The 18th Annual Conference on Women & Gender

Sisterhood is Global:
From Theory to Practice

March 31, 2006

Proudly presented by:
The University of Connecticut
Women’s Studies Program,
Native American Cultural Society &
Human Rights Institute

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CELEBRATING OUR COMMON THREADS

http://www.womens.studies.uconn.edu
Welcome to the 18th Annual Conference on Women and Gender, brought to you by the UConn Women’s Studies Program, co-sponsored by the UConn Native American Cultural Society and the UConn Human Rights Institute!

This year, as we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of Women’s Studies at the University of Connecticut, this conference offers an opportunity to reflect on the past 30 years of feminist scholarship and activism, while sharing our work in the field today. Our theme, “Sisterhood is Global: from Theory to Action,” derived from Robin Morgan’s edited collection *Sisterhood is Global*, is indicative of some of the many threads that run through Women’s Studies: Is sisterhood global? Can it be? Should it be? If it is, how can we, as feminists, embrace our global sisterhood without losing sight of the infinite diversity of women’s lives? If it is not, how can we, as feminists, work in solidarity to create a world that will honor our diversities?

We are grateful for the contributions of each of our presenters who have come together to share their research and insight as they encourage an ongoing dialogue as we address these and a multitude of other important questions. We encourage all participants to join in these conversations as we work together to discover new ways to apply this critical learning as global citizens committed to creating a more just and humane world. As always, it takes the work of many to bring together an event such as this and we are deeply indebted to our co-sponsors and supporters from throughout the University. Thanks, also, to all our wonderful vendors for joining us and providing an opportunity to expand our knowledge and extend our feminism in new directions.

Of course, the conference would not be possible without the many people who worked behind the scenes: Jeanne Monty, Women's Studies Administrative Specialist, and our fabulous student staff: Ashley Savastre and Jessica Feliciano; the Women’s Studies Advisory Board; our joint appointment faculty, Dr. Nancy Naples, Dr. Margaret Breen, and Dr. Anne D’Alleva; Stacey Melanson and UConn Catering Services; Suzy Staubach and her staff at the UConn Coop; Bob Seguin, UConn Parking Services; Richard Wilson and the UConn Human Rights Institute; and the UConn Native American Cultural Society.

*Marita McComiskey, Director of Women’s Studies*  
*18th Annual Conference Committee:*  
*Barbara Gurr, Katherine Hurley-Dizigan, Brittney Northrop, Setta Mushgian and Jayme Schwartzman*

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**Please stop by to visit our vendors!**  
Their support is invaluable in keeping our conference affordable.

We particularly urge you to stop by and make a bid at the Silent Auction sponsored by *Iota, Iota, Iota*, the National Women’s Studies Honor Society; all proceeds support *Iota, Iota, Iota’s* efforts in service to women and girls worldwide.

Please visit the table sponsored by the UConn Violence Against Women Prevention Program to purchase a calendar in support of their efforts to prevent violence against women on our campus.

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

8:00 AM  Registration Opens
9:00 AM  Welcoming Remarks
Cathleen Love, Associate Vice Provost, Office of Multicultural and International Affairs
9:30—10:45 AM  Session A
11:00—12:15 PM  Session B
12:15—1:15 PM  Lunch
1:15—2:15 PM  Session C
2:30—3:45 PM  Session D
4:00—5:00 PM  Keynote Address: Winona LaDuke “Politics, Motherhood and the Environment”
5:00—6:00PM  Closing Reception

POSTERS

Posters will be on display all day in the Common Area

Global Reproductive Rights: Creating a Voice of Advocacy on Campus
Alexandra Estes, University of Connecticut

The Objectified Body of Consciousness in Nepali Mother/Daughter Pairs
Galina Portnoy, University of Connecticut

Influence of Feminist Identity of Body Dissatisfaction & Thin-Ideal Internalization in Women
Galina Portnoy, University of Connecticut
SESSION A

9:30 AM — 10:45 AM

A1 Feminism, Gender, and Violence

Room: P

Moderator: TBA

Gyoung Sun Jang, Clark University, The Politics of Anti-Sex Trafficking: From 'White Slavery' to the Globalized ‘Sex Trade’

Nikki McGary, California Institute of Integral Studies, Gendered Violence and the Biomedical Paradigm: One Woman’s Narrative

Linda Christen, Northeastern University, Feminist Perspectives of Art Therapy in Intimate Partner Violence as Represented in a Crazy Quilt

A2 Work, Women and Politics

Room: E

Moderator: Shobha Gurung, University of Connecticut,

Christine Newkirk, University of Connecticut, Women’s Action and Activism in Urban Brazil: Redefining Domestic Care Work

Shobha Gurung, University of Connecticut, Labor, Gender, and the Informal Economic Sectors: The Case of Nepali Women in Boston


A3 Women as a Vulnerable Population: the Implications of Social Exclusion

Room: B

Moderator: Sumru Erkut, Wellesley Center for Women

Katherine Morrison, Wellesley Centers for Women, Social Exclusion, the Imagery of “Strong Black Woman,” and the Sista’hood among African-American Victims of Intimate Partner Violence

Diane M. Purvin, Wellesley Centers for Women

Silvia Dominguez, Northeastern University

Domestic Violence and the Intergenerational Reproduction of Women’s Poverty in the United States

Sumru Erkut, Wellesley Centers for Women, The Personal is Political, the Global is Personal in the Fight Against AIDS

Jasmine Waddell, Wellesley Centers for Women, Human Rights, Sexual Rights, and Social Inclusion: Coming Out and Moving In

Portnoy, Galina: Research on women’s negative embodied experiences often examines social standards of beauty. Due to the effects of globalization, Western images and standards of ideal beauty have spread rapidly throughout the world. This study examines body consciousness in two generations of Nepali women. The two topics of interest in this study include whether women’s relationships with their bodies differs from the mother to daughter generation and the cross-cultural similarities and differences of women’s embodied experiences.

Portnoy, Galina: Eating disorders have the highest rate of hospitalization and suicide attempts of all psychiatric disorders facing women. Two risk factors for eating disorders include thin-ideal internalization and body dissatisfaction. New perspectives need to be investigated in order to better assess this widespread women’s health crisis. This study’s first purpose was to examine whether student completion of an introductory Women’s Studies course increased their feminist identification. The second purpose was to examine the role of feminist identification in body dissatisfaction and thin-ideal internalization.

We’d like to issue a special Thank You! to the UConn Human Rights Institute and the UConn Native American Cultural Society, whose support for this conference made today possible.

Light the Lodge Powwow

Hosted by the Native Cultural Society of UConn

Saturday, April 1st

Hicks Arena, UConn Storrs campus

Grand Entry at 11:00 am

Native American dancing, singing, food, vendors, and more!

Cost: $2 students, $4 general public, $3 senior citizens, children under 12 free
McCarthy, Kati: bell hooks book *Feminism is for Everybody* (2000) is a staple in many Women’s Studies programs, yet there are still hundreds of thousands of women and men who cannot or will not identify with feminism. My WST 101 activism project focused on men and women in the Christian Church and their, often times, complex relationship with feminism. I try to define these two terms and explore possible points of connection.

Saha, Monoswita: The very name of the divine feminine is Shakti – strength; a burning mass of creative and destructive energy. However, once we descend from the world of myth and scriptures, the pedestal can look like a prison. Are women slaves to goddess-hood or is there a marriage between flesh and blood limitations and intrinsic divinity? From the second generational perspective, the traditional feminine role is a funny fit and too often we cut it out of our lives completely.

Nasser, Roberta; Weinberger, Sara; Kantrowitz, Ricki: This panel will showcase examples of advocacy at both the global and grassroots level and suggest ways that college faculty can bring an international perspective, especially using a human rights framework, to teaching and practice. Examples of advocacy efforts include: working at the UN on behalf of Tibetan and other immigrant communities; developing a writing and education program on behalf of women prisoner; and incorporating women’s mental health issues into the agenda of the UN.

Hubbell, Andrea Haas; Handley, Mary Ann; Evans, Shanta: Please see the write up on Panel C4 for details.

Laguzza, Katy: Authors of LGBT literature have progressed from having no words to voice their frustrations to creating new roles for language in which they can find expression and truth. Because they are not provided with a traditional backdrop of words to describe their emotions, they create their own methods, perhaps bringing about a new style of language that would not have been created otherwise.

Sylvester, Marissa: Domestic violence between lovers is the ultimate act of violence and betrayal of trust and it is a sensitive topic because discussing it, preventing it, and punishing it violates laws and norms of individual privacy. It is also assumed that instances of domestic violence involve women being abused by their partners. However, there are others who are forced to suffer in silence because they are members in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered community.

POSTERS:
Estes, Alexandra: This is a crucial time for reproductive justice, both nationally and abroad. College campuses are ideal sites for political activism, yet a presence of political mobilizing centered around global reproductive justice is nonexistent. This poster is presented with the goal of promoting social activism through successful techniques to mobilize college students and faculty to advocate for change surrounding the crucial issues that are discussed in woman-centered courses.
B2 From Feminist Theory to Feminist Action 2
Room: P
Moderator: Barbara Gurr, University of Connecticut
Karen Garner, State University of New York, Women and Global Leadership: The World YWCA and the UN Decade for Women
Jacqueline Hookimaw-Witt, University of Toronto, Canada
Norbert Witt, University of Regina, Canada
The Politics of Maintaining Aboriginal Feminism and Aboriginal Women’s Roles of Sacred Responsibility to the Land

B3 A Ticking Bomb: Nepal, Trafficking, and HIV/AIDS
Room: E
Moderator: Mary Crawford, University of Connecticut
Mary Crawford, University of Connecticut
Jenna Formeister, University of Connecticut
Michelle Kaufman, University of Connecticut
Meghan Niedzwicky, University of Connecticut
Lindsey Shepherd, University of Connecticut

B4 Global Sisterhood, Transnational Connections
Room: C
Moderator: TBA
Leah Hutton Blumenfeld, Florida International University, The Political Economy of Tourism -- Women and Labor in the Caribbean
Mariem S. Lo, University of Buffalo, Transnational Connections: The Influence of Diasporic Social Networks on Female Entrepreneurship in West Africa
Jila Kazerounian, Women’s Forum Against Fundamentalism in Iran, Women’s Resistance Against Islamic Fundamentalism: A Case Study of Iran

B5 Transgender Issues: Undergraduate Explorations
Room: G
Moderator: Margaret Breen, University of Connecticut
Joseph Pigott, University of Connecticut, Stone Butch Blues and Locating Gender
Eric Hopkins, University of Connecticut, Transmen Need Love Too: An Exploration of Transsexual Identity

B6 Teaching the Global Politics of Women’s Reproductive Rights
Room: A
Alexandra Estes, University of Connecticut
Kathryn Libal, University of Connecticut

C4 Hubbell, Andrea Haas: The Roots of Roe by Andrea Haas Hubbell presents the history of abortion and contraception in America from the first surgical abortion in 1742 to the struggles over Roe v. Wade. Narrated by Ellen Burstyn and James Whitmore, the program has voices of historical characters provided by Katharine Hepburn, Joanne Woodward, Jason Robards, Peter Coyote, Ann Archer, Drew Barrymore, Brooke Shields, Margaret Avery, and Sharon Stone. The Roots of Roe won more than twenty awards, including three Emmy awards for Outstanding Documentary, Directing and Writing. It was broadcast nationally on PBS in 1997. The event will consist of two sessions. The first will start with a short introduction by producer Andrea Haas Hubbell, followed by a showing of the 56 minute documentary The Roots of Roe. The second session (D4) will feature a panel discussion on the issues raised by the documentary for the future of reproductive rights both in the United States and globally.

C5 Holgerson, Kathleen; Fluckiger, Kathleen; Peña, Veronica; Lebel, Leah: Discussion will highlight the many ways in which women’s centers contribute to building women’s leadership skills. Facilitators and participants will delve into the work of women’s centers in building women leaders, the impact of women’s centers on student staff, and the meaning of young women’s leadership today.

C6 Cahill, Madeleine: This paper will explore the use of film as a pedagogical tool for raising awareness of and interest in global issues affecting women. Clips from films made around the world will be shown. An annotated film resource guide will be distributed.

SESSION D
D1 Giaimo, Genie: Like the polarized and idealized images of womanhood and the femininity that we encounter within society there exists a contested narrative space within which women construct their sense of self linguistically. This contested space is in no way binarial. Young women construct their sense of self within a liminal space traversed by various conflicting cultural discourses on ideal womanhood and femininity. These conflicting discourses manifest within young women’s narratives in various linguistic and experiential forms.

McClain, Sylvia: This paper will present a short review of the problems of the aging singer and then will focus on the results of my interviews with singers in Germany. For the purposes of this paper, I will discuss my interviews with chamber music specialist Charlotte Lehmann (who has since been the teacher of baritone Thomas Quasthoff), Ingeborg Hallstein, coloratura soprano, Hannelore Bode, dramatic soprano, and Edda Moser, dramatic coloratura soprano. These sopranos are in their sixties or seventies. I recorded the interviews, with their permission. Each interview was unique and also proceeded according to the persona of each singer. There is no doubt that this subject matter will have a very broad appeal not only to singers, but to all of us in facing the subjects of aging, health and retirement.

D2 Garcia, Elizabeth: Why don’t Latinas call themselves “feminist?” In this paper, I argue a contributing factor is the lack of historical connection between Latinas and feminist movements. Specifically, I will be looking at the feminist practice of women in the Young Lords Party and Evelina Lopez Antonetty, founder of the United Bronx Parents.
has a different meaning in the hemisphere, and different meanings within it as well, that will affect how women view their roles in work and in politics. The paper will ask how the gender division of labor in tourism industry reinforces inequality but also how it might expose women to new ideas and offer new opportunities that may not have existed before, and what the political implications might be.

B6 Estes, Alexandra; Libal, Kathryn: This presentation provides theoretical and practical tools for teaching undergraduate students about reproductive health as a human right. The session focuses on ways to get students to think about access to information, contraceptive supplies, and a full range of family planning services in the context of a U.S. imposed “Global Gag Rule.”

SESSION C
C1 Craig, Renya: “MAWOMBA” (Gift of the Womb), a poetry reading. Biological mothers or not, we are ALL mothers for our precious Earth. Our wombs are rhythm water drums of wisdom, power, beauty, and grace for the circle of life. Just as Mother Earth is birthing a new time, we too are birthing ourselves, and rising up to bless our world awake for the highest good of all concerned.

Nassar, Roberta; Weinberger, Sara; Kantrowitz, Ricki: Round table discussion on the use of documents and reports published by the United Nations, UN agencies and International NGOs as classroom texts in a college setting. A range of materials will be available for examination.

C2 Deans, Jill: The art and prose of Me-K Ahn contributes to an already active conversation on inter-country adoption. Undertow, an 18 minute film, which will be featured here, explores the adoptee’s desires and dissociations. Ahn uses body imagery as a nexus for the literal and figurative search for mother, who, in the case of inter-country adoption, is lost geographically, linguistically, culturally, and metaphysically. I will explore the symbolics of Undertow in an effort to spark a discussion about the feminist implications of inter-country adoption and the reality of inter-country adoptees coming-of-age and looking for home.

C3 Cheney, Ann: In a global context, the incidence of eating disorders are significantly increasing and affects women of diverse cultural backgrounds. However, biomedical models, which privilege the concept of fat phobia, diagnose and treat women who suffer from eating pathology. By employing a historical/cultural perspective, I will demonstrate the problems associated with this model and will reflect upon the use of gender as a key category of analysis to understand the meaning attached to women’s self-starvation.

Willis, Jessica: Depictions of “girlhood” in Western cinema have typically followed a formulaic guide for constructing and reproducing concepts of “femininity.” Focusing on “girlhood” as an identity position that changes with respect to historic and economic transitions in a society, this presentation considers the ways in which cultural discourses of “femininity” have changed over time and in what ways they remain relatively stable within dominant cultural media representations. Preliminary findings from qualitative interviews with girls from an east coast urban population will be introduced as a means of understanding theory and its implications on the ground.

12:15—1:15 PM
Please join us in the main dining area for a sandwich buffet.

Don’t forget to browse the vendor tables!
and the police as well as the violent and brutal "breaking in or seasoning" as they are inducted into prostitution upon arriving in the brothels of Bombay. The second part explores the high incidence of alcohol and drug abuses as well as self harm and attempted suicide among prostitutes. Finally, the last part of the paper explores the informal networks of support and survival strategies adopted by prostitutes in a bid to overcome their awful predicament.

Session B

B1 Hohman, Kathryn: Recognition of women's agency is essential, particularly in periods of political change when women have the opportunity to shape new social paradigms. I set out to discuss the Hindu festival of Tij as a site of women's agency and a space for creating alternative means of peace building in the face of Nepal's civil war.

Scozzari, Lois: The emerging modern powwow is a visible and dynamic area where American Indians intrepidly claim space and legitimacy through physical and spiritual ceremony. The dance is an empowering vehicle for Intertribal identification, unification and solidarity, leaving no question that American Indians are visible, distinct and active in American contemporary life. Exploring the powwow venue illustrates that native women make a powerful and unequivocal statement of their own unique identity, contribution, responsibility and intention for the future.

B2 Garner, Karen: During the UN Decade for Women, several World YWCA leaders played key roles as convenors in organizing the NGO forums that ran parallel to the official UN Conferences: Mildred Persinger (1975 Mexico City), Elizabeth Palmer (1980 Copenhagen), and Dame Nita Barrow (1985 Nairobi). These NGO forums enabled thousands of women to experience the substance and spirit of the Conferences, to form transnational feminist networks, and then to return to their communities informed and motivated to develop programs promoting the Decade's goals of peace, sustainable development and gender equality. This paper analyzes the contributions of these three women and their leadership styles, and addresses questions of access to leadership positions within the international NGO community.

Hookimaw-Witt, Jacqueline; Witt, Norbert: Aboriginal communities continue to struggle against the cultural impositions of mainstream society that refuses to recognize Aboriginal traditions. One of these traditions is the egalitarian character of Aboriginal societies and the leader roles women have in it. Women as keepers of culture are, e.g., also in charge of education and thus determine the path the Nation will take in the future. I offer some insight into my Cree philosophy, demonstrating the egalitarian roles and the incorporation of male and female philosophies by presenting the topic with my husband.

B4 Blumenfeld, Leah Hutton: This paper will look at tourism and politics in the Americas to assess the relationship between tourism and women's participation in labor, politics, and policy. It will begin by exploring the role of feminism in the American context and it's differences from the work of scholars in the European context. This will include a review of the literature in general and the research conducted by the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State. How might similar research be undertaken in the Americas? Feminism
**A3 Morrison, Katherine:** The “Strong Black Woman” (SBW) is a racial identity among African-American women that is simultaneously a source of resilience as well as may increase the risk intimate partner violence victimization. This presentation will describe the influence of racism on the development of SBW as well as the effects of SBW on help-seeking behavior among victimized African-American women. The presentation will also share the results of a qualitative investigation.

**Erkut, Sumru:** The global face of HIV/AIDS is not a white gay man but a brown adolescent girl. Young women between the ages of 15 and 25 are the fastest growing group in the rates of HIV infection, especially in Africa and Southeast Asia where sexual encounters often occur within a context of physical violence. The female anatomy and physiology coupled with blood accompanying violent sexual encounters puts young women at greater risk for infection than any other group. That young women of all races are not yet the face of HIV/AIDS in North America and Western Europe should not give Western public health experts a sense of complacency.

**A4 Stambler, Leah:** Three prominent women, Drs. Helen Caldicott, Jane Goodall, and Wangari Mathaai, have taken strong stands about prospects for the planet’s future that reflect the premises of Ecofeminist ethics and activism. The views of these dynamic women provide lenses through which to view global challenges to the environment, international political decision, and the role of activist women. Their internationally acclaimed accomplishments serve as models for making informed and critical decisions about the relationship between human beings and their environment.

**A5 Fine, Jamie:** The Indian Boarding Schools are one of America’s most unfortunate programs. After separating tribes and families, causing countless deaths and, ultimately, denying an entire generation of American Indians their heritage, these Schools constitute one of the most damning acts taken against Native America today. I will discuss life at these schools, the constitutional violations waged against both students and their parents, and will look at how other countries with similar schools have handled the fall out.

**Stassinos, Elizabeth D.:** Can creative writing prevent crime and recidivism? If so, how? Does creative writing for the marginalized prison population of women decrease the risk factors and change the decision-making that fuel recidivism? I read seven years of women prisoner’s creative writings as ethnography and social critique, specifically as comments on the authors’ own sense of the destructive patterns in our culture that contribute to anomie and crime. I will discuss women prisoner writings from “Voices from Inside” from 1999 through 2005. I currently volunteer in this program at a minimum security/pre-release program as an observer helping to plan an outcome evaluation of the workshop. What are the themes that these women want the public to attend to? I pay special attention to well-researched risk-factors and decision-making patterns that contribute to the socio-cultural and economic contexts for crime.

**A6 Gurung, Alka:** This paper explores the issue of violence and empowerment experienced by Nepali prostitutes. The first part of this presentation highlights the violent encounters the prostitutes experience from their clients...
In 1989, LaDuke received the Reebok Human Rights Award, with which, in part, she began the White Earth Land Recovery Project. In 1994, she was nominated by *Time Magazine* as one of America’s fifty most promising leaders under forty years of age, and was also awarded the Thomas Merton Award in 1996, the Ann Bancroft Award, the 1997 *Ms.* Woman of the Year Award (with the Indigo Girls, Amy Ray and Emily Saliers), the Global Green Award, and numerous other honors.

A graduate of Harvard and Antioch Universities, she has written extensively on Native American and environmental issues. Her publications include *All Our Relations* (non-fiction), *In the Sugarbush* (children’s non-fiction), *The Winona LaDuke Reader*, and *Recovering the Sacred: the Power of Naming and Reclaiming*.

### CLOSING RECEPTION

5:00—6:00 PM

Please join us in the main dining area for a light buffet. Ms. LaDuke will be available to sign copies of her books, available at the Coop table.

### EVENT STAFF

**Conference Coordinator:** Barbara Gurr

**Conference Student & Intern Coordinators:**

- Setta Mushegian
- Britney Northrop
- Jayme Schwartzman

**Director of Women’s Studies:** Marita McComiskey

**Program Assistant:** Katherine Hurley-Dizigan

**Administrative Specialist:** Jeanne Monty

**Student Staff:** Jessica Feliciano

Ashley Savasta

### ABSTRACTS

**Session A**

**A1 Jang, Gyoung Sun:** This paper explores anti-trafficking movements in the 1990s in terms of discourse construction of gender at the international level, focusing on the ways in which transnational anti-sex trafficking movements have contributed to the re/creation of the Third World women. By comparing the recent discourses of 'sex trade' of impoverished women under globalization to the metaphor of 'white slavery' which aimed to protect white western middle-class women in the early twentieth century, this paper also analyzes the juncature of continuation and discontinuation in meanings of gender and sexuality.

**McGary, Nikki:** This is a narrative about my mother and her story of negotiating the biomedical system after being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. In this context, I wish to explore the complexities and specificities of gendered violence linked to knowledge production and power relations. This is also a narrative about my struggles as a feminist, ethnographer and daughter.

**A2 Newkirk, Christine:** In Salvador da Bahia, a diverse array of community organizations are actively redefining the values of remunerated domestic care work. This loosely defined social movement to protect the rights of women in the informal economy is the product of three decades of social activism in Northeastern Brazil. This movement has developed locally, but has been nurtured through exposure to, and engagements with, a global network of women’s rights associations.

**Gurung, Shobha:** This paper will present some preliminary data from an ongoing research project investigating the work-family experiences of female migrant workers in the informal economy. The research focuses on Nepali migrant women legal and illegal, ages 16-65, in Boston, New York and Los Angeles, who work in the informal sector. Female workers in the contemporary informal economy in the US have received very little research attention (recent exceptions are Ward 1990; Wichterich 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Ching Yoon Louie 2001). By conducting informal in-depth interviews with 21-30 women, this study explores how women are drawn to these jobs, their experiences in these jobs, how (if at all) they move to formal sector. The study focuses on how women’s new role as a transnational worker and foreign income earner affect their personal, work, family, and community lives and how women reconstruct their social, political, and economic lives. The paper will present some information gathered from Boston and describe some of preliminary patterns.

**Noehren, Michelle:** The presentation will focus on the lack of female representation in public office and how campaign finance reform is a crucial step forward in closing the gender gap in politics. Despite many gains from the women's movement, the lack of representation of women in government highlights that we have not come as far as our feminist pioneers had hoped. Public financing of elections has proven to level the political playing field and encourage more women to run for office.