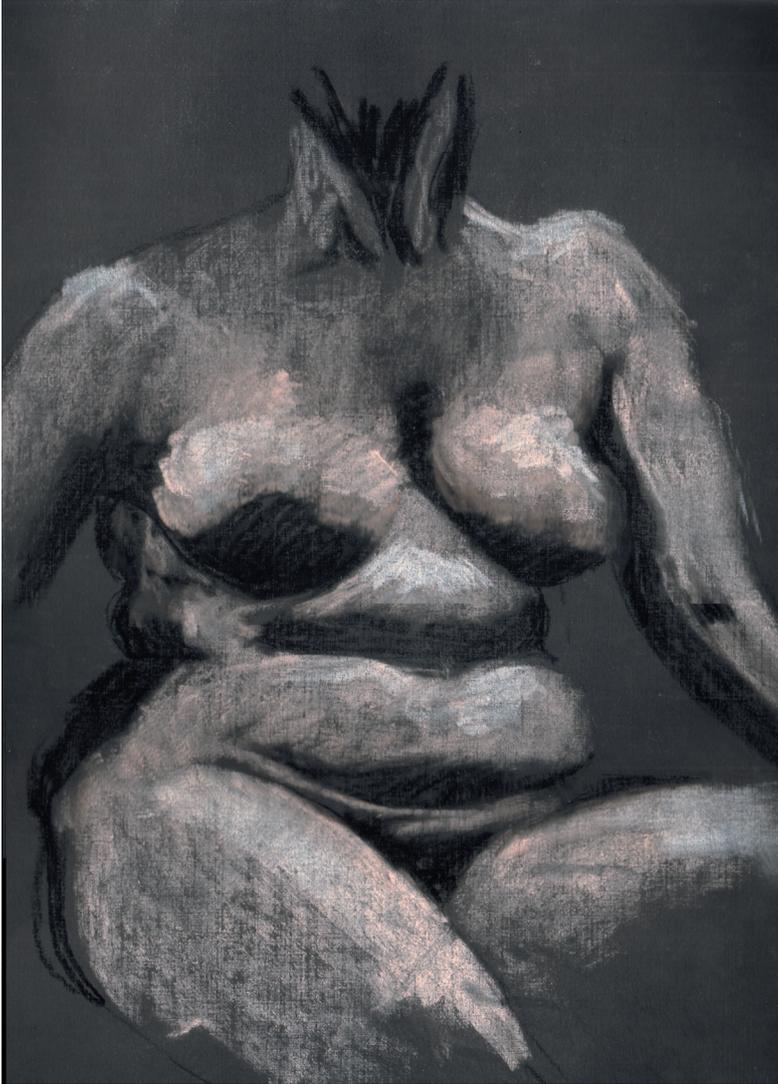
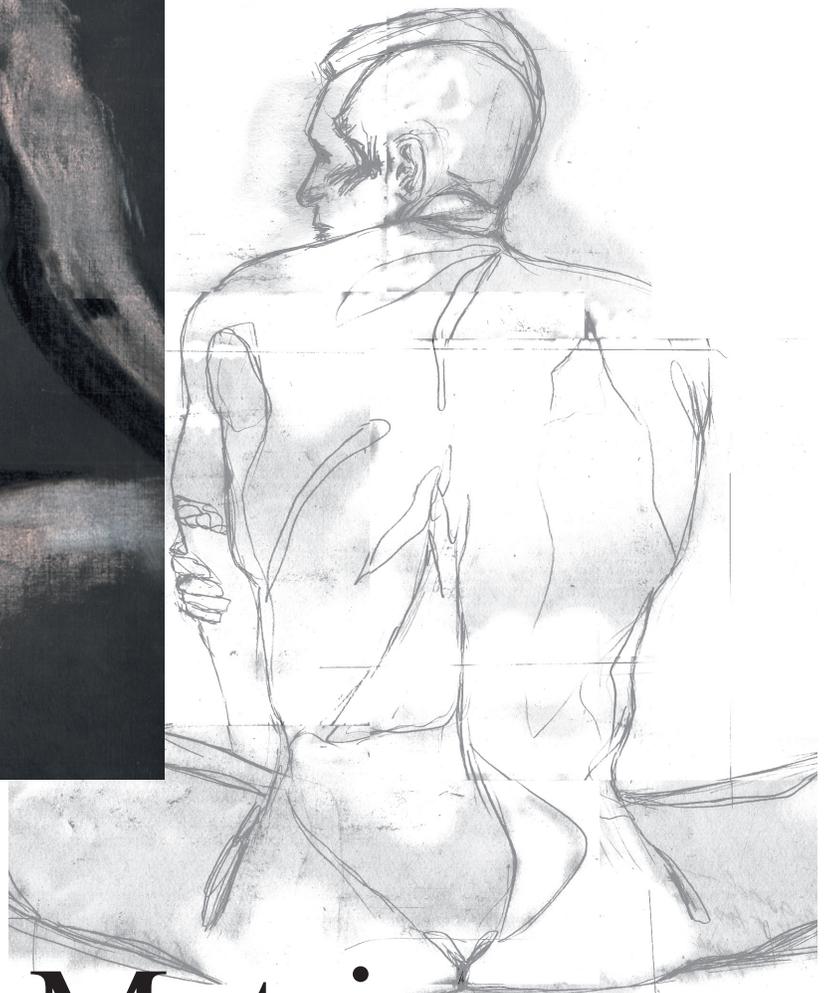


Welcome to your body



Your Choice



Your Nature

The Matrix
Sex & Sexuality

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The Matrix is dedicated to the creation of a culture of ACTIVE conscience and consciousness in our communities to replace the current culture of fear and silence. To this end, *The Matrix* provides an outlet that engenders dialogue and fights dehumanization.

*Prohibit sharply the
rehearsed response.*

W.H. Auden

Advisor:

Beth Kraig

Editors:

Amy Post
Stephanie Marron
Angee Foster
Greta Jaeger
Jamie Forslund
Adam Oswald
Nathan Bendickson
Rebekka Esbjornson
Mariesa Bus
Jane Livingston

Contributors:

Asheia Bias
Troy Benton
Chris Green
Lindsey Webb
Chelsee Crisostomo-Slemp
A. Gerow
Dan Neely
Elizabeth Boyd
Amanda Sahli
Aaron Dennis
Deana at the Kickstand

Mad Props:

Printing & Publishing
SIL and ASPLU
The Mast
Lisa Marcus

contact us at
matrix@plu.edu

**Cover Illustration
by Jamie Forslund**

SEX by any other name...

What does it mean when euphemisms are more real than the actual word? Is “coitus” or “intercourse” so powerful we can only view it through the curtain of slang? If we gaze upon *it* directly will it annihilate us like the gods of Greek mythology? We have no idea why there are so many euphemisms for sexual intercourse in the English language. The answer feels obvious if left unstated but inexplicable if brought into the open. Perhaps anything as powerful and ubiquitous as sex can only be dealt with incidentally, from a tangent. Interestingly, the only other topic we can think of that uses so many euphemisms is death. But, in an effort to light-heartedly deal with the very serious topic matter of sexual intercourse, we thought about and researched words that “stand in” for “it.” Some are polite, some are nice, most are kind of sick. Here are just a few...

...screw, bang, pork, fuck, nut, **plow**, boink, do it, sleep with, shack up, shag, mate, know someone in the Biblical sense, friendship with benefits, do the nasty, root around, shag, nookie, living in sin, mattress dancing, get it on, get off, **get laid**, poke, piece of ass, **poontang**, quickie, make whoopee (Whoopieee!!!!), balling, lay, home run, action, **hanky-panky**, score, fool around, go to bed with, to bed, put out, root, drill, service, hump, lovin', spooning, tugging, go ner in the bun, make dip the stick, makin' **tango**, party on down, roll in the hay, mattress **lumbago**, fusion, fistin' the pink, pickle-plums, cranking, be get your swerve on, get bash, beat hose, beejer, bump uglies, dip, durb, **get the giddie**, somethin', between knock boots, nail, play **sauté**, schrump down, wax, wuk, hoagie time, **baloney ride**, basketball making, bat-belly ride, belt, blanket the Loose, corns, **boff**, fur, bunny fuck, bury the bone, bush patrol, cane, change one's a tread, climb, cock up, with, cover, **crack it**, the mattress jig, Daub **dunk**, diddle, dip your dip your stick, dip your the crossroads, **do a do a flop, do a push,**

Greetings Readers,

Sex? Yes. Sex as a social justice issue? Yes! Look around: sex is everywhere... but there are pieces missing. Pop culture abridges and skews anything too complex for its narrow lens. This is where sex and social justice meet. We want to talk about sex and sexuality in meaningful ways. We want to add depth and color to the two-dimensional versions on TV and in magazines.

Think about politics. Many prominent issues hover around sex: women's health and reproductive rights, STDs and AIDS, same-sex marriage, rape and abuse, world health, overpopulation and international relations. Most of the time we sweep these issues under the rug. And if we do talk, it's about morals, money or medicine. What about the sexual side? What about the stereotypes, peer pressure and sexual objectification that creep around the corners of all these issues?

This issue of the Matrix represents a handful of PLU students speaking out, amidst the silence around sex. The articles and stories here are philosophic, academic and intensely personal. They are angry; they are joyful. With sex, it seems, it's hard to strike a balance.

This issue is about sex. Are you worried? Nervous? Excited? We are.

Sincerely,
The Matrix Staff

board, do the deed, do the nasty, ease nature, exchange spits, feather-bed jig, feed the Dummy, fiddle, fir, fit end to end, fix her plumbing, flesh session, **flop in the hay**, four-legged frolic, fun and games, get a bit, get a crumplet, get a chunk, get a little, get a piece, get a snippet, get a wet one, get home, get in, get into her pants, get into some serious flesh, **get Jack in the orchard**, get one's ashes hauled, get one's greens, get one's leather stretched, get one's noodle wet, **get one's oil changed**, get your bean waxed, get your pole varnished, give her a stab, **go all the way**, go like a belt-fed motor, go to town, go vaulting, grease the wheel, grind one's tool, have, have a bit of giblet pie, have a bit of summer cabbage, have a blow through, **hide the ferret**, hide the salami, hit on the tail, hock, hop on, **horizontal refreshment**, hose, hot roll with cream, impale, introduce Charley, incade, **Irish Whist**, jazz, jink, job, join paunches, jounce, joy ride, juke, jump on one's bones, knock off a piece, know, Ladies' tailoring, lay some pipe, lay the hip, lay the leg, leap on, lie on, lob in, **make feet for children's shoes**, make the scene, making babies, mingle limbs, mix one's peanut butter, mug, muss, nick, oblige, off, Park Your Yacht in Hair Harbor, peel one's best end, **peg**, perform, pestle, piece of snatch, pile, pile-driving, pin, **plant the oats**, play hide the bone, pluck, plug, pocket the Red, pole work, polish your rocket, pop, **post a letter**, pump, punch, put the boots to, quimsticking, put the tool in the shed, rip off, **Rites of Venus**, Roasting the Broomstick, rock, rod, Roger, romp, **root**, rootle, roust, rutting, salt, saw off a chunk, scutz around, Secret Services, shack up, shaft, **shake the sheets**, shoot between wind and water, shoot one's wad, **short arm practice**, sit-up, sink the sausage, sink the soldier, slam, slip her length, split, spoil, Squat Jumps in the Cucumber patch, squattin' on the hog, squeeze and squirt, stable my naggle, strop one's beak, strum, stuff, swing, take a turn in the stubble, **take a turn on Shooter's Hill**, tear off a piece, tear the sheets, the Disappearing Cane Trick, **the Matrimonial Polka**, thread, thread the needle, throw a hump, throw a leg over, throw a shot, thump, tie the true lover's knot, tiff, tip the long one, to be intimate, toppling in the woods, tops and bottoms, trim the buff, **trip up the Rhine**, tumble, twiddle, Vitamin F, wap, **What Mother Did before me**, wind the clock, womanize, workout, work the dumb oracle, work the hairy oracle, **yard**, yentz, coitus...

pump, diddling, at it, put the wie-a meat sandwich, bacon, **sideways** dick diving, boffing, polo, **pool table** sion, slamming, get-poking, frig, twang had, brown-bag-it, a little something, bosh, **breed**, buck, doink, drop teas, get a little somethin' the sheets, **hunch**, IRS, pound, ride it, scrag, tap, skeet, a bit of jam, ballock, nanas and cream, ter, beef injection, drill, board, blow off bore, bottle, bump one's wick, bury **Buzz the Brillo**, luck, charge, chuck come across, couple cram, crawl, Dance of the Brush, **dicky** stinger in the honey, wick, dirty work at **div in the dark**, do a slide up the

SKIDDY'S KITTENS

BY AMY POST

Skiddy was a stray cat, and when she was adopted she was very thin. She gained weight when she began eating regularly, so no one noticed much when she continued to grow. One day someone guessed that she might be pregnant. A month later she gave birth to four kittens, white just like her. I happened to stop by the day she went into labor and watched her give birth. I had never seen anything like it my life. I remember when my brother was born, but I was only three and didn't understand how he came out of my mom.

When I arrived she had already given birth to two kittens. She looked exhausted, but she seemed to have an air of pride about her. I thought only humans, fireflies

and deep-sea fish could glow. When she felt another one coming, she started to shift uncomfortably. She propped herself up on her back legs, and presto! The kitten just came right out. It was bloody and gross. The kitten's fur was soaked in fluid and clung tightly to its body. Then came the placenta, the extra tissue that now served no purpose. It was hard not to touch or offer help, watching this living thing come out of a tiny hole in another living thing. "Oh, oh, I don't think the kitten can breathe! Come out come out!" But each time Skiddy masterfully pushed and breathed and got it out successfully. She immediately began to lick the kitten, cleaning it; this was the kitten's first dose of motherly love and

worldly feeling. I couldn't help but wonder what Skiddy was thinking.

Someday a living thing might come out of my body, just like this. What would it feel like? Would it hurt or would I not notice the pain? I wanted to ask Skiddy how she felt. How many kittens had she had? How did she deal with the grief of those who inevitably would not make it? I had so many questions, but of course was afforded no answers. I could only watch and wonder. I sat transfixed, humbled before this creature, marveling at her ability to bring to the world new life.

The Matrix would like to remind its readers...



But in all seriousness... The photo on the right was taken at a "Pro-Life" rally in Olympia. The people in the foreground are pro-choice activists, protesting the rally. The sign of a crossed-out hanger is a reference to illegal, unsafe abortions in which hangers are used to abort the fetus. This type of abortion is incredibly unsafe for women and can lead to infection and death. The pro-choice activists support safe and legal abortions and fear that if abortion is made illegal, incidents of these unsafe, illegal abortions will rise.

Photo by Ashley Miller



Get a Grip:

A Feminist Perspective

by Angee Foster



body, tingling and tingling.

The next time our class meets, we watch a film about sterilization of women in Puerto Rico. Women are interviewed: they didn't know the operation was irreversible, they didn't know their government (the US) had genocidal plans to sterilize as many women as possible, and they didn't know their bodies were grounds for war against population explosion. They didn't know there

were other means of contraception available. No one told them. When birth control was made available, they didn't know they were being given pills that had never been tested, that were ten times stronger than the birth control we use today. They didn't know that they were lab rats.

The film repeatedly flashes footage from sterilization operations. An incision drips blood. Forceps reach into the hole cut into an abdomen and then emerge, the fallopian tube pinched neatly in their grip. The tubes are tied and snipped. My abdomen flip-flops and I feel pain, real pain, like cramps or being punched. I shift in my seat, trying to make the pain stop, but I can't. It won't.

I want to throw a fit. I want to throw myself on the floor and writhe around, slam my fists against the linoleum and see my brown hair fly in whisps in front of my eyes. I want to scream and shout, "You can't keep treating us like this! We are living, breathing beings. You can't treat us like this!"

Of course, I don't. When my eyes fill with tears I don't allow them to spill over. I'm in class at PLU. I can't. I can't show so much emotion. I have to be objective and articulate my opinion. I have to distance myself from feeling too strongly because it will cloud my

judgment. I'm not supposed to feel so much for these women. I need to get a grip.

The movies play; we sit and watch. We sit in our comfortable classroom, eyes glued to the screen. Afterward we talk about it. We analyze it. It feels like we're a world away. But we're not; there's only one world, and I just can't reconcile the fact that these women and I share it.

It scares me to think I could do something to help these women. It scares me to realize that this is one world, and the current pace of globalization makes these women my neighbors. The realization that the way I live and the way they live are intricately linked makes my lifestyle and my "needs" feel like a dull bludgeoning hammer over their heads. I used to buy into the ideals of liberal feminism: just give women the chance and we can prove ourselves. We can be worthy of equal pay, we can be corporate bosses, we are capable of rationality.

Picturing the plight of developing world women complicates all that. Somehow, "women's rights" start to look like just one more way to keep women down or turn us into better men, rather than an affirmation of our full humanity. If our idea of feminism is that women have to prove themselves, we've missed the point that they are already human in the first place. Women's rights are human rights, not special privileges to be bestowed by the ruling male order.

We need to stop treating women's bodies as if they are public property. Stop measuring our worth according to the labor market's standards. Stop asking us to prove ourselves as if there's more we can do to prove we are alive than breathe and bleed and bring new life into the world. We are human, are we not?

We're watching a movie in my Gender Issues class about women in Africa: their struggles and triumphs, the ways in which they rebel against and cooperate with the patriarchal system that grants them fewer rights and freedoms than men. The textbook theories come alive in the personal stories of women speaking about everything from female genital mutilation to AIDS to "women's work."

One woman holds a baby as she tells us that her genitals were mutilated when she was a child. The next woman tells of her role in traditional life: she performs female genital mutilations. Her wrinkly old eyes smile as she demonstrates the cutting technique with a rusty blade on a piece of leather. She proudly holds up the small scrap she has cut off.

The film cuts back to the first woman and she gesticulates wildly as she tells of being grabbed by two women and hauled into a back alley when she was five or six years old. I can feel her terror as she relives the experience. Her eyes drop as she explains that she screamed as loudly as she could, but that there was nothing she could do. As I listen my clitoris hurts. It swells and spasms and contracts deep into the warm folds of my

Women in the world...

*At least 20 million women have unsafe abortions per year¹

*80,000 women die from complications of unsafe abortions¹

*62% of women live in areas where access to safe and legal abortion is severely restricted or unavailable²

*World Health Organization estimates more than 500,000 die from pregnancy-related causes every year (99% of these deaths are in developing countries)²

*Risk of dying in childbirth is 1 in 25 to 1 in 40 in developing countries and 1 in 3000 in developed countries²

*Female sterilization remains the most common contraceptive method in the world¹

*In the past few decades, governments of several countries, including China, India and the US have forced sterilization on minority or poor women¹

*30% of women in the US have undergone sterilization¹

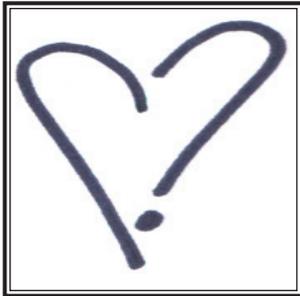
*Over 50% of women have Female Genital Mutilation performed on them in Mauritania, Senegal, Cote D'Ivoire, Gana, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Yemen¹

¹ Seager, Joni. *The Penguin Atlas of Women in the World*. Penguin Books: New York, 2003.

² Peterson, V. Spike and Runyan, Anne Sisson. *Global Gender Issues*. Westview Press: Boulder, 1999.

The Cupidity of SEX

SEX. The word means different things to different people. When I look



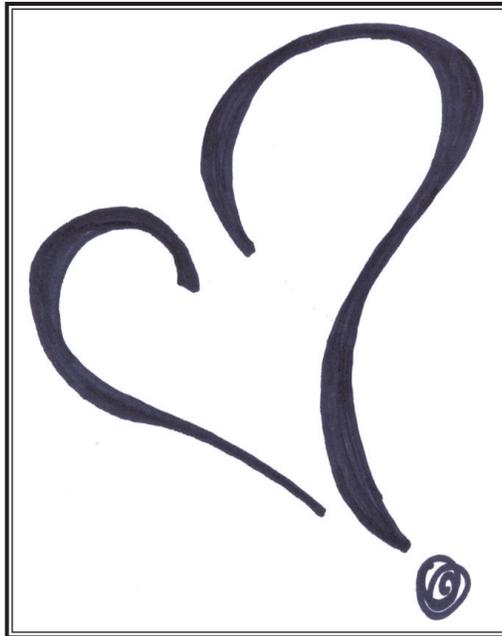
at the word, I see an emotionless sexual interaction between two people—sex is what strangers do. I also

see what I haven't experienced. Is that wrong? Am I behind? Have you ever been so close to the edge that you could do nothing but fall?

In many situations that involve that word, SEX, I stop to contemplate. I have so many questions. Why haven't I had sex yet? What about me makes me unfit to be attractive for sex? Why do I even want to do it? I feel pressured by TV—safe-sex Trojan commercials. I feel like I am lacking—magazines with beauty queens. And I feel alone. Why should I keep asking these questions? Why should I feel so incomplete? And why? Why?

I know why—because it's "in" to be sexual. I think sex is the only way some people know to express themselves. There is nothing wrong with that, but why is there nothing wrong with that? We've allowed ourselves to see things less abrasively; TV says it's okay. But go back to the 40s and the 50s—movies wouldn't even allow close-mouth kissing for more than two seconds, women and men couldn't even sit in the same bed, let alone be flamboyantly sexual with their partner. There is way more action today.

SEX is only a word, but this word can be a noun, an adjective and a verb. I haven't had The Sex, maybe because I don't want to, or maybe because I'm just not sex material.

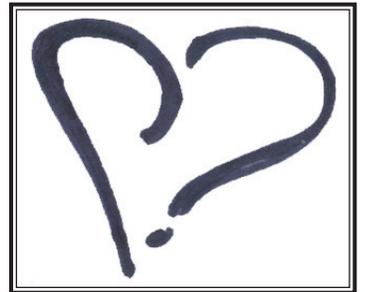


I'll tell you what I mean. I could be at a party, standing there, looking presentable, looking good, feeling my best. Then abruptly I'm approached and I am told that I look good. "Want to dance?" Sure, I think to myself, but how is this going to end? We start to dance and within a few seconds I feel forced. Some drunk dude is using me to get off. I slyly begin to move away, but then he grabs me and asks me for another dance. With remorse dripping from my forehead I stay, and then

by Asheia Bias

he brushes the hair from my face and says, "You're really pretty. What's your name?"

I should just make up a name because it really doesn't matter; he'll forget it in a minute. I tell him my name, and he smiles. I feel that he's going to ask me a question that will make me think of my morals. Do I have sex if I'm asked? What about AIDS and other STDs? That makes me stop. I walk away. I leave him standing there with his head in two places. He's mad because I didn't finish what I started. I'm disgusted with myself because I almost did...but almost does not count. I know that I'm ready, but I also know I'm not. I feel pressured, but I can't do anything about it because I don't feel that anyone is ready to accept what I have to offer.



I haven't the slightest clue what that is, but I know that no one has ever had it.

Here's something to think about: cupid and stupidity make Cupidity. And that, my friends, is just another word for lust.

Mind of a Playa'

by Troy Benton

When people call me bigheaded, I take it as a compliment, but I prefer to be called cocky. I don't know nothin' about being Lutheran, I could give a damn about a Lutheran, but I do know about "lute," and at PLU there's plenty of it! See, when it comes to lute, I like to think of myself as a pirate seizing the loot, the pirate treasure, the booty.

Every time I go out I swear my eyes are like a periscope searching for signs of that T and A. I can see it from a mile away, and if they ain't got it, I don't want it. When I go to Kentucky Fried, I don't care about the chicken head, I want breasts, thighs and legs! When I meet a female, I don't care where she's from, or what her major is, I just want to know one thing...

If I could have one wish, it would be to skip the whole "get to know you" process, get past all of the late night conversations, all of the dates and straight up get the answer to this one question, "Can I hit it?"

I don't hook up with a lot of females because I've got the most game, I hook up

with a lot of females because I know how to play the game. Every female is a freak. No matter how much they deny it, get a few wine coolers in their system and the clothes start coming off! They're always throwing pitches and I'm always swinging! Especially if you don't have a big bat

Can I hit it?

like me, you've always got to be ready for the pitch. When I spit game, I'm like a crack head fiendin' for a hit, "Can I hit it? Can I hit it?"

I've got like 200 chicks in my cell because I'm always prepared for a booty call. Before they had phone cameras this would get me into trouble because a female would call and they'd be like, "It's Megan," but there's like five Megans! So talking about "hitting it" was always like Russian Roulette. One night, I'm lying in bed next to one chick, she's asleep, and another chick calls looking to hook up! That's why I alternate cells because every waking moment is an opportunity for a booty call, and they come at the strangest moments. One time I was in the library and...hold up I've got a call.

Author's note:

I originally wrote "Mind of a Playa" for Writing 101. The assignment was to write from the perspective of a particular persona. I chose the "player." A player plays on other people's emotions to get what he or she wants (yes, women can be players too.) A male player's interest in his relationships with women is sex.

This skewed mindset is very real. All of the sexual references can be heard in any locker room or college dormitory in America. This aspect of masculinity is often glorified in society. I do not share the opinions of the player, but I would be lying (just like any man would be) if I said I am not susceptible to the lustful thinking they express. Part of the problem is that

society supports the image of the "playa" a lot more than the image of the real man who respects women. Men brag about sex among other men because they want to be accepted. The fear of losing the respect of male peers can cause men to rush into sexual relationships. When this happens, the focus becomes earning the respect of other males at the expense of females. This is not the way it's supposed to be. Men need to start holding each other accountable for their actions and behavior towards women. We should not be shy about discussing ways to fight lust because we certainly are not shy about displaying our lust. So, to all my fellow men: let's start acting like real men and lay the player image to rest.

In the US...

*Every two minutes a woman is raped

*Less than one-third of rapes are reported to the authorities

*25% of college women have been victims of rape

*8.5% of college men admit to sexually abusing women but don't consider it rape

*Of the women who were raped only 25% described it as rape and only 10% reported the assault

*47% of rapes were by dates and romantic acquaintances

*90% of date rapes occur when either attacker or victim was drinking

*Women who are 16-24 are more than four times as likely to be date raped

*44% of date-raped women have considered suicide

*84% of women who were date raped knew their attacker

*33% of men said they would date rape someone if it could go undetected

Statistics from: www.womensissues.about.com

My Penis Has Feelings Too: in pursuit of male sexuality

by Nathan Bendickson

I want to be a sexual man. I want to feel good, enjoy my body and enjoy the sexually pleasing body of my choice—currently, my girlfriend. As a man, as a human being, I deserve this, and I'm not ashamed to say so.

As is, things are good. My girlfriend and I don't have sex—sexual intercourse, I mean—but for a year we've been finding other ways to have fun, enjoy our bodies and satisfy our sexual selves.

Could it be better? Sure! It can always be better. But how?

Usually when I have a question, I ask my friends. But this is personal. Is there a place to go, a person to ask? I don't think so. Most guys I know don't talk about sex. When they do, it's about how fine a girl is, or about getting laid last weekend. That may relate to sex, but how does it help me? What I need is a forum, a place to go and swap stories. Men are sexual all the time—in secluded rooms, in showers, on beaches, in forests, with women, with men, by themselves... Surely someone knows something that could make my sex life better. I bet I could offer some tips too.

How about this? Lately my sex life has improved. I'll tell you how.

She stops touching me. Our eyes meet.

"How's it going?" she asks, seeking help. The room is quiet. Our bodies are naked, intertwined and still. She asks what I want.

I want an orgasm. Believe it or not, there are moments when this beautiful, exciting, sometimes naked girl kisses me and touches me all over, but it doesn't feel good anymore. It doesn't make sense, but it happens. And this is one of those times.

I have no better answer, so I say it. "I...want an orgasm." I'm clumsy as a

boy. We shift our bodies, try a few different things, until finally, a little too forced, frantic with physical and emotional relief, it's over.

After we crawl under the blankets and rest a while, our feelings mixing like perspiration on our soft skin, my thoughts settle and I speak. "It shouldn't be so hard," I say. She asks what I mean. "I..." I begin, but the words are bulky. "I don't think anything's missing," I say. "It just...it seems, sometimes, like...like it should be easier to...I mean, easier to have an orgasm. It...shouldn't take so much work."

She sighs like a cold wind. Then she looks in my eyes to secure my attention. "Nathan," she says, "I think if I were a guy, and had only one orgasm at a time, I'd try to put it off as long as I could. Once it happens, that's it—so why rush it?" I try to explain, but when I open my mouth, nothing comes out. She's simplifying the problem, but, at the same time, she's right. "Besides," she says, "why does it matter so much? Why not just enjoy yourself?"

That's a good question. Most of the time it doesn't matter, and I do enjoy myself. But sometimes I feel numb to sexual pleasure because, ridiculous as it seems, I start wondering when the end will come—and it's near impossible to have an orgasm when worried about having one; self-consciousness diffuses pleasure.

Does anybody know what I mean? Maybe I'm the only one—but I doubt it. Clothes are easy to remove, but fears and worries about sexuality cling tighter than t-shirts and socks. We want to feel good; we want to satisfy each other; but we don't always know how. We're afraid to fail, and if we try to talk, the words come out twisted and dumb. Have you ever said the word orgasm to

somebody? How about penis or vagina or clitoris? It's weird, like the words get stuck in your teeth.

Plus, talking doesn't guarantee progress; it can even fuel self-consciousness. In my case, I think my body is changing. Orgasms seemed to come quicker a few years ago. Is that true, or is it my imagination? Can I talk about it without feeling even more pressure? I've heard that a man's "sexual prime" is from age thirteen to eighteen. If so, what does that mean? I personally refuse to believe that the best of my sex life is over. Still, it frightens me to think of our parents' generation, where satisfying sexual relationships are few and far between; I want better odds than that. What really happens as we get older? How can I be ready?

Fortunately, through conversations with my girlfriend and other close friends, I've been finding answers. But these answers are sometimes counter-intuitive and hard to swallow. They challenge my idea of pleasure. In fact, the more I think about it, the more I fear that men don't know how to enjoy sex. Male sexuality needs to be talked about and redefined, or else the self-consciousness around sexual "performance" will never go away, and we'll all be gulping Viagra like candy.

I want to be a sexual man. I want to enjoy everything, not just the outcome.

Therein lies the problem: so easily sex becomes a game, a goal to achieve. From the demure (wanting an orgasm) to the deadly (aggression and rape), I can't conceive male sexuality without picturing quick, directional action. I mean, we have bases—kissing, up the shirt, down the pants, and score! When guys talk about sex, it often turns into bragging about who, what, where, when, how far and how much. We measure it and pursue it. But as women make progress breaking gender

stereotypes, becoming sexual beings instead of mere objects, men need to follow suit. Instead of seeking a goal or an object, we too need to become sexual beings.

This is where men have a handicap. By some biological circumstance, our bodies have a singular built-in goal that is satisfied in any sexual situation, whether it's intimate sex or just a fuck; the physical relief is the same. And while this may have served a purpose at one point in history, it now gets in the way of love and pleasure. I'm not saying women have it easy—they struggle with unrealistic expectations around appearance and purity—but here they have a biological aid: mindless sex doesn't satisfy them. Most female orgasms come from the clitoris, which doesn't enter penis-vagina sex unless somebody seeks it out. Plus, unlike a man's orgasm, a woman's is not the end of a sexual experience, and can leave her wanting more. By default, women have good reasons to explore different types of pleasure.

This isn't just about respecting wom-

en; this is about respecting ourselves. Since men and women are different, we have things to teach and things to learn. From what I've seen, men tend to be more single-minded about sex. That shouldn't be devalued; strong, reckless passion can be amazing. But if sex only moves in one direction, toward one action or feeling, it soon becomes a dark, narrowing tunnel. Things stop feeling as good.

My girlfriend has helped me see sexual pleasure in a new way. Because women's bodies can have multiple orgasms, sex has a circular shape, instead of looking like a straight line; for women without other inhibitions, the pressure to reach one ultimate goal doesn't exist. And without that goal, there's more room for freedom and pleasure. Think about it: what shape is pleasure? What shape is happiness? While some think happiness is a goal—a certain job, car, degree, house, person—that's not true. Happiness doesn't culminate in one, orgasmic moment. Happiness is much more mysterious. You can't force it. It comes; it goes; it's warm and round

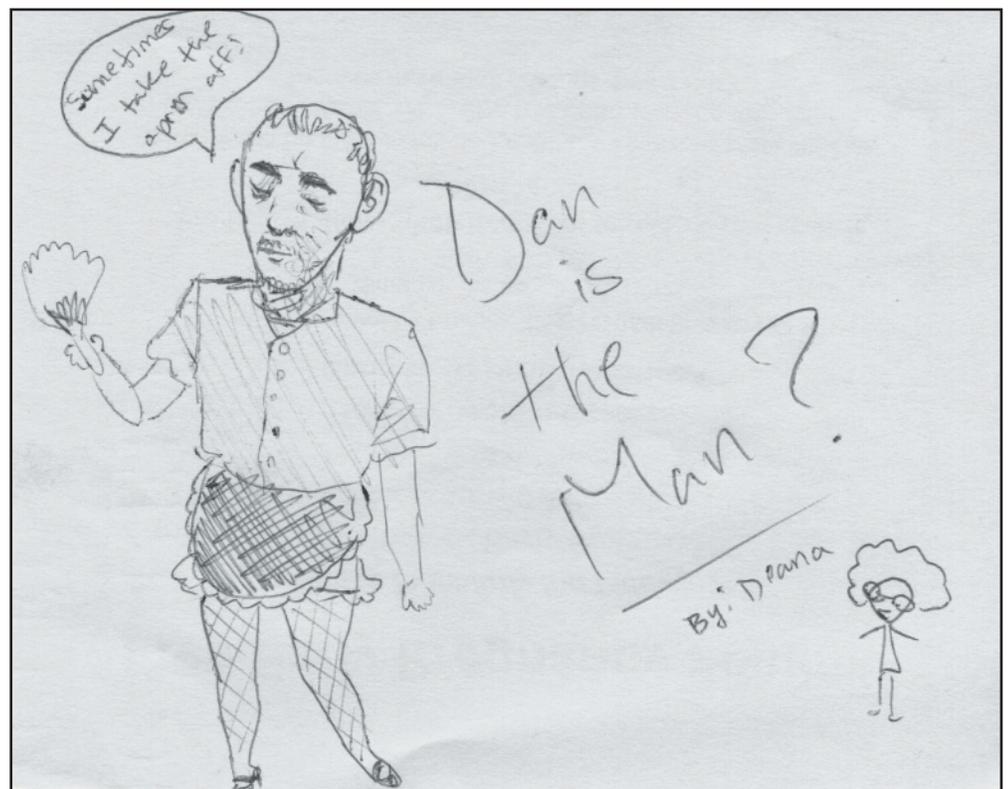
as the sun on a perfect day. This same type of happiness belongs in work, in relationships and in sex.

Currently I'm learning to fit these ideas to myself. When I touch my girlfriend she isn't waiting for an orgasm, so it's more about perpetual pleasure than any sort of climax. I want to be the same way. Dessert tastes better when you don't expect it, right? Why not savor the whole meal? Every dish appeals to different appetites. Since men tend to be excited visually, I'm surprised we don't spend more time touching our sexual partners, just watching them sigh and moan. Once we redefine our sexuality, allowing more room for things like this, I believe everyone will be happier and more able to enjoy sex beyond the years of raging teenage hormones.

What do you think? Does anyone agree with me? Disagree? I know something's happening in those dark, secluded rooms of yours, but is it what we want? Can it be better?

Of course. It can always be better. But how? Any thoughts? Anyone?

Look
at
you
in
your
pants
in
your
skirt.
What
lies
beneath
your
straight
seams
and
the
way
you
flirt?



First Love

by Dan Neely

There is something about the first person you fuck that stays with you forever. My first time was with a wonderful woman—an all-too-wonderful woman. Her name was Jenny. She was a senior in high school, and I was a junior. I had known her for years, but hadn't really pursued her. I had only been dating girls less than a year when we started dating.

In the months leading up to us getting together, rumors started surrounding her. She apparently had sex with men without having relationships with them. She was fully in control of her own sexperience: she fucked who she wanted, when she wanted. She was already mysterious to me before those stories started. After that, she was an almost divine mystery, especially for a dumb virgin like myself, uninitiated into the rites of love.

At a party at her house, I handcuffed myself to her. She led us into her bedroom and asked if I wanted to make out with her. I did, and we did. A week later, she invited me over. We got out of school, and she said she would call me around six. I went home, watched a Nine Inch Nails video that I owned and fell asleep.

I woke up to her calling. I rushed over. We baked cookies, and then started to kiss by the fire. We went downstairs to her room. She asked if I wanted to have sex. I said, "Sure." Damn. How unromantic, how unimportant is that? When asked if I wanted to have sex with this beautiful woman, whether I wanted to lose my virginity, I said, "Sure." Oh well, nothing I can do about that now.

And then we did it. With a condom, of course, and it felt wonderful. I had been dreaming about this feeling since I was eleven, and now it was here. I had a beautiful girl, no, a gorgeous woman (no girl is a girl when she is having sex with you—she is in control, she is a woman) wrapped around me. Everything I had worried about in my adolescent years, "Will I be good enough?" "Will I know what to do?" dissolved in the knowledge that it's instinctual, that I can "wing" it, that I am

good at fucking. I could make a woman come with my cock, and I wouldn't be a premature ejaculator. She paid me the greatest compliment of my entire life, "Are you sure this was your first time?" All my fears evaporated in the loving arms of this woman.

When we were done, I lay with her for a few hours. I hadn't come, which I thought was odd, but I guess it's common. After that, I drove home (in my Oldsmobile, god I loved that car), stayed up for a few hours longer, and watched a documentary on VH1 about Pink Floyd's "The Wall Tour." I include all these little details because they become almost as important as the event itself. Everything surrounding the loss of one's virginity becomes included with the story.

This went on for over a year. I came to love her. And, in a big way, I still love her. I went to school in Washington. She went to Massachusetts. It wouldn't work. It couldn't work. We tried to make it work. She found someone else. I was heartbroken.

I'm still heartbroken. I've found someone else, but I still feel...tainted by that fucking first love. As soon as I find myself even halfway happy with a new girl (because they are all girls when compared to that first woman), I start to pine for the lost Jenny. I still yearn for her soft skin, the way she smells, and the way I felt like we were the only two people in the universe, like there was nothing outside of us, curled up together in her bed.

I'm not the only one. The First Love fucks you over. I have numerous friends who still wonder about that first one. Was he/she the one who got away? Could it ever work again? When Pandora opened her box, the last thing that flew out was hope. And that is what fucks me over more than anything: the hope that maybe, someday, we could be together again. We won't. I know this, but it still doesn't stop that pain. Someday, some future day, I'll be over her.

In the US...

*About seven million women and girls, and one million men and boys have eating disorders

*80 percent of children who are ten years old are afraid of being fat

*25 percent of men and 45 percent of women are on a diet any given day

*80 percent of women are dissatisfied with their body appearance

*51 percent of nine and ten year-old girls feel better about themselves if on a diet

*The average woman is 5'4' tall and weighs 140 pounds

*The average American model is 5'11' tall and weighs 117 pounds

*In a recent survey of women on a college campus, 91 percent had attempted to control their weight through dieting

*95 percent of all dieters regain their lost weight within 1-5 years

*42 percent of elementary students between the first and third grade want to be thinner

*40 billion dollars per year are spent on dieting and diet-related products—that's 136.50 dollars per person, per year

Statistics from: www.womensissues.about.com

Coming to Consciousness

A Queer, Mestiza, Feminist Reclaims Her Voice

by Chelsee
Crisostomo-Slemp

Author's Note: The following essay is a personal-sociopolitical analysis of the constructs of race and gender in my life. It is excerpted from an essay I wrote in WMST 340: Women of Color class I took two years ago. The second section of this writing is a critical discussion of my experience in the class and PLU's decisions concerning issues surrounding racism and homophobia.



Illustration by Jamie Forslund

"I am not a bubble! Dammit!" These are the first words I heard upon exiting the SAT testing room at my high school. One of my closest friends, Adam, made this declaration in reference to the 'ethnicity' and 'gender' portion of the test, which at that time did not offer the 'multi-racial' option. Throughout high school Adam and I had a running joke that both of us were "ambiguously brown."

Adam is an ethnic mix of Puerto Rican and white. He is also gay. I am half Filipina and half white. I also embrace the terms 'queer' and 'bisexual' as part of my political and sexual orientation. Both Adam and I were raised in middle-upperclass-white suburbia. We were very aware that by simply inhabiting the bodies offered to us a birth, we were, as the oh-so-familiar bumper sticker states, "subverting the dominant paradigm."

Adam's "I am not a bubble" comment had a profound effect on my consciousness as a person whose identity does not 'fit' in the neat boxes society tries to force individuals into. Adam chose not to fill in any bubbles the SAT offered as options to classify an individual's ethnicity or gender.

And while he probably did not realize it at the time, his decision to not be a 'bubble' was deeply political. He refused to submit to a prescribed identity given to him by a standardized test that is accused of being a racially, economically and gender biased measure of a person's intelligence.

Adam's ability to articulate his anger indirectly gave me permission to share in that frustration and defiance. I became furious and started to express my opinions about our racist, sexist and homophobic society in an unrestrained manner. I was furious my white grandmother called me "her little brown granddaughter." I was furious I was consistently tokenized as "the racial girl" growing up. I was furious my Filipino grandmother was rarely treated well by store clerks and restaurant waiters because she had a very thick Tagalog accent. I was furious my mother, an intelligent Filipino-American woman, was told by her racist high school counselor she would "never make it to college." I was furious my mother felt the need to assimilate herself into the "professional white work force," and furious that in order to be considered "successful" she had to comply

with the dominant norm. I was furious that I, as a Mestiza, was never fully accepted as a complete individual by the two groups that formed my ethnic identity. And right before my freshman year of college I became increasingly aware of homophobia and the ways it could be directed at me.

Ever since I was a young child I had been aware of my unique position as a person of mixed race. And as I grew older I realized I was also marginalized as a sexual minority. Growing up, I remember being sad and confused. Once, I cried after visiting my white grandmother who made a number of hurtful, blatantly racist comments. But I was always taught to just "accept things the way they are." Both my mother and my mother's mother internalized the passive-aggressive, non-confrontational qualities Filipino culture often instills in women. They in turn attempted to pass on those negative cultural and familial patterns to me. However, there came a point in my life when my frustration, confusion and anger at a systematically racist, sexist and homophobic society became too much to "just accept."

That point arrived when I became in-

volved in a variety of progressive student groups at my university. During my first two years of college I took a number of classes that emphasized the importance of understanding how US society upholds a system of interlocking oppressions, including but not limited to racism, sexism, classism and homophobia. These classes gave me the vocabulary and theory to articulate the frustration I felt growing up Queer and Mestiza in White suburbia. The first semester of my sophomore year I enrolled in "History of Women in the United States" and it enlightened me in many ways. One essay we read encouraged me to rise to a new level of consciousness. I can trace the beginnings of my journey to embrace each and every unique aspect of my identity back to my first reading of Audre Lorde's essay from *Sister Outsider*, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action."

I can state, without inhibition, that Lorde's essay touched the depths of my being. It urged me to embrace each facet of my identity and refuse to compromise the value of one identity over another. Additionally, it affirmed my existence as a whole, unique individual with the ability to act for justice. It encouraged me to use my voice as a tool for to fight for justice. Lorde touched me with these words: "What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you sicken and die of them, still in silence?"

At that point of my life I was filled with the void of silence, but wanted desperately to stop "swallowing my tyrannies." Since, I have worked towards managing the fragile balance of voicing my opinions while still protecting my integrity. The decision to use my voice as a tool of activism and continue to stay consistent in the struggle towards justice has been the most difficult endeavor I have embarked upon. But it has also been the most rewarding. There are times when I get angry, shed all forms of discretion, and simply shout out what I am feeling. This is a survival mechanism. There are times when I choose to conserve my energy, stay silent and not "fight that fight." This is also a survival mechanism. But I know I am doing more than merely surviving; I am thriving. I am more confident, more introspective, more intentional and more alive. I have realized the ramifications and joys inherent in refusing to deny any part of my identity or in placing

more value upon one portion of my personhood over another. I refuse to reject any part of my whole. I am no longer afraid to embrace my identity as Queer, Mestiza and Feminist. And as I continue to travel down the path of my life journey I choose to remain optimistic. The more voices that refuse to remain silent, the louder the call will be for the end of oppression and the embracing of justice.

A Culmination of Thoughts with a Focus on the Process of Community

I remember approaching the professor on the first day of WMST 340: Women of Color, and exclaiming with glee, "I have been waiting my entire educational career to take this course. I am so excited." However, by the final day of class I was only excited for it to be over and to never see that group of students ever again. I was tired, emotionally drained, angry, frustrated and relieved on that last day.

The first time I came out publicly on campus as Queer and Lesbian (a term I identified with at the time) was in this class. I read a journal entry to the class, and because I was nervous I said the coming out portion of my journal, "...as-a-Lesbian-Woman-of Color-it's-my-opinion-that...", very quickly. I was shaking before, during and after this statement. Then I realized, "I've finally done it! I've summoned enough courage and self-respect to truly embrace this aspect of my personhood!"

These feelings of joy were almost immediately replaced with feelings of anger. Another student, a heterosexual white woman, responded to my comment saying, "I think that it is important for gay people, to like, come out with a lot of confidence and not just be in a hurry to get it over with." This straight person was indirectly telling me how to come out! Did she know the inner battle I had about this decision? Did she know the risks I took by making this statement? Did she know I stayed up the night before, contemplating for hours the most comfortable way for me to identify myself as a person who inhabits the far margins of society? No. What right did she have to tell me how to articulate my identity! No student should ever have to feel those emotions in connection to their experience in a class meant to offer an affirming and supportive learning environment.

In the anthology, *Making Face Mak-*

ing Soul Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspective by Feminists of Color, Gloria Anzaldúa explores the importance of creating a leaning environment where Women of Color feel empowered, not weary. She states, "...las mujeres-of-color expressed their hundred years weariness of trying to teach whites about racism...the problem was that white women and white Jewish women, while seeming to listen, were really not "hearing" women of color and could not get it into their heads that this was a space and class on and about women of color." The plight of Students of Color at PLU similarly mimics the plight of the women in Anzaldúa's class. We are either tokenized or placed in positions where we must educate our fellow students and validate our life experiences as People of Color.

This burden could be greatly appeased if the PLU community worked intentionally and systematically from the top down--from the administration to the faculty to the staff and to the students--to hire, admit, and offer support, finances, space and validation to the life experiences of Women of Color on the PLU campus.

On behalf of the growth PLU has made in the two years since I took this class, I am glad to see the addition of a University Committee focused on issues of Equity, the Diversity Center Peer Educators and the Student of Color Banquet. In addition, in its recent search to fill two faculty positions in the English Department, four of the six finalists were People of Color and two of them were women. And although the final offers were not made to the Women of Color, one Gay Filipino-American Male was offered a position. It is this kind of intentional effort to diversify the PLU faculty that should be applauded and more frequently incorporated into faculty searches.

As much as these changes are pointing PLU in a more positive direction, I want to emphasize that when I was a student in WMST 340, the only person who I felt offered me strength and support during class discussions was the professor. I felt ignored, silenced and shunned by most of the other students in the class, all of whom were white. It wasn't until the J-term of my junior year I found a faculty mentor who could truly empathize my frustrations as a Queer, Mestiza, Feminist student on the PLU campus. And the faculty member of whom I speak is amazing. Unfortunately, PLU fails to hire a diverse enough faculty

and staff to mentor to the needs of and advise Students of Color. If PLU asks itself why it is difficult to keep retain Students of Color, it should look at how many staff and faculty and administrators of Color are hired and choose to stay at PLU. There are not many. And those that are here are often, if not always, over-burdened. That the professor of whom I speak chose to leave PLU is yet another example of the inability to retain Women of Color in the faculty.

PLU needs to reevaluate its definition of community. "Community" is a word thrown around PLU at a frighteningly fast and confusing pace. What is this "community?" Is it a place where all individuals are treated equally without regard to their gender, race, sexual orientation or religious affiliation? My experiences as Queer, Mestiza and Feminist can answer

that question with this response: "No, the PLU community has a long way to go before it offers full equality to each and every student, staff and faculty member." These criticisms of the PLU community are not meant to negate my experience in WMST 340. My words are meant to encourage the PLU community to think about why, as a Woman of Color, my experience in a class specifically focusing of the lives of Women of Color was so frustrating.

In the book, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics*, Starhawk defines community:

We all are longing to go home to some place we have never been – a place, half-remembered, and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Some-

where, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free.

In WMST 340 I did not hear voices celebrate me when I came into my own power. I did not feel free.



Illustration by Jamie Forslund

Night comes suddenly in winter, and the sun departs before we're quite ready. Dusk briefly touches our horizons, making way for darkness.

It was dark. I felt fresh and soft from walking through the trees in Point Defiance Park. I felt pretty and young and desired by my companion who waited in the car while I bought gas to get us home. The lady in the station puzzled at my crisp academic clothes against the three wrinkled dollar bills. I smiled and wished her a wonderful night.

Night. While paying for gas in the brightly lit gas station, the night had put the dusk to sea. The cold wet air swept past

Not Afraid

by Jamie Forslund

my cheeks as I strode back to my little white car.

There was a brown van; there were men inside, smiling at me as they sped to a stop. That oxymoron caught my attention—they moved so quickly to stop. Sliding door sliding open smiling man stepping out, quickly out, "Wait, hold on!" So fast, so like an insult, inexplicable and unexpected. "Stop! Let me talk to you!"

No.

No.

I am no longer soft. I am closed and taut. This man insists, "Just a moment," and still I refuse. No.

I say this word aloud but it seems to drop from my mouth to the dirty pavement, heavy and weak. No.

I feel the word reverberate inside me and wonder if I've even managed to say it aloud. No.

"Just a minute," he smiles, still smiling as I open my car door and turn to him.

Fine. What?

He pulls closer and notices my companion inside the car. Everything in me is working to look assertive, to be assertive. I don't know if I give myself away: my face is loose and transparent, my knuckles white on the door frame. He smiles at me.

His smile is stupid, ungainly and wide, like a child's or a junkie's. He says he is

looking for a restaurant. His mock turtle-neck is frayed around the neckline.

"Do you mean Anthony's?" I ask.

"No, not Anthony's."

Now he's irritated and his smile fades. The air is cold and heavy. Oh. I don't know any lobster restaurants. He thanks me but I do not say he is welcome.

I am closed and taut as I get in the car and shut my door against the station's artificial glare. Closed. It happened so quickly, and now this heaviness, this weight, this silence... My hands are steady but inside I am quaking: a violent tremor that I can't control, can't subdue.

Driving away I feel explanations spewing up my throat, held back by the weight of my tongue. My insides are carved out like a melon, filled with reasons: the frayed collar of his shirt, the red hair, his insistence, his deaf ear to my protest, the fast van with its open door.

I am angry; I am sad. This paranoia comes from my mother, from Parkland, from being a woman—let it come from anywhere but me.

I was not afraid. I was safe. There were bright lights and a confident young man to aid me. I did not fear this redhead in his forties with his ugly clothes and toothy smile. I feel foolish and petty.

The Ancient Art of Wooing Women (or, how to get rich quick)

by Elizabeth Boyd

Here's a business venture for you all.
It's a get-rich-quick scheme that actually works.
Overhead, the cost of a concert ticket
(don't worry, you'll get it all back
by the end of the night...)

Step one: find a beautiful woman
(she can be ugly if you like, but since you'll be dancing
pelvis to buttocks, attractiveness might matter)
preferably a foreigner
(the others know. They've learned.)
dancing
somewhere in the crowd, dancing
with her arms swinging and her feet stomping
to the deafening pulse of amplified music.

Go dance with her.
She wants you to, believe me,
she loves the feel of your chest pressed against her back
she loves the feel of your breath on her neck
she loves the feel of your erection
grinding rhythmically between her buttocks.
She loves knowing that you're getting sexual pleasure
from her company, even if all she knows of you
is the smell of beer on your lecherous panting breath.

Go dance with her. Dance with her as though she were
a woman in your dreams
nothing but a husk, soft and sensuous

built of fantastical fiber specifically for your enjoyment
tonight.
Run your horny hands all over her body,
past her shoulders, over her arms,
down the gentle curve of her waist,
around the perfect bulge of her "bubble-nuts;"
grasp her pelvis for better grip to rub against her.
And while you're there, follow her hips
down to her pockets—

it might be best to smash her
up against someone dancing in front of her, too,
so that she can get the pleasurable sensation
of a chicken, stuck into a meat grinder.
So much attention.
So many distractions.

You'll make a fortune.
And she'll feel sexy.
(translation: used
But that's okay.
You'll never see her again anyway.)

04/26/04

Trinidad

Author's note: I wrote this while I was in Trinidad and Tobago in Spring of 2004, after I had been felt up and then pick-pocketed at a concert. One of the very difficult things for me to deal with about the Trinidadian culture was how differently women are treated there than they are here. This is not to say that all Trinidadian men are lecherous; I met a good number of very kind, respectful and trustworthy men. Rather, this is an expression of the vulnerability and the objectification that I felt very strongly in this one isolated incident.

**V
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"Some girls who are sexually molested overeat in order to gain weight because they subconsciously want to be ugly."

Is the man on Oprah talking to me?

Am I a statistic?

Psychological analysis: young sexually molested girl over eats in order to become unattractive to males, fearing further sexual contact of any kind.

My mind, like a detective trying to pile evidence in support of the testimony, starts collecting file folders of memories.

One week ago—Conversation with Witness #1

Witness #1: "I like being ugly."

Defendant: "I like being fat; it keeps people away."

NO! I yell at the detective.

I saw the whole thing happen. The girl was fine—content—I promise.

But the detective holds my hand— "It's okay honey."

My lips quiver. —End of trial. Defendant guilty as charged.—

—cut to bathroom one hour later—

I shake from disgust and tears. I wash my hands.

I'm stained with the blood of my innocence.

I don't want to feel dirty anymore.

by Amanda Sahli

a-men-or-rhe-a or a-men-or-rhoe-a (a-men-or-rhe-a): cessation of menstruation. Primary amenorrhea is a delay in or a failure to start menstruation; secondary amenorrhea is an unexpected stop to the menstrual cycle. It is caused by a dysfunction of the pituitary gland, ovaries, uterus and hypothalamus, by surgical removal of the ovaries or uterus, by medication, or by emotional trauma. The result is an inadequate amount of body fat, calories and protein to sustain menstruation. Female athletes have a higher than average rate of menstrual dysfunction, particularly amenorrhea, but the long-term effects of the exercise related disorders are not known. It is also common among anorexics. The lack of estrogen, however, may contribute to the development of osteoporosis. Hormonal deficiencies over long periods of time, particularly in combination with poor diets, may cause luteal phase deficiency and hypogestrogenic amenorrhea, which may last a long time. Methods of treatment include oral contraceptives, or estrogen-progestin therapy.

I drove it off.

It's gone with my definition of self.

I am expired and so is my feminine identity.

I have no insides to define it with.

Touching and prodding doesn't bring it back. It just makes it burn a little more and creates a rough raw sensation for days post. The more I dream the farther it is.

I have no blood in my hands . . . I have no blood on my name.

The running becomes endless. The eating becomes tiresome and very pointless.

My bones have small breaks but it doesn't matter. I still have no blood on my hands.

My bra won't hold anything and I cry for the strength to run farther. The music helps to satisfy something a little smaller but the mass is still buried in there. And yet, I still have no blood on my hands.

I should, I should. I grope and pull at myself hoping for some sort of surprise. Perhaps streamers and noisemakers will explode from my inside.

I want to fold into myself. Why does length and lank seem beautiful when it doesn't breed life?

Perfection is unattainable but so goddamn tempting. Dry touch is as far as it goes but fucking seems to draw closer. It hurts but I play along. The cool wetness of my body has evaporated and dry fire burns. But I like it. The friction is a matter of experience . . . an acquired taste.

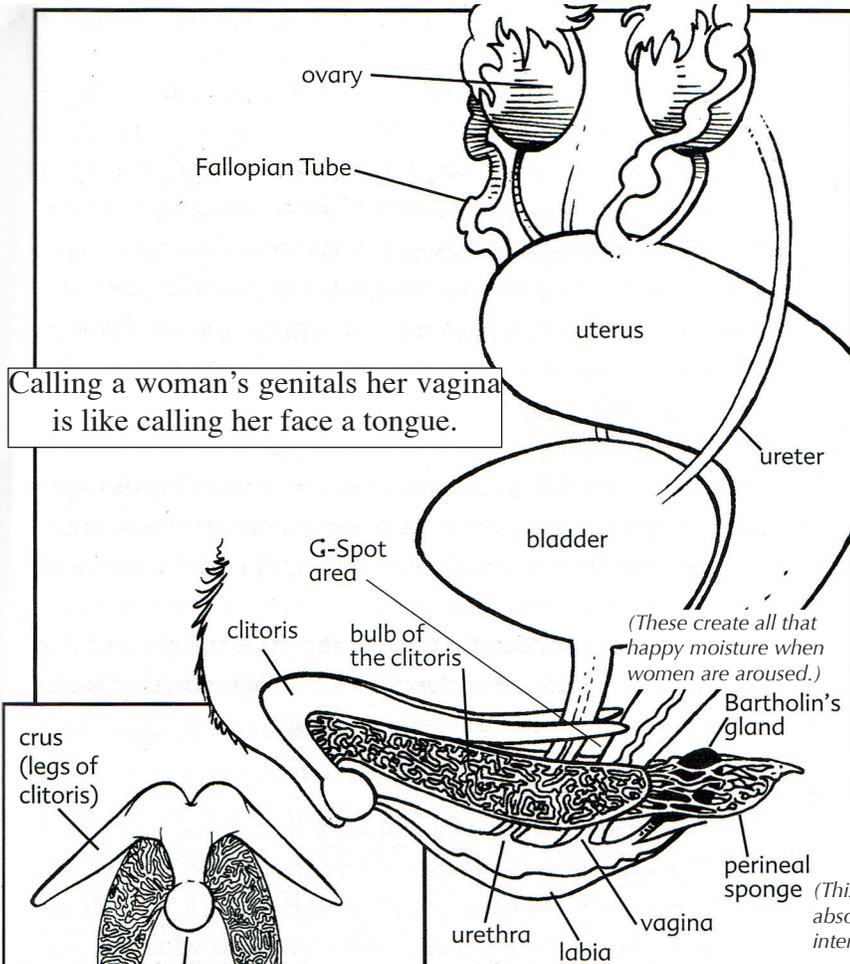
I am a deviation, a variation, some sort of abnormality that has fallen through the cracks without the realizations of anyone else.

With this matter I can form and enfold and create. But my lack of creativity and fear of falling further stalls my body into amenorrhea; an unwilling absence.

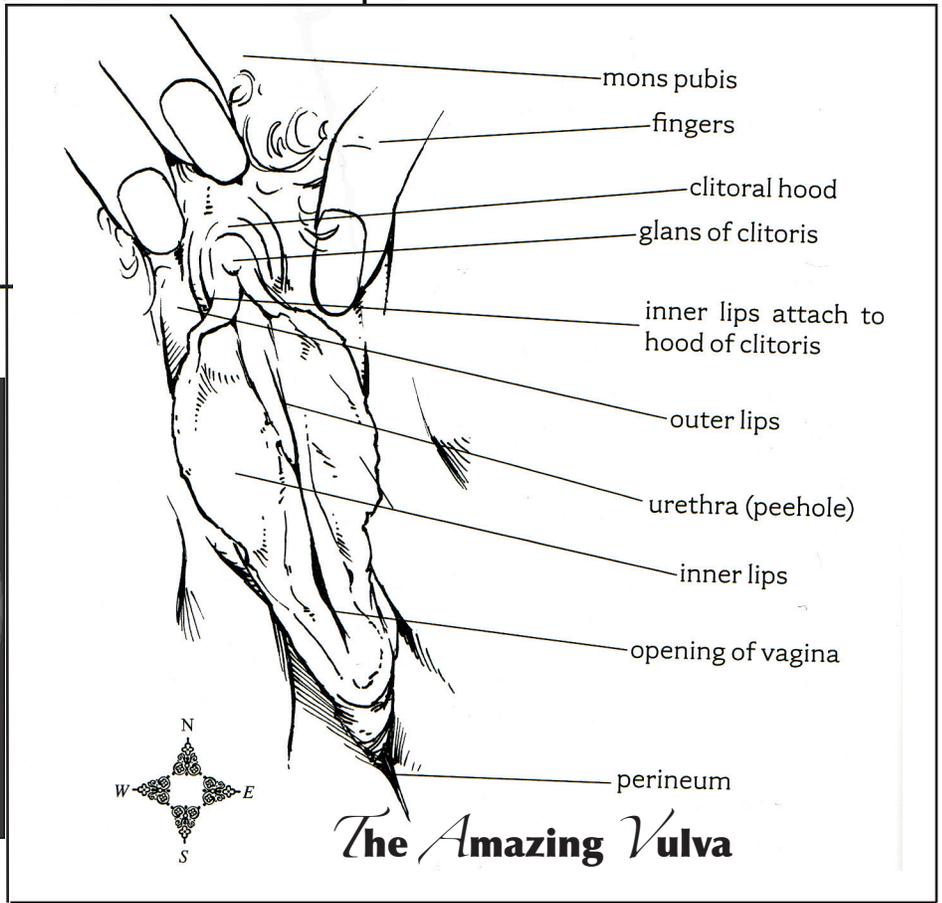
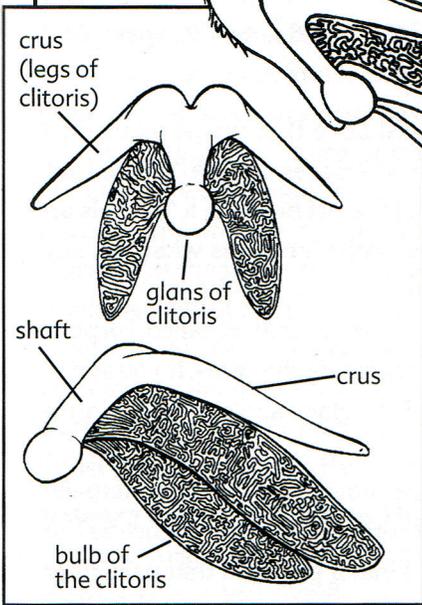
Keeping It Real

All genitals are different

- Some women have large inner lips, some have small
- The visible clitoris ranges from 1-3 cm
- Some women have more nerves in their clitoris than labia and visa versa
- Some women's nerve endings cluster and some are equally dispersed
- Most women respond to clitoral stimulation
- The G-spot is elusive. Many women don't have one. Don't stress — focus elsewhere
- Not all women have a vagina
- Not all women have a uterus
- Like snowflakes, no two vulvas look the same



Calling a woman's genitals her vagina is like calling her face a tongue.



The Amazing Vulva

Happy Fun Corner
 The clitoris is **TWICE** as sensitive as the penis
 When aroused, the vagina doubles in size
 The scents of jasmine, vanilla, Patchouli and peppermint stimulate most women

Diagrams and info from Paul Joannides's *Guide to Getting It On*: Goofy Foot Press, 4th Edition. May 1, 2004.

The Wonderful World of DOWN THERE

Ladies, gentlemen, everyone in between and beyond: do you ever wonder what's happening down there? You're in luck as *The Matrix* offers you a glance at the mysterious and profound world of genitalia.

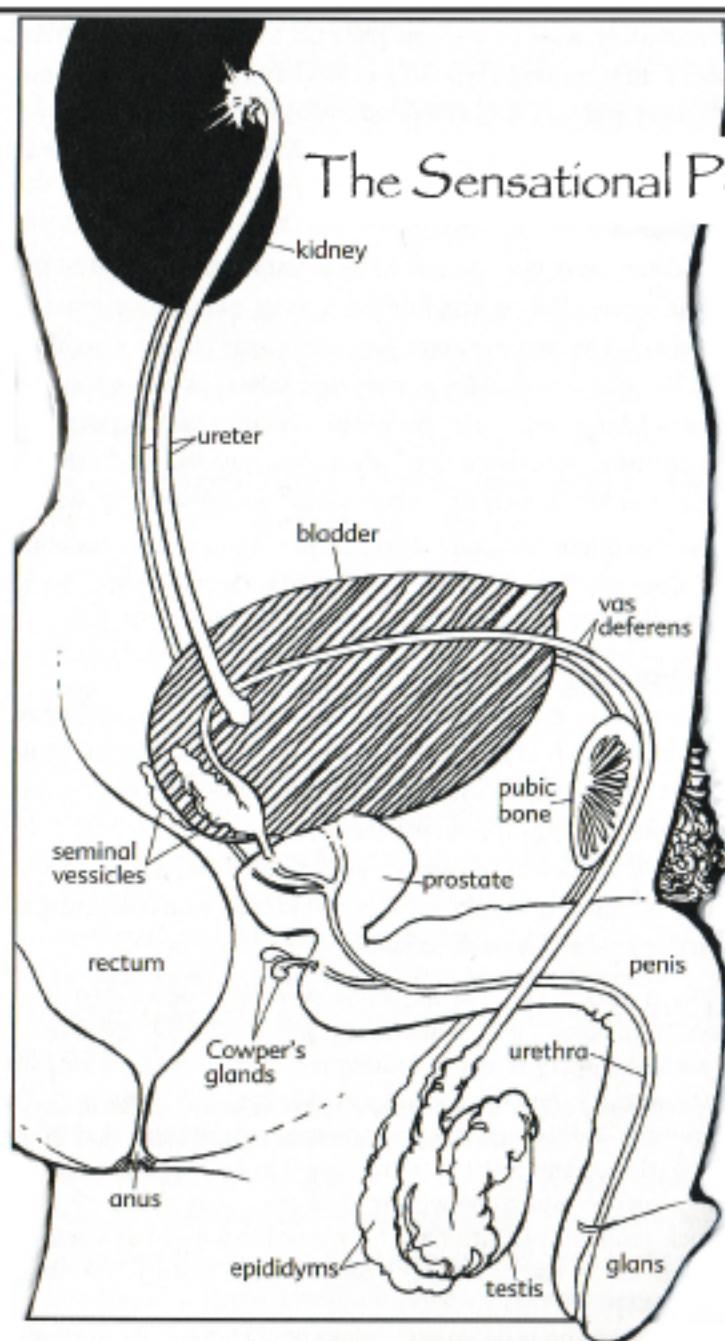
Happy Fun Corner

Men have an average of 11 erections per day and 9 per night

There are 5 calories in a teaspoon of semen
The frenulum is the most sensitive part of most penises

Odors that increase blood flow to the penis: lavender, licorice, chocolate, doughnuts and pumpkin pie!

The Sensational Penis and Scrotum



Keeping It Real

Like vulvas, all scrotums and penises are different

- Penises come in various shades that may be darker or lighter than the rest of the body
- Testicles are usually different sizes, and one hangs lower than the other
- The average penis length in the US is 3.4 inches flaccid and 5 inches erect
- Amount of time needed for a man to regain erection: from 2 min. to 2 weeks
- Average number of times a man will ejaculate in his lifetime: 7,200
- That's 14 gallons of semen spurted in a lifetime!
- Ejaculate travels approximately 28 mph
- Erotic sensations travel from skin to brain at 156 mph
- Sperm lives 2.5 months from development to ejaculation. Outside the male body it lives 3 days
- All penises bend slightly to the left or right when erect

When it comes to genitals remember to: talk, touch, look, taste, feel and cherish.

AS A MAN

BY A. GEROW,
SAPET MEMBER

There is an impasse. An impasse between what it means to be a man and what men feel they need to be. We hold doors, offer our seats, and we might even throw a jacket across a puddle. At the same time, we rape, assault, abuse and commit the majority of crimes in the US. We disguise and we pretend. We work out in gyms and we watch the Super Bowl. If we're against these stereotypes, there are always extreme sports...like those pesky Parkland kids always skating where they don't belong. Maybe we're liberal, maybe we're conservative. But still, we embody an impasse.

This impasse is monolithic. It is in the books and magazines we read. It's in the television commercials, the ads, our language and our identities.

What would it be like to be a woman? I don't have so much as a clue.

There are simple things we do differently. Namely peeing, having slightly thicker bones, and, of course, having a completely different (cultural) mentality. We all have had the class in which some stupid question about perception and cultural identity comes up. These questions are fun to answer because everyone can sound so damn smart. We all know the answers. "What really is the difference between men and women?" Well, we pee standing up...and have bigger bones. Oh yeah, and we don't have children. "No, but what really makes men and women different?"

This is when that kid who is going to be an annoying goof all semester says something about cultural dichotomies and the ontological engendering of our perceived world. Bull shit. This is where the class stops getting it. From here on in we discuss perception, standards and stereotypes. Naturally, there is an impasse.

First off, what do these constructs say

about our identities? Second, why the hell are they here in the first place? And third, how can they be changed or destroyed? I understand that being conscious of our cultural dichotomies and the ontological engendering of our perceived world is a big step. But frankly, I find it offensive to think we've gotten anywhere by recognizing some ridiculous term only the suck-up kid in the class could come up with. We need to take the next few steps, which may be hard from a classroom.

People walk around all the time. People go it alone sometimes. And yes, men do get worried late at night walking alone. I've been there, and sometimes it is worrisome. A story: one late night after a concert on the south side of Chicago (as bad as it sounds) I'm walking to my car. Three men follow me for about two blocks, all the while talking boisterously. Here is a list of things going through my head:

—I'll tell them quickly that they can have all the money.

—It may take a second to get the wallet off the chain.

—I'm just going to my car.

—I'm sorry.

I got to my car and they walked past without so much as a nod, although, had I seen them before this point I would have been twice as scared. I got in my car and left. When I got back to my friend's apartment on the north side (as nice as it sounds) she and I sat down for some coffee.

It was her turn to tell a story. She had been at an art gallery premier for a friend of hers, after which some hooligans followed her. While they didn't touch her, they threatened to. They laughed at the prospect of smacking her tits. They admired her ass in a pair of tight jeans. They groaned in

mockery of how she would sound while they were raping her, after which she would "realize she liked it." She made it to her car without saying a word; they kept walking.

"No biggie, just ass-holes," she said.

So my question is this: what do our cultural dichotomies and the ontological engendering of the perceived world have to do with this story? Not much in word, but a heck of a lot when we're safely tucked behind a small desk in the Hauge Administration Building.

Another quick story: I'm skating down Hinderlie hill late at night, maybe 1:30, to the Olson lot. I notice a car pull into a parking space behind Reike; no biggie. I skate (loudly) to my car which just so happens to be next to the newly arrived one. Two girls are getting out. Here is the conversation, if such things are conversations:

Girl one: "Holy shit, get back in!"

Girl two: "What!?"

The car doors lock.

Girl one: "Get your phone."

I arrive at my car and open the trunk to put in the skateboard.

Girl one: "Oh god..."

They get out only after noticing I'm "that guy from math class." I apologize, but they only apologize back. Somehow we're both really sorry just for being there.

Here's my deal. Men kill, we rape, and we assault women. That is to say, we commit the large majority of crimes against women (and men for that matter). The point is that we are predators. We are wrong, and we are pre-defined to fall on the wrong side of benevolence. I become a criminal. I become a threat. My man-ness makes me a threat.

Sometimes it hurts more than other

times. In the incident from this story I felt bad. Other times I walk faster, so as to be in front of a woman whose path will soon join mine. Other times, I take entirely different routes. I'll cross the street so as not to collide with or follow a woman at night. I listen to those stories from women about being stalked, followed, harassed and too often, a lot worse. What can I do if I default to a predator when the circumstances warrant it?

First off, don't be a predator. Next, don't condone being a predator. Don't make the jokes, don't allow the jokes, and don't laugh. And don't act like it isn't a problem. Every time we men have walked a woman home, every time we've asked how someone is doing, and every time we've said hello, we have played on the (cultural) male ability to help. And every time we

haven't cared, every time we've misunderstood what the hell some girl was talking about, every time we've wondered why a woman won't walk home alone, every time we've wondered why there's a women's center but not a men's center, we have exploited our (cultural) ability to repress.

There is no reason to wonder. There is no reason to expect a woman not to fear men, even men she knows as friends. (Statistically women should be more worried about a person she knows harming her than a stranger.) There is such a small step from recognizing our constructed cultural identities to doing something about it. This is no call for revolution, just a call for thoughtfulness. Understand that we men are subject to our gender's actions. And when it comes down to it, we rape, we murder, we assault and we harass. To dispute this is

ludicrous, but to stop it, simple. While it takes time and effort, there should not be such an impasse between idea and action. While we take our respective tours of academia, it is easy to lose sight of why we talk about gender roles and issues. But progress is not understanding, no matter how much we want it to be; it is acting.

A quote from the 2003 Vagina Monologues: "Imagine being able to sit next to that lone girl in the computer lab without feeling like a pervert." These issues are cultural. They are pan-gender. They are not human nature. The question is not how to "live with our differences" but "how can we stop our constructed differences from hurting people?"

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Women in Afghanistan:

A brief, modern history by Chris Green

There has been a rosy view of the progress of Afghan women since the US-led force drove the Taliban from power in late 2001. The reality, however, despite public relations gestures, is that Afghan women are in some ways worse off now than when under the rule of the Taliban.

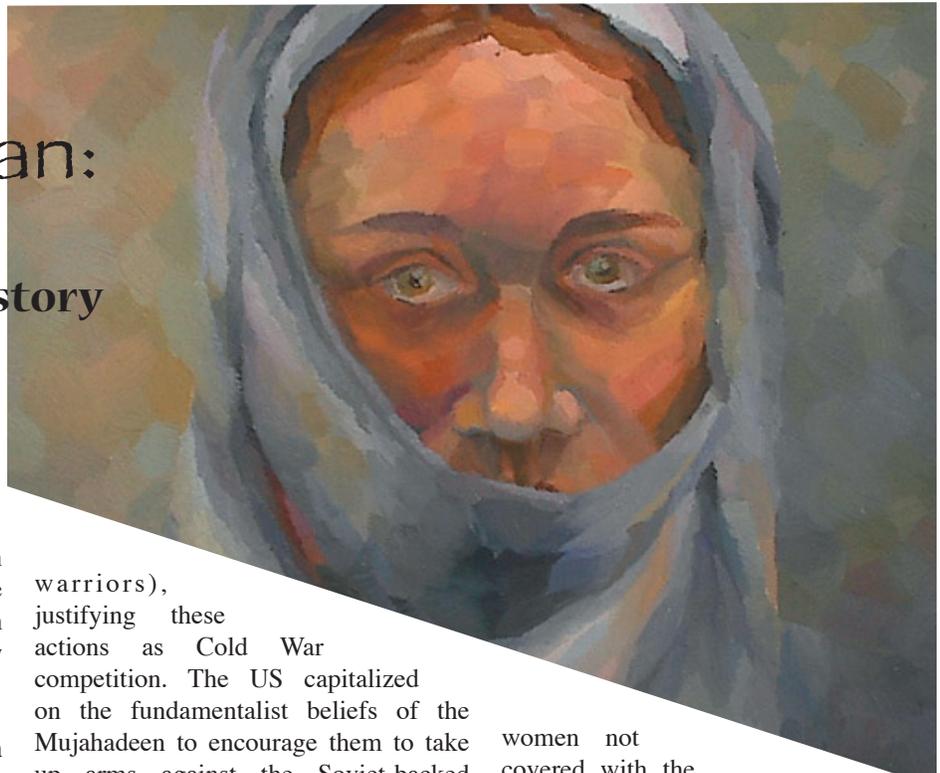
Background to US intervention and the course of women's rights in Afghanistan

For centuries, Afghanistan was a society structured on feudal and clan lines. From 1933-1973, the country was united under the absolute monarchy of Zahir Shah. In the early 1960s, the King began experimenting with slight democratic reforms. In a 1964 constitution, women were granted equal protection under the law, including the right to receive equal pay, but the provisions on women's reforms were hardly implemented. In 1973, the King was overthrown by his cousin Mohammed Daud, whose brutal and corrupt rule received some support from both the Soviet Union and the US.

In April 1978, a leftist government overthrew Daud. The new government outlawed child marriage and the exchange of daughters in marriage for cash or commodities. Schools for women opened. The US was not forthcoming with aid, so the regime increasingly turned to the Soviet Union. In August 1979, a State Department analysis concluded the leftist regime in Afghanistan should be overthrown because of Soviet and socialist influences.¹

The Mujahadeen

The US poured money into a coalition of Islamic Mujahadeen (i.e. holy



warriors), justifying these actions as Cold War competition. The US capitalized on the fundamentalist beliefs of the Mujahadeen to encourage them to take up arms against the Soviet-backed regime. According to a *New York Times* article, the Mujahadeen had the following concerns with the new government:

Land reform attempts undermined their village chiefs. Portraits of Lenin threatened their religious leaders. But it was the Kabul revolutionary Government's granting of new rights to women that pushed orthodox Moslem [sic] men in the Pashtun villages of eastern Afghanistan into picking up their guns... "The government said our women had to attend meetings and our children had to go to schools. This threatens our religion. We had to fight... The government imposed various ordinances allowing women freedom to marry anyone they chose without their parents' consent."²

The Mujahadeen opposed these changes on radical religious grounds.

The US funneled several billion dollars into the Afghan Mujahadeen, mostly through Pakistan's dictator, General Zia Al Haq. Over half of all US aid went to Gullbudin Heckmatyar's *Hizb-e-Islami*, who was backed by Pakistani intelligence. He rose to prominence in the early 1970s as an opponent of reforms on women's rights. Heckmatyar encouraged his followers to throw acid in the faces of

women not covered with the burqa. A US ambassador to Afghanistan describes him as "an extremist, a nut and a very violent man."³ According to US congressional testimony, Heckmatyar ran his refugee camps with a reign of terror. He engineered the assassination of the founder of Afghanistan's oldest women's organization, the Revolutionary Association of Afghan Women (RAWA).

The Mujahadeen eventually overthrew the leftist regime in April 1992, but then began infighting. Former Mujahadeen commanders reverted to killing, looting and raping. In the Southern capital of Kandahar in 1994, a movement of former *Talibs* (students of Islam) emerged as voice against the Mujahadeen. They were led by Mullah Mohammed Omar. Omar quickly became a folk hero rumored to save women and children from molestation.⁴

Women under the Taliban

Omar and his followers called themselves the Taliban. In the words of journalist Ahmed Rashid, many of them came from "the poorest, most conservative, and least literate Southern...provinces of Afghanistan."⁵ In parts of Afghanistan, women's literacy, education and freedom had been

making slow but sure progress, but time stood still in the villages of these young men. In these areas all women covered themselves with the burqa and men and women were supposed to be segregated. Many Taliban had been uprooted from their villages during the 1980s Soviet invasion and spent time in refugee camps in Western Pakistan. In the religious schools of the refugee camps—the *madrassahs*—the young men and women were segregated. Many *madrassahs*, received funding from Saudi Arabia, whose official religion is the ultra-Puritanical Wahabbi sect of Islam. The Wahabbis of Saudi Arabia are notorious for their edicts against women.

The Taliban's Wahabbi trained teachers, often barely more literate than their nearly illiterate students, inspired the young men with a vision of an idyllic society free of sin, where men would reign supreme over their families. A marked feature of the ideology of the Taliban rank and file was a deep distrust of women. Most of them knew little about women, having spent much of their lives segregated from them. They assumed that if they allowed women freedom, they would develop their sensuality and tempt the men into sin. In addition, many Taliban followers had seen rape and other extreme violence committed against women by Mujahadeen armies, and feared they would develop such tendencies in themselves if they were exposed to women.

The Taliban emerged as a full-fledged military force in Southern Afghanistan in late 1994, and immediately outlawed women from the workforce (except in some medical areas) and schools. Women were confined to their homes and in most instances, disallowed in public, except when accompanied by a male relative and completely covered.

Before the Taliban, some women had been civil servants, teachers and doctors. Even Heckmatyar had tolerated women's education and service in professional ranks. Now the Taliban reduced women to empty vessels under the complete control of their husbands. Women had no rights in their husband's eyes. For instance, a woman could not claim she had been sexually assaulted by her husband. Women's rights were dependent on their value to men.

Taliban leaders told journalists they recognized the need to lessen restrictions on women. However, "for now," they preferred to keep women in slave-like status in order to consolidate their rule over the

country. As one Taliban official explained, the Taliban army might be "demoralized" if the subordination of women was relaxed.⁶

Post-Taliban

The US overthrew the Taliban in late 2001 and installed a government in Kabul, headed by Hamid Karzai. However, the warlords of the Northern Alliance—remnants of the old Mujahadeen leadership—reestablished their own fiefdoms in different regions of the country, becoming, in effect, Afghanistan's new rulers. In his January 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush declared, "[Under the Taliban,] mothers and daughters of Afghanistan were captives in their own homes, forbidden from working or going to school. Today, women are free, and are part of Afghanistan's new government. And [tonight in the gallery] we welcome the new [Afghan] Minister of Women's Affairs, Dr Sima Samar."⁷

Shortly after this tribute, Dr. Samar was dismissed from the government in Kabul on grounds of "blasphemy." She told journalist John Pilger in a piece published in the *London Guardian*, "There is no more official law to stop women from going to school and work; there is no law about dress code. But the reality is that even under the Taliban there was not the pressure on women in the rural areas there is now."⁸

Indeed, many women's schools that sprung up after the Taliban's fall were forced to close because of warlord terrorism and threats. In late 2003, Amnesty International reported:

The international community and the Afghan transitional administration, led by President Hamid Karzai, have proved unable to protect women. The risk of rape and sexual violence by members of armed factions and former combatants is still high. Forced marriage, particularly of girl children, and violence against women in the family are widespread in many areas of the country.⁹

Many American elites congratulated themselves after the October 2004 elections in Afghanistan. However, its many flaws were ignored. In rural regions, deputized soldiers of various warlords, "the very people Afghans say they are most afraid of," guarded the polling places, noted Human Rights Watch Asia director Brad Adams. "The warlords are still calling the shots.... Many voters in rural areas say the

militias have already told them how to vote, and that they're afraid of disobeying them. Activists and political organizers who oppose the warlords fear for their lives."⁸ Many journalists told stories of warlords who raped and kidnapped young women. For the most part, such crimes go unpunished; people are afraid to bring the crimes to the attention of the authorities, and the authorities will not investigate them.⁹

Many men worried about the elections because women had the opportunity to participate. Journalists Jim Ingalls and Sonali Kolhatkar wrote:

In a public opinion survey conducted in Afghanistan this July [2004] by the Asia Foundation, 72 percent of respondents said that men should advise women on their voting choices and 87 percent of all Afghans interviewed said women would need their husband's permission to vote. On International Women's Day this year, Hamid Karzai only encouraged such attitudes. He implored men to allow their wives and sisters to register to vote, assuring them, "later, you can control who she votes for, but please, let her go [to register]."¹²

The authors state that while most of the candidates participating in the election made some mention of women's rights, these were merely token gestures to appease Western observers.¹³

Two Stories of the Current Situation

These stories give a picture of the current situation of women in Afghanistan. The first is the case of two dozen young Afghan refugee women who had been living in Northern Iran, and ended up in the "protective custody" of the government in Herat, the capital of Western Afghanistan. In Iran, they were forced into marriage and prostitution and some had been arrested on charges of walking in public unaccompanied by a male. They were all deported from Iran and ended up in Herat. There they were held captive by forces of the warlord Ismail Khan. Khan was described by Donald Rumsfeld as "an appealing man...thoughtful, measured and self-confident."¹⁴ However, those under Khan's rule grew restless under the violence, harassment and extortion of his soldiers. The soldiers were notorious for stopping women unaccompanied by male



relatives and sometimes transporting them to a hospital to check their vaginas for evidence of recent sexual activity. Khan was “fired” from his post as regional governor by president Karzai in September 2004, but his forces continue to dominate the Herat area of Western Afghanistan.

In January 2003 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in

literacy training, but instead locked them up in a building in Kabul surrounded by male guards. They were forced to engage in sweatshop labor, and several ran away, but were hauled back by Kabul police who arrested them for traveling without male escort.

But the women continued to rebel. A German psychologist examined them and

found “they were defiant... ‘like a gang of street kids - but not aggressive, not malicious. They were a bunch of young girls who drew their fantasies from Indian Bollywood movies. They wanted to be film stars. They had spirit. They were survivors.’”¹⁵

Dr. Samar was desperate to get rid of them. She sent one woman to a mental asylum. Others were sent to a clinic in Afghanistan’s Central Mountains for the stated purpose of becoming nurses. Most chose, instead of continuing imprisonment, to be distributed as wives to men in the neighborhood.¹⁶

Another story is that of Sharifa Daadekhoda. She was forced into a marriage at age twelve to an older man who began prostituting her. She ran away from her husband but was imprisoned by the Taliban. They released her after six months, but forced her return to her husband. She ran away

again. By the time she was caught, there was a new government in Kabul: the US backed Hamid Karzai. That government has continued the practice of imprisoning women who run away from their husbands. Indeed, one of the first laws promulgated by the new Northern Alliance government in December 2001 announced women would no longer be killed (as under the Taliban) for running away from their husbands, only imprisoned. Adulterers would continue to be stoned to death, the judge announced, but with smaller stones than those used by the Taliban.¹⁷

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¹ Blum, William. “Afghanistan 1979-92: America’s Jihad.” <http://members.aol.com/bblum6/afghan.htm>

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⁵ Ibed, 110.

⁶ Ibed, 106

⁷ Pilger, John. “What Good Friends Left Behind.” *The Guardian (London)*. 20 September 2003. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/afghanistan/story/0,1284,1044925,00.html>

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⁹ Rawi, Mariam. “Rule of the Rapists: Britain and U.S. Said War on Afghanistan Would Liberate Women: We Are Still Waiting.” *Commondreams.org*. 12 February 2004. <http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0212-10.htm>

¹⁰ Rawi.

¹¹ Parenti, Christian. “What ‘Democracy’ Looks like.” *The Nation*. 18 October 2004. <http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20041018&s=parenti>

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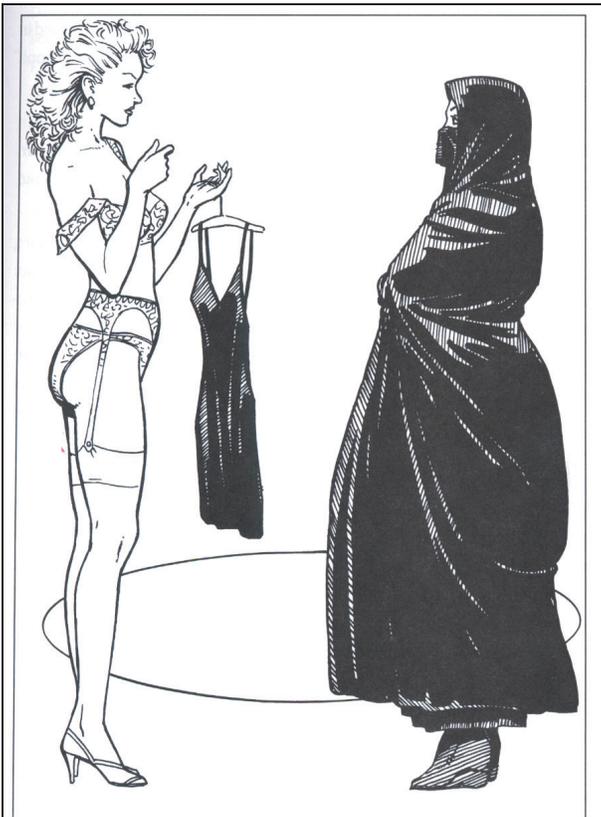
¹⁷ Navai, Ramita. “Afghan Women Still in Chains Under Karzai: Kabul’s Central Jail Holds Prisoners Whose Only ‘Crime’ is Their Refusal to be Second Class Citizens.” *Commondreams.org*. 23 January 2005. <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines05/0123-02.htm>

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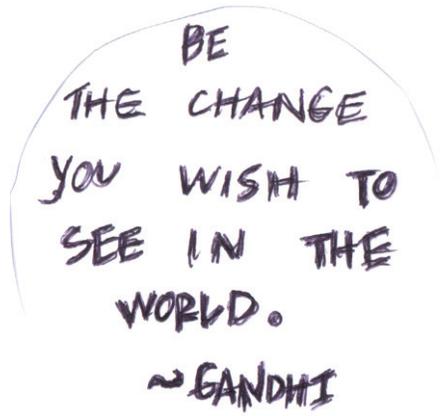
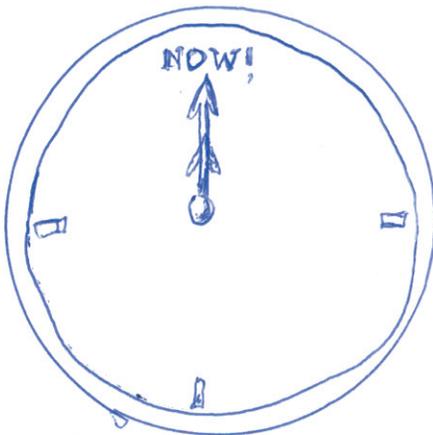
Illustration to the left:
Joannides, Paul. *Guide to Getting It On*. Goofy Foot Press, 2004.



Who is the “Sexual Prisoner”?

- The Muslim Woman
- The Western Woman
- Neither
- Both

When we think of war, we do not think of women ...



Photos by Greta Jaeger

... Because the work of survival, of restoration, is not glamorous work. Like most women's work, it is undervalued, underpaid, and impossible. After war, men are often shattered, unable to function. Women not only work, but they create peace networks, find ways to bring about healing. They teach in home schools when the school buildings are destroyed. They build gardens in the middle of abandoned railroad tracks. They pick up the pieces, although they usually haven't fired a gun. And because consequences are usually not televised, by then the war is no longer sexy - the ratings are gone, consequences remain invisible.

Eve Ensler,
Necessary Targets: A Story of Women and War (Villard Press, 2001)

Same-Sex Marriage, Religion, and "Gay PDA"



Illustration by Jamie Forslund

I grew up in a tiny western-Montana town where homophobia was normal and accepted. A vivid memory will serve to illustrate this: in eighth grade my social studies class conducted a mock state congress designed to teach us the workings of government. A bill brought to the congress's attention by one of the "senators" proposed a ban on "homosexual" public displays of affection. I cannot remember if the bill passed or not, but the explosion of noises expressing disgust, contempt and hate coming from my class (myself included) leads me to believe it did. The teacher also contributed to the general invectiveness that arose when the student proposing the bill said the words "gay PDA."

This fall I had a similar experience when I was confronted, not as a mock senator but a voting citizen, with a Montana state amendment that would ban gay marriage. I was alone when I read the ballot, far from my hometown, isolated from any derisive howls that might have accompanied the words "gay marriage," and this time I voted against the amendment that would define marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman. What grieved me most was that my own faith, Christianity, was providing most of the pressure to bring the issue to a government vote in the first place. Changing an internal theological struggle into a publicly voted issue is not only a breach of the separation of church and state but also a betrayal of Christian values that run much deeper than marriage.

It is the push to make Christian marriage a government-defined institution that I find the most difficult to understand. To the best of my knowledge, the Christian argument is this:

1. Marriage is a sacrament defined by God as between a man and a woman, so humans can no more redefine it than they can change any other divinely mandated institution, like the Ten Commandments or baptism.

2. God defines sacraments for a reason, and with marriage this is to create a stable, functioning society, the corollary being that a heterosexual family is the fundamental base for society.

3. The Western tradition, and the US in particular, draws heavily upon Christianity, so therefore cannot go about redefining institutions at will, without threatening the stability of society or the moral basis of Western civilization.

4. Therefore, because this is a Western civilization, marriage must be defined in the Christian sense, and therefore must be a public, government-protected institution.

This compact little argument had me convinced until I left Montana, actually met openly gay individuals and learned more about how other successful cultures organize their institutions. Lo and behold, that comforting blend of American society and Christ is a lie, a security blanket torn to pieces by actual experience, history and theology.

My focus is on the last two arguments in the list above, because they provide the

by Adam Oswald

logical justification for legally banning same-sex marriage. If Christians did not think Christianity was an important US value and that their definition of marriage was necessary for society to function, there never would have been government bans on same-sex marriage for me to write against.

The US is not a Christian society. It is not defined by Christian values, and its institutions and laws are not Christian. The death penalty, commoditization of creation, and usury all run contrary to Christian beliefs, yet are perfectly legal in the US. These sins have received little attention relative to the recent drive against same-sex marriage. Abortion and war have received more attention from the Christian religion (from many angles), and serve to illustrate my point: the US is not Christian. It is a multi-cultural empire, its institution reflecting a broad range of beliefs, religions, traditions and interests.

The separation of church and state helps protect one religious group from enforcing its beliefs upon the whole of society. Certain Christian groups have no more right to define government marriages than Hindus have the right to outlaw all consumption of beef. The next time some fundamentalist Christian talks to you about reinstating prayer in schools, ask them if the state should pay muezzin to lead and make sure everyone faces toward Mecca. That should really get them going.

To be serious, however, imagine a future where a same-sex couple adhering to a religion that recognizes their marriage has to face a US government with a constitutional ban against it. Despite myriad high-flown arguments about stability and sanctity propping it up, discrimination is an ugly thing. Words like "stability" and "tradition" have little meaning when balanced against the frustration and anguish of the oppressed. We should be glad that plural-

ism has tended to moderate politics and religion, and as participants in this empire we should deeply distrust all attempts to favor one religious view by the state. Christians may have misgivings about the legitimacy of Christian same-sex marriage, but turning a theological issue (and an unsettled one at that) into a public, state-wide vote is lunacy. A federal government recognizing same-sex marriage and granting gay couples the same civil benefits as straight ones is no more threatening to Christian marriage than government recognition of atheist, Muslim, Shinto or pagan marriage.

But my eighth grade memories and many others from growing up in Montana (one of the eleven states that just banned gay marriage) tell me the motivations behind these votes are not logical constructions about the need for religious morals in building social values; they represent something much darker. Though it is nearly impossible to quantify, homophobia played a huge part in getting people to vote against same-sex marriage. These state amendments don't merely invite or threaten future restrictions on same-sex rights. They **are** discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) people, which is why they not only subvert the separation

of church and state but also violate the message of Christ so many Christians thought they were voting to protect. I can find no better expression of this idea than the following passage from the book *Credo*, by William Sloan Coffin, a former Yale chaplain:

"It is not Scripture that creates hostility to homosexuality, but rather hostility to homosexuals that prompts some Christians to recite a few sentences from Paul and retain passages from an otherwise discarded Old Testament law code. In abolishing slavery and in ordaining women we've gone beyond biblical literalism. It's time we did the same with gays and lesbians. The problem is not how to reconcile homosexuality with scriptural passages that condemn it, but rather how to reconcile the rejection and punishment of homosexuals with the love of Christ. It can't be done. So instead of harping on what's "natural," let's talk of what's "normal," what operates according to the norm. For Christians the norm is Christ's love. If people can show the tenderness and constancy in caring that honors Christ's love, what matters their sexual orientation? Shouldn't a relationship be judged by its inner worth rather than by its outer

appearance? When has a monopoly on durable life-warming love been held by legally wed heterosexuals?"

Hate is a poor agency for democratic expression, and despite the positive connotation associated with "the voice of the people," I have heard people's voices saying very ugly things. Let us remember that interracial marriages were illegal in many states until 1967, and that Christians in those states undoubtedly used very similar arguments (never theologically sound) to rail against them. Groups preaching fear and hatred in order to distract from true problems have often arrogated the arguments of stability and tradition to oppress minorities. These state initiatives, though passed just this last election, are an old, tired phenomenon that we should have rejected long ago. They are not sound by any logic, violating the extension of equal rights to all members of this country, the separation of church and state and the universal, unqualified love Christ brought into the world. The irony is that they have proven the flexibility of our government; it was mass mobilization by certain groups that got them passed, but in this case such democratic action was a blow against equality and Christian love.

More information...

Last year, a constitutional amendment was introduced in Congress that would define marriage as only between a man and a woman. The Senate fell far short of passing the amendment last year (they need a 2/3 majority). However, after 13 states banned same-sex marriage in the last election, there is more momentum and support for a constitutional amendment. Republicans plan to reintroduce the amendment this year and call for a vote before the 2006 elections.

source: Espo, David. "Senators to Press for Gay Marriage Ban." 24 Jan 2005.

The Amendment

H.J. Resolution 56/S.J. Resolution 26 states:

"Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this Constitution nor the constitution of any state, nor state or federal law, shall be construed to require that marital status or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon unmarried couples or groups."

Visit Human Rights Campaign:
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Same-Sex Marriage, Philosophy, and Reality TV

by Lindsey Webb

Marriage is not simply the joining of two people for life. It is also the recognition of their union by society—by the people around them and by the law. In *A Theory of Justice*, philosopher John Rawls outlines principles of justice that a just society should employ. According to his theory, the more important of these two principles is that “each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.” Rawls goes on to say that none of these basic liberties can be taken away from any person in society without the reduction of rights benefiting all involved. These principles, like the US Constitution, promote an equality in which no person’s happiness is valued above any others, and is not valued above or below the entire society, but rather is in accordance with it. The rights of same-sex couples, according to this doctrine, are violated every day because they are not allowed the right to marry as different-sex couples are, and there is no justification that cites benefits to US society as a whole.

According to the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, marriage in the US currently affords a husband and wife over 1,400 rights that are unavailable to unmarried couples. For example, consider a gay man who is critically injured in a car accident. His partner of twenty-five years is not guaranteed the right to see him. If a critical medical decision needs to be made, his partner is not able to make it for him, even though he may be the only one who knows the injured man’s wishes. Then, if the injured man dies, his partner is excluded from many rights afforded to married couples. He a) does not have social security benefits available to him, b) must pay estate taxes on any property or housing inherited from his deceased partner and c) is excluded from pension benefits. Even

though same-sex couples live in much the same way different-sex couples live (Census 2000 estimated that there are 601,209 same-sex households in the United States), they are exempt from many of the rights that married couples enjoy.

It is true that same-sex couples are allowed, in a few states, to enter into contracts such as “civil unions” and “domestic partnerships.” However, according to HRCF, civil unions are only legal in Vermont, and domestic partnerships only in California, Washington D.C., Hawaii, Maine and New Jersey. Neither of these contracts guarantees all of the rights given to married couples.

Also, neither civil unions nor domestic partnerships are recognized across state lines or by the federal government. Even if civil unions and domestic partnerships were legalized in every state, gay and lesbian couples’ rights would still be significantly less than those of married couples. This discrimination is still justified only by the fact that both partners are male or female, lacking any proof that allowing them the same rights would harm the rest of society.

Perhaps the biggest argument facing same-sex marriage is that it weakens the whole institution. Marriage was originally intended for a man and a woman with the purpose, as Knight says, to raise children in a healthy and stable environment. Different-sex couples have been entering into this often-religious ceremony for hundreds, maybe thousands of years, and it stands on a strong foundation of tradition.

However, just because something has been done for years and has been accepted by the masses doesn’t make it morally acceptable. Slavery was accepted in North America for hundreds of years until society realized it was wrong to dehumanize millions of people. Concerning marriage,

interracial unions weren’t legal until a Supreme Court ruling made them so in 1967. Today, interracial marriages are widely accepted in the US and it’s a wonder to some people why they were illegal for so long. Tradition is a weak argument against same-sex marriage because in a changing society that promotes diversity, it’s imperative that the laws accommodate.

If opponents of same-sex marriage really want to use the “weakening the institution of marriage” argument, it would only take a flip of the TV switch to see marriage weakened in another way. Reality TV has taken marriage to mainstream commercial heights, showing programs such as “The Bachelor” and “The Bachelorette,” in which one woman or man meets a host of suitors and has a certain amount of time to fall in love and choose one of them to spend the rest of his or her life with...in theory. Even more of an insult to marriage is “Joe Millionaire,” where women meet a man believing he is in the possession of a huge inheritance, only to realize later that it was a ploy to see if they loved him in the first place or only wanted his money.

These shows display marriage values at their worst. Marriage is becoming a tool to make money or gain fame. Many of the people who apply to be on these shows no doubt intend to have something to do with “fifteen minutes of fame” or the hope of being “discovered.” Amid a flurry of ratings and dollar signs, marriage is barely discernable. It seems a route to money, a route to recognition, and a means to a type of publicity that portrays holy matrimony as something cheap, easy to enter and easy to cancel.

I dare the opponents of same-sex marriage to condone marriage of people on shows like these, who are caught in the whirlwind of instant fame, barely know each other and are unfit to spend the rest of

their lives together on a whim. I dare them to deny marriage to a pair of women or men who have spent forty years of their lives together, their relationship built on mutual love and trust. Deny them the rights of different-sex couples whose relationships theirs practically mirrors. Deny them the right to buy a house together because they can't sign jointly for a loan even though

they've lived together for years. Deny them the right to enter the ultimate contract, to make public their commitment to each other and be recognized in the eyes of the law, just because they happen to both be men or women.

It all comes down to equality. This country is about every person having the same opportunities. The Constitution guar-

antees life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness to each one of the citizens who lives under it. For many couples, the pursuit of happiness means marriage, and it would be a gross misappropriation of rights to refuse that chance for any couple.

Different Perspectives... an e-mail conversation

Due to the separation of church and state that is supposed to govern US politics, making a political decision about a primarily religious institution would issue a devastating blow to the moral fabric of our county.

My suggestion is amend the concept of marriage in an entirely different way, and that is to recognize it as a religiously-based coupling that the state recognizes as a civic union, which itself is indiscriminate of gender.

Making the state responsible only for civic unions, irrespective of gender, and leaving the concept of marriage to be dictated by the religious organizations to which it rightfully belongs would not only secure the sanctity of marriage, but also that of the US Constitution.

- Aaron Dennis, PLU alumnus

Aaron, Why should we suddenly retile the license? Why not continue to call it a marriage license? It never has required any kind of sacred or religious affiliation. Atheists have always been empowered to receive marriage licenses. Why should folks suddenly act as if the marriage license is "sacred" and requires religious approval?

-Prof. Beth Kraig

Beth, I made the suggestion based on European models, and figuring the verbiage was the primary problem in the issue...I also figured the administration had to be confused about the word's usage because religious groups define it differently than the government.

-Aaron

Aaron, Actually, the different European models offer a good example of the problems. In the Netherlands and Belgium, and probably Spain within a year or two, marriage licenses will continue as they have been and simply be issued to all couples, regardless of gender. This is called "marriage equality."

In countries like France and Germany, there are "civil unions" (under various names), but rather than have these go to ALL couples, they coexist with marriage licenses which still can ONLY go to different-sex couples. This is NOT equality. It is rather a form of segregation. "Civil union" is the name of the back of the bus where the lesser people (same-sex couples) must sit.

The leaders of the movement to create the Constitutional Amendment to "protect" marriage [...] are fully aware that licenses have nothing to do with religion. They know that VERY well. But that is how bigotry works...it always uses false rhetoric, false arguments and false concepts to stir up hatred and arrogance in the "favored" people.

I fervently hope that at least some different-sex couples of conscience will, therefore, refuse now to get licenses and will continue that refusal. It took white people refusing to patronize segregated institutions for Jim Crow to end.

-Beth

In the US:

*Suicide is the leading cause of death among GLBT youth

*50% of all GLBT youth report that their parents reject them due to their sexual orientation

*26% of GLBT youth are forced to leave home because of their sexual orientation

*About 28% of GLBT teens drop out of high school because of discomfort

All facts from http://www.pflagphoenix.org/education/youth_stats.html

For Immediate Release: Monday, March 22, 2004

[HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN]: CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION CAN'T BE CONCEALED WITH TWEAKS AND MANEUVERING

WASHINGTON — An announcement Monday from the authors of the Federal Marriage Amendment to tweak the language of their proposal won't disguise this dangerous ploy to change the Constitution, said the Human Rights Campaign.

"This is an attempt to change the Constitution from a vessel for freedom to a tool of discrimination," said HRC President Cheryl Jacques. "For more than 200 years, the Constitution has been amended to expand individual rights, not restrict them. No matter how you word it, this amendment discriminates against millions of Americans."

There is broad opposition to this effort, including Republicans Bob Barr and Alan Simpson, the NAACP, civil rights leader Rep. John Lewis and the National Women's Law Center.

The Human Rights Campaign is the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender [LGBT] political organization with members throughout the country. It effectively lobbies Congress, provides campaign support and educates the public to ensure that LGBT Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.

Seeds of Patriarchy

words and photos

by Amy Post

While abroad in Trinidad and Tobago during Spring semester 2004, I got hit on every day. Walking down the street, men would incessantly catcall me and practically every other woman, Trinidadian and foreigner alike, hissing and sucking their teeth. It was flattering maybe the first or second time, but by the third time in the first day, I was sick of being harassed.

One of the things I found most shocking about Trinidadian culture was how brash men were about desires to have sex with women. Whether dancing in a club, having a drink at a bar, or shopping at the grocery store, my women friends and I rarely found refuge from comments about the way we looked. People were very friendly, which I loved; they greeted everyone on the street and were quick to strike up a conversation with a stranger. But when these conversations turned to direct propositions, I got angry and frustrated. I'm sure some of the guys who hit on me would have been fine had I given them a chance—but they never got the chance. Their harassment prevented me from wanting to know them. I did meet and get to know quite a few delightful

men, but they were much more respectful than the catcalling men on the street.

It was hard to deal with my strong negative feelings at being objectified. As much as I tried to have an open mind and accept the culture as it was, as a person from the US, a female, a white person and a feminist, my experience showed me things about Trinidad and Tobago that I liked and things I did not like. The sexism in Trinidad and Tobago is more blatant than it is in the United States. In the United States, we have become aware of sexism and it is no longer socially acceptable to be openly sexist. But sexism still exists in subtler forms, and women in the United States still face discrimination. For example, women are still objectified in the media. In order to become successful

in the business or politics, they often have to adopt masculine characteristics, become “more like men” to be treated as equals in the workplace. Even if a woman has a career, she is often still stuck with most of the housework. In many US churches, women are not allowed to be ministers or read scripture.

In Trinidad and Tobago women face this same kind of discrimination, for example, in the workplace and at school. They don't get the same pay as men and typically work in secretarial or other “female” occupations. The difference between Trinidad and Toba-

rior to feminine power—creates a hierarchal social structure that dictates people's interactions. It is apparent in not only popular music and everyday life, but in most of the islands' religions. Many Roman Catholics, Muslims, Hindus and people who belong to African and Afro-Caribbean religions share this value.

European colonialism originally established patriarchal structures in Trinidad and Tobago. The colonists did their best to change the cultures of the people they conquered, enslaved or employed to be more like their own. They enforced their own ideas of gender roles; women were expected to be physically frail and subordinate to men. Women were never supposed to be educated or powerful, because then they might challenge men's power. They also preached a white beauty standard; white women were considered more beautiful than dark-skinned women. This is one example of how sexism and racism go hand-in-hand. Patriarchy creates power dichotomies that place one kind of people over another. Men were better than women. White

people were better than black people. Christians were better than Hindus. Although colonialism and slavery ended long ago, they have left a legacy that maintains these power dichotomies. In many ways, men, white people and Christians are still considered better than women, non-white people and non-Christians.

It is easy to judge Europeans and colonialism because we can definitively say slavery, the conquest of indigenous people and changing the cultures of the enslaved and indigenous are very bad things. I knew this before I went to Trinidad and Tobago, and once there, I saw relics of colonialism everywhere. A white beauty standard still exists. As a white person, I had certain privileges the non-white Trinidadian did not.



This building is the City Hall of San Fernando, a southern Trinidadian city. The architecture is an example of the continuing European colonial influence in Trinidad.

go and the US is that people are much more upfront with their sexism in T&T. The incessant catcalls and comments about my appearance shocked me with their directness. I found myself hating this blatant sexism. I also found myself asking why. Why is the sexism so prevalent and shameless in Trinidad and Tobago? I also found myself hating these feelings because I felt like I was judging their culture in relation to my own. Was I saying to myself, well, in these specific ways the States are better? Is that ok?

Of course, not every Trinidadian was sexist; like everywhere, it varied from person to person. But there I couldn't escape the patriarchal structures entrenched in the society or the sexism they created. Patriarchy—the idea that masculine power is supe-

These privileges made me very uncomfortable because I didn't earn them, and thus felt I did not deserve them. The easy reaction to this situation is to blame my European ancestors. But the whole picture is not that simple, and this reaction doesn't solve the problem. The European colonialists are long dead, but the legacy of colonialism still exists. To make things even more complicated, there are other, non-European forms of patriarchy in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is hard to pick apart the culture and identify which aspects of sexism and patriarchy are leftovers from colonialism, which aspects are from non-colonial culture, and which aspects are a syncretism of many different factors. Many Trinidadians practice African religions, Hinduism or Islam, which are all patriarchal religions. Certain uniquely Caribbean cultural aspects are also patriarchal. For example, the Afro-Caribbean religion RastafarI draws from Christianity and African traditions to create a new religion that is also patriarchal. These non-Christian and Christian religions all maintain a structure in which women are submissive to men. This trait is also a part of the overall Trinidadian culture. Women are expected to submit to men in all aspects of life. The role of women is to bear and raise children. It is not unusual for a woman to have her first child by age 18, before she is married. This motherly role is both compulsory and celebrated by society. Plus, men are expected to flaunt their masculinity, which leads to other problems, such as the spread of HIV/AIDS.

There is a stigma associated with condom use in Trinidad and Tobago; they are seen as a threat to manliness. In fact, many men don't worry about getting a woman pregnant because having many children is also a sign of manliness. However, these attitudes seem most prevalent in older people. Most of the young people I met, primarily at the University of the West Indies, were well educated about condom use and talked about it openly; the stigma didn't seem to affect them.

HIV/AIDS is a problem in Trinidad and Tobago, just like the rest of the world. Before I went to Trinidad I had never met

anyone with the virus. It was something that existed, but didn't affect me. As there are a lot more people in Trinidad with HIV/AIDS than in the US (3.2% and 0.6%, respectively¹), I likely met someone there with HIV/AIDS. But I never spoke to someone who was open about being HIV positive. I think most are secretive about it because of the attached stigma. They face harsh discrimination, ranging from rejection by friends and family to getting fired from a job. Only once, at a party, I heard a rumor that a guy we knew had AIDS. I don't know if it was true, but it changed the way I thought about AIDS; suddenly I had a face to put with the



These Trinidadian boys are students at a Catholic School. European Colonialists introduced Catholicism into the West Indies. These boys will learn patriarchal ideas in their school.

disease.

The high HIV/AIDS rate is affected by the stigma associated with condom use and by common infidelity. As many older Trinidadians purport, abstinence until marriage is the best way to stop the spread of the virus—but this idea is horribly out of touch with reality. Some of the older people I met refused to acknowledge that most people have sex with more than one person in their lifetime. (We have this same problem in the US, as the Bush Administration pushes abstinence-only sex-education in public schools.) This attitude illustrates a generational gap, as many of the younger people are well educated about HIV/AIDS and will do a lot to protect themselves and stop the spread of the disease.

There are both women and men fighting sexism and patriarchy in Trinidad and Tobago. Many of the university students were

quite progressive when it came to sex and patriarchal resistance. Many of them challenged traditional gender roles; the women were getting an education and aspiring to have a career. The university was nice because it was the one place nobody catcalled me. While I was taking classes at the university in Trinidad, I volunteered at an organization called Women Working for Social Progress. Two of this group's main projects focus on reducing domestic violence and increasing women's control over reproduction.

While having a great time in Trinidad and Tobago, getting to know and enjoy a different culture, meeting new people, and exploring these questions, I had trouble dealing with the things that went against my US, feminist values. It wasn't ok with me that people were sexist, but I felt like I was judging them unfairly because I was comparing their culture to my own and to my ideas of how a culture should be. Some of the sexism I met is a relic of colonialism, but some of it comes from other sources. I spent five months in Trinidad and Tobago, but I am not a Trinidadian and so do not completely understand the culture. Am I falling into the role of the paternal

colonialist by criticizing their power structures?

There are aspects of my own culture that I like and aspects I dislike, but I am "allowed" to be critical of the United States because it is my own culture. How then, am I supposed to reconcile all these contradictory feelings? I don't know the answer to this question, and maybe there isn't an answer. But my study abroad experience helped me to see the complexities of the world. I learned to function in and enjoy a different culture, which was probably the most difficult thing I've ever done. I found contradictions everywhere and somehow learned to allow them to coexist peacefully and not-so-peacefully in my mind. I ended up with more questions than answers. Mostly, I learned that there are no easy answers.

¹ CIA World Factbook. www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/

Anesthetic Beauty by Rebekka Esbjornson

*This body--
this body is no supermodel
scorns those size 3 jeans
dismisses tiny tank tops
clinging tight revealing*

*reflections do not lie
curves shadowed by lamplight
rounded thighs wide hips
womanly breasts soft and smooth
feminine*

*this body is mine it's mine
a glorious entity of self*

*but they tell me i am wrong
tell me no one
no one will want that body
lose half your mass
till your skeleton sticks out
odd and angular
your face is sunken and hollow
but it's oh beautiful
you are so beautiful
get a pair of plastic boobs
round and luscious and oh so squeezable
for those roaming hands will wish
to touch to touch to touch
hide underneath a new skin
masked by the layers of makeup
until they cannot see
somewhere under all this mess
underneath the layers of lies
and the destroyed innocence
she is real
it's what they want
are you listening
it's what they want
and when you're crying
you won't know why or what or how
because you're gone
shattered and dead inside
empty as a dried husk
where once you knew
full with knowledge of what you were
but at least you're beautiful
and it's what they want
it's all they want*

right

An Unholy Miracle

by Nathan Bendickson

(Italicized song lyrics taken from Joseph Arthur's "September Baby")

Your holiness is gone.

And he's right. The voice sings from two speakers, perched by the window like sad angels, mourning the small people on the thin carpet in the small room.

Sometimes love can make you sad.

We are naked and self-conscious. We are acting. I lean back and try to ignore the song while she kisses my body.

*Until you find where you belong,
you'll dream of what you never had.*

Where I belong. Earlier that day we decided to break up. "But I wouldn't mind, you know...still doing this sometimes," she said. "Doing what?" I asked like I didn't know. We stood there after a long hug, not backing away, her hipbones inside mine. We stared into open eyes as friends. We held each other—my hands sliding up beneath the back of her shirt, her fingers sneaking

under my collar—as friends. We kissed as friends. We eased our bodies to the floor as friends.

*I can feel the falling leaves filling up
my vacant mind.*

My vacant mind. Leaves are filling up my mind—leaves that bloomed, even flourished, knowing they would fall someday. I feel the dry, brittle corners scrape against the inside of my head.

*When I fall onto my knees I pray
you don't leave me behind.*

She touches my cheek and wonders what it means. I kiss her forehead and ask myself why. We get on our knees and pull our bodies closer to each other, the skin across our hipbones touching. We do what we've been doing for months. And we wonder what it means.

*Summertime is over. I don't owe you
nothing. When you say you're leaving
I want you to hold on. Summertime is
over. I don't owe you nothing.*



Illustration by Jamie Forstund



I have to hurry up and type this...

...before I come because it's gonna be soon and I don't want to lose these thoughts to that too-intrinsic rush. I just took a bath with radiohead. with thom's voice. radio. head. think about it, descamisados, and i noticed that my breasts float, like life rafts or petals or fruit flies in wine glasses (it's true, when you're in the bath your breasts float, becoming perfectly formed cylinders of mother nature's design; they are the volcanoes on a 3-D map of paradise) and I thought, that's the most beautiful goddamn thing I've ever seen, and had to touch them. they were wet and slippery from the too warm water and my patchouli bath, and my hands couldn't help but slide all over them, and then push them to float in my own gratified waters, right there in the bathtub. and I thought about what? bodies, colors, smells, noises, eager faces I've seen below me while propped up on elbows, that time in cool august night on the front porch, no one you'd know, no one I'd admit, the guy with the nose ring, the darkness and the night, learning to salsa, posing nude, tree canopies against the sun, pulling out wine corks with my teeth, the karma police, girls with curly hair, my current bedfellow especially, and well, let's just say that anyone that went to that overrated Halloween party knows that hands will and do wander. and so here I am, on the edge of crisis, about to enter orbit for awhile, sitting here in an oversized towel, my legs wrapped around this squeaky desk chair like

a cowboy's, and writing about it, alone in my freezing room, in Microsoft word, the least sexy computer program EVER and why. why, the fuck, so to speak, would anyone do this to themselves? I'll tell you. for that moment, that singular moment writhing on the floor of the tub, water draining from beneath me, as thom (radio...head) burst out with "wrapped up and hanging around" and the wax from the candle spilled on my ankle and I achieved temporary nirvana, I forgot. I forgot the mistakes I've made when intentionally distanced from my own body and intuition. I forgot those who I can't forget, but would rather. my body forgave me of the spermicides, the condoms, the hormones, the bad sex, the good sex, the really really good sex, the sex I can't remember, the Disease, the pregnancy scares, the ignorant doctors, the hurts I've caused and can't rectify, the manipulations, the intents, the politics, the regret—my body and my mind forgot and granted me this brief forgiveness. I had to write this down before I became too free to tell you: bathtub writhing* is how to forget.

*No, that cannot be the name of your band. Unless I get a free shirt. And tambourine privileges.

THE MATRIX GENDER SURVEY

Choose One:

Male

Female

OR

What is your gender
TODAY?

