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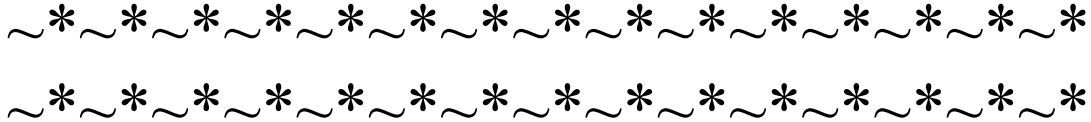

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URI Women's Studies Newsletter February, 2007

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Director's Column February 2007

I am thinking about new beginnings. The view from my window in Eleanor Roosevelt Hall shows new construction, a new dining hall being built.

A new semester always starts with hope and promise: new experiences, new ideas, new books to read, challenges to meet. We have a rich array of speakers this semester; be sure to attend the events listed in this newsletter and on our newly-redesigned web page.

I have just moved to a new home. This brings with it a new way of looking at the world: new sights and sounds from my window, new ways to arrange the spaces for living. This reinforces my New Year's Resolutions: to be more organized, to savor more private moments and share more time with friends and family, to find more time to read for pleasure.

This new year seems especially hopeful. The democratic majority in Congress brings promise of change: of concern for minorities and people in poverty, of a new emphasis on health care, education, human well-being, and pressure to end the war in Iraq. But politics is a matter of compromise, of balancing moral imperatives with financial pressure. We must continue to monitor what our elected representatives are doing, to let them know of our concerns, to hold them accountable for their votes.

I wish for you a new year and a new semester that fulfills your hopes and expectations, that offers you new ideas, deeper learning, richer friendships, greater awareness, times of joy and peace.

Introducing: Your Editor ☺

Hello readers, I am the new editor of the Women's Studies (spectacular) Newsletter. Let me go over the basics: my name is Shannon Stad, I'm majoring in both English and Women's Studies and I work as a lab monitor in various on-campus computer labs. I'm a daughter, sister, cousin, niece and, last but not least, friend (aww).

Since that's out of the way, allow me to get a bit more specific. I am also a member of the one and only self-proclaimed feminist group on campus, P.A.G.E (Promoting Awareness for Gender Equality). It is a wonderful group, and we try to get as many events as we can out there on campus. Just last semester we hosted a "Love Your Body Day", as well as campaigned for pro-choice candidates during last year's elections. This year, we're conjuring up plans for an Affirmative Action Week in March, as well as helping with Take Back the Night, which will take place on-campus in April. I encourage all feminists to join this group; the meetings are held on Wednesdays at 5:30, room 202 in the Memorial Union. If you cannot make it and still would like to help, contact the president, Colleen, at irishrose_colleen@yahoo.com.

Now that I've gotten through with promoting P.A.G.E, we can really get down to business! I'm one of those people who don't consider identifying your sex, gender, sexual preferences, religion, ethnic background, etc. as very important. However, many minorities *must* identify their diverse selves, be proud, and let themselves be known in order to promote understanding and awareness. It's a very hard topic for me, and you can see why (can we say "confusing"?). But, if I must, I'll identify as a female with fluid gender and sexual preference, atheist, and quite frankly, one of the palest people you would ever see (Irish, Polish, English, Italian).

I love my cat, can't sleep well without a stuffed toy, and did I mention I love my cat more than any one person? I'm also love the books "Cunt" by Igna Musico, "Female Chauvinist Pigs" by Ariel Levy and (an older favorite) "Ordinary People" by Judith Guest.

Now that I've quenched your thirst for knowledge regarding *me* (hah!), I hope you enjoy this newsletter and all the information within.

-Shannon Stad

We welcome your submissions. Please e-mail shmariest@hotmail.com Submissions must list your name and contact information, but if you request, we will not publish your name. Submissions may be edited.

The URI Women's Studies Program presents

- Tuesday, Feb 13
Jody Lisberger
DES and Diflucan: Pharmaceutical Marketing Choices-Why Women Should Take Heed
URI Women's Center
5:15 - 6:30 pm

Tuesday, Feb. 27
Donna Hughes
Sex Trafficking: Policy and Debates
URI Library Galanti Lounge 5:00 - 6:30 pm

- Tuesday, March 6
Stephanie Dunson
The Old Folks at Home: Domesticity and Race in 19th Century Sheet Music
URI Library Galanti Lounge 5:00 - 6:30 pm
- Tuesday, March 13
Raging Grannies
Songs and Activism
URI Women's Center
5:15 - 6:30 pm

- Wednesday, April 4
Dawn Paul
Reading from Still River

URI Women's Center
5:15 - 6:30 pm

- Tuesday, April 10
Naomi Caldwell
Native American Women
URI Women's Center
5:15 - 6:30 pm

Note: For more information call 874-5150. Program access will be provided to persons with disabilities. If you need disability assistance, sign interpretation, or have questions about accessibility, please call 784-5150 at least 3 days in advance.

P.A.G.E (Promoting Awareness for Gender Equality)

- **April 4**, Take Back the Night at URI. Speakers, music, marching and support.
- **March 26-30**, Affirmative Week of Action. Keep an eye out for fliers regarding times and places!

More Events

- **Wednesday, February 14 at 4:30pm**

Join us at the State House

on Valentine's Day for Marriage Equality RI's 4th Annual Rally for Marriage Equality in the State House Rotunda. For more information, see www.MarriageEqualityRI.org.

- **Tuesday, March 6**
Save the Date! League Day at the State House. Speaker: Jennifer Lawless. 5:30pm. For more information as the date draws nearer, visit the League of Women Voters Rhode Island website at www.lwvri.org.

- The Fredrika Wild Schweers Lecture on women and health: Janet Mancini Billson "Female Well Being: Challenges and Power" Tues, **March 27 White Hall Auditorium 7-9 PM**

- **April 22** the WMS Program will have a pot luck lunch at Professor Karen Stein's house in Kingston followed by a matinee of "Pride and Prejudice" at the URI theatre, directed by Bryna Wortman.



On Taking Action

-Shannon Stad

“Taking action” can mean oh-so-many things. It’s a shame that many people are put off by the terms “activism” and “feminism”, especially when used in the same sentence—but that is a completely different topic, for a completely different audience.

For those who are simply put off by activism because they think it only entails marching around with signs, traveling and having to constantly be working toward a set goal, which is totally righteous (does anyone use that word anymore?), I’d like to give some comfort and advice. I, too, used to be very put off by the term “activism”, never thinking I could truly be an activist. Seeing pictures of people shouting, chanting, fighting for what they believed was right was truly a spectacle, and I wished I could put that much time and effort into my beliefs. And it wasn’t until college that I realized that I *did*.

Activism isn’t always about going out and making big plans for the day (though it does help), but it is also in the way I live my life. It is as simple as stopping a sexist or racist joke in its tracks. Maybe even just not thinking it is funny, and not laughing. Voicing one’s opinion out in the open to friends, family, classmates and coworkers even counts—and isn’t that easy to do (not to mention satisfying)? So, as you see, in simply being yourself- or myself, we are already activists. Fighting for women’s rights, fighting racism and classism; it’s as easy as utilizing everyday occurrences to get a point across.

Of course, there is much more to taking action than the everyday. A step up would be signing petitions, writing letters to state representatives, or even making phone calls to politicians to voice one’s opinions on pressing issues. Don’t be afraid of the writing part—it’s quite easy. For example, many of the letters Planned Parenthood’s take action site sends out include pre-written messages. All it takes is for you to fill in your personal information (so they know it’s coming from real people). This is my preferred way of communicating to local representatives, since the phone tends to scare me, though I’m also all for voting. Which reminds me: Always Remember To Vote!

There, now don’t you all feel just a bit better about taking action, being an activist, and finding ways to get your fantastic feminist thoughts out there? Even googling “ways to take action” will bring up wonderful websites to help feminists get involved in many ways, including events to attend.

On that note- good luck to y’all out there in getting something done, spreading the word that discrimination/ prejudice/ whatever just isn’t *in style*.

Visit our web page, newly-redesigned by Melodi Landi at www.uri.edu/artsci/wms

You will find information about our events, faculty, and the WMS scholarships and prizes.

Please consider applying for one of the WMS scholarships. We also welcome submissions to the Mother Jones essay contest.

Have you taken 2 or more WMS courses? Is your GPA 3.0 or higher? If so, you may be eligible to join the WMS Honor Society, Iota Iota Iota. Please contact Professor Stein at wmsdir@etal.uri.edu

The U.R.I. Women's Center – A Unique Living and Learning Environment

The Women's Center will have a full house of 31 women residents this semester. Much of the credit goes to Scott Tsagarakis, Director of the Fraternity Managers Association, who helped to make transfer students aware of the Women's Center as an on-campus housing option. Is this an option for you? Preference is given to women majoring in science or technology (WIST), but others are welcome if space is available. Women interested in becoming a part of the WIST community have to complete an application process, which includes an interview.

As someone who lived in a house with eight other girls while in college, I am aware of the challenges that living with all women can pose. Living with 30 other women is not for everyone! However, for those individuals who are ready to embrace an all-women living environment, the Women's Center offers students the opportunity to live in a community-oriented setting that is based on mutual respect and tolerance. With a zero tolerance policy in regard to alcohol and drugs, the Women's Center hopes to provide residents with a safe living environment in which to pursue their academic and professional goals. We also hope to instill into our residents the importance of community service by requiring that all residents take part in one community service project per semester. This past fall, many of the WIST women took part in the Annual Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk at Roger Williams Park Zoo. Not only did we have a great time, but I am proud to say that our team was able to raise \$800 for this very important cause.

Elizabeth Cathers
Graduate Assistant
U.R.I Women's Center

For those interested in becoming part of the 2007-2008 WIST community, please visit our website at www.uri.edu/women_center/ or call us at (401)874-4042.

Essays by Students and Faculty

In this section, students and professors speak out regarding events on campus, popular films and everyday experiences- as they relate to women's issues and women's studies.

Julie Silva

In the intensely class-conscious and wealth-obsessed culture of Regency England, young girls were taught to pursue the sole aspiration of marrying men of wealth and social status. Such is the climate of *Pride & Prejudice*, a film adaptation of Jane Austen's classic novel that captures England's social stratification and the limitations on women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Through the quick-witted heroine of Elizabeth Bennett, Jane Austen makes a boldly feminist statement that is far ahead of its time: that women should seek personal fulfillment and self-actualization, rather than loveless marriages of convenience. Amid a culture of preening, pretentious women whose only occupations in life are to flatter those with power and to seek wealthy husbands, Elizabeth Bennett emerges as a strong-willed feminist who refuses to adhere to conventions that belie her values and convictions. By contrast, Elizabeth's mother, Mrs. Bennett, fully accepts the limitations of her society on women, and she encourages her daughters to do the same. The film's juxtaposition of Elizabeth with these anti-feminist characters highlights the folly of the latter individuals and emphasizes the virtue and strength of Elizabeth, who is able to withstand societal pressures and maintain her integrity at all costs.

I enjoyed this movie because the character of Elizabeth Bennett is so far ahead of her time. Her acceptance of Darcy, once he has proven himself worthy, sends the message that women can find happiness without compromising their values and convictions

2). In the movie *Mona Lisa Smile*, Julia Roberts portrays an art professor named Katherine Watson who accepts a position at Wellesley College, a school for women. Set

(Mona Lisa Smile)

in 1953, this film depicts the clash between Watson's progressive, feminist messages to her students and the anti-feminist culture in which they live. At the time in which this movie takes place, American women were generally encouraged to become wives and mothers, not to have careers and to support themselves financially. Therefore, although Wellesley College is a prestigious school that could help its students pursue fulfilling careers, many of the students plan to become full-time housewives and mothers after graduation. Dismayed at these circumstances, Katherine Watson is determined to motivate her students to think for themselves, to cultivate their talents, and to liberate themselves from the anti-feminist restrictions of their society. . . . Exasperated with her students' lack of receptiveness, she complains, "I thought that I was headed to a place that would turn out tomorrow's leaders, not their wives." However, Watson never gives up on her students, and she pushes them to challenge themselves and think in daring new ways.

Here is Professor Quina's view on activism, and what it is/entails

Kathryn Quina, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology & Women's Studies

For me, feminism is indeed linked inextricably with activism, but "activism" needs to be defined as well. Many think that means marching, burning bras, and of course the imperative man-bashing, because that is what the media portray as activism.

However, activism can be carried out in simple everyday "outrageous acts" such as helping a son resist pressure to "be a manly man" (or to learn how to cook) or using non-sexist tactics in one's workplace.

Continued in next column

Activism can be volunteering in a homeless shelter. And activism doesn't have to be only with women, so long as it improves the lives of women as well as men and children. Some commit activism through education of others, some through acts of individual kindness, some through everyday interactions with their families, and some through all of these. Indeed, while activism requires some behavioral effort, it is mostly an attitude that makes that effort seem to be the right thing to do.

The Feminist Therapy Institute has long taken a stance on, and Laura Brown has wonderfully described, feminist ethics in her *Subversive Dialogues* (Basic Books, 1994). An ethical feminist therapist wants her clients to live out their potential more fully. Here's the challenge: If you are treating clients who are suffering because of a societal ill -- violence, limited access to equal opportunities in life, poverty, etc. -- you have a responsibility to treat not only the patient but also the society, in whatever way you can.

An interesting question would be, what do you think that word "activism" means? I'm willing to bet some of you are already "activists" but don't realize it, because you defined the word more specifically. Perhaps the last week of class students could revisit what they would define as feminism and see how they (with their newfound awareness) and their interactions with the world around them may have changed. And it may be helpful to remind them -- and all students in women's studies -- that WMS 300 and other course credits may be available to them while they are engaging in social change!

Take Action



During the school year, many students are already busy what with their class load, social obligations, taking part in student groups and even holding a job. This section is for those who can't devote much time to "take action", providing websites which involve prewritten letters, petitions and more which are brought to the attention of your local government officials (among others). These sites also will be helpful to those who *do* have time to devote to various causes, as there are many issues to tackle, and many ways in which to do so!

- <http://www.amnestyusa.org/women/index.do>
- http://www.equalitynow.org/english/takeaction/takeaction_en.html
- <http://www.feministcampus.org/act/oneclick/>
- <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/get-involved/take-political-action-.htm>
- <http://www.feminist.com/activism/>



Tampons upon tampons, pads upon pads—so much trash by the end of a woman’s period. These menstrual products are designed by men (for one of the most womanly event? where’s the logic behind that?), and are not very environmentally friendly. Tampons may leave harsh chemicals in a woman’s vagina, and pads seem to gather so much unrecyclable trash—it often left me wondering if there was a better way to go about the entire situation. And there is!

Many women still do not know about menstrual cups and cloth pads. They are designed by women, for women, are much more economically friendly, and in the long run end up being *cheaper* than pads and tampons.

Most cloth pads attach to women’s underwear by a button or elastic, which holds it in place. When it has absorbed its fill of fluids, it is time to wash the pad and reuse! Some even come in fun colors and patterns. Here are a few places where these cloth pads can be bought, as well as researched further:

<http://www.gladrags.com/> ,

<http://www.kristinsclothpads.com/>

As for menstrual cups, there are a few popular brands out there with websites which provide much information on use, care and reasons to make the switch. These cups can be worn throughout the day- even overnight (!!) and hold more fluid than the average tampon. It is inserted into the vagina, while the rim of the cup suction to the inside walls- making it less prone to leakage than tampons. Many women attest to the comfort of these cups, enjoying the freedom to spend the day without worrying about changing tampons or pads, as well as saving money as these cups can last for

many years: <http://www.thekeeper.com/> ,
<http://www.divacup.com/>

