

WOMEN'S STUDIES NEWSLETTER SEPT 2007



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Woman of the Year Award: Professor

Karen Stein

Shannon Stad

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Our very own director of the Women's Studies program, Karen Stein, has been honored with the Woman of the Year Award by the Rhode Island Commission on Women, along with two other spectacular women. Professor Stein has worked very hard through the years, especially for us here at URI, and has earned this award indefinitely. I have had the privilege to interview Professor Stein regarding this award and other achievements in her career.

Upon asking Karen how she felt about this amazing award, she replied that she was very excited about it. Yet it is also humbling because the award, she feels, is not only for her, but for the Women's

Studies department and all the students, faculty and staff who put in a joint effort to make URI a better school for all of us. In accepting this award, she is doing so on behalf of all who participate.

Professor Stein is an ex officio member of the President's Commission on the Status of Women at URI, a group that works to address issues important to all the women on campus. They have recently been developing work-life policies such as a family leave policy, and working to ameliorate sexual harassment by such means as informing women of their rights and options in dealing with these issues—all to help create a climate which promotes safety and wellness. It is also important to note that it is not only the women on campus who must work to end harassment of all kinds: all must work toward that goal.

Some of the recent achievements of the WMS Program are: 2006- Developing the WMS certificate program for graduate students. This year there are half a dozen students who are interested in receiving this certificate. In 2006 the Women's Studies honors society, Iota Iota Iota was formed. In 2005 The Women's Studies Department's 25th anniversary took place, where faculty, alumnae, students and friends enjoyed a dinner and a video about our history produced by Prof. Stephen Grubman-Black. \$10,000 was raised for the department's use.

When asked what are the greatest obstacles the Women's Studies Department faces, Stein says it is the fact that they are very under staffed. It is very hard to accomplish all our goals without enough professors to take part in all the hard work that must be put in to see results. There is also a general problem with fear of the "f" word. It seems many students, especially taking Women's Studies 150 (the introduction to women's studies course), are fearful of calling themselves feminists, even though they support equal rights for women and men.

Advice for those who are out there, trying to make a difference, Professor Stein suggests that first and foremost, don't let yourself burn out. Try to lessen the load through networking and getting work done at a steady pace.

This year, Stein is gathering a group of people to organize a celebration for International Women's Day, which will be taking place March 6th in the Union. We welcome your help! Join our planning meeting on Wed, Oct 3 at noon in Roosevelt 311. Here's a chance to take part in something very important!



Ann Telnaes [<http://www.anntelnaes.com>]

A Small Speck Regarding Large Corporations

Shannon Stad

We all know about large corporations, and of course we all know how badly they treat their employees (unless of

course this employee is a rich, white male making the corporation its money, but I digress). My question's always been, "Why doesn't anyone do anything about it?"

When I heard a story first-hand from my mother's old co-worker, I finally began to get an answer. The story is: she accepted an offer to be a manager of a CVS. Not far into it, she was working 70 hours a week, no day off, three months straight while being berated, degraded and sexually harassed by the then-Division Manager (who was promoted later on). When she began looking for another job via Monster.com her higher-ups found her resume and proceeded to harass her further. To put icing on this lovely cake, while hauling in products on truck day, she severely injured her shoulder and back and the company fired her.

Now that we're all shocked and appalled, I'd like to mention she did get to sue CVS for \$60,000. But that's barely a dent in this chain's multi-billion dollar worth. After hearing all of this, I was reeling with anger and shock, and encouraged my mother's friend to inform all people she knew and to keep on complaining. She replied "It's in the past, I just don't want to be reminded of all that anymore. Besides, I finally have a job that treats me well."

OK, understandable, is what I'm thinking. After a few hours of remaining complacent,

though, it's finally hitting me—no, not OK! This woman was harassed because she was younger (new manager), a woman and did not feel it would be best to make *too* much of a ruckus (because lord knows how the work environment would be if she had *fought back*). It disgusts me to think that there are thousands and thousands of workers, especially female workers, who have no place to turn. Most can't complain because if they lose their job- who's going to hire them? How about for the same pay? It's a "dog-eat-dog" world, as they say. Scratch that—as "they" choose to dismiss the problem and we all nod in agreement and decide not to take any action. There won't be anything done to truly give this (and many other) women (and some men) justice for the treatment they endure just to make a living. Again, we all "know" it's wrong—so what's taking so long for there to be some action? There are unions, but there are many companies who discourage employees from joining one, and further more a union won't solve all of these issues regarding sexist or racist behavior.

I don't know about y'all, but all the money in the world wouldn't make me feel better after my boss smacks my ass and tells me I "need a good spanking". The only thing that would keep me from seething is to see this privileged person fired *immediately*.

I'm not blaming those out there who have been victimized by their co-workers and higher-ups, since I don't have an answer to all these problems. All I can think to do is *tell everyone* who knows about these heinous acts and to cease purchasing from a corporation who won't treat their employees like human beings *in every store*. Write letters, make phone calls, and keep one's eyes and ears open. It's a constant uphill battle and I'm not one to promise I won't ever buy from a large corporation again (try as I might) but I sure as heck will be dedicated to informing and taking action. Fight the good fight, everyone.

**Keep Your Rosaries off My Ovaries:
Pregnancy Crisis Centers in Rhode Island**

Gillian Ramos

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Imagine being 21 years old, and away at school for another exciting year. You go to a party, have a few drinks, and wake up in the morning next to that guy from your economics lecture. Something isn't quite right. You wait a few days, hope your period comes around, but it doesn't. You take a drugstore pregnancy test. It's positive. You freak out - you can't possibly have this baby, you're just a student.

You scour the internet for help, and find a listing for a clinic that offers pre- and

post-abortion counseling. Okay, that helps. You meet with one of their counselors; she is very kind and gentle, appearing sympathetic to your situation. She gives you some pamphlets to read, describing the growth and development of the baby. Things seem weirder now than they did before. It's like she wants you to keep the baby, since it's apparently so developed and alive. You begin to feel ashamed for even *considering* abortion.

But that's exactly what the counselor wants you to feel. This crisis center is not designed to help you feel more secure in your decision to abort; instead, it is designed to mislead, to entice women to seek their services under the guise of "pre-abortion counseling," and above all, it is designed to spoon feed pro-life propaganda. Contrary to the efforts of pro-choice organizations and individuals, these crisis centers are popping up across the country, with eight of them in Rhode Island alone. Ironically, all three Providence locations are within 10 minutes driving time of a Planned Parenthood clinic.

Even more upsetting is the *Washington Post* reporting that these crisis centers have received over \$60 million in federal funding since 2001. Where exactly does this money go, you might ask. According to an independent report requested by Representative Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.), much of this money has

funded efforts to “frighten pregnant teenagers and women,” thereby preventing them from making informed decisions about their health. Waxman’s report cited this practice as bad public health policy. Such efforts include, but are not limited to, abstinence-only programs for local schools, and perpetuating already-debunked women’s health myths, like the one stating that women who have abortions are up to 50% more likely to wind up with breast cancer in the future. The latter claim was refuted in 2003 by a panel of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), following the mysterious 2002 deletion of relevant study results from the NCI website.

What does this all mean for Rhode Island? In a year 2000 survey conducted by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Rhode Island teens between the ages of 14 and 18 who became pregnant averaged 48.6 per 1000 girls. Based on data from the Guttmacher Institute, Rhode Island has one of the top 10 abortion to birth ratios for women under age 20. This trend helped contribute to the 35% decline in teen pregnancies on a national scale; teens who have visited a Rhode Island Planned Parenthood clinic most commonly praise the facilities for their compassionate, confidential service, indicating a trend towards better self-care. In 2006, the state’s Department of Education issued a cessation of federally-funded abstinence-only

programs in state-funded schools. Teens are receiving comprehensive sex education, further contributing to the overall national decline in teen pregnancy.

Unfortunately, the Heritage Foundation of Rhode Island is still trying to further their conservative agenda by pushing for abstinence-only programs, attempting to link teens’ abstinence to their academic achievement, and virginity pledges to “improved life outcomes.” There are currently two Planned Parenthood locations in Rhode Island, according to their website, both of which are in Providence. Two locations in only one city, compared to the eight crisis centers located throughout the state, proving that the fight to protect a woman’s right to make an informed, healthy decision will continue to be an uphill battle as the 2008 election draws near.

We would like to hear from you! Send your short essays to Sharon Stad
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Visit our web page
www.uri.edu/artsci/wms



Ann Telnaes [http://www.anntelnaes.com]

Keeping Health In Mind While Returning to School

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Fall is here and school is back in session! For most of us, this means we've moved to a dorm or an off campus rental, our schedules have changed and our lives are now stepping to a different pace. We've become busier and life can be more stressful, whether it's from schoolwork, social obligations, or just the change into a new environment. The one thing that can help us to get through these stressful changes smoothly could be the most neglected aspect of our lives, our health. Three things are commonly forgotten about

during the school year that dramatically affect our health: nutrition, sleep habits, and mental health. Have you been keeping track of your body?

There are two things we see when we turn the corner into Hope for dinner: the salad bar and the display of desserts near the same counter. I know which one I would love to pick, but having a little will power can go a long way. With so many options in the dining halls, try including a salad with dinner and have juice instead of soda; this can have a huge impact. This doesn't just apply in the dining halls, but also invest in a woman's multi-vitamin (including a calcium supplement), and stock up on some nutritious snacks (peanut butter on apple slices, bananas or a granola bar are good choices!) to keep you going in between classes. Studies have shown that your energy holds up longer throughout the day when you have five small meals as opposed to three larger meals. Try to keep as balanced a diet as you can.

Probably the most neglected yet most important aspect of our health during college is sleep. Whether it's because of a huge exam and the need to cram late or friends who want to go out the night before an 8am class, sleep just doesn't fit in there. The problem is, it really needs to. Getting a good night's sleep before an exam will help more than late night cramming; sleep helps you to think more clearly and provides

energy. As for friends, they should understand if you don't want to go out for the night, just prioritize. Which will help out more in the future- being healthy and attending class prepared, or one night of clubbing? Also with roommates, you should be able to work around a sleep schedule for everyone. If one roommate doesn't care about getting sleep, you have a right as an equal person of the house/dorm to get your six to eight hours of sleep, so don't feel guilty about sticking up for that right. Sleep is underrated!

Finally, one thing that is often overlooked about health is our mental health. No doubt about it, college is stressful. Schoolwork and social pressure can probably make people feel sicker than licking the bathroom floor. It always seems like there are a lot more things to get done than time to do them. One classic strategy is to make a priority list, and organize all of the things you need to do by importance and work on each task as time permits. There are many other stressors in our lives too, and we should set time aside to deal with them

so they don't interfere with our health and future. If help is needed to get past stressful times, the counseling service at URI is a free service available to all students and is a perfectly healthy way to deal with stress and other issues.

Taking care of all of these aspects of our health is key to making college life have less of a negative impact on our bodies. There are many different online resources to help us learn about optimal diets, sleep patterns and stress relief. The healthier we are, the more we will be able to accomplish without having an illness or simply feeling run down. The more applied we are in college, the more prepared we will be when we start our careers, which will help us in having bright and fulfilling futures.

Woman Positive



An actress can only play a woman. I'm an actor, I can play anything.

Whoopi Goldberg, American female actor

In politics, if you want anything said, ask a man -if you want anything done, ask a woman. *Margaret Thatcher*

I do get called a bitch quite often. What I do NOT get called is pushover, stupid, sweetheart, dear or doormat. Works for me. *Rebecca M.*

Remember always that you not only have the right to be an individual, you have the obligation to be one. You cannot make any useful contributions in life unless you do that.
Eleanor Roosevelt

People think at the end of the day that a man is the only answer [to fulfillment]. Actually a job is better for me. *Princess Diana*

Expecting life to treat you well because you are a good person is like expecting an angry bull not to charge because you are a vegetarian. *Shari R. Barr*

The thing women have yet to learn is nobody gives you power. You just take it. *Roseanne Barr*

As a woman I have no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.
Virginia Woolf

WMS Events for the Fall



- September 24-28: MCC Diversity Week; includes discussion of Chinese woman author Ding Ling on Wed 9/26, 4-5:30
- September 29: Welcome Brunch for WMS students, faculty, new URI faculty and their mentors- 10am at the Women's Center. Please bring food to share; arrive at 9:30 to help set up.
- October 29: Environmental Factors and Breast Cancer Risk: Are chemicals in common, everyday products linked to breast cancer? 7pm-8:30pm in the Memorial Union, Atrium One.
- November 5: Alumni Association Women's Council—"Financial makeover": getting out of debt; investing. Meet, eat, and greet people from a variety of careers to learn about career possibilities . Evening, at the Alumni Center on Upper College Road.
- December 11: Peng Xiaolian, film director: *The Changing Role of Women in Contemporary China*