

**SUSAN B. ANTHONY WOMEN'S CENTER
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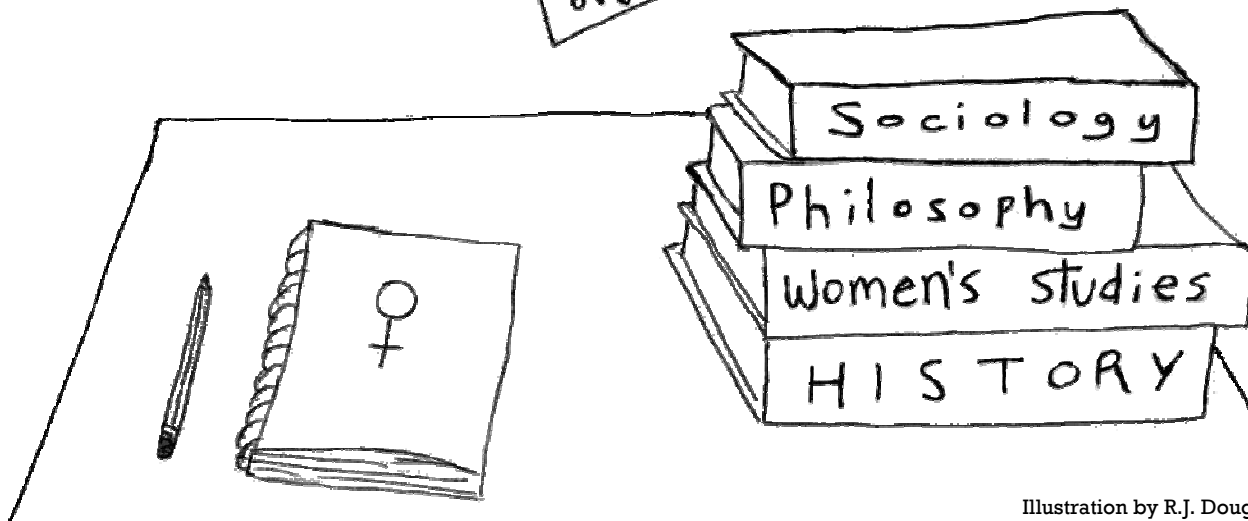
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Inspiring Women: The Founders of the MCLA Women's Center

by Gloria Statwick

The Susan B. Anthony Women's Center at MCLA opened in the fall of 1993. It is a thriving, accessible organization on campus today, but it didn't happen overnight. It took the dedicated effort and commitment of two women to bring the Women's Center to fruition.

In 1983, North Adams State College had a Women's Issues Group, which served as an open support and discussion circle for many years. Female faculty members were few at this point, and the group provided a place to discuss issues of salary equity.

While Peggy Brooks was head of the Women's Issue Group, Annika Adams (one of her students) asked about an on campus resource for women. Her inquiry led to the discussion of creating a Women's Center on campus. Adams founded a student version of the Women's Issues Group. By voicing her opinion, she propelled staff members to work for a center on campus. Two professors, Peggy Brooks and Michele Ethier, saw the need and adopted the Women's Center project.

Brooks and Ethier began the process by researching how other campuses ran their women's centers. They gathered information and put together a model of how they wanted the Center to work. Finding a location and funding for the Center was a struggle. "Administration was supportive," Ethier says, but there was still a small budget.

For the first few years, the challenge was how to craft a mission the embodied feminist principles in counseling with academic needs and student-oriented activities. The Center has never had a specifically clinical component. Instead, over the years it has developed an emphasis on educational activism.

Ethier and Brooks each received one course release from teaching to develop the Center. Its original intent was to provide a safe place for women to get help and information. The Center's mission statement says its goals are to eliminate "sexism, discrimination and violence towards women." Since its beginning, the Center has been that safe place, and has presented a variety of programs and performances and events. Just last year, the Center created and performed a piece adapted from a book by the feminist/activist group, The Guerrilla Girls. Newsletters are published several times a semester. In recent years, other Center activities have included: hosting community forums on body art and gender-based stereotypes, sponsoring gender-equity bake sales (to educate students about gender-based wage discrimination), marching with the MCLA Clothesline Project



The MCLA Women's Center

in the Fall Foliage Parade (to raise awareness about violence against women), and celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Women's Studies Minor and 15th anniversary of the Susan B. Anthony Women's Center at MCLA.

Over the years, Brooks' and Ethier's hard work and perseverance has enriched the entire campus, while providing them with personal satisfaction. Ethier says that getting to work with Brooks was one of the best parts of starting the Center. "It is a proud accomplishment," she says. Brooks also enjoyed deepening her friendship with Ethier, having "great conversations about feminist issues," and being able to provide a successful center on campus that is highly student driven.

Michele Ethier has masters degrees in sociology and social work, and is a Professor of Social Work and Women's Studies. Peggy Brooks has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and is a Professor of Psychology and Women's Studies at MCLA. Due to their strength, passion and vision, our campus continues to actively fight sexism and all forms of stereotypes today.



Professors Peggy Brooks and Michele Ethier, April 2009

Herstory: A Study of Women's Studies

by Alex Nichipor

Women have always been interested in the history and deeds of their gender. Early Buddhist nuns gathered their tales of spiritual seeking and enlightenment into a book of poetry called the Therigatha. Some African tribes contained women-only secret societies. The world over, mothers have told stories of great heroines to their daughters.

Likewise, most men have had an interest in the history of the male gender. But because men have enjoyed social, economic, and political dominance of the human race for most of recorded time, the contributions of women have often been left out of the foundations of academic disciplines. Likewise, feminine methods of experiencing the world have been seen as somehow "other," as exceptions to the rule, and not appropriate for real scholars.

Things began to change in the 1970s. Many strong, feminist women were going to college, and they were coming into contact with a profoundly sexist institution. Curricula

ignored the accomplishments of women; male professors sexually harassed female students or openly favored males in their classes; mediocre male scholars were granted tenure in place of more qualified female scholars. Even forms of assessment could be sexist. For example, some classes awarded grades on how well as student performed in a debate with another student. Women, socialized to believe that competition was unfeminine and that girls should always play nice, were at an obvious unfair disadvantage in such classrooms.

The discipline of Women's Studies grew out of both the frustration and the curiosity of these female students; frustration at the failings of the institution, and curiosity about the true place of women in academia. Like-minded professors, especially within sociology and anthropology departments, began offering courses focused on women and women's issues. This emphasis spread to other departments, such as film, literature, psychology, biology, law... the list goes on and on. Courses on feminist theory began to appear. Today, a tiny handful of courses at a few universities has grown to 678 undergraduate programs in the United States alone (NWSA.org), involving thousands of committed students and professors. Women's Studies has branched out to include Gender Studies, courses that focus more generally on the societal constructions of male and female, as well as the creation of queer identities.

Women's Studies is not without its struggles, however. Frequently, adversity comes in the form of misinformation and stereotypes of the sort of student who would focus on this discipline. There is a persistent idea that Women's Studies students are shrill, fool-

ish women who would love nothing more than to castrate every male they see. One "humorous" guide to college advises a girl looking for a boyfriend to "ditch her mouthy friend who majored in Women's Studies." Additionally, some faculty believe that Women's Studies is a waste of academic resources, and that the scholarship in this field is second-rate.

This idea is a particularly dangerous one. Some Women's Studies courses encourage "consciousness raising," which is a fluffy-sounding term for the psychological growth that comes from heightened awareness of gender roles. It makes a student look at how much of their self-identity comes from themselves, and how much comes from the expectations of the outside world.

Some critics say that this is unprofessional, that classes should not be taught like therapy sessions. However, if a class is well-taught and the material learned both compelling and factual, a student cannot help but feel a certain level of "consciousness raising." I myself have experienced this in history, biology, and philosophy classrooms as well Women's Studies courses. A professor doesn't even have to focus on creating "consciousness raising," because this expansion of the mind occurs naturally when a person learns more about him/herself through learning about the world.

Women's Studies has, in fact, contributed a great deal to the academic world, and certain inadequacies in old theories are coming to light. For example, for many years psychologists accepted Freud's idea of penis envy, the theory that every woman secretly wanted to personally possess this piece of the male anatomy. The psychoanalyst Karen Horney challenged this idea, saying that Freud had mistaken power envy for penis envy. Additionally, she proposed the theory of womb envy, saying that men resented women's creative powers, and this led to the oppression of women by men.

In literature, female novelists long abandoned, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, are being rediscovered and read by entire generations of college students. A similar renaissance began to occur within the fine art world; the work of historical painters such as Artemisia Gentileschi are coming to light, and the art of contemporary painters like Georgia O'Keefe receives a warmer welcome.

Feminists within the realm of economics began to question why even women with college educations make less than men, how economic systems depend on the undervaluing of women's labor, especially in

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Body Activism by Skylia Seamans

Did you know, according to researchers at Penn State, over sixty percent of all known cases of eating disorders are diagnosed on college campuses? The number of college students with eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating has increased remarkably over the last several decades. Between demanding course schedules, high work loads, and hectic social lives, many college students find themselves facing the highest stress levels they have ever experienced. One must also keep in mind that many college students are making their own food and menu choices for the first time in their lives. Other factors, like excessive drinking, tobacco consumption and lack of exercise, also add to an unhealthy lifestyle. Overall, nutrition experts estimate that the number of college students whose diets could be described as healthy and balanced may be less than twenty percent! This is why body activism is important on college campuses.

What is body activism? For starters, it means accepting and loving your body just the way it is and learning to keep it healthy and happy. Everyone comes in different shapes, sizes and colors and the first step in embracing body activism is to accept this fact. There is no such thing as perfect, and our flaws are what make us all human beings. Always know that you are beautiful just the way you are, as long as you're healthy and content. You should never be someone you're not or feel like you have to change your appearance for any reason. Do you love what you see in the mirror? Body activism is all about seeing yourself for you and not obsessing about your appearance and fitting into the image of "perfection."

There is an explanation as to why young women believe they must be thin, tall and stunning in order to be accepted by society. We see impossibly thin and gorgeous girls on every page of magazines as well as on our favorite television shows and in the many other advertisements we come across. The truth is that those women are airbrushed and touched up. No one really looks like that. The media takes their time perfecting the women they portray to make us feel awful about ourselves and play off of our insecurities. That way, we will buy their expensive products over and over in an effort to achieve that "perfect" look. To them, it is all about making money. This is why eighty percent of United States women are unhappy with their appearance, according to the National Organization for Women. Women and girls spend billions of dollars a year on fashion, cosmetics, magazines, and diet supplements. We shouldn't succumb to the pressures of society's idea of "the perfect woman." Something must be done to help women realize they must love their body just the way it is, curves and all.

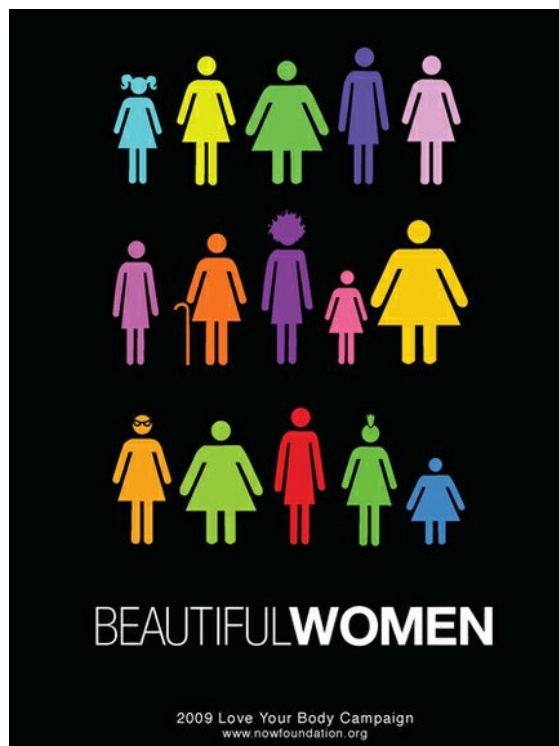
Body activism is a way to overcome all the negative body images we see and realize that no one need actually look like that if they are truly healthy,

physically and mentally. The National Organization for Women celebrated Love Your Body Day on October 21st this year. According to NOW, this day was created to "raise awareness about women's health issues, protest harmful and offensive advertisements, and promote the importance of positive body images for women and girls." However, body activism doesn't just start and end on Love Your Body Day. You should love your body for the way it is each and every day. It is extremely important to be happy with yourself and to not relentlessly critique your body image. Maybe it isn't as easy as it sounds, but I know you can do it. Love your body; embrace it, for you are only as beautiful as you believe yourself to be.

In the past, the Women's Center has celebrated Love Your Body Day at MCLA. On October 18th, 2006, the Women's Center sponsored a movie to appreciate women of all different sizes. There was a "fashion-less" show in Hoosac Harbor to encourage students to wear clothes they wouldn't normally, as if no one was watching. Prizes were awarded to the outfits that were most casual, most eccentric, and most colorful. Refreshments were provided and there was a great turnout. The night began with an introduction by Graziana Ramsden of the Modern Languages Department (also a member of the Women's Center's Advisory Board). The festivities reflected upon the Women's Center's unique approach to educating women. The film shown was "Real Women Have Curves," which was chosen to emphasize the pressures that affect adolescent girls. Overall, the night was a success.

Health at Every Size is another branch of body activism. It's an approach to health and happiness that

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Reproductive Rights: Be Educated, It's Your Right

by Corinne Blake

"No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother." These strong and true words were spoken by Margaret Sanger, the leading lady in the birth control movement in America in the early 20th century. Ms. Sanger opened the first birth control clinic in the U.S. and was arrested for it. We've come a long way since Ms. Sanger's birth control clinic. Today there are over twenty forms of birth control available. But are we losing what she and many women after her have fought for? Birth control is about being safe. Shouldn't you feel safe on your college campus? Reproductive rights hits close to home for college students and it's a big issue on college campuses.

Reproductive Rights activism on college campuses is all about being educated. Over the past few years, sex education has suffered and been silenced by abstinence-only programs that received \$1.1 billion from Congress in the last ten years. Why is this a problem? High school and college students are becoming sexually active despite these abstinence-only programs, but now they have little to no knowledge of the workings of birth control and safe sex. In response to these failed abstinence-only programs, college students have advocated for sex education as part of their rights as students. Along with this education comes the education about reproductive health and reproductive rights. One college that stands out in the progression of the reproductive rights movement is Hampshire College located in nearby Amherst, MA. The Civil Liberties and Public Policy Program, based out of Hampshire College, provides an opportunity to learn for college students and community activists every year during their annual conference. The conference is for students to learn about reproductive organizations and to learn how to organize activists on their own campuses and in their own communities.

What good is sex education if we can't afford to apply our knowledge? For years college students have had affordable and easy access to many different forms of birth control and contraceptives. This all changed with the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. This law, aimed at curbing national debt, changed the rules of all campus health centers causing a dramatic rise in prices for contraceptives or an elimination of them all together. Contraceptives that would normally cost a student three to ten dollars sky-rocketed to thirty to fifty dollars. The law is not only unfair, it is unsafe. Students who have books to buy and tuition to pay are finding it harder to practice the most effective procedures of safe sex. This has led to an increase in unplanned pregnancies and other

health complications. Contraceptives not only prevent pregnancies, but they are also a viable tool to protect against STDs and HIV. But there is hope. With a new president comes new ideas and in May 2009, the U.S. Senate passed the Affordable Birth Control Act with the intent of reducing the prices that shot up in 2005. One step forward for Reproductive Rights activists!

With reproductive rights, comes the dilemma of abortion. In 1973 a pregnant woman stood up for her right to have a safe, legal abortion. This led to the famous Roe vs. Wade case that ultimately led to the legalization of abortion. This has become a very important right for young women, particularly college students. An unplanned pregnancy can, and will, change your life forever. Even

with the proper use of contraceptives, pregnancy can happen, and college students stand up for their right to choose against having a baby in favor of finishing their education. This is another area where students should make sure they're educated. There are many myths about abortion; make sure you have your facts straight. For example, abortion will not cause breast cancer or heighten your chances of developing breast cancer, though anti-abortion activist may tell you this is true.

Anti-abortion groups use many deceptive tactics to persuade you to give up your rights. There are ways to actively fight back on college campuses. The University of Kansas receives an annual visit from Justice for All, a religious anti-abortion group. One student finally decided to fight back and organized Sextival, a friendly and honest environment to talk about sex education. The students who took part in planning this event represent what reproductive rights on college campuses are all about.

Know what you want, know what you need, and know how to be safe. Be educated, it is your right.

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College Campuses Against Domestic Violence

by Brianna Vear

Did you know that October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month? Did you also know that Women under the age of twenty five make up fifty two percent of all victims of domestic violence? Or how about that thirteen percent of women on campuses are stalked in a six to nine month period?

Do you even know what domestic violence is? According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, it is the pattern of behavior in which one intimate partner uses physical violence, coercion, threat, intimidation, isolation and emotional, sexual or economic abuse to control the other partner in a relationship. Stalking or other harassing behavior is often an integral part of domestic violence. Now you may be sitting there thinking, "Great, I know what domestic violence, is but what does that have to do with me?" One out of every three college students has been or will be a victim of domestic violence by the time they graduate. Kind of scary, huh? Many college students think it is, and are doing their best to change that statistic.

One way students are doing this is through holding and attending "Take Back the Night" marches and vigils. Take Back the Night's (TBTN) sole purpose is to raise awareness about all forms of domestic violence. It was started in the late 1970's and is still running today. When the institution first started its goal was to help make the streets, cities and college campuses safer for women, especially at night. As it progressed it, became a way to protest pornography, physical violence, sexual assault, rape, dating violence, sexual abuse, domestic violence, stalking, sexual harassment, child abuse, internet harassment, child prostitution and sex related crimes throughout the world. Today, TBTN events are sponsored by college campuses, women centers, battered women's shelters, high schools, crisis centers, and community centers. TBTN events include speeches about the violence by experts and victims, discussions for men, candle light vigils and marches for women and children. If you are near a TBTN event you will most likely hear the rallying of women and their chants of "Take back the night, loud and clear, We claim the right to walk without fear."; "Yes means Yes, No means No, However we dress, Wherever we go"; "Out of our dorms, into the streets, we wont be raped, we won't be beat": or "Join together, Free our lives, We will not be victimized" along with many, many more. Often TBTN events also host the Clothesline Project.

The Clothesline Project is a non-profit organization that uses t-shirts decorated with messages of abuse victims to not only put humans behind the statistics, but also to help the creators of the t-shirts come to terms with their ordeals and let victims know they are not alone. The Clothesline Project was first started in

October 1990 on Cape Cod by a group of women, many of whom were affected by violence in one way or another. The turning point that pushed these women to create the Clotheslines Project was a statistic published by the Men's Rape Prevention Project in Washington DC. It stated that during the Vietnam War, fifty eight thousand soldiers died. During this same time period, fifty one thousand women were killed by men who were supposed to love them. The idea to hang shirts on a clothesline was inspired by the Aids Quilt and the concept of "airing society's dirty laundry." The first Clothesline Project was presented in October 1990 during a Take Back the Night Rally. As the day wore, on the clothesline grew and grew as women continued to make shirts. Today there are as many as five hundred projects in forty two states and five countries that have roughly fifty to sixty thousand shirts combined. Many of these projects are held on campuses of colleges like Mount Saint Mary's College in Los Angeles, CA, Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, FL, and our very own MCLA here in North Adams, MA. MCLA's project marched in the Fall Foliage Parade and part of it is currently on display in the Centennial Room until the end of October.

The different colored shirts on the clothesline depict the different kinds of abuse the victim has faced (though MCLA's shirts do not always follow in this pattern.) Typically a black shirt is for victims of political violence, purple and lavender shirts are for those who have faced violence because of their sexual orientation, blue and green shirts are for those victims of sexual abuse and incest. The red, orange, and pink shirts are for survivors of rape and sexual assault while the yellow and beige shirts are for the battered. Although all of the t-shirts are very heart-wrenching, it is when a white shirt appears on the line that it is almost unbearable. A white shirt stands for a victim that was killed due to the violence.

Eleven hundred campuses participated in VDay 2009. VDay is held on Valentines Day helps raise money for awareness for the victims of domestic violence. February 1 to April 30 is VDay season. The V stands for Victory, Valentine, Violence and Vagina. Victory for all those who have survived and for when we finally defeat the war against domestic violence; Violence because that is what we work to raise awareness for on VDay; Valentine because of the date it is celebrated; Vagina because VDay is for helping reclaim the word for women. To celebrate VDay, campuses put on productions of the *Vagina Monologues*. *The Vagina Monologues* was written by Eve Ensler and is a compilation of stories of women who were interviewed by her. Some monologues are light hearted, while others like "My Vagina was My Village" depicts the rape and mutilation of Bosnian women. There are happy facts and not-so-happy facts, laughter, bitterness, sorrow, resent-

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College Mamas

by R.J. Doughty

There remains an uncomfortable dichotomy between work and family, especially for

women. In recent years, there have been a number of trend stories about women “opting out” of college and careers in order to have children. For mothers that do seek education or hold jobs, we use the language of “balancing” family and work – compartmentalizing their lives, so one aspect does not mix with the other. This mindset, however, denies the reality of women’s lives and erases the need for work and family to interact and accommodate one another. Mothers frequently take their life at college, either as students, professors or staff, home with them. Why, then, are mothers expected to leave their family life behind when they set foot on a college campus?

When Joanne Gilbert, a professor of Communication at Alma College, announced that she was pregnant, she discovered that there was no formal maternity leave policy. It was rumored that the informal policy was that female faculty were encouraged to give birth over the summer. Gilbert and some of her colleagues became a committee to research and advocate a leave policy. They found that theirs was one of many colleges and universities with no maternal leave policy in place, and that where there were policies, they were under-utilized.

This may be due to fear of what the organization Moms Rising has termed “Maternal Profiling”. Mothers in all fields are seventy-nine percent less likely to be hired than non-mothers with the same amount of experience, and mothers receive lower wages. The same isn’t true for fathers – in fact, being a father seems to improve one’s professional and economic standing. A study from Cornell University showed that mothers were offered \$11,000 less than non-mothers with the same experience, while fathers were offered \$6,000 more. In academia, it was found that having a baby within five years after earning a Ph.D. hinders a woman’s ability to earn tenure, while men who have a child at the same point in their careers are more likely to achieve tenure than either women or other men without babies.

The policy that Gilbert ended up negotiating was not what she and her colleagues wanted. New mothers at Alma College would receive a “short-term disability” release from teaching one course, and then have the option of “buying” a second course by literally giving up money or by taking on an extra course the following semester. Such a hard-won and unsatisfactory situation for new moms is not unusual in the U.S., but it is unheard of in

most other parts of the world. A Harvard study of over one hundred and seventy nations found that the United States was one of only four countries without any national paid leave program for new mothers.

A lack of maternal leave and pay inequity for moms aren’t the only issues preventing most colleges and universities from being a supportive place for women with children. In 2007, students at Tufts came together to demand affordable campus housing for student mothers and their children. With off-campus housing options being too costly, student mothers were being forced to drop out. Anne Stevenson, co-founder of the Tufts Alliance for the Advancement of Mothers, was at the school on full academic scholarship when she had her son. She was advised to take out loans to cover off-campus housing and daycare, leaving her thirty-five thousand dollars in debt. The dean of student affairs at Tufts pledged to provide housing for students with children in the future.

Child care on campus is an issue of importance to students, faculty and staff alike. According to the National Coalition for Campus Children’s Centers, who believe on-campus child care is “an integral part of higher education systems”, there are over two thousand campus children’s centers in the United States. Thousands of other schools, however, don’t provide child care, and many existing programs close due to financial concerns. When the University of South Maine started cutting programs in the past year, parents in the college community began a letter-writing campaign and rallied at their campus center, but to no avail. The closing of the child care centers will not only cause some students to leave USM, but will have a negative impact on several academic programs – such as psychology, sociology, linguistics and nursing – that depended on the center for research. Parents at USM continue to petition against the decision. Ogeechee Technical College cited financial instability as their second reason for closing their campus child care center – their first reason was that college campuses were not a safe place for children. A writer from Moms Rising points out the irony that this decision is endangering more families than it protects by leaving every parent on campus without any guarantee that there will be somewhere to go and someone to care for their kids. MCLA’s own childcare program closed several years ago.

Activist mothers are doing what they can to improve campus life for themselves and other parents. However, mothers and their concerns are under-represented in activism, due to the same lack of support and resources in activist circles that exist in the world at large. A New York City based group called MAMA (Mothers Alliance for Militant Action) was created to address the needs of mothers in general and within activist communities. The group says they aim to include every kind of mom: “work-for-pay moms,

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Herstory: A Study of Women's Studies (continued)

the realms of childcare, housework, and eldercare.

Women Studies has revolutionized my own field of religious studies. Not only are women able to actually receive degrees and doctorates in this subject matter (GASP!), they are making remarkable discoveries about the huge role women played in the birth of every major world religion, and the later emergence of oppressive rules used to force women back into their "place."

Sociology and anthropology are the disciplines most closely tied to Women's Studies, and they have benefited most from it. A preference for qualitative (such as interviews) over quantitative (such as demographic or numerical information) data when investigating populations broadened and clarified the data gathered by sociologists and anthropologists.

Women's Studies and feminism has changed the very patterns of formal speech in the academic world. Once "he" was the formal term for any general individual mentioned within a text. Today, using gender neutral language, "he or she" or "one," is mandatory for publication in every major scholarly journal and newspaper from the American Psychological Society to the New York Times (4). Some critics say this is sacrificing simplicity of language for the sake of political correctness. However, recent studies have shown that the importance of gender neutral language goes deeper than mere politeness. In studies, children asked to draw "firemen" will show a group of men in red hats fighting a fire. But if one asks children to draw "firefighters," some of these figures will become women in red hats fighting a fire. Gender neutral language is more inclusive, and it is also more accurate when speaking about the world today.

Though Women's Studies has accomplished a great deal, it still has its struggles. Stereotypes of man-devouring women persist among students, and faculty continue to complain about misplaced resources and shoddy scholarship. In these days of shrinking university funds, Women's Studies is walking a tightrope. Many colleges (like MCLA) don't actually have a Women's Studies department; rather, these courses are taught by professors within a wide variety of disciplines and cross listed with Women's Studies. As budgets shrink and enrollment rises, professors may be encouraged to stop teaching Women's Studies course in favor of more general courses. So, a piece of take-home activism for the dear reader: sign up for a Women's Studies course for next semester!



The logo of the Women's Studies Minor at MCLA created by R.J. Doughty in Spring 2007

Whatever their fate in the coming decades, Women's Studies and its parent movement of feminism have changed scholarship forever, presenting the academic world with a fuller and more accurate picture of humanity. I have witnessed an emphasis on women's perspectives and experiences even in classes that have nothing to do with Women's Studies. It may be that one day Women's Studies will be simply redundant, because the histories and discoveries of women will be presented alongside those of men in every classroom.

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Body Activism (continued)

celebrates natural diversity in body size. It encourages women to stop focusing on weight loss and dieting and start paying attention to their natural appetites for food, sleep, and exercise. Health at Every Size encourages self-acceptance by honoring people of all shapes and sizes. It also endorses the advantages of physical activity by encouraging social, pleasure-directed movement. In addition, it also helps people reconnect eating to internally-directed hunger. This leads to a more normal and peaceful relationship with food. By breaking the never-ending cycle of weight loss and regain, this approach can help end the waste of valuable resources that results from our cultural obsession with thinness. The overall goal is to help people make positive changes to improve the quality of their lives, regardless of their weight status. This, in turn, should create a society that judges less and embraces diversity.

An additional example of body activism is the Body Project. Since 2001, more than one thousand high school and college students have partaken in the Body Project. The project works by getting girls to recognize how they have been buying into the idea that they have to be thin to be happy and successful. The participants of this project have done activities such as critiquing the supposed thin ideal by writing essays and role-playing with their peers. Participants are directed to come up with simple, but successful, ways to spread body activism. For example, some girls have slipped notes saying "Love your body the way it is" into dieting books at stores like Borders. Another example is writing inspirational and positive thoughts about the body on post-its and leaving them on the mirrors in public bathrooms. There are many different ways to participate in the Body Project.

Since such an enormous part of body issues has to do with the way women view themselves, activism that allows women to see their physical selves as attractive can be very successful. Here are many ways in which you can embrace body activism according to the sources listed at the end of this article:

- Always remember that the sun will rise tomorrow even if you had one too many slices of pizza or an extra scoop of ice cream.
- Never blame your body for the bad day you're having.
- Stop joining in when your friends compare and trash their own bodies.
- Quit judging a person solely by how his or her body looks (even if it seems harmless) because you would never want anyone doing that to you, right?
- Create a poster of your own positive images of women for inspiration.

- Create a "Wall of Shame" where you and a group of friends go through magazines and cut out all of the negative images of women. Or, create a "Wall of Fame" where you can find positive images of women. Although most of the media is at fault for portraying negative images of women, some companies, like Dove, actually reveal women as beautiful in varied shapes, sizes, and colors.

- Make a pact with yourself to treat your body with respect and stick to it.

- Host an "indulgence party." Invite friends over and encourage them to wear whatever makes them feel good and comfortable. Serve tasty snacks without the guilt. Urge everyone to come prepared to talk about their feelings and experiences.

- Don't buy products from companies that use negative images of women in advertising. Make sure that magazine editors, television producers, and others know what you think about the images they are choosing.

- Spread the word about the Love Your Body campaign. Pass it around: it's okay to love yourself for who you are.

Finally, here is one last piece of advice from *feminist.com*. "While eating a well balanced diet, getting regular exercise, avoiding toxins such as cigarettes, junk food, drugs and alcohol, and getting enough sleep may not be a form of activism in and of itself, respecting your body in these ways is a form of body pride. Activists need all the energy they can get and taking care of yourself physically will help you stay motivated and mentally alert so that you can make the change you wish to see in the world."

Sources:

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- Gupta, Sanjay, MD. "Taking on the Thin Ideal." *Time* 06/09/2008: Vol. 171 Issue 23, p50-50.
- Mysko, Claire. "Body Activism" Helps Girls Confront Body Issues." *Claire Mysko*, 2006-2009. World Press.
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Resources for Activists, Volunteers, and Those in Need...

The **Elizabeth Freeman Center's** mission statement describes the organization as "a non-profit, county-wide agency that provides counseling, advocacy, emotional, educational, vocational, and economic services, and fosters social change. We oppose violence, harassment, and discrimination, and we promote the physical and emotional safety of all people. We strive to provide a haven and a communication network for all people, regardless of gender, age, race, color, class, religion, or sexual orientation." They are always accepting volunteers. Training for their hotline to connect survivors to support, counseling, advocacy, shelter, or just someone to talk to, will occur after the first of the year.

Their free hotline is available 24 hours a day:

866-401-2425

For general information and how to volunteer, call 413-499-2425,
or visit their North Adams office at 85 Main Street.

Tapestry Health is a non-profit organization that has provided reproductive health care and HIV counseling in several locations across Western Massachusetts for over thirty years. Their nearest site to MCLA is located at 100 Wendell Avenue in Pittsfield. They have a variety of options for volunteers and interns. They are also currently campaigning against cuts to Family and HIV Funding. From their website:

"Contact the Governor's office today and urge him to not reduce the Family Planning line item (4513-1000) or the AIDS line item (4512-0103) as he contemplates 9 C cuts for the FY 2010 and as he plans for the FY 2011 budget proposal. Cuts to these line items now or in FY 2011 would result in further/significant reduction of services. Governor's contact information: 888-870-7770."

Learn more about Tapestry Health at their website:

www.tapestryhealth.org

or call:

(413)586-2016

The **Berkshire Food Project** provides free hot lunches five times a week, Monday through Friday. Contact them about donations and volunteering:

First Congregational Church
North Adams MA 01247
Phone:(413) 664-7378
www.berkfoodproj.org



If you know of a campaign, protest, cause, volunteer opportunity, social justice organization, support group or other resource in the Berkshires (preferably in the North Adams community), let us know about it!

Contact us at:

womenscenter@mcla.edu or **x5497**, or visit in **Campus Center Room 322**.

Mail to:

Phone: 413-662-5497
E-mail: womenscenter@mcla.edu

North Adams, MA 01247
MCLA
Campus Center Room #322

Susan B. Anthony Women's Center

From Meadows to Meaning

"Featuring the work of Doris Carey Scott, Yolande Waldron, Merritt Kraft Fletcher, Natalie Tottenham, and Kristen Parker. This exhibit is multi-generational with a focus on the feminine aesthetic. Themes converge, over-lap, and include responses to the artists' interaction with nature and their environments, ideas surrounding the animal/human divide, memory and the passage of time, absurdity, myth, love, beauty, philosophy, fertility, and flowers."



**On display at Elf Parlor
303 Ashland Street,
North Adams**

**October 17th
to
November 13th**