

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

March 8, 2016

Patricia Marroquin

## **108th International Women's Day — A UCSB Perspective**

Today marks the 108th observance of International Women's Day, a day to celebrate and reflect on women's achievements and contributions across the globe. The [origins of International Women's Day](#) date to 1908, when a group of 15,000 women marched in New York City with demands for shorter work hours, better wages, and voting rights.

Each year, there is a different campaign theme for the occasion, and this year's is Gender Parity. The [International Women's Day website](#) says: "Worldwide, women continue to contribute to social, economic, cultural, and political achievement. And we have much to celebrate today. But progress towards gender parity has slowed in many places. The World Economic Forum predicted in 2014 that it would take until 2095 to achieve global gender parity. Then one year later in 2015, they estimated that a slowdown in the already glacial pace of progress meant the gender gap wouldn't close entirely until 2133."

Events held worldwide to commemorate the day range from conferences and exhibitions to festivals and fun runs to concerts and online digital gatherings. Here in the U.S., Lakshmi Puri, the deputy executive director of UN Women, was scheduled to ring the bell at the New York Stock Exchange at 9 a.m. Eastern time. And Google pays tribute to women of the future with [a different kind of Google Doodle](#) in the form of a video. Google visited 13 countries and spoke to 337 women and girls, asking them to complete the sentence: "One day I will ...". To learn what else is

going on around the globe today, visit the [International Women's Day Events page](#).

We asked several women faculty members, administrators, and staff at UC Santa Barbara for their thoughts and perspectives on this important day. Here's what they had to say:

**Margaret Klawunn, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs**

"We have work to do domestically and globally, which makes International Women's Day an important moment to reflect on progress made and goals to be reached. While many countries have had women leaders, in the United States we are watching Hillary Clinton's campaign for the Presidency at a moment when voters reject the idea that she should be picked because of her gender. On campuses across the country, including ours, we have made major changes in how we handle harassment and sexual assault, and much more remains to be done to eliminate gender-based violence. Women's safety, security, independence, educational and economic opportunities continue to be goals around the world. I am happy to be part of the changing conversation as we rethink categories of gender, sexuality, and equality."

**Claudine Michel, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs; Professor, Department of Black Studies**

"As a woman of Haitian descent, I proudly celebrate International Women's Day 2016 and stand in solidarity with women and girls from throughout the world. I salute our women-sisters-warriors who have held families together, labored alongside their male and female partners, stood up against violence, engaged in organized movements to gain equality, and fought for justice everywhere while remaining bold, creative, and hopeful. In particular I honor those women who live in those *otherspaces* in other parts of the world where women are as strong as they are vulnerable. In Haiti, women are said to be *potomitan*, centerposts, pillars of society. We bend but do not break. La lucha continua!"

**Karen Myers, Associate Dean, Graduate Division; Professor, Department of Communications**

"International Women's Day is certainly a day to take stock in how far women have come toward reaching parity. I think it's important to remind young women that we still have a distance to go. In some of my classes I talk about gender-based pay

inequity and I am concerned that most college women are unaware that inequity still exists. Most believe that the battle was won years ago! The first step in overcoming the problem is awareness. Pay inequity is an issue, not just for women but for partners, parents, children, and others.”

**Laury Oaks, Professor and Chair, Department of Feminist Studies**

“The Department of Feminist Studies celebrates International Women's Day, knowing that this day is recognized with festivities by scholars and activists around the world. The origins of the day remind us to ‘vote with our feet’ — which may be updated today to urge also that we ‘vote with our social media’ - to advocate for social justice locally and globally. This election year demonstrates clearly that raising our voices to fight against oppression, in all its forms, remains crucial.”

**Denise Stephens, University Librarian**

“For women around the world, access to information is key to survival, learning, success, creativity, and innovation. Libraries offer access to these resources to everyone, regardless of gender, for free. A woman with access to knowledge - whether she is a scholar, businesswoman, politician, laborer, mother, or one of the many other extraordinary roles she might play — is empowered.”

**Simran Singh, Director of the Office of International Students & Scholars**

“Each year, we have about a thousand new students and scholars who travel to UCSB from around the world, both women and men, some from countries where the roles of women are much more narrowly defined. At UCSB, while we have work to do towards reaching gender parity, women are an active, influential presence in the leadership on this campus. We have women in positions of power, women innovators, women of remarkable and world-changing accomplishments. I’m proud of what UCSB models for the rest of the world.”

**Kim DeBacco, Academic Program Director, UCSB Extension; Member, UCSB Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on the Status of Women**

“On this International Women’s Day I want to express gratitude to my strong mother. In saying so, I want to thank all the strong women before me who had to fight to gain recognition of their abilities, their intelligence, and their power and physical strength too. As a young child growing up on a dairy farm in northwest

Tasmania, Australia, I didn't realize, at least not until well into my teenage years, that there were things I couldn't or wasn't supposed to do physically because I was a girl. You see, when I was a child, I saw my mother, Jill, driving tractors and trucks on the farm, shearing sheep\*, and milking cows. She mixed concrete and wheeled wheelbarrow loads of bricks for my dad when he built a large cowshed on the farm — she was his 'brickies laborer'! She and dad operated the cowshed and milked herds of up to 80 cows in it twice a day. She would dig and bend for hours in our quarter-acre vegetable and fruit garden, and jog along Ulverstone Beach in her bikini every Sunday in summer after a swim or two. My mum was physically strong and proud of it. Her five children (four daughters and one son) learned to be proud of their physical strength too. At 79, Jill still goes to the gym in Brisbane every day and is incredibly healthy, fit, and beautiful. An inspiration for all women — and men!"

*\* Mum won the shearing competition at the Ulverstone Agricultural Show at the age of 16, beating all the seasoned male shearers.*

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## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.