



About 2,200 people gathered at the Wait Chapel on Wake Forest University's campus to hear Laverne Cox speak on Oct. 5. Photos by Mayeesa Mitchell

Laverne Cox at Wake Forest University on Monday, Oct. 5.

Actress and activist Laverne Cox advocates transgender label for census

BY MAYEESA MITCHELL FOR THE CHRONICLE

Laverne Cox, best known for her role as Sophia Berset on "Orange Is The New Black," spoke Monday night, Oct. 5, to a crowded Wait Chapel at Wake Forest University (WFU).

"I believe it's important to claim the various intersected components of my multiple identities with pride in public because I've not always been able to do that," said Cox when she first addressed the audience.

During her speech, Cox used personal stories from her journey to becoming her true self while relating back to statistics that speak to the death rate of and the lack of support for people who identify as gay lesbian bisexual transgender and queer (LGBTQ).

Cox holds many accolades, including being the first transgendered woman nom-

inated for an Emmy. She uses her platform as a prominent actress to promote LGBTQ issues with emphasis placed on issues concerning transgender people of color.

"I've never seen 'Orange Is The New Black,'" said Anita Patel. "I have respect for her, not because she's a character on a show but because I'm interested in what she has to say."

Patel, a junior at Wake Forest University, sat with her friends, Regina Murphy, Katie Freudenburg and Janae Shaheed, while excitedly waiting for actress and activist Laverne Cox to take the stage at WFU's Wait Chapel.

The Chapel, which holds 2,200 people, was nearly filled to capacity as students, faculty, staff and community members gathered to hear Cox deliver a keynote address sponsored by WFU's LGBTQ Center, Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Student Union, the Student Activities Fund, the Women's Center, the University

Theatre department, the Documentary Filmmaking Program and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

"As an African-American transgender woman, she can speak to intersectional experiences," said Kayla Lisbenby, program coordinator at WFU's LGBTQ Center, when asked why it was important to bring Cox to campus. "She's attracting different audiences and using her platform to speak on important issues."

Jade Boston, an African-American transgender woman from Winston-Salem, was easily able to relate to Cox's journey.

"It is inspiring to have someone as high profile as Laverne Cox represent our community," said Boston. "It's hard to meet people you can relate to."

Throughout her address, Cox expressed the need to count transgender people in the census and to change policy with the goal of protecting and supporting transgendered people.

Before allowing members of the audience to ask questions, Cox ended her speech with a call to action, asking the audience to go out and have difficult conversations across differences and to create safe spaces with the goal of having a better understanding of who the other person is, and ultimately who you are.

Derrick Boone, a professor of 19 years in WFU's School of Business, agreed with Cox's message of acceptance and support.

He said, "Our job is to educate the whole person and open students to difference points of view."

Others who traveled from area schools like Winston Salem State University and Salem College to hear Cox speak were not disappointed.

Ayana Shiggs who traveled with her friend Myesha Oliver and two resident coordinators from Salem College, summed up the experience of hearing Cox speak. "It was enough to be there," she said.

Fund

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from 77 percent in 2009 to 88 percent in 2014. The teen pregnancy rate in Forsyth County has dropped by more than half. But poverty showed no signs of improvement.

"Even though we have made some strides in teen pregnancy and high school graduation rates, our poverty rate continues to rise," said Women's Fund Director Sabrina Slade.

The study found 21.7 percent of women in Forsyth County living in poverty. It found locally 34.2 percent of black women, 50.6 percent of Hispanic women and 16 percent of Caucasian women living in poverty. All these numbers are increases over the 2010 report, with the number of white women in poverty almost doubling. The updated report went by current federal poverty guidelines that define poverty as making \$11,670 or less annually for an individual, or \$19,790 or less for a family of three.

The study found numerous possible causes for the increase. It notes that housing and associated costs continue to increase in the absence of livable wages. Women still continue to lag behind men in careers involving STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering

and Math), which tend to have higher wages. Of the 25 states that enacted the Earned Income Tax Credit, North Carolina became the only one to eliminate it in 2014.

The report had numerous recommendations, including a local ordinance to require businesses that receive subsidies to pay a livable wage. Slade said that local organizations need to come together to tackle the problem and the community needs to devote its time, money and resources in the effort.



Slade

"One of the recommendations as a Women's Fund is that we need to collectively come to the table to look at what we can all do differently now, we've been at this for a long time," she said. "What can we do differently collectively to make an impact because there's not one agency, one foundation or one group that can tackle poverty in Forsyth County by themselves."

Slade said the Women's Fund continue to do research and advocacy on the subject and will continue to give grants to organizations that help women.

"As a fund we're going to try to continue to chip away at it the best way we know how through the dollars that we give to our organizations in Forsyth County who are working on economic security issues with women and girls," she said.

Forsyth County offering free flu immunizations

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Forsyth County Department of Public Health is offering the seasonal flu vaccine. Flu vaccine is the best way to protect you from the flu and is recommended for everyone over 6 months of age.

The Forsyth County Department of Public Health will provide flu vaccine to anyone at no cost while supplies last. Also, the county will offer High Dose vaccine for those over age 65. The health department will not offer FluMist or intradermal (micro-

needle) Flu.

While getting the flu shot is the single best way to protect against the flu, there are several other ways to prevent the virus: wash your hands; cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze; if you are sick, stay home from work and keep your kids home from school if they are sick so it does not spread; and if you do become sick with the flu, take flu anti-viral medications if your doctor prescribes them.

Flu shots will be given in Clinic 3

of the health department at 799 N. Highland Ave. during the following hours: Monday through Wednesday, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.; Thursday, from 9:30 a.m. to 6:45 p.m.; and Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Clinic 3 is a walk-in clinic; appointments are not necessary.

For more information about flu vaccination, contact the health department at 336-703-3100 or visit <http://www.flu.nc.gov/>.

Rep. Adams to deliver address to NOW

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

U.S. Rep. Alma Adams will deliver the keynote address at the annual conference of the North Carolina National Organization for Women on Saturday, Oct. 10 at Parkway United Church of Christ in Winston-Salem from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The conference theme is "Focusing Women's Power NOW!"

"Women are pushing back and moving forward, demanding our human rights and freedom from unwanted intrusions in our privacy and pursuit of happiness," says Gailya Paliga, president of N.C. NOW. "We are focusing women's power NOW!"

Paliga explains that part of the state conference is educational, and part motivational. "It's a time to network and get organized to focus women's power to make changes that our state

desperately needs to help women move forward."

Morning sessions will feature updates on the status of, and pending legislation on, NOW's six core issues in North Carolina:

- * Reproductive rights
- * Economic rights (including pay equity), featuring Tazra Mitchell, Policy Analyst for the N.C. Budget and Tax Center
- * Ending violence against women, featuring Suzanne Reynolds, Dean of the Wake Forest University School of Law and legal expert on domestic violence protocol in the courts
- * Racial justice (including immigration)
- * LGBTQIAA rights
- * Constitutional equality through the Equal Rights Amendment

Following Adams' keynote address, attendees will spend the afternoon honing their activist skills to bring about positive

changes for women's lives in North Carolina, including: electing feminist candidates, taking direct action and working with the media.

For more information about NC NOW, visit <https://northcarolinanow.wordpress.com/home/>; or for the National Organization for Women, visit www.now.org

About the National Organization for Women

The National Organization for Women (NOW) is the largest organization of feminist

activists in the United States. NOW has 500,000 contributing members and 550 chapters in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Since its founding in 1966, NOW's goal has been to take action to bring about equality for all women. NOW's purpose is to take action through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspects of social, political, and economic life.

The Chronicle (USPS 067-910) was established by Ernest H. Pitt and Nubisi Egemonye in 1974 and is published every Thursday by Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc., 617 N. Liberty Street, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101. Periodicals postage paid at Winston-Salem, N.C. Annual subscription price is \$30.72.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636 Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1636

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