



# The UMBC Women's Center Summer 2012 Newsletter

## Letter from the Director: Jess Myers



*"Hope is that thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words and never stops... at all."  
~Emily Dickinson*

There's something magical about summer in higher education. It's not that it's less busy or there are less late nights or early mornings (which of course is nice). Rather, it's the hope that floats through the air. The hope of what the next academic year will hold. The hope that comes from fresh starts, time to reflect, and the anticipation of new things. These are truly the feelings bouncing around this summer in the Women's Center. What will our new start and anticipation for next year include? As we move into our 21st year, we leave our anniversary celebrations and, yet, I still think about the stories of the Women's Center. Last year we asked, what is your story? This year, *I wonder how will we live our stories?*

Two important initiatives happening next year in the Women's Center will focus on living out our stories. As the Director, I reflect on how the Center can continue to grow and push itself to help

others live their stories. One way we'll be doing that this year is through a men's engagement program. This 10-week program will be a safe place for men to explore masculinity and construct healthy and authentic narratives of their gendered experiences. Alongside the exploration of masculinity, this initiative will also seek to mobilize men as allies in gender equity and the prevention of violence against women.

The other initiative is to expand the opportunities for our returning women's community. Last month we welcomed a new cohort of 20 scholars into our scholarship program for returning women. This year we plan on offering more workshops, mentoring opportunities and additional ways for all of our returning women to network and engage with each other.

As new students gather on campus for Orientation, I wonder how many will find a home in the Women's Center? What stories will they tell? What legacies will they create for the Women's Center community before they graduate? I am truly full of hope. Until then, rest, rejuvenate, and enjoy the rest of your summer!



### What's Inside!

- ☺ Letters from Staff
- ☺ Intern Corner
- ☺ Ongoing and Upcoming Events & Groups
- ☺ Information about the Women's Center, the list serve, and newsletter submissions
- ☺ Shout Outs!

## Letter from the Coordinator: Galina Portnoy



*"Wherever you go, there you are."  
~Confucius*

Some reflections from the road...

I got to travel a bit this summer and began to notice people in a way I hadn't before. I spent some time in France, and because I don't speak a lick of French, my only way to get by was to note how others acted, and try desperately to blend in. Something I noticed again and again was how much more space women use in Spain and France compared to the United States. Let me break this down a bit. I've always been interested in the idea of space in relation to gender. Specifically how much space men and women utilize daily and the role "taking up space" plays in sexism, gender relations, and in issues around weight and body image.

For example, consider the intersections of taking up space, standards of beauty, and the American culture's focus on women's

thinness. In the United States, women tend to sit with their legs crossed and arms to their sides, a posture that essentially enables women to take up as little space as possible. Men often sit and stretch their arms up behind their head, place a foot on their knee, or spread their legs wide apart, basically making themselves as wide as possible. In France I noticed this was not the case. Men tended to sit with their legs crossed, almost as much as women did; and women (especially in conversation with other women), spread out, leaned their elbows on their knees, laughed loudly and openly. Once I took note, I started seeing these dynamics everywhere, and couldn't help comparing them to what I've noticed in the U.S.

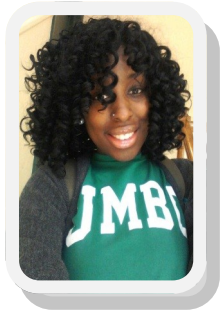
If we consider some of these "taking up space" differences one more level out, we can start to paint a more complete big picture. Take advertising for example. The idea that advertising sells more than the product illustrated on the ad is not new to us. Advertising and media also sell norms and ideals that we're expected to buy into. For women, there is no greater concept sold alongside products

than thinness. The message of "thin=beautiful" is pervasive; but is the other message perpetuated that women are to become as thin and small as possible, and thus take up as little space in the world as they can? The message isn't just imparted on us by mainstream media. It's taught in etiquette classes across the country. Women are instructed to sit gracefully with their legs crossed and arms at their sides or crossed on their lap while men are often found sprawled out, taking up as much space as they can in the chair. See if you can take note of the ways those around you take up space. What do *you* notice?

If you are interested in conversations like these, stop by and visit us in the Women's Center, we're open all summer (10am—3pm)! We'd love to engage in thought provoking conversations around gender issues as well as share stories from summer adventures! We'd love to see you. Also, check out pg 3 of the newsletter where you'll find photos of Women's Center friends engaged in fun summer outdoor activities!

## THE WOMEN'S CENTER'S INTERN CORNER

This spring, the Women's Center was able to bring on our very first summer intern. We're excited to have Tidanke Kaba with us this summer to give us an extra hand around the Women's Center and to have her add her special touch on the student legacies left behind each semester in the Women's Center. As a Health Administration and Public Policy major, Tidanke comes to us with passion in child and maternal health in international/developing countries. For the summer edition of our newsletter we asked her to compile some of her knowledge so we could share it with the rest of the community. Help us welcome Tidanke!



Hello! I am the first Summer Intern at the Women's Center. I was interested in this summer internship because I have a strong passion for women's health. For the past three semesters I have been a UHS Peer Health Educator on campus. Also, I am a rising Health Administration and Public Policy concentrating on Public Health major. My career goal is to work in child and maternal health; I would like to be an advocate for women in international countries who do not have a voice in society. My family background is Liberia, West Africa. So, I have some first-hand insight on what women may go through during pregnancy and childbirth in developing countries. I've included some statistics below to paint a picture for you:

More than 500,000 women per year die from pregnancy and child birth-related complications, 99 percent occurs in developing countries (USAID). Access to good healthcare is very scarce in developing countries. Many only have a trusted elderly woman in the community who helps with the deliveries. This can often be unsafe for the baby and mother because it reduces the access to sanitized medical instruments needed to help with delivery and an overall clean and healthy delivery space.

Even with this misfortune many countries around the world have unique childbirth practices and beliefs. Here are some interesting facts about what women's do around the world for childbirths.

- ◇ In **Australia**, women do not make an appointment with an OBGYN when they find out about their pregnancy right away. Since many times miscarriages can happen in the first part of pregnancy, pregnant women will wait until they reached the 12 weeks mark, to make sure the baby is well.
- ◇ In **Guinea**, the placenta and umbilical cord are buried in the ground, which is thought to restore the women's fertility and help heal her womb. It also symbolizes that the child will always have food to eat
- ◇ In **China**, families are expected to have a boy. Women will eat things like sunflower and watermelon seeds before they're pregnant. Eating prunes is thought to produce as early delivery while eating peanuts will help it be as easy one. All the OBGYNs are women because men aren't allowed in the delivery room. This is because in the past a man saw how much pain his wife was going through during labor and decided to punch the doctor. China believes that their men aren't ready to witness childbirth.
- ◇ In the **Netherlands** there is a high percentage of home births, about 40%. The Obstetricians work as a team with the midwives. Once they start to follow the normal course of pregnancy the OBGYN refers them to a midwife whose care is more personal.
- ◇ In **Ghana** an infertile woman urinates on the ground where a placenta was buried in the hope that her fertility will be restored. Having twins is a great blessing and is a sign of fertility for the women.
- ◇ In the **Philippines**, certain restrictions are put in place for pregnant women. Women shouldn't buy anything for the child until after 8 months of pregnancy. Also, women will not wear a necklace or anything over her shoulders before birth since it is believed it may cause the child to be born with their umbilical cord around the neck.
- ◇ In the **Yoruba tribe in Nigeria**, the child's name refers to the circumstances of the individual's birth.

There are plenty more practices that women do all around the world. Can you recall any you're your culture or family background? Childbirth is so amazing to me and its neat to think about it all. I hope you enjoyed these facts as much as I do. For additional information if you're interested check out some of these sites:

<http://www.angelfire.com/wi/caretheworld/english/ebirthworld.htm>

<http://www.globalhealth.gov/global-health-topics/maternal-and-child-health/>

*And, remember, the Women's Center has a Mother's Group that meets every month. This can be your chance to share your own experiences of motherhood!*



WOMEN'S CENTER FRIENDS ENJOYING THE OUTDOORS



Jess  
riding her  
bike in  
Berkeley  
Springs, WV

Jessica Guzman-  
Rea (*advisory  
board member*)  
and her son, Xa-  
vier, at the  
Baltimore Zoo



Galina doing yoga mountainside  
in Malbosc, France



Christy Wilson  
(former student  
staff) & Kris  
Walker  
at the  
Baltimore  
Pride Festival



Max Barnhart  
(student staff)  
waiting for the  
fireworks at  
Soloman's  
Island, MD



Lizzy Wunsch (student staff) hosting  
a good ol' American BBQ

We hope that you are enjoying fun outdoor activities this summer! Soak up the sun and the adventures with your family and friends... and don't forget the sunblock ;)

## WOMEN'S CENTER & COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHTS

### Returning Women's Support Group

The Returning Women's Meeting is a Women's Center program designed to support women returning to college later in life (after the traditional age of 18-22). Campus resources will also be made available in order to help you reach your goals. Email [jess.myers@umbc.edu](mailto:jess.myers@umbc.edu) for more information.

We're currently surveying the group to find a good time to meet next year. Give us your thoughts at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/5BRCPMR> by July 15th!

### Mothers' Meetings

All mothers are welcome! Share a cup of tea and your stories/struggles, celebrations about one of life's greatest & most challenging experiences! The Mother's meeting takes place the second Friday of every month

**Next Meeting: July 13th at 12pm**

We're currently surveying the group to find a good time to meet next year. Give us your thoughts at:

[www.surveymonkey.com/s/VPQ923Q](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VPQ923Q) by July 20th!

## BETWEEN WOMEN

Between Women is a discussion a support group for women who love women, think they might, or support women who do. Come and discuss topics related to sexuality and share your feelings and experiences with other women.

**Summer Meetings:  
Thursdays from 2-3pm  
at the Women's Center**

If you have any questions, please contact:

Coordinator of the Women's Center:  
**Galina Portnoy** at: [portnoy1@umbc.edu](mailto:portnoy1@umbc.edu)

OR

Graduate Coordinator of the OSL Mosaic Center for LGBTQ Programs:  
**Oteri Esiekpe** at: [oesiekp1@umbc.edu](mailto:oesiekp1@umbc.edu)

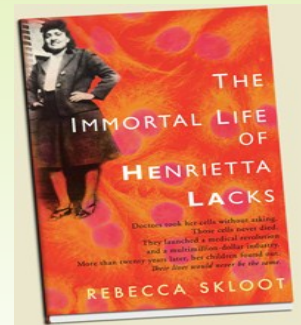
 **The Mosaic**  
Center for Culture and Diversity  
The Mosaic is a part of the Office of Student Life  
Room 2B23, The Commons, 2nd Floor  
410-455-2686  
[mosaic@umbc.edu](mailto:mosaic@umbc.edu)  
<http://www.umbc.edu/studentlife/mosaic/>



Women's Center at UMBC  
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[womenscenter@umbc.edu](mailto:womenscenter@umbc.edu)  
[www.umbc.edu/womenscenter](http://www.umbc.edu/womenscenter)

### Early Fall Not Oprah's Book Club Reading is:

*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*



We're excited to have this as our early fall book since it's the New Student Book Experience book that all first year and transfer students will be reading. For more information, check out NSBE's website:

[http://www.umbc.edu/undergrad\\_ed/  
book/2012Selection.html](http://www.umbc.edu/undergrad_ed/book/2012Selection.html)

### New Groups/Programs to Look Forward to in the Fall!

*The Men's Engagement Program*

*Women's Veteran's Community Group*



Looking for Daycare Resources? Visit our resource guide at our myUMBC group page: [my.umbc.edu/groups/womenscenter](http://my.umbc.edu/groups/womenscenter)



## UMBC Women's Center

The Commons, Room 004  
1000 Hilltop Circle  
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[jess.myers@umbc.edu](mailto:jess.myers@umbc.edu)  
[portnoy1@umbc.edu](mailto:portnoy1@umbc.edu)

**Facebook Page:** *Women's Center at UMBC*

**myUMBC group page:** <http://my.umbc.edu/groups/womenscenter>



## This, That, and the Other...

**Newsletter Submissions:** Do you have an event, organization, course, announcement, or other information that would be useful to the UMBC Women's Center community? If so, please send it to [womens.center@umbc.edu](mailto:womens.center@umbc.edu) so we can post it in next month's newsletter.

**Women's Center List-serve:** To learn about upcoming events, scholarships, and other opportunities from the Women's Center, please email us at [womens.center@umbc.edu](mailto:womens.center@umbc.edu) and we will add you to our list-serve.

**And please, visit us!** We're located in The Commons, Suite 004 (right next to the Yum Shop). We have: a private lactation/mediation room, comfy couches, library, free coffee, tea, tampons/pads, condoms/dental dams. We're also here if you just need to talk... if you are going through a hard time, have something to celebrate, or need a hug, we are here :)

**Please Note: Our Summer Hours are Monday-Friday from 10am-3pm.**

*If you need to use the Center outside of these hours, contact Jess.*

## Summer 2012 Women's Center Shout Outs!

We would like to offer our "Shout Outs!" section to everyone in the UMBC Women's Center community. If you would like to send a Shout Out! To someone who has achieved something great, made a positive difference in your life, or just deserve a few kind words, email the UMBC Women's Center at [womens.center@umbc.edu](mailto:womens.center@umbc.edu) and we'll include them in our next month's newsletter.

♀ **Diane Lee**—Thank you for your continuous support of the Women's Center. We feel lucky to have you as an advocate! — Jess

♀ **Andrea DeSantis**—Thanks for always helping us out on our administrative tasks. You're always so helpful and resourceful! - Jess and Eryl

♀ **Men's Engagement Committee (Max Barnhart, Galina, Ben Goldberg, Craig Berger, David Hoffman, Dan Sym, Derrick Johnson, Renzo Meza, Josh Gamse)**—Thanks for dedicating your time to helping the Women's Center create a men's engagement program that will allow for safe and healthy spaces for men to explore masculinity and gender roles. An extra big thanks to **Ben** for stepping up to be this year's lead facilitator!

♀ **Rabbi Jason**—Thanks for being a consultant on a men's engagement program documents. So many great insights! We appreciate it!

♀ **Simon Stacey, Jodi Kelber-Kaye, and Jessica Guzman-Rea**—Thanks for working with us on a new initiative. We're looking forward to the Honors College/Women's Center internship!

♀ **Lizzy Wunsch**—Thanks for helping keep the Center open during staff vacation time! An extra thanks for still answering book club emails even when you're not working in the Center! - Jess and Galina

♀ **Tidanke Kaba**—Thanks for being a part of the Women's Center family this summer. Its been great having you here to bring new ideas and energy.

♀ **Max Barnhart, Michael Fell, and Christina Anamashaun**—Thanks for talking up the Women's Center to new students in your role as OPAs during Orientation. Its so great to have you as fans!

♀ **Elle Trusz**—Thanks for the printer tech support. We'll figure out how to scan one of these days!

♀ **Oteri Esiekpe**—Thanks for your continued support on the Between Women's group. We always appreciate the collaboration and a person we love to call an amazing teammate!

## Get Well Soon Eryl!

Our dear Eryl is on sick leave as she recovers from knee surgery. Please keep her in your thoughts and wish her a speedy recovery so she can return to the Women's Center soon!



*For those who didn't get a chance to see our 20th Anniversary quilt yet, here's the finished product! Thanks for everyone's help!*