEW WITH THE WOMEN'S CENTER PODCAST'S TEAM

**Context Note from the Editor:** At the beginning of the spring semester, the staff here at the Center began the process of starting a Women's Center podcast. The idea came about from trying to find more ways to connect both with and beyond the UConn community to discuss topics in feminism. As the podcast is still in its early stages, this interview with Anthony, a Men's Project facilitator, and Jola, an In-Power facilitator, highlights the direction and purpose of this work-to-be and how its importance to our campus.

### **How did the idea for Feminist Frequency begin?**

We listen to podcasts everyday. Whether informational or for entertainment, we always have them in our ears. So, the Women's Center staff were brainstorming about ways to get more people involved in the Center and we landed on podcasting. We feel that it is a more accessible and attractive way to let people know about what exactly we do at the Center. The podcast would encourage critical thinking and community engagement within the student population by providing them with an opportunity to analyze and discuss the complex factors of identity and resources within the Women's Center. The podcast would foster a sense of community among students who are interested in the Women's Center and gender-based issues, thus encouraging collaboration on initiatives to address the problem. It would also leave a lot of room for flexibility in how we want to spread awareness.

### **Will this be a more casual or formal sort of podcast?**

To achieve this goal of increasing the Center's rapport with students at UConn, we believe that the podcast should be a good mix of both. If the whole production is straightforward and formal, people may be reluctant to listen. On the other hand, if it is too casual, folks may not learn as much as they could. So, hopefully we can develop a chemistry between hosts and guests to where it can feel like a casual conversation with the content being educational and empowering. With that being said, it is hoped that everyone involved in the show will have a good time and feel free to be themselves while still advancing the intersectional mission of the Women's Center.

### **Will these shows typically be more lighthearted or heavy-hearted with more difficult-to-discuss topics?**

Shows will be more lighthearted for the most part. We want to create a space that people do not have to prepare to be in, but that still allows them to talk about their concerns and experiences. Therefore, we anticipate that hard hitting topics will inevitably have to be talked about as they might be relevant to the understanding and awareness that we aim to increase. So, trigger warnings will certainly be provided at the start of the show, or during it as necessary so that our viewers are safe.

### **What's the most important thing you want listeners to experience or take away from listening to this podcast?**

One of the major goals for this project is to break down the stigma around learning about topics like sexuality, gender-based violence, and feminism. We want listeners to be able to look at social issues through an empowering lens and be motivated to learn more and/or help in their own ways. Furthermore, we would hope that folks are more drawn to the Women's Center overall and the overall and the programs and services that we provide as it is challenging sometimes for people to keep track of all resources available to them.

### **What's so important about the Women's Center even having a podcast in the first place?**

First and foremost, we definitely want to use the podcast to highlight and promote the amazing events and programs that our staff provide here at the Center for the UConn community. Also, we acknowledge that our topics and missions can be hard to listen or talk about for some people. Some people do not feel very affected by them, some people feel uncomfortable talking about things they might not be very knowledgeable on, and some people are simply bored by them. However, it is important that people have a space to learn more and/or have their voices heard. Through these conversations, we would hopefully be able to break the barriers of stigma and discrimination. So, if we are able to communicate these messages through a medium that is easily accessible to college students- as well many others- it would be a huge success.

—Written by Anthony Figueroa and Jola Bufi



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# LEARNING FROM THE PAST TAKEBACK THE NIGHT TO INFORM THE FUTURE

An annual event to honor the survivors of gender-based violence, Take Back the Night aims to offer survivors of sexual assault the opportunity to regain control over their own narrative and aid their healing. It's called Take Back The Night (TBTN) because the original protest was against the fear that women have when walking alone at night, but the event welcomes all individuals of all identities. The Women's Center hosts this event during Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and it is open to both survivors and friends so we can support one another and raise awareness. Gender-based violence can be a triggering and sensitive topic to a lot of people, so we took care in designing our activities, inviting speakers, and crafting our speech. By raising awareness and educating students and faculty about the prevalence of campus sexual assault, this event aims to create a safer community within UConn.

The most important thing to keep in mind for TBTN is having a safe and inviting space for all of the attendees. Experiences of gender-based violence can be isolating and scary, so our priority is to ensure that we give space for survivors to share their stories and work towards closure. We want students to know that their experiences and feelings are validated. We also hope that they feel heard, seen, and understood by their UConn peers. To achieve a sense of community, we're adding bonding activities and interactive games this year for participants.

We are doing a bunch of new things this year for TBTN, but one of them is the envisioning of a gender-based-violence-free world. By collaborating with all

UConn regional campuses, we're crafting a statement about our vision of a world with no gender-based violence together as the opening of the event; representatives from each campus are going to join virtually and we'll read the statement together. We'll also be hosting a competition— student participants of the event are tasked with writing a piece of 1000 words or less talking about their vision for a UConn Campus free of gender-based violence. The winner will receive a \$15 Amazon gift card and a TBTN shirt, and a portion of the winner's submission will also be read at TBTN. The goal here is to encourage students to think about what changes can be made to make this campus a safer place.

Take Back The Night and other events like it are essential because sexual assault on campus is prevalent and we need to do everything in our power to educate people on this issue while also supporting and validating survivors. The only way to generate change is by raising awareness through education and challenging the ways in which we facilitate a problematic environment. UConn is a community, no matter how fraught, how different, how large. This event is a chance for a smaller group of our community to lift each other up and support one another through something that can and often does take a huge psychological toll. The Women's Center is not just for women and we have so many wonderful programs for them to participate in. TBTN, as amazing as it is, is only one of the many avenues of support we offer to the UConn community.

—Written by Grace Wang, Nala Davis & Katie Holmes

# TB TN



Empowered  
Women  
Empower  
Women



LEARNING  
FROM THE  
PAST  
TO INFORM  
THE FUTURE





WE ARE SURVIVORS

# 50 Years Later...

all



## WISTEM



# In-Power



# GASA



# MEN'S PROJECT