

# Meeting Gloria Steinem: Campus event brings a SUNY Broome student an unexpected opportunity

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Sometimes, opportunities lurk in unexpected places – a lecture hall, an email, an interesting conversation.

For Teacher Education – English major [Karryann Kohlbeck](#), the choice to attend a free screening of a documentary led her to connections she couldn't have imagined – and a trip to the 2015 Gloria Awards gala in New York City.

Kohlbeck decided to attend the April 23 screening of “[Madame Presidenta](#),” which featured a visit by Pittsburgh-based filmmaker [Heather Arnet](#). The film asked a question that intrigued the Arizona native: why hasn't the United States had a woman President?

Normally a little shy, Kohlbeck piped up during the question and answer session, and then had a deep conversation with Arnet following the event. They discussed the concept of patriarchal hegemony and its comparison to matrilineal systems; the latter were traditionally more common in Native American tribes, including Kohlbeck's ancestral Navajo culture.

A little while later, Kohlbeck was working on a paper concerning gender inequality and emailed Arnet, asking to use her as a reference. That's when Arnet invited her to attend the [Gloria Awards](#), after a friend was unable to attend.

“It was a fortuitous encounter,” she said of her connection with Arnet. “I was a little hesitant at first — it's a risk — but I'm glad I went. It's a huge experience you will never forget.”

Sponsored by the Ms. Foundation for Women, the Gloria Awards honor women who ignite policy and culture change. It's named after feminist activist, journalist and Ms. Magazine founder Gloria Steinem – who Karryann had the chance to meet in person.

The two discussed the change from matrilineal to patrilineal systems, and the ensuing transformation of culture.

“She was intrigued by how it changed to (a system where) it's more about power,” Kohlbeck said. “In the case of a matrilineal system, it's more connected and more of a circle. We talked about that, and I wanted to know more about her work with Wilma Mankiller, the first female president of the Cherokee Nation.”

During the event, Kohlbeck also had the chance to network with others working toward gender equality, including filmmakers, producers, writers and more.

She said she is grateful to Professors I.J. Byrnes, M.A. Rossi and M.P. Whittaker for arranging the screening of “Madame Presidenta,” and urged SUNY Broome students to consider attending similar campus events.

“You’ve got to take advantage of the opportunities offered to college students – the lectures, the film screenings, the events,” Kohlbeck said. “These opportunities can lead to an extraordinary life.”



**Left to right: Karryann Kohlbeck,  
Gloria Steinam, Heather Arnet**

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