

A Bit of Me

This series of profiles on SUNY Broome community members is a part of the Student Village diversity calendar initiative. We will be highlighting members in our community who identify with or can speak on the diversity theme or topic for each month. The theme for March is Women's History month and the topic is women in the workforce. To be featured in this series please reach out to Pamela Alvarez or Alexandria Donkor.

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Background: Carla has a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Economics and a Master's Degree in Political Science all from Binghamton University. Carla also has additional graduate credits in Political Science and Education courses.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS PROFESSION?

It chose me! My initial plan was to become a lawyer. However, I decided instead to pursue Political Science with an emphasis in Public Administration. My initial career goal was to obtain a position with the federal government, perhaps with the State Department or another federal department. I even interviewed for an Economic Analyst position with the CIA! While pursuing my Master's Degree, I had to complete an internship and I had two offers, one at SUNY Broome and one at the County Planning Department. I accepted the SUNY Broome internship and found that higher education was my passion, particularly teaching and academic advising. I am very lucky to love what I do, I have enjoyed the variety of positions I have had at SUNY Broome since that first internship in 1986!

WHO IS AN IMPORTANT WOMAN TO YOU, IN YOUR LIFE, IN HISTORY, OR IN MEDIA?

My paternal grandmother was an amazing role model to my sisters and myself. Anna was a very independent woman during a time when that quality was quite unusual. She worked full time at the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and was undaunted by traveling alone. She would often take my two sisters and myself to NYC to see a show by herself on the train. She was also an amazing cook, no one could make lasagna like my grandmother. To this day, I am still working on perfecting her lasagna! I know that my sense of independence and energy comes from her.

WHAT IS ONE THING THAT WOMEN HAVE TODAY THAT YOU ARE THANKFUL FOR?

Opportunities. Educational opportunities, career opportunities and ultimately the opportunity to make decisions without having decisions made for us.

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU WISH WOMEN COULD HAVE SOMEDAY?

Parity. I hope that we are no longer surprised that a woman is achieving a "first" such as the first woman to serve as Vice President or the first woman to serve as Treasury Secretary. Instead we can simply acknowledge that women and men are capable for any position that is available. There should be no more surprises that a woman is serving in a particular capacity, such as Deb Haaland, the first Native American woman to serve in a Presidential Cabinet position.

More concerning, why is it that in 2021 we finally have our first female vice president? Shouldn't we have broken that glass ceiling years ago? When will a woman serve as President? Or, when will Americans trust that a woman can be president?

Other countries currently have women leaders and have trusted their leadership for years. Margaret Thatcher served as the Prime Minister of England from 1979-1990, Angela Merkel is currently the Chancellor of Germany and has been since 2005 until present and Jacinda Ardern, has been the Prime Minister of New Zealand since 2017.

IS THERE A WOMAN WHO INSPIRES YOU IN YOUR CHOSEN CAREER/FIELD?

This is a difficult question as there are many women that have paved the way for women like myself to not only study and teach Political Science but to also actively engage civically in one's community, state and at the national level. Many women come to mind, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, Lucy Burns, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bella Abzug, Shirley Chisholm, Gloria Steinem, Madeline Albright, Hillary Clinton, Michelle Obama, the list is endless.

I will concentrate on two women for this article. Alice Paul has to be the most tenacious and focus driven woman in our history. Her solitary goal was to secure the right to vote for women and she dedicated her life to that goal. Her persistence and dedication to her mission are qualities that I most admire. She inspired and motivated even the most skeptical, with a variety of tactics to sway public opinion in favor of giving women the right to vote. She planned the largest women's rights parade in Washington, DC the day before President Wilson's Inauguration. This parade along with constant picketing of the White House yielded much attention to the cause. Hunger strikes in prison, being force fed while in prison, then being released only to do it all over again was a personal sacrifice she endured with unparalleled strength and persistence. Once Alice was successful in securing the right to vote for women via the 20th Amendment (her efforts convinced the Congress to finally propose and pass the amendment) one would think she might revel in her achievement. Instead, Alice started advocating for the Equal Rights Amendment which she fought for until the day she died on July 9, 1977. These are the qualities that I try to adopt in my day to day professional and personal life. Most certainly, Alice has taught us never to give up the fight for a worthy cause.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was also a very strong advocate for women's equality. She chose to fight for gender equity using the law as her "weapon". One of the cases that launched her success was a case titled "Reed v Reed". A separated couple's son passed away and both parents wanted to serve as Executors of the son's estate. However during that time (late 1960's) in the

state of Idaho, if both parents were alive and of equal competence, then the law stated that the man would serve as the Executor. Sally Reed wanted to be treated equally and be a part of the estate process. She retained a lawyer, Allen Derr and RBG who would write the brief. The case was taken up by the Supreme Court and the court ruled unanimously in favor of Sally Reed due to RBG's gender equity arguments. From that point forward, RBG was a tireless advocate for gender equity.

A few years ago at the Glimmerglass Festival in Cooperstown, NY I had the honor of meeting RBG in person. This is a picture of her from that event.



WHAT WOMAN FIGURE DO YOU FEEL LUCKY TO HAVE IN YOUR LIFE?

This one is difficult to answer, there is no one woman but many women! Women support one another during good and challenging times and especially during COVID. My daughters inspire me each and every day as I watch them take on the challenges of their daily lives and struggle with the decisions that they must make as adults. They also make sure that I "dress appropriately" and am current in all of the social trends!

I am also very lucky to have sisters and friends who I can lean on during difficult times and share life's joys and tribulations. We share with one another how to balance the demands of our professions, motherhood and our relationships. The support that we provide one another is uplifting and energizing, knowing that we have each other's backs even on the worst of days.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MILESTONE IN WOMEN'S HISTORY?

Without a doubt, securing the right to vote. Without that right, women would not have a political voice nor would we have made the progress we have made without the ability to participate in the political process. I had the honor to serve on the Broome Tioga Suffrage Anniversary Committee that Assemblywoman Lupardo and Tioga County Legislative Chair Martha Sauerbrey

co-chaired. Our charge was to honor not only NYS's 100 year anniversary of granting women the right to vote but also to then celebrate the passage of the 20th Amendment. We re-enacted a suffragist parade held in the City of Binghamton and secured two historical markers. The first was installed in the Village of Lisle and denotes the first woman who voted in the state of NY. The second marker is located in the City of Binghamton and it marks the suffragist convention and parade held in 1913. I am including some pictures from those events.



Girl Scouts in traditional era uniforms in the parade re enactment.



Donna Lupardo and I prior to the parade.



WHY DO YOU THINK IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO HAVE A WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH?

We must always acknowledge the work of our foremothers and value what they achieved for us. If we are not reminded of what they sacrificed so that we might have freedom and the right to vote, we will not value the importance of that right.

WHAT DOES FEMINISM MEAN TO YOU?

Always striving for parity. Ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity in today's society.

WHAT KIND OF WOMAN DO YOU STRIVE TO BE?

Educated, assertive, and someone who will not back down in the face of injustice and inequity. I also hope that people around me can rely on me when they need help. I am also always willing to speak up on behalf of SUNY Broome's students to ensure that they are well represented and have their academic needs met.

WHAT IS ONE AREA OF LIFE WHERE YOU BELIEVE THAT WOMEN STILL HAVE TO FIGHT TO BE TREATED FAIRLY?

Women still worry about their safety when they walk to their car at night or are walking or jogging alone in a park or in their neighborhood. Most men do not worry about their safety. When will women not worry about their safety? Six Asian women were just killed in Georgia, allegedly due to their gender and the shooter's "sex addiction". Women are still harassed at work by powerful men. When will women be treated with dignity and not as objects?