



WINTER 2023

A Letter from the Director

Dear Middlebury Feminists,

On June 24, 2022, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* dealt a severe blow to women and other folks who can get pregnant. This Supreme

summer internship. As you can see on the following pages, the ensuing exhibition “Visualizing Reproductive Justice” highlighted this pressing social injustice in a variety of media that

regime following the murder of Jina Mahsa Amini by the regime. Led by Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri '24 and Mei Dwyer-Frattalone '24, we marched in support with the protestors in Iran in November. We



Court decision left us feeling stunned and in a state of shock. A group of GSFS students quickly gathered force again. Led by GSFS professor Carly Thomsen, they channeled their anger into thought-provoking art in a Public Feminism

Photos: Sib to Sib attendees this fall

impressed themselves onto our hearts and minds and mobilized us to resist this injustice.

In September, women in Iran and their allies started to resist the gender apartheid

were guided in our efforts by Middlebury alum FayezeH Hajji Hassan '14, who organized protests in Pittsburgh, PA. Read an interview with FayezeH in this newsletter.

If we look beyond Vermont's border to states such as Florida, we

become incensed about governmental inroads into public education: The “Don’t Say Gay” bill prohibits K-12 teachers from talking about sexual orientation or gender identity in the classroom. The governor also signed a bill to prevent public educators from teaching critical race theory. That is why we have to do everything to safeguard these

Butler says, gender is created and naturalized through its repetitive performance, then what happens when we perform feminist joy over and over again? Can feminist joy begin to seem natural and embodied? Feminist joy interrupts gender, raced, and classed histories of happiness and reinserts all bodies as sites for pleasure activism.

creative resistance. She will also discuss her theory of communal play as a viable strategy for feminist coalition building. Jae Bassiliere will give a performative talk on the feminist joy of drag kings. Check for more updates at go/gensler2023

Following on the heels of this symposium, we will host a day of GSFS’s own



rights in Vermont. Focusing on middle school kids, the student organizations “Sister-to-Sister” and “Brother-to-Brother” merged into “Sibling-to-Sibling” to guarantee greater inclusivity for ALL kids. Their events in the spring brought dozens of young people from Addison County to campus for a few fun events.

Looking ahead to the spring, the theme for the 2023 Gensler Symposium on Feminisms in the Global Arena is “Performing Feminist Joy.” If, as Judith

This year brings a variety of feminist scholars, activists, and artists together to help us create new worlds and new forms of resistance through pleasure. On April 12, Anahi Russo-Garrido will lead a workshop and give a talk on the connections between mindfulness and social justice activism. On April 21, two practitioners of feminist joy will lead us through a day of art, activism, and analysis. Treasure Brooks will discuss how her work creating the feminist media company “The Meteor” was a form of

Carly Thomsen debuting a feminist reproductive justice mini golf course with a feminist building activity on April 29 and the grand opening of the Feminist Mini Golf course on May 12. Join us for some joy!

Dr. Karin Hanta
Director of the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House

Dr. Laurie Essig
Chair of the Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies

CHELLIS WORKERS



Middlebury's Feminist Resource Center

HALSEY

SENIOR
SHE/HER



**Major: Art History and
Gender, Sexuality &
Feminist Studies**

"Hi all, one of my favorite GSFS classes was Gender & the Body from my first fall at Middlebury and I am really looking forward to providing space at Chellis through our Chellis Chats which are happening twice a month!"

MEI

JUNIOR
SHE/HER



Major: Mathematics

"I recommend: history of sexuality in the US! A Chellis event I was excited about: fruits and sweets in collaboration with Effervescence and QSH."

LU
JUNIOR
SHE/HER



**Major: Gender
Studies and Theatre**

"My Favorite GSFS course: FEMINIST JOY and I recommend Queer Critique! The Chellis event I look forward to are the bi-weekly Chellis Chats"

ANDREA
SOPHOMORE
SHE/HER



**Major: Environmental
Architecture**

"My favorite GSFS class was Feminist Foundations that I took last Spring. An event that I loved so far was the Reading group and discussion events for Patricia Saldarriaga's 'Infected Empires'."

MATEUS
SOPHOMORE
HE/THEY



Major: Neuroscience

"My favorite GSFS class was Intro to Gay and Lesbian Studies. I look forward to collaborating with individuals/Orgs to organize more protests/demonstrations."

NABILA
SOPHOMORE FEB
SHE/HER



Major: Undeclared

"Hi, I recommend Gender and politics in the Middle East. I am overjoyed to be a part of the Chellis house community, and we look forward to organizing exciting events for you all."

LILY
FRESHMAN
SHE/THEY/HE



**Major: Japanese
and Psychology**

"An event I'm looking forward to: future poetry readings & feminist film viewings!"

Interview with Activist Fayezeah Haji Hassan '14

By Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri '24

Sophia: Fayezeah, let me start out at the beginning: where did you grow up?

Fayezeah: Well, that's a long story. I was born in Iran. My parents were political activists and one day, we had to flee to Afghanistan. From there, I came to study in the U.S. I would say I have lived a decade of my life in each country. I really don't know where I'm from anymore. But I am, by law, birth, parents, and lineage, Iranian.

S: What was life like in Iran and Afghanistan?

F: I have a lot of good memories of my life in Iran. But looking back at it, at the segregation of genders in the schools and other places, I would say it was a gender apartheid regime.

Looking back at it, I'm surprised that I had to wear

a scarf at school at age six. We fled to Afghanistan during the first Taliban regime. So the situation got even worse there.

S: What was the transition from Iran to Afghanistan, then from Afghanistan to the U.S. like for you?

F: It was very difficult going from Iran to Afghanistan

because during the first Taliban regime, girls couldn't even go to school. In Iran, I was wearing a scarf, but I wasn't covering my face. In Afghanistan, I even had to



Above: Middlebury Alumnus Fayezeah Haji Hassan '14

cover my face. Since I couldn't go to school, I opened my own school for girls in our neighborhood. I taught the girls whatever I knew, from reading to writing. When the Taliban regime fell in 2001, I started working with the UN. There, I was exposed to a wide range of cultures and people. And although I had never

been to high school, I applied to Middlebury College and was awarded a scholarship in August 2010, when I was 22 years old. When I came here, it was a great experience. The first year was a little challenging, however, because I hadn't been in school for so long. By sophomore year, I was pretty comfortable.

S: Do you miss Iran?

F: I do. Yes. Yes. A lot.

S: What do you miss about it in particular?

F: Once you leave your own country, no matter where you go, and no matter what the papers say, there's that sense that you don't belong. There is so much that is intertwined with your culture. I still

like to celebrate Nowruz and other feasts. I also have memories of pop

culture in my country. When other students talked about different TV shows in college, I often felt like an outsider. I had to start building memories in this new home, which is always difficult. The U.S. is never going to be my home, but I'm very appreciative and I love this country. But I have an accent, my culture and what

I grew up celebrating doesn't really exist here. I do celebrate Christmas now. Which is really interesting, because I don't have any memories attached to it. It makes it very challenging. And finding friends when you're a little older is even harder.

S: Do you feel like you've been able to create some sense of home in the U.S.?

F: Yes, I do. I embrace the fact that I'm always going to be a little different. And depending on where in the U.S. I live, I'm always going to be out of place. And that is okay. This is how the new home is going to feel. But also when I go home and sit on my couch, I'm thinking: "Okay, I made this. This is great."

S: Do you think you'll ever go back to Iran?

F: I would love to. It's a dream. Yes.

S: Is that a possibility for you?

F: Not really, not with the current regime, not only because my parents were political activists, but also because I have been trying to raise my voice. I don't think I can ever go back as long as this regime is in power. I would probably be arrested at the airport.

S: What do you think about the threats protesters and journalists are facing from the current regime in Iran?

F: Freedom of the press is one of the main pillars of any democracy, right? If you want to keep any government

accountable, you should be able to investigate, to report, to criticize, but all of that is a crime for journalists in Iran. Whatever you say should be in line with the regime's propaganda. The regime has shut down so many newspapers just because it didn't like an article or two that they published. They also jailed so many journalists. The two women who reported on Mahsa Amini's death, Niloofar Hamedani and Elahe Mohammadi, are still in jail. The number of journalists jailed has even increased in the last three months since the uprising. The state-sponsored media are maligning Mahsa Amini by saying that she died because she was sick, she had a heart condition, she had a surgery as a kid. They have come up with so many stories to justify that the regime didn't kill her. But then we all know what happened, and then there were doctors and hackers who got into the files and who let us know that she was beaten to death.

S: What went through your mind when you heard about what happened to Mahsa Amini?

F: I don't know if you ever had this experience that somebody pours a huge amount of cold water into your face, and suddenly, you are shocked.

Many Iranian women are familiar with this feeling. I think any woman who has lived in a town or in a bigger city in Iran has received some sort of warning about how her clothes are out of line ... I remember wearing green socks in school.

We weren't supposed to wear green, only black. Even before Mahsa's death, there were so many videos showing people protesting, especially women because they did not want to abide by those laws. But to be killed is a whole other level, just because you're protesting those laws. And when she was killed what resonated with a lot of people is the thought that this could have been them.

S: Are you the main organizer of the Pittsburgh protests or are you collaborating with others?

F: When Mahsa was in a coma, I connected with the Iranian community in Pittsburgh, about 400 people, in a Telegram group. I asked them: "What are we going to do about it?" Nobody really responded. When Mahsa died and the protests started, I messaged again and asked whether folks wanted to do anything. The whole world was watching this very gross injustice. People started talking, and then a group of volunteers came together. So yes, I am the main organizer, but also I work with other people who help me.

S: When did the first protest take place?

F: On October 4th, if I'm not mistaken.

S: How many have you organized since then?

F: After the first and biggest one in downtown Pittsburgh, we had another one on October 19, a human chain. In our third protest, we revealed a mural dedicated to Mahsa

Amini. I also wrote an op-ed for the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. I have also visited different schools and small gatherings of women's associations to keep the issue on the front burner.

S: What can others do to help?

F: One thing we want people to do is to contact their representatives. Policy-makers know what kind of government Iran is, but politics is a very dirty business. And often, political representatives don't respond because we are some people in the Middle East that they don't care about. They expect this kind of news to come out of the Middle East. If we can actually get the people in the U.S. or other countries to support the cause, then we can change the politics on a global level. People should hold their governments accountable because many policy-makers are still working with Iran, a country which has incurred many human rights violations.

S: What forms of protest are the most impactful in your opinion?

F: Obviously, bodies count. The more people take to the streets, the better it is. In Berlin, there were more than 50,000 people from all over Europe in the streets. In D.C. there were about 20,000 to 30,000 people. Protests such as these always garner much media attention. They remind politicians that people care. The protesters may originally come from another country, but if you want their vote, you also need to listen to them. Art also functions as a form of protest. Many celebrities, athletes, and other

public figures have spoken about the issue. Articles in newspapers and social media posts are also good. The more people read about the protests, the more they are going to care about the issue. The next time they hear that there is a protest, they may take part in it.

S: Once you get people in the U.S. or other countries to care, what do you see as the next step for politicians to help?

F: Something similar to what happened in South Africa — targeted political sanctions. We are calling on foreign governments to ask the Iranian ambassadors in their countries to not recognize the regime as the official government. If nobody recognizes them as the government, then things will play out just like they did in South Africa. A lot of help is also needed during transition, because once the regime changes, we want a government that comes from the Iranian people.

S: Just to be clear, what specifically are you referencing in South Africa?

F: In the 1980s, the whole world came together to bring down the South African apartheid regime. Countries started sanctioning the regime. They didn't allow the South African team to participate in the Olympics. Nobody was having trade relations with South Africa. No military intervention was needed, just sanctions.

S: Is this the first protest or activism that you've engaged in?

F: I do have prior experience. I mean, obviously, in Afghanistan, I worked for the U.N. and I worked for the Human Rights Department, so. But since I came to the U.S., I also protested the Muslim travel ban in early 2017, during the Trump administration. I wrote an op-ed and I gave talks at several universities. I have also been involved with a women's law project in Pittsburgh, and with abortions rights.

S: What did you do specifically for the UN Human Rights Department?

F: Part of my job was to monitor the situation and keep track of violations. I was very focused on women's and children's rights. And to some extent, the freedom of press. I went to prison to monitor the situation and to make sure that the prisoners were having their basic needs met, and then I reported on various instances of domestic violence, on laws that were not very favorable to women.

S: Can you tell me a little bit about your career now?

F: I went to law school to save the world, but I did not find a job in the humanitarian sector even though I really tried. I applied to many international organizations, from Human Rights Watch to Amnesty International and the World Bank. I then started working in the private sector. And now I do corporate law, which is a lot of commercial agreements, privacy law, etc. I still do my activism on the side.

S: What was life after Middlebury like?

F: Since Middlebury is such a liberal, interesting place. I really didn't have any culture shock when I arrived. But when I came to Pittsburgh to law school, it really hit me. I met people who were not as open as folks at Middlebury. I realized how much I had learned at Middlebury, critical thinking that enabled me to look at issues objectively.

S: Am I right that you also worked at the Feminist Resource Center while you were at Middlebury?

F: Yes, I did. Fellow student Mahnaz Rezaie and I staged an exhibition of photographs from Afghanistan. When I arrived at Middlebury, I was still wearing the hijab. And then I took it off during the first semester. And then everybody was thinking, I took it off because I had been modernized, liberated. I gave a talk to say that the reason was that I didn't feel accepted with my scarf, my hijab. And I had to take it off to be integrated in the college environment. I went to different events, but it always felt like people only saw the scarf and they already thought that I was not too open to certain things. Guys especially didn't approach me. After I took off my scarf, somebody approached me and asked me: "So can you date now?" I thought: "Really? The only thing that kept you from dating me was my scarf?" There was a lot of pressure in classrooms. I think I went to a gender studies intro class where we were sitting in a

circle and the two chairs on my two sides were empty. They only got filled after there was no other place to sit. You can't help but notice those things. Maybe people weren't conscious of it, but to me, it was obvious. So I had to take off the hijab, but I didn't want people to go around and think I was liberated.

S: Did you choose to wear the headscarf prior to Midd?

F: To some extent, yes. And no, because in Iran, and in Afghanistan, it's mandatory. You really don't have a choice. You are committing a crime if you don't. After the fall of the Taliban regime, if you wanted to have people's respect or succeed in your job, you needed to wear a headscarf. My scarf was always loose. That's how we always wore it in Iran.

S: If you had felt more accepted, would you have continued wearing the hijab?

F: Probably not. Because I didn't believe in it from a religious perspective, but also, as a corporate lawyer, I already have an accent. Right now, people probably will not be able to pinpoint where I'm from right away. But if I have a scarf, they right away assume that I'm a religious Muslim. That would complicate things.

S: How did working at the Feminist Resource Center influence you and your career?

F: Even though I have always been a feminist, I didn't necessarily have the tools to explain it. But when I went

to work at the center and when I took classes, I received the tools to explain power relations from a gendered perspective. Especially after I left Middlebury, I realized that many people here in the U.S. may think they have freedom and don't need feminism anymore. But they really don't look at issues that deeply, and they're not interested. And sometimes it bothers me that I am that "woke," and I'm that aware, because it feels lonely.

S: In what other ways do you notice sexism and a lack of freedom for women in the US?

F: I mean, the obvious one is the taking away of abortion rights. But even the way that the dress code works in the U.S. is anti-feminist. I remember even at Middlebury I was looking at people in cold weather who were wearing really short skirts. I was wondering why they felt the need to look sexy, to have no body hair on their legs or under their armpits. The line is very blurry. It is controlled by the patriarch. Equal pay is another issue. In law firms, you don't have many partners who are women.

S: Thank you for this insightful interview.



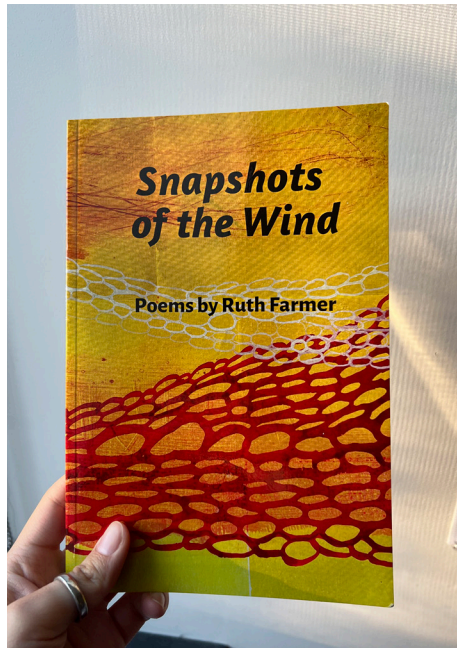
A Snapshot of Ruth Farmer's Poetry

By Halsey Smith '23

Poet Ruth Farmer visited the Middlebury campus on November 15th for a poetry reading in Chellis house from her first full-length poetry collection, *Snapshots of the Wind*. Ruth is an essayist, fiction writer, and poet.

Ruth describes her poetry collection as her way of tracing "the wonders and nuances of interior and exterior landscapes, seasons, and perception through three sections: 'What's Seen and Not Seen,' 'Voice,' and 'Snapshots of the Wind.'"

Enjoy the final and titular poem of her book.



Above: Ruth's newest poetry collection. Below: poet Ruth Farmer and a scene from her reading on November 15, 2022.

Snapshots of the Wind

*A crow lifts into the air
black wings bent to pitch
toward its destination.*

*A birch's white bark spins
as it flakes to the ground.
Oak leaves tango.
A titmouse's tuft shimmies.*

*Curtains billow, flatten.
Lamp light flickers. Fireworks
dissipate. A child's shout
sails down the road.*

*A house crumples, while waves
spray
a woman strolling along a
beach as
windbourne sand kisses her
cheeks.*

*Sound billows and fades
A shutter bangs closed.
The cloud is pushed along.*



VISUALIZING REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

By Halsey Smith '23

On September 27th, the exhibition Visualizing Reproductive Justice: A Call to End Fake Clinics opened in the Axinn Winter Garden, bringing crowds to see the artwork by seven Middlebury students as the culmination of their summer Public Feminism Fellowship.

Kamari Williams '22.5, Isabel Perez '25, Alexis Welch '22.5, Elissa Asch '22.5, Luci Bryson '25, Emily Ribeiro '24, and M Farley '24.5 produced artwork that reflected on their engagement with reproductive justice activism and scholarship, focusing specifically on crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs).

Funded by the Gender, Sexuality, & Feminist Studies

Program and the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House, the Public Feminism Fellowship was created and facilitated by Dr. Carly Thomsen, assistant professor of

the manipulative practices of CPCs, critique their practices, and in some cases, offer solutions." Crisis pregnancy centers are religiously motivated, anti-abortion,

non-profit organizations that function as the backbone of the anti-abortion movement. Critics

describe these unregulated centers as 'fake clinics'; they aim at dissuading women from getting access to abortion. After the reversal of Roe v Wade last summer, the Fellows grappled with which steps to take next. Art-making provided some sort of relief.

The art mediums encompassed

a broad range. Bryson's *pelvic inflammatory disease*, was a printed image of political statements pieced together in



Fellows M Farley '24.5, Elissa Asch '22.5, Alexis Welch '22.5, Kamari Williams '22.5, Professor Carly Thomsen, Luci Bryson '25, Emily Ribeiro '24 and Isabel Perez '25, stand in the Axinn Winter Garden the day of the exhibit.

Gender, Sexuality, & Feminist Studies. According to Fellow Kamari Williams, the students' artworks "[try to bring to] light

a pelvis shape and covered in paint, far different from Welch's *I do not want to be a mother*, a felt

information on CPCs were also handed out.

This event came just after a student-led demonstration co-organized by Fellow Elissa Asch and Bella Cady '22.5, protested the participation of a local CPC, "The Women's Center," at the Student Involvement Fair. This summer, Asch founded the NESAC Coalition

ways to promote feminist activism on campus remains a goal for these Fellows and many more students on the Middlebury Campus.

As Chellis director Karin Hanta said, "Through our art making and advocacy efforts, we have to sharpen our tools to speak out against policies that wreak immense havoc on the bodies of women and other folks who can become pregnant."

Learn more at: <https://www.publicfeminism.org/>



Above: The interactive art table where attendees were encouraged to reflect on their experience; Right: *This Is Not A Chicken Dinner* group art piece; Below: the crowd at the opening

pipe cleaner doll covered with cloth.

Attendees were able to reflect on the exhibit by drawing and answering the prompt, "How does this exhibit make you feel?" Zines and

to Ban CPCs from Campus, which garnered support from students at every NESAC school.

Finding



Zooming into Zombie

By Mat Miranda '25

How does an expert in Spanish literature from the Baroque era get to be a specialist in all things zombie?

For Professor Patricia Saldarriaga, it all started on her sofa ten years ago when her husband invited her to watch a horror movie one night. Not an aficionada of the genre until then, Professor Saldarriaga quickly became addicted. A dyed-in-the-wool scholar, she could not turn her critical mind off and quickly drew parallels between the literature and visual arts she had been studying and the films she was now watching.

"It's precisely because I have taught and worked with apocalyptic religious images of the Baroque that zombies are very appealing to my taste," she says. "Since the Medieval age, paintings, and especially the vanitas painting genre, have confronted us with death. In zombie cinema, we are also forced to think about ephemerality."

In her book *Infected Empires: Decolonizing Zombies* (co-authored with Emi Manini), Professor Saldarriaga went on to reimagine and "decolonize" the concept of zombies by breaking down how they have been portrayed in the media. In her talk on October 27, 2022, she showed

how they break through capitalism, Christianity, and chrononormativity by merely existing in opposition to the living. They exist in a queer temporality because they resist heteronormative, abelist, sexist, and racist structures. Throughout the book, the zombie emerges as a metaphor for "the othered." Readers are encouraged to imagine how they have been zombified themselves and what a zombie future would look like. Since its inception, the zombie genre has been linked to colonialism, racism, slavery of Black people, white slavery (i.e., the slavery of white women for sexual exploitation), exploitation of natural resources, capitalism, and globalization.

The first zombie movie, *White Zombie*, from 1932 depicts white women in a zombie state, existing to satisfy the sexual desires of a sugar plantation owner. In this movie, Black Haitians are resuscitated from their tombs, made into soulless beings without needs. Their only purpose is to enrich whites with their easily extractable labor. The film can be interpreted as white supremacy taking revenge. After all, Haiti was the first nation to free itself from slavery in 1803. As Mel Y. Chen

explains, viewers witness the construction of eternal [Black] labor in this film.

George Romero's movie *Night of the Living Dead* ushered in a new concept of the zombie. Since then, they have turned into hungry cannibals. In his 1968 movie produced during the time of the Vietnam War, zombies arise from a cemetery full of tombs with American flags. Neither the country nor the home can offer any security. Since then, the zombie-cannibals have bitten their way through movies, and humans die only to be resuscitated, a scenario which represents a hungry sort of capitalism that drives us all to a quicker death.

But zombies are also 'outliers'. They do not follow proper social expectations or responsibilities. They do not reproduce "normally." They are often "visibly disabled" and wander the world freely. Overall, they question the humanist project and its hierarchical system that values Man over all other forms of life on earth. They are queer, poor, POC, and trafficked. They point to a post-human future, a future where disability is the norm. Nobody is controlling their present and future but they themselves. They are building a strong community.

Tapping into a strong feminist network

By Mei Dwyer-Frattalone and Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri

On Friday, Nov. 4, a group of Middlebury students gathered to march in solidarity with the Iranian and Kurdish women protesting for their basic human rights in Iran, and mourning the death of Mahsa Jina Amini.

After allegedly being killed by the morality police for not properly adhering to the sexist and oppressive mandatory hijab laws of the Iranian government, Iranian and Kurdish women and girls turned their freedom dream, to have basic human rights, into a freedom fight.

They are protesting in their streets and burning the mandatory hijab, more desperate for freedom than afraid of the violence of the morality police or the possibility of arrest and sexual assault in

what the Iranian government is calling “re-education” centers. Two more young lives were unnecessarily taken by the brutal morality police; 16-year-olds Nika Shakarami and Sarena Esmailzadeh died fighting for their sisters and themselves.

Iran. On Friday, we gathered to stand in solidarity with these brave women. We gathered to honor their lives. And we gathered to amplify their voices.

This march wouldn't have been possible without the strong network of feminist

activists at Middlebury. When I began to think about organizing the march, the first person I approached was my dear friend Mei. I didn't know how to start the process, but I knew it was something I wanted to do, so I turned to her. My confidant, personal cheerleader and a student worker of the Feminist Resource Center, I knew she'd be able to help.

I asked Mei if the Feminist Resource Center at Chellis House might be able to support this sort of event. Then, I found my first link to the strong feminist



Above: Chellis House Director Karin Hanta and students Iman Behabani, Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri and Mei Dwyer-Frattalone speaking at the rally on November 4.

Photo Credit: Devin Santikarma

They are not the only girls who have lost their lives in the battle to end gendered violence and oppression in

Center at Chellis House might be able to support this sort of event. Then, I found my first link to the strong feminist

network at Midd.

I hadn't committed myself to organizing the march at that point, I was merely exploring the possibilities. I didn't know if I was the right person for this task; I had never organized anything like this before, and I was afraid I wasn't close enough to the situation to organize a thoughtful event that was conscious of all the deeply rooted intricacies of the problems facing Iranian and Kurdish women in Iran right now.

Mei committed herself to helping me start this initiative. The very next day she came to me and said that the center would definitely be able to support the march. Karin Hanta, the director of

is the best co-organizer in the world and this wouldn't have been possible without her.

The Feminist Resource Center immediately welcomed me into their circle. My feminist network grew by one more link. Director Hanta gave me and Mei direction on logistics. She suggested we reach out to the Dean of Student Affairs and get the event registered on Presence. She also frequently forwarded us resources regarding protests in Iran and solidarity movements in the United States.

She sent an article from The Harvard Crimson that was particularly informative. The article was written by a Muslim student who actively chooses to wear the hijab. She

is something wrong with the hijab, when in fact the problem is the dictator's using it as a means of oppression. This informed a lot of the language we used and led to us getting in touch with the Muslim Students Association (MSA). We had a meeting with them and made sure that all of the language we were using was respectful to women that actively choose to wear the hijab. We collaborated with them on our poster and put large emphasis on the fact that we are advocating for women to be able to choose what they wear, not to promote a particular choice.

Mei and I were also able to connect with strong feminist voices at Middlebury Union High School. Narges Anzali



the Feminist Resource Center, suggested that I come to their next meeting for further discussion. And so, the initiative was born. I am so grateful for Mei's help with setting up this connection. She

Above: Students carry handmade cardboard signs while marching asking for freedom and respect for all women in Iran

was extremely bothered that some U.S. protests were using language that implied that there

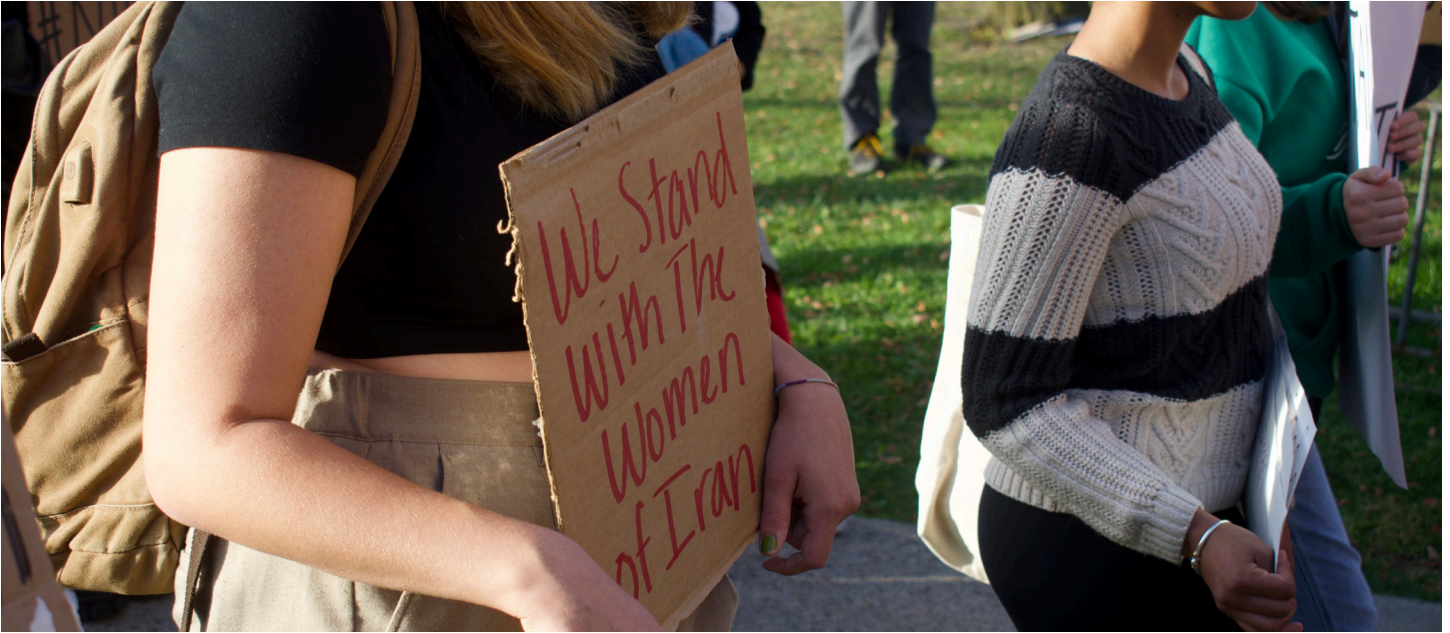
spread the word about the event in the high school. She also read a beautiful poem at the event.

A friend connected us with Iman Behbehani, who led the chant "Women, Life, Freedom,"

and read a touching and powerful speech at the event. Student-employees of the Feminist Resource Center

necessarily present as a feminist organization, but was one of the groups that volunteered their time to make the event happen.

various groups to come together based on the topic of women's rights. We found a significant overlap in the feminist beliefs



helped hang up posters and put us in touch with several student groups to organize sign-making. Radical Asians (RAISINS) and Feminist Action at Middlebury (FAM) both came together to make signs for the march. The event was a promising example of multiple student organizations pooling resources and joining in a shared passion for feminism. RAISINS does not

This effort was a collaboration amongst many affinity groups and showed that the feminist network at Middlebury transcends the focus of various student groups. By organizing this march, we revealed feminism as a shared passion at the root of various cultural and political organizations. It seemed that intersectionality allowed for

amongst MSA, RAISINS, FAM and Chellis House, and we are hopeful that commonality can be at the forefront of future, bigger activist movements.

We believe this level of collaboration will bring existing organizing efforts to a new level. The Nov. 4 march showed us that there is so much to be gained by reaching out for more perspectives and support.

To Love An Island: Poetry Reading by Ana Portnoy Brimmer

By Andrea Lopez '25

Ana Portnoy Brimmer is a Puerto Rican poet who spoke at Middlebury on October 6, 2022. In her volume, *To Love an Island*, she reflects on the beauty and joy of the island that she has experienced firsthand from living there.

At the same time, she writes about the economic, geographic, colonial, and biopolitical issues that Puerto Rico faces. The experiences that she and other Puerto Ricans find themselves in. While she is proud of her work and publication, Portnoy Brimmer spoke about her sadness and frustration that this book was borne out of these circumstances.

At the event, she both read her poems in English, and a translated version in Spanish. Some of her poems include word play that can only be understood if you speak both languages. She describes how both languages “meet halfway” in her writing process. You can tell the intentionality with her writing as it also emphasizes who she wants her writing to reach. The following is my personal favorite of her poems. It is titled “Ode to my studio apartment in Forest Hill, Newark” which was inspired by the poet Aracelis Girmay.

*I once read a poem that there's
such a thing
of the kindness of windows. Its
winter — branches chatter
like a fever, and I've never known
trees
to willingly surrender their
foliage. I watch the world
from this snowglobe, your
scratched glass,
smudge the surface, patiently wait
for late morning.
When the sun comes in through
your eastern windows, I pull up
the venetian
blinds — pull off my clothes, lie
— back bare,
on your wood-checkered floor, tits
in the air, a river
of sunlight pouring in. Even
though the sun
behaves differently here, doesn't
touch with the tenderness
of my island, your windows do me
this kindness,
and we cheat the cold. I was told
I'd be swallowed up
by weather, wouldn't survive the
chill
of this country — its biting ways.
But you give me
these moments, delicious heat, hide
my nakedness even with the blinds
up, windows open;
allow me this traveling back, this
pleasure
of winning, of fuck-you to this
cold cold place
while my belly hangs cliffside, ribs
blossoming*

*bougainvillea in the paned
warmth, and February
roars outside. You, dearest of
square footages,
hold me between your gypsum
arms — cries puddling
in my navel, even as I miss and
love another
while inside you.*

Ana beautifully describes feelings of familiarity while also portraying feelings of the unknown. She writes poems like these to depict the stories and lived experiences of many first-generation Latinx folks. Stories like these not only help reconcile with estranged feelings of living in a new environment, but also bring people with similar upbringings together. A feeling of closeness and understanding is exactly what can help her community feel seen by giving voices to their shared experiences.

