

# Students engage in an inspiring afternoon

By Brianna Wallen  
News Editor

Almost six out of 10 women in prison and under community supervision are victims of domestic abuse according to a report from the Centre for Women's Justice.

With the alarming trend of "unjust criminalization" of female victims, there is a direct link between violence inflicted against women resulting in legal ramifications for those attempting to escape their abuser.

With more than 60% of cases, many know of victims that have been locked away. For author and advocate Michelle Horton, her sister, Nikki Addimando, was a victim.

The Department of Sociology, VPAS Center, K9 Jules Foundation, the Office of Career and Professional Development and the New Haven Women's Resettlement Working Group hosted the event, An Inspiring Afternoon with Michelle Horton and Nikki Addimando, on Oct. 15.

In the Adanti Student Center Theater, students, staff and faculty attended a reading from Horton's book, "Dear Sister: A Memoir of Secrets, Survival, and Unbreakable Bonds," and a Q&A session.

The narrative shares the lives of two sisters tied in a crucial case: Horton,



Aileen Keays, senior project director, at University of Connecticut's Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy, moderating the Q&A session between Author Michelle Horton and Nikki Addimando on Oct. 15.

who was left to raise Addimando's children and deal with the intricacies of the criminal justice system, and Addimando, who was imprisoned for the murder of her long-time abuser.

The emotional night started with the sisters expressing their personal journey through trauma, resilience and the unbreakable ties of family, as attendees were invited to reflect and learn about the often overlooked narratives within the

criminal justice system.

"The system is the second abuser," Addimando said. "All these women go away and just disappear."

Despite their extensive evidence of abuse, charges were not dropped.

"There was the DA office in Dutchess County: knew about her as a victim. And then a gun goes off, but it's not the victim, it's the perpetrator who they knew to be the perpetrator. And everyone got really quiet, and the

district attorney's office recused themselves from prosecuting," Horton said.

Instead, Horton said that the judge denied ever seeing any evidence of abuse and gave her a sentence of 19 years to life.

Addimando, who had two young children at the time, was convicted and sentenced in February of 2020 after her arrest in September of 2017.

Horton said that her sister was vigorously persecuted by Dutchess County.

She describes it as "textbook victim-blaming" of twisting of narratives, victim-blaming and slut-shaming.

It was not until the U.S. Court of Appeals acknowledged her as a survivor that Addimando was granted a resentencing under the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act.

"The only reason that she's home right now is because a higher court said 'We believe you. You

were a victim,' and they gave her seven and a half years," Horton said.

From 2017 to 2021, Horton worked to build the Nicole Addimando Community Defense Committee, where she spoke out against her sister's criminalization.

"We made so much noise. We wouldn't shut up, kept growing in numbers, and it made us undeniable," Horton said.

Addimando was released nine months ago. Since then, Horton has reflected on the signs of domestic violence and ways that people can help.

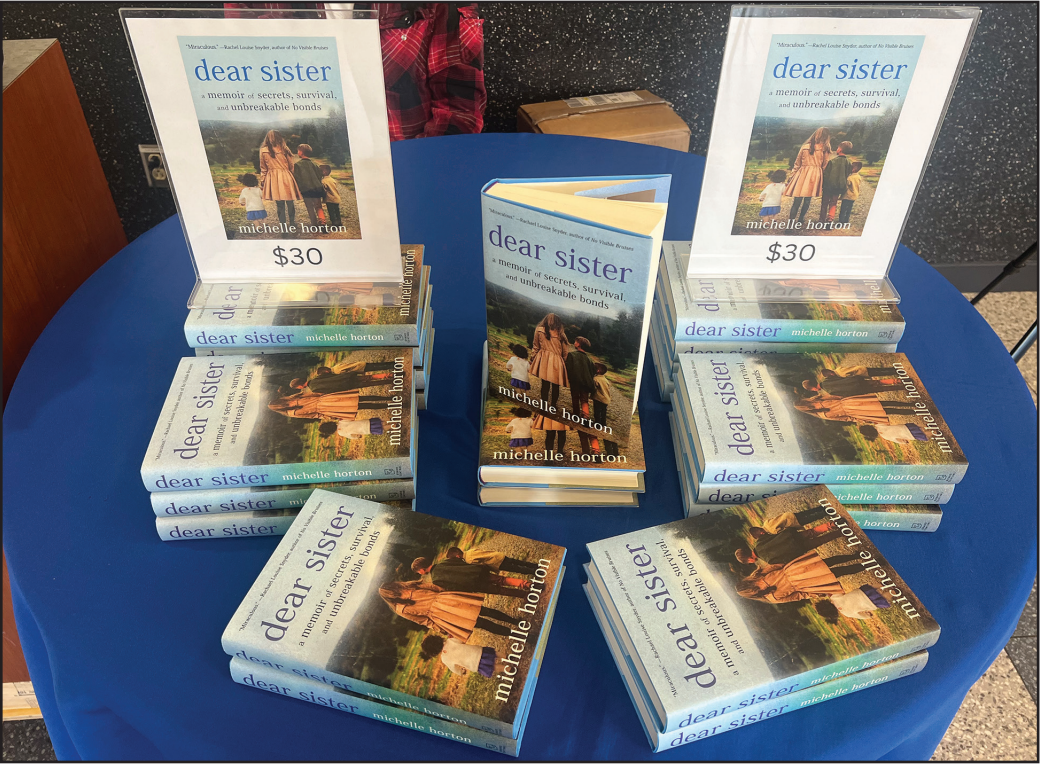
"My blanket advice is that when the time is right, ask them if they're safe, and just show that you are somebody who can handle their truth without judgment," Horton said. "Second, reach out to your local domestic violence agencies."

Many audience members also related to the tale of these two sisters.

Business major Juwell Clay, a sophomore who attended the event, said that she was happy about the outcome of Addimando's case.

Clay revealed that a family member would have had the same fate as Addimando if the charges were not dropped.

"It really goes to show about how the justice system really is," Clay said. "When it comes to these cases, they don't go in the victim's favor most



Author Michelle Horton's book, "Dear Sister: A Memoir of Secrets, Survival, and Unbreakable Bonds," for sale in the Adanti Student Center.



Nikki Addimando interacts with K9 dogs and university police in the Adanti Student Center Theater.

## Students share their opinion on the impact of Hurricane Milton

By Brianna Wallen  
News Editor

Category 3 Hurricane Milton left a path of destruction in Florida, as officials confirmed to CBS News that at least 24 people were killed.

As Milton moved across the peninsula to the Atlantic Ocean, Floridians were left without power and destroyed property.

Viewers all around the world were able to witness the horrors of Milton through their TV screen or phone.

At the university, students said that they watched the events of hurricane unravel from the lens of Florida's residents with the click of a button.

Nursing major Favour Amayo, a sophomore, said that on various social media apps, she saw those affected from the hurricane share their experience in real time.

"Most of my information has been seen on social media sites like TikTok and sometimes Instagram," Amayo said. "I saw the water flooding the

streets, broken houses and cars underwater."

Despite being over 1,000 miles away from the line of disaster, through social media posts, more students are able to see the emotional impact that Floridians have undergone due to this natural disaster.

Health science major Rakeem Fuller, a sophomore, said that he was able to sympathize with the victims of the hurricane through their perspective.

"I saw posts from those who chose to stay. I heard they had to write their names and birthday on their arms in Sharpie," Fuller said.

Floridians that did not evacuate were advised to write information on their arms to identify their bodies in case of death.

Not only were Florida residents' safety at risk, but their property was in jeopardy as well. Many left behind their cherished belongings.

"It is very sad that all these people lost their homes," Fuller said.

Social work major Lexi Murphy, a sophomore,

said that these posts had a pull on her emotions.

"It's very, very sad to see that everybody's life is changing due to the natural disaster," Murphy said.

Amayo said that although Hurricane Milton is tragic and affected her emotionally, she has become desensitized to it.

"I feel this hurricane is really scary and frightening. However, I feel like so many hurricanes and natural disasters have happened so much in that part of the country that to me it seems like another one," Amayo said.

Despite this feeling, Amayo urges the campus community to bring awareness to the victims of Milton.

"As a student, I can probably spread more information about it to people," Amayo said. "I would also recommend students to conduct interviews to see how people are feeling about it and comfort people who know someone that may have experienced losses from this hurricane."

## Alternative options to textbooks

By Taylor Green  
Contributor

Textbooks can weigh students down both physically and financially.

Computer science major Johanna Sampedro, a sophomore, said she spent \$230 on textbooks between only two courses, one of which was a genetics textbook that alone cost \$127.

Sports management major Hannah McGuire, a sophomore, said she tries to get her textbooks second-hand, but can not always find what her course requires, leaving her to spend more than she would like to.

"I spent close to \$350 one semester," said McGuire said. "Prices are ridiculous, absolutely crazy."

Students such as Sampedro and McGuire face struggles each semester with high-priced textbooks that extend beyond their budget.

Demonstrated in the 2021 Legislative Report of the Connecticut Open Educational Resources Coordinating Council: "Between 1978 and 2019, textbook prices increased more than three times inflation: +812%."

With textbook prices on the rise, there is an alternative to purchasing and renting materials: Open Educational Resources.

According to Research Librarian Susan Clerc, OER are textbooks and materials that students can access for free as long as faculty creates and shares them online, whether it be at the university or elsewhere.

Students can access materials for free through Buley Library's webpage.

The 2021 Legislative Report of the Connecticut Open Educational Resources Coordinating Council states: "According to a survey of 28 CT institutions, OER saved students \$2.8 million last year."

Students who have access to OER have free access to their resources, saving them hundreds of dollars.

Although, not all textbooks and tools can be accessed for free, as Clerc explained, it depends on the professor and faculty; if they do not provide the materials, then students cannot access them as OER.

Despite that, there are other ways to access textbooks at the university.

In the Buley Library, there is a section of textbooks on the first floor that are free to use for a short period of time.

Additionally, professors can put textbooks on reserve at Buley Library for their students to use and access throughout the

semester.

Buley Library may not have every textbook, but other students can help increase the selection of books to support future generations of students to come.

"We can't afford to actually buy the textbooks for every class," Clerc said. "They change every year, and we need multiple copies. But, people can donate the textbooks, and we can make them available."

The textbook section of the library is an alternative option to purchasing textbooks to save money, but also to help others if students have a spare textbook lying around from past semesters that they no longer need.

Clerc explained that students can visit the library's front desk for questions or assistance on these textbooks, especially with students spending hundreds on them already.

Students already spend between \$12,000 to \$26,000 on tuition, yet are additionally required to spend more on textbooks.

Students can decide to purchase textbooks or choose an alternative option of OER and accessible textbooks at Buley Library.

"Textbooks are ridiculously expensive," Clerc said, "and shouldn't be."