

WGS NEWS

Women's and Gender Studies Department at UMass Dartmouth

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Hear from our students about their experiences as majors, in internships, and with Service-Learning projects.

Community

- Who Needs Feminism?
- Suzanne Alden

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Events

International Women's Day

Spoken Word Event with Justice Ameer and Chrysanthemum Tran

- by Pamisa G. Udomratanakoson

The spoken word event that we attended on International Women's Day explored a variety of themes that ranged from transgender struggles to racism. However, when Chrysanthemum Tran spoke about her struggle with being both trans and coming out within her Asian household it resonated with me. There was a sense of familiarity there that managed to turn this from a school

event to one that truly hit home.

Chrysanthemum had a poem where her community was slowly becoming gentrified and how as an Asian woman she was expected to be submissive rather than aggressive with her emotions. Her poem talked about how her family frequents a restaurant and despite the aggressions that they have experienced from white people throughout the day, by end of the night she creates this image of her family sitting there with stiff smiles and accepting the abuse. Towards the end the poem she demanded that they rise like a phoenix and take a stand. It was inspiring to see her align herself to the phoenix and rise before us.

I come from a similar family as well that likes to congregate at a restaurant in Chinatown. We go there when our lives get too hectic and share our problems and fill our bellies while we are surrounded by people like us that also share our marginalized struggles. The struggle that Chrysanthemum and I share reminds me of the reading, “La Guerra” by Cherrie Moraga. In this reading she writes, “women of color and working-class women often shrink from challenging white middle-class women. It is much easier to rank

oppressions and set up a hierarchy, rather than take responsibility for changing our own lives” (32). There have been countless of times just like Chrysanthemum I let the white woman question why my voice does not have an accent. We both have answered the, “Where are you from?” question and realized that the person asking was not satisfied with my answer of, “Boston” (in her case, Oklahoma). We also have stared in the mirror and wondered what it would be like to not have yellow skin and have it be white.

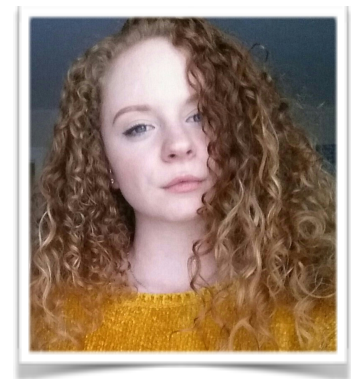
As Moraga says, “I am a woman with a foot in both worlds; and I refuse the split” (34). Chrysanthemum utilized spoken word to reinforce the energy Moraga describes. The courage she demonstrated at this spoken word event inspired me to be a stronger individual. Just like Moraga, I have a foot in both worlds. I am privileged enough as an American so why should I neglect to defend my roots? Fighting back against oppression will always be met with resistance. However, this event, and Chrysanthemum Tran showed us that we have the power.

One Love Workshop

by Rebecca Godfrey

At the beginning of this school year, I become a facilitator for an organization called One Love for my internship with the victim’s advocate, Jessica Harris, here on campus. The main goal of the organization is to spread awareness about relationship abuse amongst college students with peer to peer workshops. Throughout the trainings and the preparation to bring these workshops to UMass Dartmouth, I discovered a new passion. Personally, being a Women’s and Gender Studies student, I found that a lot of the work I was doing with this relates to my classes. So, I was able to find ways to incorporate the knowledge I was gaining into my classes and projects.

Something that I saw in the workshops is the amount of gray area that can exist within a relationship, which can make it difficult to determine a healthy relationship behavior versus an



unhealthy behavior. An activity that we would do is called Stick It, every participant would take sticky notes and write any sort of relationship behaviors they could think of on it. Then as a group we would discuss whether the behaviors are healthy or not and what I often saw was that several of the sticky notes would end up in between healthy and unhealthy on the board. This would happen because so many of the behaviors we see in relationships depend on intent. Someone can surprise their partner with a cup of coffee between classes, this could be either healthy or unhealthy because we don't know the intent of the gesture. Did they bring their partner a coffee just because they were thinking of them and knew that they had a busy day? Or did they bring them a coffee to check in and insert a component of control in the relationship? Relationship abuse is an extremely difficult topic, but I have found that many of my peers are able to relate and become involved in the conversations, with or without personal experiences.

An aspect of the organization that is stressed for all facilitators and students who take the workshop is self care. The things we talk about and learn are sometimes hard to digest, but this only emphasizes the importance of the conversation. This is something that I took for granted at first. The improvement I felt with energy and my overall mood was significant when I began treating myself to a large cup of my favorite tea after every workshop. Being a facilitator for this workshop opened up new perspectives and ideas for me as someone who hopes to contribute to the greater good. I would highly recommend becoming a facilitator for One Love or even just taking one of their workshops to anyone interested.

Faculty News

Bridget A. Teboh, History Department and WGS Affiliate

A. Accomplishments: In October 2017, I presented a paper "Truth be Told, Madame Maternity's Resistance and Life work: Biographic Verity in Cameroon, Africa," at the Conference of the Biography Society [*La Verite d'une Vie*] *Biography and Verity*, Aix-Marseille Universite, France. In November 2017 I presented a paper titled "Southern Cameroons Youth and the Ghost Towns Operations" at the 59th African Studies Association (ASA) Annual Meeting, Chicago, November 16-18, 2017. I also Chaired and Coordinated a Carnegie Panel on "The Use of Technology to Enhance Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program (ADFP) Goals" at ASA 2017. I also presented, "I Am What I Am, Wherever I Go': New Homelands and Identity Politics in the African Diaspora" at the 5th International Conference on Africa and Its Diaspora (BICAID) "*Voluntary or Forced: Migration and the Conceptualization of African Identities and Homeland(s)*," at The African Studies Institute, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.



B. Award / Events: Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program (CADFP) Award. During summer 2017, I was awarded the prestigious, highly competitive Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program Fellowship. That Carnegie Award allowed me to spend 2.5 months "giving back to Africa" through higher education efforts at an African Institution. Consequently from May 16 to August 06, 2017, I was a Carnegie Fellow at Adeyemi College of Education-ACE, Ondo, Nigeria (my Host Institution). While there, I mentored students and junior faculty, gave lectures and seminars, developed

and strengthened curriculum for the History Department, and helped set up a newly approved WGS Program equivalent, The Directorate of Gender and Sustainability Development Education (DGSDE). My stay and activities at ACE Ondo were facilitated by The Provost, Professor Olukoya Ogen, Deputy Provost, Dr. Samuel Akintunde, Director of International Linkages & Research, Dr. Mrs. Awosika Itinu, and The Director of DGSDE, Dr. Mrs. Onuegbu Martina. It was a fascinating and most fulfilling experience!! I wish I had taken some of my students with me! UMD really needs to facilitate students' educational travel! Special thanks to the Dean, School of Arts and Sciences, Dean, School of Vocational Training, and Head of Department-History, Music, Junior and Senior Lecturers/Faculty, all ACE students and staff for their hospitality!!

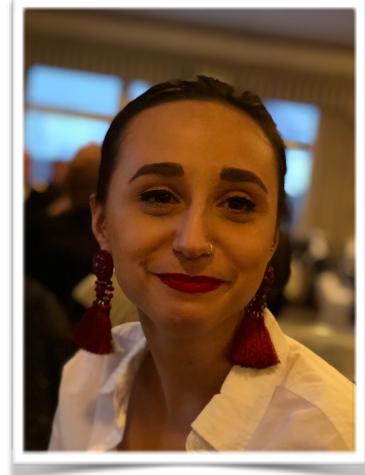
WGS Students

Summer Heath, Internship with YWCA

My name is Summer Heath, and I entered the internship program in Fall 2017 at the YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts, located in New Bedford. I now work for the non-profit as a Girls Exclusive instructor. Which means, that I teach after school programs to various age groups of girls and boys. Recent programs I have worked on have included, Girls Design Academy, which is a program where I would help teach STEM, racial justice, and female empowerment to 4th and 5th grade girls. And most recently, I have been going to Alfred J. Gomes, an elementary school in New Bedford, and leading the program for a group of about 10-12 3rd grade girls and boys. Some of the other tasks that I work on include, grant writing, promotion of upcoming events and programs, lesson planning, and participating in workshops aimed at racial justice, or development of children.

The first question that people usually ask when they ask about my major is, "what can you even do with that degree?" which always leaves me frustrated. However, until I had this internship experience, and later job, I didn't know how to answer that question with concrete examples. When I had my interview with Gail Fortes, the Executive Director of the YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts, one question she asked me was, "what area are you most interested in, because we

have multiple programs that specialize in promoting racial justice, and female empowerment?" I was stunned, never before had there been so many options for me to pick from. So, without having a well-rehearsed answer to her question, I ended up interning in the program and services



This non-profit really has changed my life, and changed the career path I want to go down.

department, under Catherine Bourassa the Director of Programs and Services, and Jordan Pouliot, the Girls Exclusive Coordinator, who oversees my progress. This non-profit really has changed my life, and changed the career path I want to go down. I used to want to be a professor, and teach Women and Gender Studies to college age students, but after working in various after school programs, I decided I wanted to work with younger kids. Without the amazing help of Julie Parker, who helped me find that internship, and the amazing staff at the YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts, I still wouldn't know how to answer people's question about my major.

Juliann Jones, WGS Major



Joining the Women's and Gender Studies program here at UMass Dartmouth has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. I was drawn to the program because of an underlying interest in social activism and engagement, and I believed that a WGS program would offer me curriculum options that would develop this interest further. I never realized how transformative this program would be for me, and certainly how helpful it would be in shaping my future. Beyond this, I loved the idea of pursuing a degree that would make me a versatile employee. This program develops a wide range of valuable skills that are highly sought in a competitive job market which allows a great deal of flexibility in the types of jobs for which I can apply. Over the years my love for this program has grown because of the incredible and interesting interdisciplinary courses I have had access to, the knowledgeable and supportive professors that have guided me along the way, as well as the strong sense of community that has developed amongst my fellow WGS majors/minors. After graduation I will be

seeking a job with a non-profit organization so I can put the knowledge I have acquired here at UMass into practice to better my community. I hope to return to UMass Dartmouth for graduate school, and hope to some day help design social programs as well as write grant proposals for non-profits full-time.

For anyone interested in joining this program, I have a few pieces of advice.

One would be to attend as many programs and events on campus as possible! Film viewings, poetry readings, and author visits are just a few of the options UMass offers all of which help contextualize what we learn in the classroom with the world around us. A second would be to keep all of the work you do in this program so you can look back at it later. There have been many times I needed to reference notes and readings from courses early in my degree track, and it's an incredible feeling seeing how much you learn over a few short years! Finally, build relationships with your peers and community members. Working collaboratively with your peers and professors will help you learn the importance of community-based learning and activism—something you'll be able to carry into your personal and professional lives down the road. I encourage you to seriously consider joining the WGS program as a major or minor here at UMass Dartmouth—it will change your life!

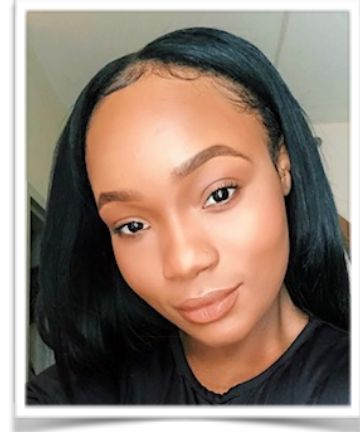
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Princess Mansaray, WGS Student and Founder of Step in My Shoes

by Madison Miedzionoski

Have you ever felt so passionate about something that, as a senior taking six to seven classes per semester, you created your very own organization? Well, Princess Mansaray has. Entering the fall of 2017, she thought that she was taking another class to fulfill a requirement for her second to last semester. Instead, she took Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies, a class that would change her life for the better.

When instructed to complete 12-15 service learning hours in the community, Princess wanted to do everything but be mainstream. Instead of calling an existing organization given by her incredibly supportive professor, Elisabeth Arruda, Princess found it in her heart to create her own organization called, “Step In My Shoes,” reflecting her strong beliefs on women’s health and the struggle for low-income and homeless women to



acquire basic necessities such as hygiene products, clothing, food, and cosmetics.

Nerves were not something that was going to hold Princess back. Her organization began after contacting Arnie’s Cupboard, located right on Umass Dartmouth’s campus, and then she starting tabling for sanitary pads and tampons. It wasn’t until she realized that once you create a service, you begin to see all the clients who are actually in need of your products. Make-up, clothing, and food was also something Princess thought no woman should have to struggle to obtain. She began to see cosmetics as a necessity rather than a luxury. It’s something small that woman can use to make

them feel more confident and prepared to tackle any new adjustment in life, like a job interview. If you feel confident in your appearance, your attitude will follow.

This semester, Princess worked on making her organization more popular and permanent. In Professor Arruda’s Spring 2018 WGS 101 classes, Princess worked as a service-learning teaching assistant, supervising 23 students to

work with Step in My Shoes. These students were separated into four groups (clothing, food, sanitary products, cosmetics) based on Princess’s classification of necessities for women. The groups raised products, throughout the semester, specific to their topic. For example, the cosmetic group solicited donations of products such as make-up and hair products for local shelters.



Princess remained in contact with these groups as a whole and solely, through an app called GroupMe.

As time progresses, Princess would like SIMS to bring products to shelters twice a month while donating to Arnie’s Cupboard weekly. Princess wants Step In My Shoes to become permanent within the University. She said that, “If you like what you are doing, you will always keep going,” when asking how she continues to push the success of her organization.



The creation of SIMS has taught her hard work, dedication, leadership, and skills for being an effective educator.

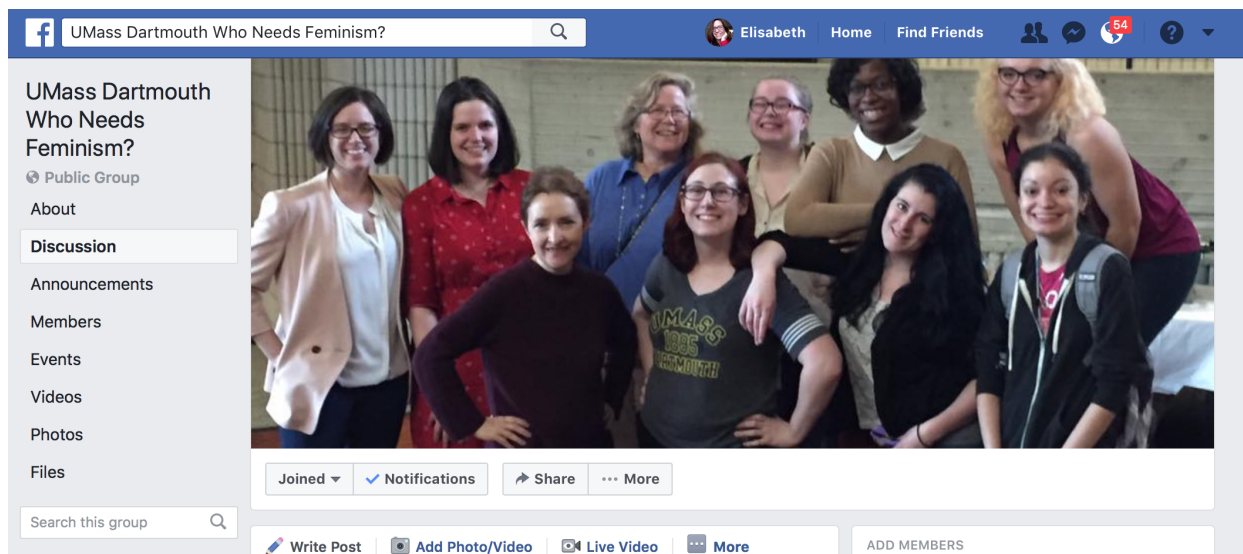
SIMS- Community Impact

Activities: Students organized bake sales, clothing, food and hygiene product drives, solicited donations from local businesses, organized raffles and campus events.

Donations of food, clothing, sanitary products and/or cosmetics were dropped off at local food banks, homeless shelters, mental health support centers, family centers and other non-profits.

- Arnie’s Cupboard, UMass Dartmouth
- Fall River Family Center, Fall River
- Grace House, New Bedford
- Pope Francis Place, New Bedford
- Lucy’s Hearth, Middleton, RI
- Stone Residence, Fall River
- Women’s Center, New Bedford

Who Needs Feminism? WGS Facebook Page



Identify yourself as a feminist today and many people will immediately assume you are man-hating, bra-burning, whiny liberal. Perhaps a certain charming radio talk show host will label you as a “feminazi” or “slut.” Even among more moderate crowds, feminism is still seen as too radical, too uncomfortable, or simply unnecessary. Feminism is both misunderstood and denigrated regularly on a broad societal scale.

This group was initiated in 2013 by students of Professor Kristen McHenry's Intro to Women's Studies course at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth who decided to fight back against these popular misconceptions surrounding the feminist movement. The class was disturbed by what students perceived to be an overwhelmingly widespread belief that today's society no longer needs feminism. In order to change this perception, the group has followed the campaign "Who Needs Feminism?" initially launched at Duke University. It aims to challenge existing stereotypes surrounding feminists and assert the importance of feminism today. We feel that until the denigration surrounding feminism and women's issues is alleviated, it will be hard to achieve total gender equality, both statistically and socially.

UMass Dartmouth Who Needs Feminism has decided not to release a single, "official" definition of feminism. The goal of our project is to decrease negative associations with the word that would keep anyone from identifying with the movement. However, we encourage you all to keep defining it yourselves... You have given better answers than we could have ever imagined!

Please direct all inquiries to Professor Anna Klobucka aklobucka@umassd.edu.

Community

Let's Ask and Tell about Sexual Assault - Suzanne Alden

President Clinton made "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" military practice in the 1990s, but the courts eventually ruled that it was a failed policy. This concept of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is a deeply flawed approach to another social issue: sexual assault.

Our culture's aversion to discussing sexual assault has contributed to a sky high rate of child sexual abuse - 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys, according to the CDC - and adult rape. As a survivor of assault, I can attest to the stigma surrounding this issue and the shame that keeps both survivors and non-survivors silent.

In 2017 I delivered a half-dozen presentations on sexual assault prevention in undergraduate classes at UMass Dartmouth, and have plans to continue this work in 2018. I educate students on its prevalence, examine sexual assault through a racial, cultural, and gender lens, and promote bystander intervention as a prevention strategy.

This work encourages students to consider an alternative approach to sexual assault that I call "Ask and Tell." To raise the awareness so essential for making a dent in the rate of sexual assault in America, our culture must make the transition to one in which the norm - not the exception - is challenging rape culture, asking children about possible abuse, and intervening when assault is imminent.

Suzanne Alden graduated from UMass Dartmouth in 1997 summa cum laude with a degree in sociology and a minor in women's studies. You can reach Suzanne at AskAndTellForChange@gmail.com or on [Facebook](#).

