



# Carolina Women's Center

Winter 2018 Newsletter

As 2018 comes to a close, we are reflecting on our programming over the last year. We focused a great deal on engaging and empowering UNC's community to become change agents for gender equity. Our Carolina Seminar Series "Gender & ..." for example, engaged a range of topics in conversations for the whole community.

The first in this series was a panel discussion on *Gender & Politics*. The Stone Center's Hitchcock Room was packed with over 100 attendees, mostly students, who turned out to listen to, learn from, and engage with female elected leaders. Our goal is to inspire young women to consider pursuing public service as a career path for themselves and to become gender equity change agents by supporting policies that benefit women, children, and families.

Our series continued in late November with a panel discussion, *Gender & STEM*, which attracted another large crowd of students. Panelists at all stages of the academic path shared the gender-based challenges they had encountered in STEM fields, and how to succeed in spite of them. Tentatively, we have *Gender & the Arts* and *Gender & Sexual Violence* planned for the Spring. Stay tuned for updates on these rousing seminars and plan to join us if you can.

In addition to the *Gender & ...* series, the CWC has been integral to Carolina's recent award of a \$1 million NSF ADVANCE grant that will focus on implementing and evaluating effective mentoring models for women in STEM. As a partner on this 3-year grant project located in the Center for Faculty Excellence, CWC will assist in program development for the faculty mentors and mentees. We will be sure to report updates on this effort as implementation takes shape.

Finally, the staff continues to keep busy with programming for students, faculty and staff. The Alternative Fall Break to Asheville was another successful trip, which you can read about on page 5. The demand for support of survivors of gender and sexual violence increased during the Kavanaugh Supreme Court hearings, and our Gender Violence Services Coordinator did admirably well responding to this need. We offered two successful series for faculty and staff, one on caring for elders and one on financial literacy, which were both well-received. And we have already begun preparing for the next summer cohort of Moxie Interns for Summer 2019.

Speaking of Moxie Interns, the CWC will be hosting a fundraiser—Power of the Purse—on Thursday, April 25th at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center from 6 – 8 p.m. to raise funds to support summer stipends for students who work at local nonprofits focusing on women and gender equity. The Moxie Project experience has been critical to providing a gender lens for students and giving them the

tools and experience as a career for themselves and to support policies that benefit women, children, and families.

Please do save the date and plan to join us for this event!

Sincerely yours,

Gloria D. Thomas, PhD  
Director

*We focused a great deal on engaging and empowering UNC's community to become change agents for gender equity.*



*left*  
2018 Summer  
Moxie Interns



*right*  
Katie Otto and Calissa  
Andersen with their  
supervisor, Mary Alta,  
from Girls Rock NC



*above*  
Moxie Intern, Olivia Neal and  
her supervisor, Laura Edwards



*above*  
Moxie Intern  
creative gift to CWC



*above*  
Moxie Intern, Sophia Hutchens  
and her supervisor, Barbara Lau



*left*  
Gender & STEM  
panel discussion



*right*  
Gender & STEM  
panel discussion



*above*  
Gender & STEM  
panelists



*above*  
Gender & Politics  
panel discussion



*above*  
Gender & Politics  
panel discussion

# CWC Fundraiser

## *Power of the Purse*

*The Carolina Women's Center is planning its first public fundraiser in many years.  
We hope we can count on you to assist with this endeavor.*

### *What?*

***Power of the Purse*** – An event that we plan to offer annually as CWC's signature fundraiser. We will be soliciting new and gently used purses for purchase through a silent auction. A speaker or panel will be invited to address the audience on the topic of women's philanthropic power to support women's issues and gender equity. Hors d'oeuvres, soft drinks and wine will be served.

### *When and Where?*

Thursday, April 25, 2019, on the campus of the UNC-Chapel Hill at the Sonja Haynes Stone Center, 150 South Road, Chapel Hill, NC

### *Why?*

CWC's goal is to raise in net profit at least \$15,000 to support stipends for paid summer internships for undergraduate students selected for the Moxie Project, a selective, innovative, engaged curricular program in women's history and activism that deeply connects scholarship and hands-on learning.

Undergraduates at UNC-CH apply to participate, and selected students enroll in a spring semester course about women's leadership and activism. For eight weeks in the summer, students intern in women's organizations, nonprofits, and municipalities in the Research Triangle, and meet weekly for seminars in which they reflect on their week's work, discuss related readings, and meet with the staff of the organizations to hear more about their work. Each student receives a stipend to support them during the summer, so that they can focus their attention on the program. Through this integrated academic and experiential program, students develop their leadership skills and deepen their engagement with the state of North Carolina.

### *How can we use your help?*

- Serve on the Planning Committee for the fundraising event to oversee logistics & details.
- Donate new and gently used purses or solicit donations from friends & family.
- Help to promote the event in your networks and/or on social media.
- Help to sell tickets.
- Make a financial contribution through a personal, organizational, or corporate sponsorship.

*If interested and available to assist, please feel free to contact Gloria Thomas at 919-843-5620 (office); 301-922-661 (cell); or [gloria.thomas@unc.edu](mailto:gloria.thomas@unc.edu). Looking forward to hearing from you!*



## CWC's Alternative Fall Break Trip

*above*  
Alternative Fall Break Participants, led  
by Andi Morgan (front row center)  
and Tessa Wood (front row right)

We co-led the Carolina Women Center's Alternative Fall Break Trip as our internship placement of our Leadership in Violence Prevention course. Neither of us realized at the beginning of the course that we would be tasked with overseeing the trip in its entirety, from planning and organizing to acting as a liaison to our community partners in Asheville. This opportunity proved to be transformative in many ways.

The focus of the trip is to provide OurVOICE, a rape crisis center in Asheville, the support and hands it needs to successfully run their Bar Outreach Project. This program strives to address Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault (DFSA) by promoting safe environments in local establishments through training bar staff in bystander intervention. The tagline of their program—"Empowering Bar Staff to be the First Line of Defense"—is a poignantly accurate summary of its mission. Our cohort of UNC students happily assisted OurVOICE by canvassing sections of Asheville each day and talking to businesses about the training program. However, what really set the trip apart for both of us was the supportive and engaged cohort we developed.

Through daily discussions with our cohort, we tackled tough topics such as serving community needs through an intersectional framework, while also facilitating bonding and bringing fun into the trip. We both had the chance to step up and out of our personal comfort zones as student leaders, and our

entire cohort expanded their leadership skills as well. We have never seen a group accomplish more work with more energy than we did on this trip. Their zeal and drive re-solidified and further inspired our goals in the fields of violence prevention and gender equity advocacy work.

Taking knowledge from the classroom at UNC and directly applying it to substantial work was extremely meaningful for us and the rest of the group. As undergraduates, it is easy to feel detached, but seeing the positive and real connection OurVOICE has in the Asheville community was motivating for us all. We were truly satisfied by assisting OurVOICE, introducing a group of our peers to the CWC and world of violence prevention, and experiencing a shared feeling of empowerment within the group. We have learned the vital importance, as articulated by author Rachel Naomi Remen, of asking "*how can I serve?*"

If you would like to learn more about the Alternative Fall Break program, OurVOICE's Bar Outreach, or the sister program at UNC, "Raise the Bar," please reach out to the CWC.

*Andi Morgan (Chemistry and Women & Gender Studies, Class of 2020), Tessa Wood (Political Science and Women & Gender Studies, Class of 2020), Alternative Fall Break Leaders*

# Coach Karen Shelton: *A Champion for Women*

Carolina field hockey coach Karen Shelton has received lots of well-deserved news coverage this fall. She has many notable accomplishments:

- Her #1 ranked Tar Heels field hockey team finished the season 23-0, becoming the third team in the history of Carolina field hockey to complete the season undefeated.
- Under Coach Shelton's leadership, the field hockey team achieved their 7th National NCAA championship.
- Coach Shelton was named ACC Coach of the Year for the 10th time.
- The icing on the cake, earlier this fall Carolina honored Coach Shelton for her commitment, leadership, mentorship and expertise over the course of 38 seasons on the field and off, by naming the new field hockey stadium in her honor: **Karen Shelton Stadium!**

As Torre Netkovich, writer for the *DTH* noted, "The name Karen Shelton will be forever engraved in North Carolina athletics." Netkovich also shared that "[t]he newly-named Karen Shelton Stadium is the first UNC athletic facility to be dedicated to a female and the only facility on campus named after a current coach."

The Carolina Women's Center takes this opportunity to contribute to the praise heaped on Coach Shelton. She's been an inspiration to many at Carolina—faculty, staff and students of all genders; athletes and non-athletes alike. And as a donor to the CWC for more than 10 years, she's been a true partner in helping to advance gender equity on campus.

The money that Coach Shelton contributes to CWC helps to fund free feminine hygiene products in the rest rooms of the Sonja Haynes Stone Center, where the CWC office is located.

A hearty congratulations to Coach Karen Shelton for all of her accomplishments and a special thanks for her support of the work at the Carolina Women's Center!



*above*  
Coach Karen Shelton, photo by  
Sarah Redmond, DTH photographer



## An Interview with Dr. Liana Richardson

*above*  
CWC Faculty Scholar  
Liana Richardson

*In this interview with Clare Counihan (CWC Program Coordinator for Faculty and Staff), Dr. Liana Richardson, assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and a Faculty Fellow at the Carolina Population Center, shares about the research she conducted as one of our 2017-2018 Faculty Scholars. Her project, “Understanding the Accelerated Physiological Aging of African American Women: The Embodiment and Expression of Intersectional Inequality,” brings together sociology and public health with Black feminist theories of intersectionality.*

**Clare Counihan (CC):** Please share a layperson-friendly overview of the research you did for the Faculty Scholar grant.

**Liana Richardson (LR):** It might help if I give a brief overview of my overall research agenda first. Broadly, I am interested in the relationship between social inequalities and health inequalities, or “health disparities.” Specifically, I am interested in how racial/ethnic and gender inequalities are linked to health disparities along those same social status lines. For example, African Americans live sicker and shorter lives compared to Whites. I’m interested in figuring out why that’s the case. I examine how

social factors (e.g., societal arrangements, institutional practices, social organization, and social interactions) that produce racial inequalities in social and economic outcomes also lead to health disparities. I hypothesize that the primary mechanism through which these social factors “get under the skin” to make African Americans sicker is race/racism-related chronic stress, exposure to which causes physiological “wear and tear” on the bodily systems involved in the stress response (e.g., our vascular, neuroendocrine, and immune systems) manifesting in disease over time.

Not only do African Americans live sicker and shorter lives compared to Whites, but there is also evidence that African Americans—and especially African American women—become sicker earlier. For example, in my research on hypertension, I found that Black women experienced elevated rates of hypertension at earlier ages in the life course than other race-gender groups. Other researchers also find adverse health outcomes. Yet, all the explanations for this age pattern (including those that pertain to the cumulative effects of chronic stress) remain untested or have not been fully tested. The research I conducted for the Faculty Scholar grant intended to fill this gap. I set out to

conduct a more comprehensive test of the mechanisms involved in the accelerated aging of African American women relative to their same race male counterparts and males and females of other races, with emphasis on the role of race/racism-related chronic stress. I incorporated stressors at multiple levels (e.g., neighborhood, family, and individual) that have been identified as unique to and consequential for African American women's lived experiences. I also used longitudinal data to assess these stressors and their relationship to health and aging over a longer and earlier timeframe than previous research—including my own research on hypertension!

**CC:** How did you become interested in this project?

**LR:** My interest in this project was motivated in part by the findings of my study on hypertension risk, as well as other similar findings over the past two decades. I'd be less than honest if I didn't add that my interest in the project is also rooted in my own experiences as an African American woman. Actually, my personal experiences plus the vicarious experiences of my African American female family members and friends make hypotheses about the mechanisms by which race (racism), gender (sexism), and their combination (gendered racism) influence health both intuitive and personally meaningful for me.

**CC:** Intersectionality is a key framework for your research. What does intersectionality enable you to explore or access?

**LR:** Intersectionality suggests that dimensions of social inequality—such as race/ethnicity and gender—are interconnected or interlocked. Thus, our lived experiences and life chances are structured simultaneously by these interlocking social statuses. Intersectionality originally described African American women's simultaneous positioning at the disadvantaged ends of both race/ethnicity and gender hierarchies, and consequently class hierarchies. It also explains the group's unique experiences of a double or triple load of discrimination, gendered racism, and the additional burdens stemming from the plight of their male counterparts, who suffer disproportionate incarceration, unemployment, and premature mortality. (Intersectionality has since expanded to understand a wide range of intersecting identities.) All these factors serve as chronic stressors which can precipitate poor health among African American women. In fact, my own study and others have found that African American women experience multiple chronic stress-related illnesses at a higher rate than other racial/ethnic-gender groups, including African American males.

These findings would be masked if I were to study race/ethnicity and gender separately or if I were to study them together but as two separate categories of analysis—that is, if I did not apply an intersectional approach. When I tested the separate effects of race and gender on hypertension risk, I found that race—but not gender—shaped hypertension risk. (Blacks had higher risk

than Whites; gender had no effect on hypertension risk). This approach obscured a substantively and theoretically important finding that was only revealed when I tested the interactive effects of race and gender: among Whites, being a female was protective against hypertension, while being female was associated with greater odds of hypertension among African Americans.

**CC:** In your public presentation this Fall, you mentioned at least one (White) student's surprised response to your research because she had heard and seen the trope that "black don't crack"; what kinds of responses do your students have to the materials you teach?

**LR:** Many of the students who enroll in my Health and Society course are hoping to pursue a career in the health professions, but they show up in my class believing that the answers to our biggest health problems lie in our lifestyle/behavior choices (e.g., what we eat, whether we exercise, etc.) and in our access to health care. While those factors may be important at an individual level, they are insufficient explanations for health patterns at a population level. This course exposes students, often for the first time, to evidence that population health and population health disparities are rooted in our societal arrangements: in how we divide and rank groups and how those rankings result in unequal access to the resources and opportunities to lead a healthy life in the first place. In turn, it reveals the need for social policies (e.g., policies aimed at poverty reduction, fair housing and anti-discrimination laws, criminal justice reform, etc.)—not just health policies—to reverse the rising tides of inequality and to improve the health of the US population as a whole. This is not the dominant approach to understanding and addressing health in the US, where a focus on individual responsibility for health prevails, so it comes as quite a surprise to many students. My course "Race, Class, and Gender" makes similar points to the "Health and Society" course but is more detailed in its coverage of the institutional arrangements that have created—and continue to reinforce and sometimes exacerbate—inequalities in social and economic outcomes. Many students in that class also find it rather eye-opening!