

FITCHBURG YOUR STORY: She Spoke - Julia Grace Ducharme

["Saxifrage" choral music plays, performed by the Fitchburg State University Choirs]

Prof. Kisha Tracy (intro): Welcome to the Fitchburg State University Perseverantia Podcast network. This is the Fitchburg Your Story series in which Fitchburg State students tell the stories that make our city and university unique.

["Saxifrage" fades out]

[rhythmic, bassy plucking theme plays over the transition]

Julia Grace Ducharme: We know women's voices and stories are important for many reasons. Remembering them is just as important. Women in our communities and across the world have done incredible work and have said some pretty amazing things. The same is to be said of the women who have studied, currently, and even will study here at Fitchburg State University.

In today's podcast, we will not only take a look down memory lane,

[rhythmic, bassy plucking theme plays]

but take some time talking about the trailblazers of today and our past.

In the 1960s, what now stands as Fitchburg State University was the Fitchburg Normal School.

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True to its current reputation of being a school that teaches teachers, FSU was a place predominantly of young women who came to study education. While the university would have been over 70% female, the men were the dominant voices heard, especially across the Fitchburg State newspapers. But among these voices were a shared anti-war opinion. Students wrote often in these editions, especially within the 60s, about impeaching President Nixon and ending the Vietnam War. In this excerpt from the 1969 Fitchburg State newspaper, *The Cycle*, now *The Point*, Suzanne Fuller sent the following letter to one of the editors:

"Dear editor, I would like to address the student body at Fitchburg State College and your criticisms of the *Cycle*. Keep in mind that you have only presented with two issues. The first was written before registration. Students participating in this issue had articles submitted regarding summer happenings. This is the first time any campus publication has been out so early. The second edition was out during the first week of classes. What news was there to print? Registration and frosh orientation was covered. The third issue, we never did get to read it, did we? President Hammond decided to censor it. Do you really think that if this excerpt from Cleaver's novella had been printed in the newspaper with no censorship, you would have reacted that strongly towards it? So now you're looking for news, campus news. Has John Antonelli been given a chance to publish what you want? Ask him. I'm sure he's not looking from really controversial stories and

FITCHBURG YOUR STORY: She Spoke - Julia Grace Ducharme

Julia Grace Ducharme (cont'd):

four-letter words. It's a newspaper, but shouldn't we also be exposed to some things outside of FSC? There are things going on around us far outside our reach and are really looking for another campus view. Sure, the evaluator is giving our campus news, but is this all you want to read during the year? *The Cycle* isn't fighting against President Hammond. It's fighting for you. You read the paper. You should censor it. Sincerely, Suzanne Fuller."

John Antonelli was a student in a Supreme Court case, "*Antonelli versus Hammond*." Antonelli was one of the editors of Fitchburg State college newspaper, and he sued the president of Fitchburg State, President Hammond, after Hammond refused to pay for the future print of what would have been the *Cycle* of course, now the *Point*.

President Hammond lost in that battle in the Supreme Court, and he lost to Antonelli. The students, especially the women of this time, were super outspoken about this loss. Women in the face of this movement fiercely fought for Antonelli's free speech, and by 1970 and 1980 the tides had slightly changed.

Women's voices are up and down the *Point*.

As women's voices began to dominate the *Point*, they started to share their opinions about things or controversial topics as we may say now. Judy Cumbie, who was a guest speaker, came and visited Fitchburg State University. In an article written about her Elizabeth Pacquiao wrote about how she spoke of inmates who she had worked with and given her views on the death penalty. She talks a lot about how Judy Cumbie was a part of a program called Project HOPE. At the end of her letter that she wrote for *The Point*, Judy said, "She spoke of religious personal governmental views of the death penalty and spoke of morals. She sang beautiful self-written songs about the abolition of the death penalty. The members of the Newman Association see more than ever what the death penalty stands for. Its mortality is felt in our hearts."

[*rhythmic, bassy plucking theme plays over the transition*]

In 1990, the tides had entirely changed. Fitchburg State women were speaking out against many things going on in campus.

[*rhythmic, bassy plucking theme fades out*]

And as things and worries started to grow, they had a visitor come to Fitchburg State campus, a gentleman by the name of Tony Markham. He delivers a rape prevention workshop here on campus. And women of the *Point* are buzzing about this visit, talking about how it was this visit that they were really happy to have on campus and how this was really important.

FITCHBURG YOUR STORY: She Spoke - Julia Grace Ducharme

Julia Grace Ducharme (cont'd): In an article written in the 1990 edition of *The Point*, Sonia Randall says, "An English professor here at Fitchburg State College will touch on topics such as how to avoid the situation of rape and how to detect the early warning signs, which may signal that you're in a potentially dangerous situation. According to Markham, three out of four rapists are known to the victims.

Although there are no certainties about who or will not commit a rape, certainly some situations are more dangerous than others. Frequently, a rapist will be a stranger asking for directions. Also on the agenda will be topic of correct police and hospital procedures for the victims of rape. Women immediately want to shower after the incident, said Markham. In order to catch a violator, the person violated needs to save the evidence. It's not a pleasant experience, but, if you prepare, it makes chances of catching the rapist more likely."

This is especially powerful for grounding what would happen later on on campus here at Fitchburg State. And this reflection really starts to pivot and become more of a topic of conversation amongst the women of Fitchburg State.

By the time we hit the tail end of the 1990s, the newspaper staff of Fitchburg State University is almost all women.

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From managing editor-in-chief, to sports editors, photography editors, all of them are women.

Which brings us to our present day, 2023.

[rhythmic, bassy plucking theme fades out]

In 2023, as we know, if you were a member of the Fitchburg State University campus, we have an incident of sexual assault on our campus that occurred in the library on Wednesday, October 4th, 2023. At the face of the incident, you have Haley Norton and Lauren Tilbury, who worked with campus groups to stage a protest in which photos were taken. And those photos are available on the archive.

[rhythmic, bassy plucking theme fades in and plays through the rest of the narration]

That protest took place on October 10th and becomes one of the largest movements against sexual assault that Fitchburg State has on their campus.

As we can see from all of our findings about the history of women on our campus and in our writing, we can also deem that it's really, really important to keep these voices alive so that the future generations come onto campus or the future generations read *The Point* or start writing for *The Point* or just generally attend Fitchburg State are able to not only keep those stories alive.

FITCHBURG YOUR STORY: She Spoke - Julia Grace Ducharme

Julia Grace Ducharme (cont'd): But tap into why it's so important.

[rhythmic, bassy plucking theme fades out]

[Perseverantia Network theme fades in]

Caitlin Moriarty: You're listening to Perseverantia, the Fitchburg State Podcast Network.

[Perseverantia Network theme fades out]