

2008

Gender and Women's Studies Newsletter for February 2008

URI Gender and Women's Studies Department

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WOMEN'S STUDIES NEWSLETTER

February 2008



Director's Column January 2008
International Women's Day Karen Stein

We will celebrate International Women's Day at URI on Thursday, March 6 in the Memorial Union. We invite you to attend.

International Women's Day grew out of women's activism for equal rights and recognition. One origin was a garment workers' strike in New York City in 1908 when 15,000 women marched asking for shorter hours, better pay and the right to vote. A National Women's Day was declared in the U.S. in 1910. Other countries set aside this day as well, and in 1911 the date of International Women's Day was set at March 8.

It is recognized as an official holiday of the U.N. and in 22 countries, and an unofficial holiday in many others. In Poland, students give their teachers flowers; in China women are given a half-day holiday, free bus passes and movie tickets. According to the U. N. "it is an occasion for looking back on past struggles and accomplishments, and more importantly, for looking ahead to the untapped potential and opportunities that await future generations of women."

Here at URI a coalition of groups including the Women's Studies Program, the Women's Center, the Violence Prevention Program, the Work-Life Committee of the ADVANCE Program, Hillel, the President's Commission on the Status of Women, the student groups PAGE (People Advocating for Gender Equality), PINK Women, the Cape Verdean Students' Association, and LASA (Latin American Students Association) will present a series of events on Thursday, March 6 in the Memorial Union.

Presenters include:

- Professor Donna Hughes of the URI WMS Program on sex trafficking 9:30
- Professor Manisha Desai, Director of the Women's Center at the University of Connecticut on "Rethinking Globalization" 11
- URI Professor Carolyn Livingston presents "Women in Music" noon
- Professor Karen Stein on Doris Lessing, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature for 2007 at 4
- Rhode Island Poet Laureate Lisa Starr reads from her work at 4:30
- Keynote speakers Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, co-authors of *Manifesta* and *Grassroots*, leading third wave feminists will speak from 5:30-7 p.m. You may read their essays "A Day Without Feminism" and "A Day With Feminism" on the WMS Web page www.uri.edu/artsci/wms
- The Cape Verdean Student Association, Hillel, and LASA will perform and teach dances
- PINK Women will present a fashion show
- A series of videos about women will run throughout most of the day

There will also be henna painting and chair massages. Come join the celebration!

Other news: Professor Jody Lisberger, Instructor in WMS, and advisor to WMS majors and minors, has just published a book of short stories, *Remember Love*.

A new TA, Jenn Brandt, is on board this spring. She is helping organize the event.

Have a great semester!

“Herstory” In Our Generation?
Hillary Rodham Clinton

By Melanie Shapiro

Every presidential election is important in one way or another, but the 2008 Presidential election is seemingly more weighted.

This term the newly elected president will face a plunging economy and a possible recession, the threat of Radical Islamic Extremism, the war in Iraq, environmental issues, domestic issues of education, healthcare, social security, poverty, and social issues such as stem cell research, same-sex marriage, gender equality, racism, and reproductive rights.

Making an informative decision is crucial. The decision voters make this year will drastically decide not only the direction of our country, but this election could potentially provide us with our first female president.

Since it is important to make an informative decision, I would like to enlighten you about the platforms on which Hillary Rodham Clinton stands.

ECONOMY: The economy is a huge issue currently, as the country is on the brink of recession. Clinton supports an economic stimulus package and is hugely supportive of strengthening the middle class. She proposes a universal healthcare bill that will provide all citizens with quality and affordable health care. She wants to lower taxes for the middle class and make college more affordable with increased grants and a large tax credit.

We have a huge issue in our country with the housing market and foreclosures. Clinton wants to have a 90-day moratorium where people can try to “work it out” as well as freezing the subprime loans for five years at a fixed rate. Also, Clinton wants to make sure that social security is not privatized.

How these issues are handled now determine how our lives will be in the future.

IRAQ: As far as the war in Iraq, she has a very well-calculated, reasonable, and responsible plan for phased redeployment to begin bringing our troops home while securing stability and trying to resolve matters through diplomatic initiatives whenever possible.

CIVIL RIGHTS: Clinton has many initiatives to strengthen the adherence of civil rights. First, she believes that voting privileges should be extended. She wants people to be able to register to vote the same day as the election, and

implement more stringent and accurate electronic voting and counting machines to assure an accurate representation of the constituency. Clinton supports stem cell research and women’s reproductive rights.

In fact, she wants to appoint justices that will uphold this right to privacy and pass the Freedom of Choice Act to strengthen the hold of Roe v. Wade. Additionally, Clinton is a strong combatant against discrimination. She wants to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, which would close the wage gap and attempt to end gender discrimination in pay, as well as the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act to reduce corruption in the criminal justice system. Clinton supports Civil Unions and wants to rescind the Don’t Ask Don’t Tell Policy. She has been known to be a supportive of the GLBT community, and was the first First Lady to march in a gay pride parade.

EDUCATION: Clinton wants to rescind the No Child Left Behind Act that reduces education to merely preparing children for performance on standardized tests. She proposes government-sponsored pre-K for all four-year-olds, funding for children with special needs, recruiting better teachers, creating “green schools,” early intervention programs, creating more after school programs to provide children with a safe place to be, and introducing honest sexual education as a teen pregnancy preventative.

ENERGY: Clinton has wonderful ideas about creating “green collar jobs” that would first boost the economy by creating jobs and also provide research into ways that we can be more energy efficient and self-sustainable. She wants to reduce electricity consumption, invest in alternative energy, and encourage companies to make more “green vehicles.” She also wants to found a National Energy Council in the White House and require that all federal buildings from 2009-on produce zero emissions.

Clinton is a wealth of great ideas about how to deal with the many serious issues that plague our nation. She has the experience, the drive, and the record to accomplish these goals.

For more detailed information on Clinton’s official stances on the issues, visit her Web site: <http://www.hillaryclinton.com>

Don’t forget to vote in the R.I. primary elections on March 4.

It's Not Just About Clinton
By Chloe Thompson
Editor

Though the limelight is shining upon Hillary Rodham Clinton about her crusade to win the presidential election, it's times like these that many Americans don't realize that history isn't necessarily being made, it's simply repeating itself. The only difference, hopefully, will be the outcome, which is up to voters to decide in the 2008 Presidential Elections.

Previously, there have been noteworthy women who have run for the seat of President in the United States. Though none have gotten as far as Clinton, it is still important to know about some of the other pioneers in the presidential candidacy.

Victoria Claflin Woodhull: (Sept. 23, 1838 – June 10, 1927)

"If women would today would rise en masse and demand their emancipation, the men would be compelled to grant it."--Woodhull

Known as an advocate of "free love," Woodhull was undoubtedly one of the most controversial women in the 19th century. In 1872, the Equal Rights Party, nominated Woodhull for the presidency, thus giving her the title of becoming the first woman to ever run for President.

Some of Woodhull's achievements include opening up the first woman-owned brokerage firm on Wall Street with her sister, Tennessee, beginning a weekly newspaper called *Woodhull and Claflin Weekly*, which lasted six years. The paper women's suffrage, sex education and free love, vegetarianism and licensed prostitution.

Woodhull was widely criticized and ridiculed for her promiscuity and radical thinking, and was named "Mrs. Satan" by the media.

Information compiled from Frisken, Amanda. Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution. Penn., Philadelphia, 2004.

Shirley Chisholm: (Nov. 30, 1924 – Jan. 1, 2005)

"Tremendous amounts of talent are being lost to our society just because that talent wears a skirt."--Chisholm

Chisholm was the first African-American woman to be elected to the U.S. Congress in 1969, and served until her retirement nearly 20 years later. Previously, Chisholm served on the New York General Assembly, and

pushed forth bills to provide state aid to daycares and increased funding for the education system. She graduated from Columbia University. She received about 5 percent of the vote from the Democratic Party to run for president in 1972, and consequently became the first African-American woman to ever run for office.

She hired a fully-female staff in her first term in Congress and campaigned against the Vietnam War, women's rights, the impoverished and civil rights. She also cofounded the National Organization for Women.

Information compiled from
http://nh.essortment.com/shirleychisholm_ruol.htm.

Sen. Elizabeth Dole: (July 29, 1936 – present)

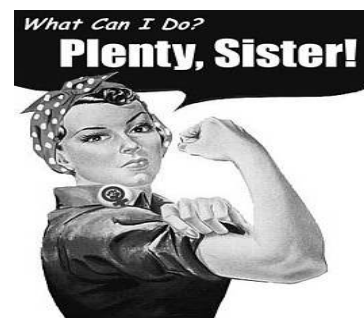
"Women share with men the need for personal success, even the taste of power, and no longer are we willing to satisfy those needs through the achievements of surrogates, whether husbands, children, or merely role models."--Dole

Dole is a Republican senator from North Carolina. She has been on the Senate since 2002, and pushes issues such as economy growth, employment opportunities, national security and improving education. The Gallup Poll has named her as one of the world's top 10 most admired women, according to her official Web site. She graduated from Duke University and went on to Harvard Law School. She's assisted presidents such as Ronald Reagan, Richard Nixon and George W. Bush in various political positions.

Dole was the first woman to hold the position of Secretary of Transportation (during Reagan's time), and the second woman to become the President of the American Red Cross, which she served for eight years. It was at this time that she campaigned for the Republican nomination as President, but dropped out of the race due to lack of funds. This helped current President George W. Bush win the election.

Information compiled from

<http://dole.senate.gov>



<http://www.iupui.edu/~womunite/feminism%202b.jpg>

Why Women Should Want to Vote Compiled by Alex Rioles

“When women shall vote, the political influence of the good men in the community will be greatly increased. There is no doubt whatever that women, in their voting, will be influenced by the men whom they know. But there is also no doubt that they will be influenced by the GOOD men whom they know.” -- Jone Johnson Lewis

“Voting by women will improve humanity, because it will compel men to seek and earn the approval of women.” --Jone Johnson Lewis

“Because the moral, educational, and humane legislation desired by women would be got more easily if women had votes. New York women have worked in vain for years to secure a legislative appropriation to found a state industrial School for Girls. Colorado women worked in vain for one till they got the ballot; then the Legislature promptly granted it.” --Alice Stone Blackwell

“Because woman's ballot will make it hard for the notoriously bad candidates to be nominated or elected. In the equal suffrage states, both parties have to put men of respectable character or lose the women's vote.” --Alice Stone Blackwell

“Because it is a maxim in war. Always do the thing to which your adversary particularly objects. Every vicious interest in the country would rather continue to contend with woman's indirect influence than try to cope with woman's vote.” --Alice Stone Blackwell

“Because experience has proved it to be good. Women have for years been voting literally by hundreds of thousands, in England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Utah, and Idaho, in all these places put together, the opponents have not yet found a dozen respectable men who assert over their own names and addresses that the results have been bad, while scores of prominent men and women testify that it has done good. An ounce of fret is worth a ton of theory.” --Alice Stone Blackwell

“Because it is the quietest, easiest, most dignified and least conspicuous way of influencing public affairs. It takes much less expenditure of time, labor and personal presence to go up to the ballot box, drop in a slip of paper, and then come away, than to persuade a multitude of miscellaneous voters to vote right.” --Alice Stone Blackwell

Because Childcare is an Issue
Almost 75 percent of women with children under the age of six are in the workforce and the vast majority of them are working full-time. Safe, affordable childcare and after school programs are among the greatest factors influencing women's ability to stay employed.
(www.womenwork.org)

Because Health Care is an Issue

Women are nearly 40 percent more likely than men to take prescription medications on a regular basis, but 17 million women in the United States are without health coverage.

Women's access to health care in the USA, including medications, is often restricted by the jobs they hold, the money they have and the insurance they can or cannot afford.
(www.womenwork.org)

Because our Funds are in Danger

While tax cuts have returned thousands of dollars to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans, funds for social services many women rely on have been dramatically reduced.

Nearly one out of every four single-mother headed households did not benefit from the most recent tax cuts. (www.womenwork.org)

Quotes taken from
<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/progress/suffrage/whyvote.html> unless otherwise specified.



Women's Studies Welcomes a New TA
By Chloe Thompson
Editor

When I first met Jenn Brandt, a new teaching assistant in the Women's Studies program, I was introduced to a bright, young smiling face and an apparent eagerness to help the students she would soon be facing.

Brandt, 27, will be teaching a section of Introduction to Women's Studies as well as helping the women's studies staff with office tasks this semester, and said she is thrilled to have an opportunity to work at the University of Rhode Island. Hailing from Watertown, Conn., she seems happy to have a change of scenery.

"URI has a great program, and teaching is very important to me," she said. "I'm looking forward to meeting all the students and helping out here."

Brandt, who received her undergraduate degree in English at Drew University and her master's in popular culture at Bowling Green State University, is currently working toward her PhD in English at URI, and a graduate certificate in Women's Studies.

Her future goal is to teach in a liberal arts school, though she doesn't know where quite yet. She'd like to combine both of her favorite things, Women's Studies and English, into one course. Previously, she taught classes like these at her alma mater, Bowling Green.

Her favorite feminist related topic, which was what her thesis discussed, is the representation of women in popular entertainment and film. She wrote about the sacred feminine in *The Da Vinci Code*, comparing the book and film to one another, as well as popular nighttime television show *Sex and the City*.

"I incorporated some of the lessons I used when I taught pop culture," Brandt said, referring to her thesis and the introduction course she will be teaching. "Even though Sophie [the lead in *The Da Vinci Code*] is a strong female

lead in the novel, in the film, she is still rescued by a man," she said. In her thesis, Brandt compared the likes of Sophie to gender roles manifested after the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001.

"I'm interested in peeling back the layers and seeing what's there," she said. "Nowadays, people watch TV more than they read for pleasure, and there seems to be an attitude that popular culture has no impact on our lives, but it does. I'm interested in learning about that positive and negative impact."

When she's not learning or teaching, Brandt is just your typical woman in her late 20's. She said she enjoys yoga, and has been doing such for the past six years. It's clear to see that it's taken hold of her, as she meticulously writes down plans and has a clear answer for everything.

As for the feminist world, Brandt said she has a large fascination with the first ladies during history, and is, naturally, a big Hillary Clinton fan. One of her future goals is to write a biography on Louise Adams, whom she finds interesting for many reasons.

"She loved chocolate, so do I," Brandt said, laughing. "She's foreign born and a poet, and it seems that history has just ignored her."

Brandt said one of the biggest problems that face women today is their complacency with how the world is.

"We take some of these freedoms, like reproduction rights, for granted," Brandt said. "I do worry about that."

She also said the presidential candidacy bothers her in many ways. "The fact that [Clinton] is a woman candidate shouldn't be a big deal," she said. "We like to think as Americans we're so advanced, but in [women running for positions of power], we're not."

For now, Brandt seems content to look ahead in her future.

"I'm hoping this will lead to more opportunities for me," she said. "I would absolutely love that."

P.A.G.E. (Promoting Awareness for Gender Equality) is hosting a private event for the grown and sexy.

Get ready for Valentine's Day whether you're happily committed or sexy and single! Get educated while enjoying the comfort of peers.

Don't miss out on this rare opportunity. Refreshments will be provided at the event!

18+ NO EXCEPTIONS

Thursday Feb. 7, 2008 7 to 9 p.m.

For more information contact P.A.G.E.'s Public Relations Rep. at E-mail address:

MsMendezA@yahoo.com

Feminism: It's Not About Cooking
By Kara Lafferty

Father: Hi, Sweetheart, how was your first day?
Do you like your classes?

Daughter: Yeah, Dad I love URI, I'm taking this awesome class called Introduction to Women's Studies.

Father: That sounds great. What have you learned to cook?

Daughter: No, dad it's not a cooking class; you have the wrong idea. The class is about feminism and women's rights.

Father: Oh yeah, sounds great honey, good luck tomorrow.

So the father hangs up the phone and thinks to himself about this "feminist" course his daughter, Sara, is taking: Feminism, what on earth is that all about? It sounds very rebellious, the only thing I remember about that is burning bras and not shaving armpits! Next thing I know she is going to join Hillary Clinton's cult.

I have to put a stop to this. Sara needs to hear it from her mother, a sensible woman.

Henry marches proudly to the kitchen to meet his lovely wife Leslie. The following is their dialogue:

Henry: Honey, Sara is taking a man hating course at URI and it needs to be stopped otherwise Sara is going to be brainwashed to hate me while becoming a hairy girl.

Leslie: What are you talking about?

Henry: The Women's Studies class its about feminism, can you believe it? I mean I thought it was a cooking class.

Leslie: Are you that behind the times, dear? Feminism is the idea that men and women should be equal in all areas of life. Sara told me that she would be studying the issues of poverty, classism, sexism, crime, and other social issues.

Henry: That's a whole lot of isms but the class sounds completely different from what I had in mind. I think I am going to borrow some of Sara's reading material.

Now, back to the real world. Clearly there are many existing myths of feminism. We are all working together to try to break the myths

and to get our important messages across, but what about starting with our own family? Could your mother or father have a response similar to this story? It is essential to our cause to spread the word within our own families. Talking to your father might be the easiest or the most difficult place to start, but isn't it the most important?

I first learned about feminism in my senior year of high school in a sociology class. My teacher, Mr. Carty, opened the discussion up by asking us, "What comes to mind when you hear the word feminism?" That's when I heard every myth under the sun and I knew that my classmates were off the mark, yet I did not know the answer either. I truly believe that it would be beneficial for young women to learn about feminism at a young age.

When I used Google to search the word "feminism," it produced many Web sites. The top of the third website had this quote:

"They had jobs, but feminists weren't satisfied; every other woman had to get one too. So they opened fire on homemakers with a savagery that still echoes throughout our culture. A housewife is a "parasite," [Betty] Frieden writes; such women are "less than fully human" insofar as they "have never known a commitment to an idea."

<http://www.friesian.com/feminism.htm>

That Web site is loaded with many quotes like this one, which all misrepresent or bash feminism.

Keep in mind this is the third website Google is offering to people who are searching for feminism. What if that person is a young woman looking for answers? Even the glorious Internet needs to be navigated delicately otherwise it could lead any intelligent person off course.

I pose this question to You: Why is feministing.com not on the first page of websites? Instead there are several Web sites with titles like, "Women who hate feminism."

We need to keep in mind that there will always be bashers and propaganda and it will always be our job to combat all myths and negativity surrounding feminism. With strong efforts from all of us, there could be one less father who thinks Introduction to Feminism is a cooking class, or a young woman who can learn the truth about feminism prior to learning the hate and myths on feminism.

Future WMS Events at URI

By Chloe Thompson, Editor and Jenn Brandt

Tues. Feb. 5 The Rhetoric of Childbirth

URI Assistant Professor Kim Owens will be speaking about the rhetoric and historical misconceptions of childbirth at 4 p.m. in the Galanti Lounge. She explores how different forms of writing inform, delimit, and respond to women's birthing choices and experiences.

Highlights: This lecture is part of the Women's Studies Department's annual Dana Shugar Colloquium and is free and open to the public.

Tues. Feb. 19 Germaine de Staël's "Superior Woman" as a Moral Compass for a Nascent Republic

Dr. Karen de Bruin, an assistant professor of French at URI, will be speaking about her dissertation and the representation of the antislavery movement in women's writings in the 18th and 19th centuries at 4 p.m. in the Galanti Lounge

Highlights: This lecture is part of the Women's Studies Department annual Dana Shugar Colloquium and is free and open to the

Just Some Thoughts

By Chloe Thompson, Editor

With the government being so patriarchal, it makes me wonder where there is room for change. What would the world be like if women ran it—If homosexuals ran it? Would the world be more open, more diverse? Or would there just be new prejudices and revolutions? It seems that no matter how diverse families are on the micro level, the macro level never changes. Political power is still in the hands of men, who are determined to keep things the way they are.

This also got me thinking, who came up with gender roles? Society plays a major part, but where did this all spur from? Who said that women had to wear pink and men had to wear suits and ties? Society tells us all to be individual, that we should be our own person and develop into America's melting pot, but when it all boils down, the government is still in control of our every move. Males typically have a higher salary than females and unless that changes, men are typically going to fall into their gender role of protecting and bringing home the money to their families. And with men contributing more to the family financially, the women need to take up the other side of families: Nurturing and bringing up the children to fit society's mold.

In a feminist perspective, the family is anti-hierarchical. Everyone is equal, with equal dominance over the family. How would that work? Does that mean that the children are equally in charge of the family as the parents are? In that case, what defines "parents" and "children?"

And taking this onto a more global level, what if we truly *were* a democracy and there was no hierarchy in the government? How would families and marriage be affected? People would finally be able to govern themselves, and marry who they want, and raise their children how they want to as well.

Society may never change completely, but families can take steps to make America as independent as we claim to be by raising their children to stand up for what they believe in and to be an individual. Maybe then something radical will happen.

First written for WMS 150, 2006.

Headers taken from

http://www.therebellion.com/blog/images/feminism_header.jpg

public.

Thurs. March 6 International Women's Day

Various departments and programs at URI will present a celebration of International Women's Day, complete with talks, music and films.

Highlights: A mini-mall in the Memorial Union Ballroom and key speakers such as Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, co-authors of *Manifesta* and *Grassroots*.

Organizations that serve women or women-owned businesses can set up an information table, free of charge.

Contact: Karol Leuzarder, karol@uri.edu or Karen Sherman, karen@uri.edu

Wed. March 12 Navigating the Birth Control Maze

Deb Erickson-Owens RN, CNM, PhD(c), a nurse-midwife, will discuss the numerous options and choices available to women concerning current birth control methods. Evening, location and time TBA.

