SHE WAS WARNED.
SHE WAS GIVEN AN EXPLANATION.
NEVERTHELESS, SHE PERSISTED.

WOMEN RESISTING, PERSISTING, AND THRIVING!
WOMEN ON WEDNESDAY SPRING 2018
SELECT WEDNESDAYS • NOON TO 12:50 P.M. • ATWOOD THEATRE
INTRODUCTION

The phrase, “nevertheless, she persisted” has been realized in powerful, tangible ways over the past year as women, and people from all genders, have raised their voices in support of freedom and civil rights. From the Women’s March on Washington and rallies to support immigrants—to protests against white supremacy, the Muslim ban and restrictions on abortion and birth control, women are fighting back. In addition, solutions to chronic problems affecting multiple communities are being named and discussed.

Fortunately, “persistence” has joined “resistance” as people from multiple communities who have been harmed by the policies of the day, plus their allies, have united in action to oppose sexual harassment and assault, transgender discrimination, racial disparities, and many other forms of discrimination and oppression. Women are not only navigating these new climates, but thriving in spite of them.

The aim of the series is to illuminate and explore issues and solutions that pave the way for reproductive justice, racial equity, safe streets and homes, equitable workplaces, transgender equality and much more. Join the Women’s Center and our numerous collaborators for timely and lively presentations.
January 22 marks the 45th anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy, allowing access to safe and legal abortion in the U.S. Since the moment Roe became law, the choice to terminate a pregnancy has been under constant attack. Restrictions have been put in place in many states that affect women of color, low income, and young women in disproportionate numbers. Despite adversity, women have persisted in the fight for the right to control their own bodies. Topics to be addressed in this session include a brief history of the Roe v. Wade decision and why it’s important to commemorate the anniversary, and how Planned Parenthood and the abortion rights movement has been contesting, persevering and ensuring choice for many decades.

Presenter: Allie Carlson-Stehlin is the Minnesota Public Affairs Manager of Planned Parenthood Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. She studied Political Science and Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies at Gustavus Adolphus College and began her Planned Parenthood career in Maryland. She later joined the Minnesota Planned Parenthood team in 2013. Carlson-Stehlin manages several programs aimed at engaging supporters in the advocacy and mission of Planned Parenthood and has worked with hundreds of volunteers to activate patients, young professionals, supporters and the general public. Her passion is empowering supporters to make a positive difference in the health of our community.

Co-sponsored by Students for Choice
While human trafficking is a global issue, we often overlook the prevalence of the issue locally. A study done in November of 2010 found that each month in Minnesota at least 213 underage girls are sold for sex five times per day through internet and escort services. Some claim that the single largest human trafficking incident in the United States is the annual Super Bowl. The 2018 Super Bowl will be hosted in Minneapolis, and this means a higher need for services for sex trafficked victims. It is extremely important for organizations to be fighting back and providing protections, and empowerment for those who are vulnerable to sex trafficking. Breaking Free will be leading the way in services, and they are taking this opportunity to raise visibility and educate the public about the realities of trafficking.

“This complicated issue presents us with a choice: We can see the current debate around the Super Bowl and sex trafficking as overwhelming - too widespread, sinister, and nebulous to fix. Or, we can see it as an opportunity to do more - more investigation to understand the scope of the problem, more to catch and stop traffickers, and more to educate the public about how to recognize warning signs. Let’s choose the latter as the winner this year.” (From blog post, The Super Bowl and Sex Trafficking, Feb. 3, 2017, by Mellissa Withers, an assistant professor of global health at the University of Southern California).

**Presenter: Jennifer Gaines** has been working with Breaking Free for over five years, currently as a legal advocate. She herself is a survivor who has used her experiences in the life to help her fellow sisters break free from sex trafficking. She was recruited into the life at the age of 14 and survived 28 years of sex trafficking. After graduating from Breaking Free’s Sisters of Survival group, Gaines served as an intern for over a year, and has also worked as a Women’s Advocate and Intake Specialist as well. In addition, she is one of the leaders of the Sisters of Survival group and continues to support clients through individual meetings and finding affordable housing. She puts a great deal of thought and care into her client’s wellbeing and is a powerful resource on the Breaking Free staff.
FEBRUARY 14
2018: THE YEAR OF AFFIRMATIVE CONSENT OR 'YES MEANS YES'

A Students United* tweet on January 25 proclaims: “It’s official ALL SEVEN @MinnStateEdu UNIVERSITY student senates have passed support for #AffirmativeConsentpic.twitter.com/AamNDy1j8u”

Led by the efforts of student activists across the country, coupled with the truth telling of the #MeToo movement, improvements in policy for sexual assault and sexual harassment survivors are moving forward. In Minnesota, the statewide organization, Students United, is leading the way for students through affirmative consent policy advocacy. Through student activism and lobbying with legislators and university administrators, Affirmative Consent resolutions have passed on all 7 state university campuses. This session will define affirmative consent, discuss its importance, and outline the ways that affirmative consent policies have the potential to transform culture through behavior and attitude change.

Panelists: Lexi Byler is the Vice Chair of Students United and an online student at Minnesota State University Moorhead, currently living in St. Paul. She received her B.S. in Integrated Advertising and Public Relations in May 2017 and is currently finishing a certificate in Project Management. On campus, she was a student leader who worked passionately to create a more equitable university. She served as the diversity chair of student senate, the diversity specialist for Students United’s campus committee, the president of the Black Student Union, and captain of the women's rugby team.

Faical Rayani is the State Chair of Students United and a senior at Minnesota State University, Mankato studying computer information technology. He is an international student born and raised in Saudi Arabia. His mother is from Syria and his father is from Tunisia. Rayani served in various leadership roles at Mankato including Student Body President, Student Senator, International Student Association Vice President and Residence Hall Association Vice President. He is an information technology major with a minor in technical communication.

Kayla Shelley is a junior at St. Cloud State majoring in Communication Studies with an emphasis in Persuasion and Advocacy, and minoring in Political Science. She serves on the Board of Directors for the student led non-profit, Students United, and is a former Vice President of the Student Government Association. At the forefront of her roles have been her passions to create equitable campus environments, prevent sexual assault, and challenge ideas about a 21st century education.
CREATING INTENTIONAL LIVING COMMUNITIES

Cohousing, or intentional living communities, is a contemporary model founded in the feminist perspective of care and justice. Today, we get to choose how we redefine the places we live. Cohousing combines the autonomy of private dwellings with the advantages of community living. A cohousing collaborative is limited only by the imagination. People are not choosing cohousing necessarily out of economic necessity, but rather as a lifestyle choice. More than buildings, cohousing is about people. This session will explore the who, what, why and the benefits of cohousing in the 21st century.

Presenter: Merry Jo DeMarais currently serves as an AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteer at the Initiative Foundation. DeMarais has experience as an educator, facilitator, trainer, and mentor. Born in Minnesota, she has lived in more than 50 cities in and outside of the United States. Before relocating to Minnesota, DeMarais was part of an intentional living community for nearly eight years.

Co-sponsored by the School of Public Affairs Colloquium series
Let’s face it: America has a gun problem. Sandy Hook, San Bernadino, Las Vegas, the Pulse Night Club and so many more. We often see the proof of America’s gun problem in the endemic mass shootings reported on our daily news cycle. However, in an article in BitchMedia entitled, “One Often-Overlooked Need for Gun Control: Ending Domestic Abuse”, author Kari Mugo, Women’s Center/St. Cloud State Alum, argues that “the daily domestic violence homicides that fill the police blotters in local papers often go largely ignored.” That, in fact, gender has everything to do with gun violence of all kinds and that the mold of masculinity as defined and lived out in US and other cultures is the cause. Mugo will be joining us remotely from Nairobi, Kenya, and will include an update on her work to address gender/sexuality discrimination and solutions as part of her talk.

**Presenter:** Kari Mugo is an activist, storyteller and communications consultant who believes that a more equitable world for marginalized and underrepresented groups and communities is possible. Formerly based in Minnesota, she currently resides in Nairobi, Kenya where she continues to write on issues surrounding feminism, identity and intersectionality, travel and the arts. In her professional role, she supports the work of agitators, dreamers and social justice workers and currently works with Kenya’s National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.
Last July, President Trump sent out a series of tweets announcing the end of transgender people being able to serve in the military and medical transition surgeries for people in the military stating that the military “cannot be burdened by the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail.” This began a national discussion on the ban and its multiple costs. The discharge of military troops was slated to begin in March of 2018. This past October, a federal judge ruled to postpone this, stating that there was no evidence to support Trump’s claims, and that the proposed ban was unconstitutional. This session explores one trans man’s story of his experience transitioning from female to male while in the Minnesota National Guard, as well as the costs of the ban, and guidance about resisting, persisting and thriving through challenging times.

**Presenter:** Tarrance Robertson-Bayless was born on Minnesota’s Iron Range, enlisted in the Minnesota National Guard in 2005 and served one tour in Afghanistan as Tara, a female. During this tour he completed roughly 280 missions and received a bronze star and combat action badge for achievements and engaging in direct enemy combat. Last summer, after the U.S. secretary of defense lifted the ban on allowing transgender troops to serve openly, Robertson began his medical transition to male. Terrance was the former Program Manager at the MN Army National Guard Substance Abuse Program. He is now in charge of Casualty Operations for the MNARNG where he assists families who have lost a love one during service to our country. He is also a change agent, in and out of the military, working to pave the way for a more inclusive military and society.

*Cosponsored by the LGBT Resource Center and Veterans Resource Center*
Since the 2016 national election, record numbers of accomplished women and other marginalized people have stepped up to run for public office at all levels. One Minnesota example is Andrea Jenkins, who won a seat on the Minneapolis City Council in November 2017, becoming the first openly transgender, black council woman elected to office in the country. Her ambitious agenda includes curbing youth violence, improving neighborhoods, redevelopment and investing resources to serve underserved communities, and reducing racial disparities. In this session, she will tell her story of trans activism, racial equity and social justice advocacy, and her successful run for public office on the Minneapolis City Council.

**Presenter: Andrea Jenkins** is the first African American, openly transgender candidate elected to public office in the U.S., winning the 8th Ward City Council seat in Minneapolis and being elected by her peers as the Vice President of the Minneapolis City Council. Her list of accomplishments is extensive and diverse. Jenkins is a poet, writer, visual artist, transgender activist, community organizer, former policy staffer for a city council member, Curator of the Transgender Oral History Project at the University of Minnesota and much more. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Human Services and Interpersonal Communications from Metropolitan State University, Master’s of Science in Community Economic Development from Southern New Hampshire University, and a Masters of Fine Art in Creative Writing from Hamline University.

*Co-sponsored by the LGBT Resource Center, Outloud! and LGBT Alliance*
“What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open.”
(Muriel Rukeyser, 1968)

The world has split open over and over again in the past several years because courageous women have told the truth about their lives. Women in Black Lives Matter, Trans women, immigrant and refugee women, and sexually harassed and assaulted women are calling out perpetrators, reporting, going public, and occasionally using the legal system for redress. Attorney Lisa Stratton will help us explore the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace, the implications on women’s lives, especially marginalized women (including low income women, women of color, trans women), plus how Gender Justice uses litigation to change the culture, one case at a time.

**Presenter:** Lisa Stratton is a Co-Founder and Senior Counsel at Gender Justice, a Minnesota non-profit legal and policy advocacy organization devoted to addressing the causes and consequences of gender inequality. She specializes in gender discrimination cases. Stratton began her career at the University of Minnesota Law School, where she later joined the faculty as a professor and director of the Workers’ Rights Clinic. She has won noteworthy federal cases on behalf of undocumented immigrant workers and women trailblazing in male-dominated industries, such as paper mills and processing plants. In 2014, Stratton was a key advocate at the Minnesota legislature. As part of her work leading Gender Justice’s policy program, she lobbied for the progressive public policy changes in Minnesota’s groundbreaking Women’s Economic Security Act.