



History of the Pink Sashes

Every year during commencement, the Women's Studies graduates stand out distinctly from others, beaming proudly in their Mexican Pink sashes. There is a story to the origin of these Mexican/Rani/Fuchsia pink sashes. In the early 2000's we were still a Special Major. During College Graduation ceremony, when Women's Studies was announced and our two or three graduating seniors stood up, many in the audience would LAUGH, trying to make our graduates feel ashamed. The faculty at that time decided that something had to change. Professor Vicki Hall, who has been associated with our program almost since its inception, came up with the idea of the pink sashes as a counter-narrative to the backlash and misogyny encountered by our Women's Studies graduates. Once the students and faculty started standing proudly in their pink sashes and screaming with delight when Women's Studies was announced at graduation, the laughter STOPPED! After we became a regular major, offering a B.S. in Women's Studies, our numbers grew steadily, and today we have a significant number of students walking every year during graduation, proudly displaying their pink sashes.

In 2008, the department organized events to create awareness around the symbolic significance of the color pink, which is embraced by different cultures around the globe, including traditional Mexican culture, and many Asian cultures where different genders equally embrace the color as auspicious. The "Pink is Political" campaign was launched to reclaim the color pink from its narrow negative Western association with sexist stereotypes and the objectification of women. The "Pink is Political" campaign deliberately shifts the narrative surrounding the color pink to reclaim and relocate it within feminist struggles for survival, empowerment, political representation, and peace activism. If pink has been used effectively by Planned Parenthood and the American Breast Cancer Foundation in their fight to support women's health, Global feminist activist organizations such as the Gulabi Gang, The Feminist Majority Foundation and Code Pink have all used the color pink as a tool for bringing women together in their grassroots activism. For us, the pink sashes symbolize our long history of existence within the academy and our struggle for recognition. We are loud! We are here! Now the pink sashes have become a major marketing tool for the department, drawing students to our table at outreach events, and generating a lot of interest and inquiry from potential majors. While passionate commitment to gender studies and feminist issues are primary reasons students choose our major, the pink sashes have definitely been an added attraction.

