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UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA FEMINIST AND QUEER REVIEW

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Volume 2 Issue 2

Mission Statement

We are a Feminist and Queer Collective working to counter misconceptions surrounding Women's and Gender Studies through the publication of an annual Feminist and Queer review. We are increasing awareness and knowledge of Feminist and Queer issues through the voices, opinions, and experiences of University of Manitoba undergraduate students from all faculties. We firmly believe in multiplicity of meaning and we therefore reject the idea of singular definitions. For this reason, we are often left with more questions than answers. But, through our publication we strive to empower ourselves and other undergraduate students with the tools necessary to address these important questions.

This publication will be a catalyst for change.

We would like to thank the following donors for their generous support:

- Margaret Laurence Endowment Fund
- University of Manitoba Women's and Gender Studies Program

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We would also like to sincerely thank everyone who contributed their work to this issue.

Editors' note

This publication is the Feminist and Queer Collective's eighth annual FAQ review. Working in a non-hierarchal manner, the members of the collective seek to provide undergraduate students with an opportunity to contribute to, engage with, and participate in feminist and queer discourse.

The FAQ review stands to actively challenge and complicate traditional notions of "academia"; allowing undergraduate students to value and draw from personal experiences, passions, and knowledge in order to articulate feminist and queer topics, interests, and issues.

In the same vein, the FAQ collective seeks to dispel myths surrounding who and what constitutes a feminist and, by association, the individuals who engage in Women's and Gender Studies. The Women's and Gender Studies department and faculty is multifaceted and, thus, allows for the interdisciplinary and personal development of its students. We, as the collective, want to shed light on the value of our Women's and Gender Studies degrees and the courses we take within the department.

Out of respect for the Indigenous peoples of Manitoba, we in the Feminist and Queer collective, and in the Women's and Gender Studies Program also acknowledge that the University of Manitoba is located on Treaty 1 Territory, the original lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

We hope that this publication not only showcases feminist and queer voices, but also inspires future and furthered engagement with feminist and queer issues and theories. We thank-you, our readers, for taking interest in feminist and queer issues, and for supporting this dissemination and expansion of social and political consciousness.

Editorial Board

Sylvie Côté
Cole Hornick
Emily Lowes
Johise Namwira
Trinda Penniston
Ashley Simms

Trigger Warning

This is a general trigger warning as we do not want to assume what may trigger or offend our readers.

The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of those involved in its creation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Retribution of a Woman
Tabitha Stephens

02 Gender, Sexuality, and the Sci-Fi Imagination
Shannon Bloodworth

05 A Girl Without a Name
Shivam Trinetrah

06 I Am. I Will.
Elizabeth McMechan

09 Asian Women in a Western World
Lea Tessier

13 That Girl
Danielle Sherwood

14 "Little Histories"
Excavating Women's Histories from Museums in Victorian Literature
Jessie Krahn

18 Living Room
Aleah Isaak

19 A Manifesto for the Missing, Murdered, and Silenced Women
Alina Champagne

23 Coming Out (I'm Gay)
James Turowski

25 Damaged, Recovering
Sharice Molgat

27 Body Positivity, Labia Pulling and Labiaplasty
Chloe Vickar

29 My Activism
Meet the FAQ Collective

43 Commodity Fetishism
Emily Lowes

45 I Am Fine
Emily Lowes

47 A Brief Critique and Analysis of the Discourses on Black Feminist Theory
Trinda Penniston

50 Men & Feminism
Cole Hornick

53 Sex Work and the Effects of Racialized and Gendered Discourse in Canadian Legislation: Critical Response to Smith's Cultural Genocide Article
Johise Namwira

55 Rights Influencing why Women and Girls in the United States are Manipulated into Sex Trafficing
Sylvie Côté

57 Confessions from an Undergrad who was Very Close to Dropping Out
Ashley Simms

RETRIBUTION OF A WOMAN

Tabitha Stephens

I am bleeding out my pain
I see the blood coming out of my ovaries
As I was once free from lust

The rape tore me apart
And now I see red everywhere
I sensed his presence
He was intruding my boundaries, emitting aggression
I knew he was there, I could sense it
Fear overtook me, it paralyzed me
My perspective of life changed ever since

I tried to warn other women of his presence
No one understood
As other women were getting hurt, I felt helpless
The only thing comforting me were my beliefs

I asked the gods to punish him
He will see blood again
Blood not of an innocent
Blood representing justice
His own blood
And he will know that I am there

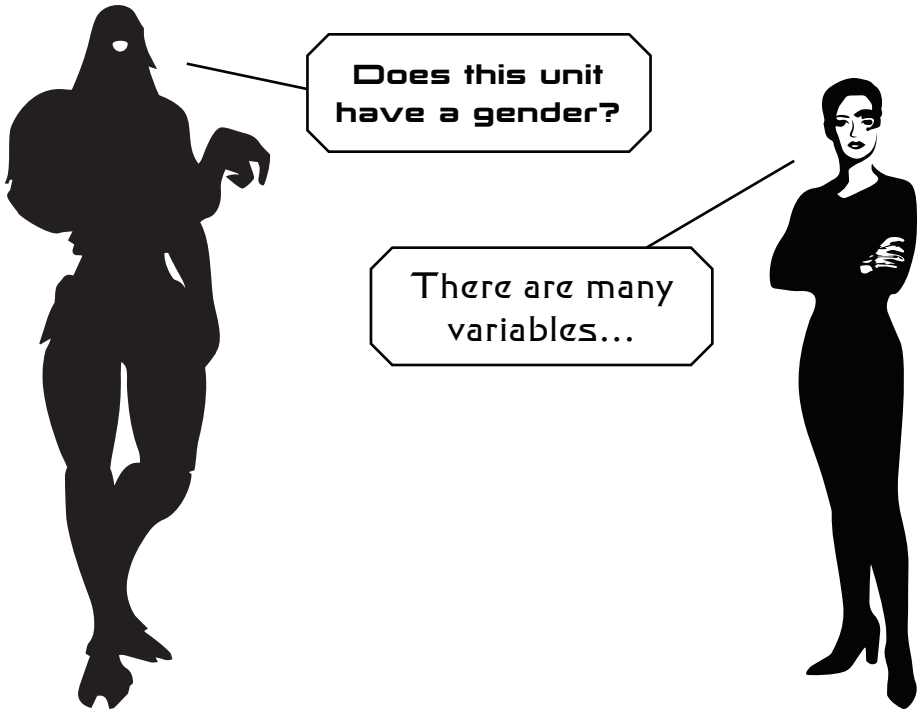
GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND THE SCI-FI IMAGINATION

Shannon Bloodworth

In my opinion, there are few genres that have as much imaginative power as science fiction. The ability to create a universe from the ground up provides great opportunities to reimagine and critique gender and sexual norms, as well as offering alternatives. The sci-fi genre has great positive potential, however, there are plenty of things to be critical of. The alien worlds and races in sci-fi are often a reflection of real world issues and minority groups; as such, they are not free of biases. Queer characters in sci-fi are often established through coding, in lieu of actual canon representation, and the reliance on alien races for representation may also have the effect of further alienating queer identities.

Representation is important and when done well, has many positive outcomes. It can introduce audiences to various queer identities and concepts like gender fluidity, non-binary genders, polyamory, etc. Queer people get to see themselves represented in their favourite books and TV shows, which fosters a sense of solidarity with the characters and also with other queer fans. Even if the portrayal is problematic, at the very least it encourages a conversation about homophobic tropes and how writers, producers, and we as thoughtful media consumers might do better.

I always pay special attention to how sci-fi works treat robots, aliens and other non-human life forms because the characteristics most commonly assigned to these beings parallel those of real life oppressed minorities. For example, having no discernable gender or being attracted to multiple genders/sexes is an obvious parallel to the LGBTQ community. Non-human characters often take things extremely literally and process and express emotions in unconventional ways, which are behaviours associated with some developmental disorders and mental illnesses. As well,



fictional non-humans and real life minority groups have both had their humanity called into question and it has been hotly debated whether or not they deserve basic human rights. How we handle the portrayal of these fictional characters says much about how we feel about their real life counterparts.

Sci-fi often allegorizes real world identities, however, relatively few works have actual canon representation, instead relying on coding to get the point across. Coding is when an author heavily implies that a character is a certain way – through their appearance, mannerisms and speech – without stating it outright. This is problematic because it reinforces stereotypes and does nothing to help increase visibility of marginalized groups. An argument I often hear in regards to coding and the use of labels is that it would not make sense for aliens to use the same words as humans do to describe themselves. A fair point, but humans rarely get to use those labels either.

It is important to consider who gets coded as queer in sci-fi. While the genre has proven significant in reimagining gender and sexual norms, there is a problem with relying too much on non-human examples. If robots and aliens are all the representation queer people get, it implies that queerness is strange, foreign, and decidedly not human. Their queer-coded identities are a big part of what marks these characters as non-human and efforts to humanize them often involve imposing gendered pronouns, traditional gender roles and heteronormative sexual behaviours on them. This sentiment appears throughout the sci-fi genre and across multiple forms of media, including books, video games and television.

In the book series Lilith's Brood, author Octavia Butler invents a gender non-conforming alien race called the Oankali. The Oankali have three sexes: male, female, and ooloi, which is comparable to a genderqueer person. In her initial encounter with the Oankali, human Lilith attempts to assign them genders, as seen in this conversation with Jdahya, a male Oankali:

> Lilith glanced at the humanoid body, wondering how humanlike it really was. "I don't mean any offense," she said, "but are you male or female?"
>
> "It's wrong to assume I must be a sex you're familiar with," it said, "but as it happens, I'm male."
>
> Good. "It" could become "he" again. Less awkward. (Butler, 1989, p. 13)

Lilith's automatic reflex is to try to understand the Oankali in human terms. To her credit, she becomes more open-minded over the course of the series, but from this first encounter readers are made to understand

that the Oankali's physical appearance and concept of non-binary genders is unfamiliar, "awkward," and that applying the gendered pronouns humans use is the best way to make them relatable.

Legion, a Geth from the video game series Mass Effect, is another example of how the concept of humanity is tied to the use of traditionally gendered pronouns. The Geth are a race of sentient machines, true artificial intelligence, and have no concept of gender. Over the course of three games, the Geth transition away from a hive mind and become individuals. Their overarching narrative sparks a debate about what constitutes life, sentience, and humanity. Legion is considered to have achieved its individualized personality (i.e. becomes human) when it refers to itself as "he" instead of "it" (Bioware, 2012).

The Discovering Humanity trope is a common one for robots. EDI from Mass Effect and Seven of Nine from Star Trek: Voyager are both encouraged to find their humanity; and a big part of that is adopting a more feminine appearance and finding a male partner. When EDI is first introduced in Mass Effect 2, she is an artificial intelligence embedded in the computers on the spaceship Normandy. As such, she does not have a physical body and appears as an amorphous hologram when she speaks to the crew. In Mass Effect 3, EDI's program is downloaded into a synthetic body with a distinctly feminine appearance; she now has curves, breasts, hair, and the markings on her body resemble lingerie. As part of helping her to find her humanity, the player can encourage her to pursue a romantic relationship with Jeff "Joker" Moreau, the Normandy's pilot.

Seven of Nine, from the television series Star Trek: Voyager, is a robot-human hybrid and a member of the Borg. The Borg are an alien race made up of several different species that have received cybernetic enhancements and been integrated into a hive mind called The Collective. In the episode "Someone to Watch Over Me," the Voyager crew attempts to help Seven rediscover her humanity by teaching her how to date. This involves dressing her in stereotypically feminine clothing and finding her a suitable male companion (McNeill, 1999). EDI's and Seven's story arcs heavily imply that humanity is constituted by adopting traditional gender roles and establishing heteronormative relationships. Or, more insidiously, that one must pass as cisgender and heterosexual in order to be considered fully human.

Fictional narratives can have serious real world implications and it is important to always look at them with a critical eye. I did not come here just to complain though, so here are some suggestions I have for the sci-fi genre. Moving forward I would like to see more characters that are explicitly canonically queer, not just coded. Using the language of the LGBTQ community normalizes queer identities and is one of the easiest ways to challenge heteronormative assumptions. We also need to create queer human characters, not just aliens, so that we are not establishing a pattern where queer equals strange or alien and heterosexual equals normal. This next one should be obvious but given how often finding humanity becomes synonymous with finding the quickest way to blend in with normal people, I feel compelled to mention it: stop forcing queer characters to conform to cisnormative and heteronormative standards. It might be easier to imagine alternatives if we diversify our writing teams. The great irony of sci-fi is that we need to invent alien races in order to think outside the heteronormative box when there are groups of people that currently exist that are already doing so. Getting a wider range of perspectives will help us to create stories and characters with more depth and nuance. We can dream big with sci-fi because anything goes. It would be foolish not to take that opportunity for all it is worth.

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A GIRL WITHOUT A NAME

Shivam Trinetrah

Dense foggy night
a girl was going back to home
walking on the footpath by the dome
dreaming of the future so bright.
When she behind her some shadow felt
she ran, fled driflty, but tired feet, and she knelt.
Three men like hyneas fiercely on her jumped,
and all the humanity they've dumped.
Help, Help, Help three times she cried,
neither a human nor the night back replied.
With red palms to free herself she tried,
but all the power from her body dried.
When those monsters have their senses satisfied
they ran away somewhere to hide.
The naked bleeding girl on the road
with foggy mind weeping she was.
No one came, no one helped
in vain she for aid yelped.
People with no ears are busy and happily sleep,
Aftermath they march lighting the candles and weep.
Dense hazy night
All the universe took away the eyes from that site.
Scars, wounds on the girl remained,
Divine, sacred lady brutally stained.

I Am
I Will

Elizabeth McMechan

I AM humiliated at 12 when men make sexual comments across the street while I am walking with my father.

I AM hostile and sullen as I start to experience changes in my body.

I AM stunned to learn at 13, before I was born, a pedophile had molested young, female members of my extended family.

I AM sickened to discover my beloved uncles dismissed the abuse, silenced the victims, and invited the abuser into their homes for coffee.

I AM confused at 15, when a woman arrives at a Christmas party with her boyfriend, her face bruised, lip swollen. I am ashamed when I say nothing.

I AM disgusted at 16, when describing a local date rape a classmate tells me "Well, she was kind of asking for it, you should've seen what she was wearing." Following that exchange,

I AM anxious that I might "ask for it" by wearing the wrong thing.

I AM appalled at 17 when I hear a well respected man in my rural farming community say, "I would rather vote for a dead dog than vote for a woman."

I AM the daughter of a woman elected to local government, she won that election despite misogynistic old farmers.

I AM entitled to respect from my partner, that or nothing at all.

I AM okay with nothing at all.

I AM a different person behind my mask of femininity.

I AM tired knowing that I am worth 70 cents to a man's dollar. Tired of the thought of the harassment women in my life have been subjected to at their place of work and tired of wondering when it will be my turn.

I AM afraid when I walk to my car alone past dark, my keys stuck between my fingers, knuckles white.

I AM sensitive and injured. Or at least that's what I am told at 19 when I raise my voice in the face of patriarchal rhetoric. I am not "sensitive". I am informed, and

I AM *FUCKING ANGRY*

I AM told by this man, that as a woman, I am meant to be tucked under a man's arm and protected. I recognize the language he is using and throw it back like a dead fish at his feet. I don't need to be tucked under his fucking arm.

I AM legitimized by the knowledge that,

I AM more than a body starved for his protection,

I AM more than this man sees me as. Feminism has taught me that

I AM a rebellion.

I WILL support those who experience structural oppression in ways I will never understand.

I WILL be an ally.

I WILL listen.

When it is my time, **I WILL** speak and **I WILL** be heard.

I WILL rise when I feel weak.

I WILL reach out my hand, and **I WILL** take the hand of those offering their support.

I WILL be outraged.

And **I WILL** not apologize for my outrage.

I WILL not wait patiently for change to come.

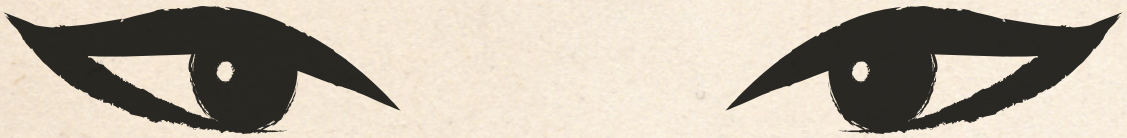
I WILL never again remain silent in the face of abuse.

I WILL never again accept my fear as inevitable. **I WILL** fight.

And **I WILL** find peace when oppressive structures have been dismantled.

I AM a feminist.

I AM a revolution.



ASIAN WOMEN

in a Western World

Lea Tessier

Throughout the existence of Western colonization and patriarchy, people of colour have been dehumanized in almost all possible ways, be it violence, sexualization, appropriation, or discrimination. The way one is oppressed differs, and it is important to approach intersectionality carefully.

Asian Americans/Canadians have experienced explicit and implicit marginalization in the West for decades, despite this issue in our community often being overlooked. Recent studies show 30% of Asian American students report depression, and 18.8% of them have reported suicide ideals/intentions, a percentage much higher than their peer counterparts (Arat, 2015). It is also reported that half of Asian American children have been bullied (Arat, 2015). Another shocking reality is that the greatest number of sexual exploit and trafficking victims (about 250 000 a year) are young girls in Asia (Zimmerman, Watts, 2002). On a related note, 41-61% of Asian women report to have been victims of sexual violence by an intimate partner (Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, 2012). These numbers are far too high to be coincidental, and yet injustice continues to go unnoticed. It is a conscious decision to turn a blind eye towards the model minority of North America (Huynh, V. W., 2012).

My mother is Chinese, and my father is French Canadian. Attending school in a French division, I was the only non-white child for many years. The occasional bully would come along and violently attack me (physically and verbally) but most of my years spent in grade school were composed of passive aggressive remarks about how I will never reach the same level of normality and decency as my white peers. To them, I was the little Chink, the odd one out, the round-nosed, flat-faced, squint-eyed weirdo. How terrible it is to think that a child learns that they are inferior at such a young age.

Of course as a young adolescent, too much time was spent bleaching my hair and applying makeup too pale for my golden skin tone. The ultimate goal was to white-wash myself as much as possible in order to finally be seen as beautiful as my French Caucasian

friends and the pretty girls on TV. Internal hatred soon settled deeply into my heart and mind because the idea was plastered that being beautiful was correlated to being white.

As I grew, it was apparent that no matter how much effort I put into white-washing myself, I would never be white enough. I tried to change my ethnic expression yet again: rather than whitening myself, I felt it was my duty to fulfill the desires and ideas that Western Patriarchy created about Asian culture. Condescending labels such as the submissive Geisha and delicate Lotus Blossom soon became my new identity. I emptily embraced the warped and racist perception of how an Asian woman should be. I soon found out I was receiving a different form of attention that did not revolve around my lack of European beauty. Statements such as "you're my favorite Asian!" and "you're so pretty for an Asian" were accepted as compliments; internally implying that Asian girls are not inherently pretty or popular. However, at the time, being a white person's accessory seemed better than being a white person's punching bag.

Shame was replaced with objectification, although the internal self-hatred lived on. I mistook fetishism and objectification as love. I turned a blind eye towards the blatant racism and degradation. My lack of Euro-beauty was compensated with Euro-stereotypes. My self-esteem plunged deeper, and the effect of constant objectification of my body and identity took a massive toll on my health. I was constantly conforming to the small, fragile and delicate Asian girl ideas Westerners had of me. Their ideas consumed me completely.

At 16 years old I was admitted to the hospital for anorexia nervosa. My body had withered down to 68 sad pounds. I looked in the mirror and saw a young girl thinking she was not worthy of respect. I spent years shaping myself into the mold that was created from deep systematic marginalization and objectification, and the next two years recovering from the internalized self-hatred. Unfortunately, eating disorders in Asian Women has been increasing at alarming rates, according to feminist Hsui-Lan. By disregarding Asian women's dignities and opinions, and basing their worth only on their appearance, Asian women may begin to internalize the constant objectifying and sexualizing of their bodies (on top of enforced Western beauty standards). Ultimately this could be detrimental towards self-esteem and encourage body-modifying strategies such as eating disorders (Cheng H-L. 2014). The thought that my existence was solely based on pleasing European ideals ate away at my body and my mind, and had I continued these self-destructive habits for another month, said the doctors, my heart would no longer be beating.

Casual racism occurs on a daily basis, and too often are these microaggressions brushed off as harmless. Microaggressions should be treated as a form of racism, and there is evidence of a direct link between experience of these acts of discrimination to depression and/or anxiety in Asian American adolescents (Huynh, V. W., 2012). Smalarz even refers to microaggressions as "modern racism" (Devos, T., Huynh, Q-L., Smalarz, L., 2011). Internalized hatred against "Gooks," "Chinks," and "Zipperheads" is the reason why recent studies show that Asian Americans have become the fastest growing targets of ethnic discrimination (Le, C.N. 2015). Modern racism is just as effective as "traditional racism" in marginalizing and alienating an entire ethnic group.

History perpetually repeats itself. Although immigration laws have always been strict in most countries of the world, only the East Asians faced complete prohibition of immigration. The first North American anti-Chinese policy was passed in 1885, however as conditions in China worsened, Chinese immigrants continued to struggle their way into Canada despite exponentially increasing Head Tax (The Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre, 2008). Unable to keep the Chinese in their poverty-stricken country, the Federal government enacted the Immigration Act, also called the Exclusion Act, July 1st, 1923 (The Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre, 2008). Although the Exclusion Act was repealed in 1947, it was not until 1967 that the federal government issued one homologous set of immigration rules for applicants of all countries; yet, to this day, immigration remains a sensitive and biased subject. To most Canadians, July 1st is a day to celebrate the birth of our (colonized) country. However, there are still Chinese Canadian elders who refer to July 1st as Humiliation Day (The Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre, 2008). Perpetually, the Chinese and other ethnic groups from Eastern Asia are still made to feel as though they are an unwanted plague.

The vicious cycle of anti-Chinese immigration persists and is enforced by the idea that Asian Americans are often seen as "perpetual foreigners." A perpetual foreigner is someone (no matter how long they have lived in America or Canada) who will never achieve

full citizen status due to his or her appearance, culture, or language (Huynh, Devos, Smalarz, 2011). The lack of recognition as American/Canadian citizens that many Asians experience strips them from their sense of belongingness and further marginalizes them from the rest of society (Liang, C. T. H., Li, L. C., Kim, B. S. K. 2004). Behaviors and seemingly harmless comments reinforcing the concept of perpetual foreignism can portray strong messages of exclusion, inferiority, and invalidity (Sue, D.W., et al., 2007). The constant reminder that one may never fit the criteria of a belonging individual (through perpetual ethnic discrimination) may ultimately take a toll on mental health, and is a marginal predictor of severe depression (Huynh, Devos, Smalarz, 2011).

I have concluded that instead of eliminating racism, this society has created "boundaries" and "rules" in order to keep racism under reasonable control (Salesses, M., 2012). These "rules of racism" are different for Asians. We are the model minority of America (Cook, N., & Gee, K. A. June 2014). We have overcome past instances of discrimination with no violent confrontation towards Whites. Our socioeconomic statistics are stable and our academic achievement is stellar (Le, 2015). "We are the example of what other minorities should be." The rules of modern racism say that it is wrong to use most racial slang (as it rightfully should be!) however "Chink" can be used harmlessly and jokingly. The rules say that racial slavery is a national crime which must be recognized, except for the Chinese slaves that connected our country's coasts with rails. They say that we can forget that the word Chink comes from the sound of metal hitting metal during the times of Chinese labor, or that it is okay to call us Zipperheads despite the fact that this name is derived from Korean soldiers being run over by the white man's jeep/tank, leaving zipper-like pattern on the body (Dang, A., 2014). The rules say that the many anti-Asian waves of in the 19th and 20th century were done in hopes of protecting North Americans rather than a case of severe xenophobia.

Our silence does not represent weakness. Our silence echoes the shock our ancestors felt when they realized North America was not salvation from their war-torn homes. Our silence comes from the condescending and pornographic images that created an image of what Asian women are. It comes from embarrassment, because although in perception we are the perfect minority we will never be the perfect people. It mimics the child crying because somebody said his eyes were too small and his skin too yellow. Our silence comes from being so marginalized and alienated that whenever we get too loud we are hushed. It reflects a revolution that we have been asking for two centuries. Our silence does not represent passivity, submissiveness, or weakness. We are no longer your model minority, your perpetual foreigner, your chink or your geisha – we never were.

I pray that there will come a day that a child does not have to feel inferior and ugly attending a uniformly white classroom, or will be able to play with a doll that looks like them. Hopefully one day, young Asian girls never believe that their bodies are fetishized objects. Perhaps one day we will not feel the need to complain about how many Asians inhabit a particular city. Maybe someday day my family may immigrate to Canada as human beings seeking new opportunities without needing to justify how they will be useful pawns for the country. Many hold the vision that Western Patriarchy will go down. Until then, the community is fighting for justice, as racism and sexism is an old game that we are all getting tired of. It is not only about us being loud enough, but also about how well the rest of the world listens.

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That Girl

Danielle Sherwood

Her red lipstick represents the abused.
Her short skirt says "I want to be used."
Her exposed chest makes all the boys stare.
Her styled hair demonstrates "self-care."
Her tight clothes show off her physique.
She looks like a woman, so to speak.

That's me.

My red lipstick represent my choice.
I see red lipstick as giving women a voice.
My red lipstick makes me feel in power,
and as beautiful as a fully-bloomed flower.
My short skirt means I like to feel free.
It does not mean that I am easy.
My clothing should not make me an object.
No matter how I dress, I deserve respect.

That's me.

Don't judge me.
Don't objectify me.
Just let me be.

"Little Histories"

Excavating Women's Histories from Museums in Victorian Literature

Jessie Krahn

Judith Halberstam, heavily influenced by the works of Foucault, devotes a great deal of attention to counter-cultural and counter-canonical narratives. She advocates for the perpetuation of "subjugated knowledges" and narratives from the lowest rungs of societal hierarchies, and privileging what she calls "the naïve and nonsensical" (11). Attempting to locate and salvage alternative histories from the canon can be a difficult task; one must often look beyond the tangible objects that have come to represent histories in order to find narratives about subjugated peoples outside of the white patriarchal canon. Barbara Onslow, in her discussion surrounding portraiture in Victorian literature, inadvertently offers a solution to uncovering women's histories from a patriarchal canon, stating, "preservation reveals only what has been lost," (455). In identifying that which is absent from the narratives privileged in museum spaces, being the physical manifestation of the canon and patriarchal history, underprivileged historical perspectives are made visible. Museum spaces in George Eliot's Middlemarch serve as the stages whereby women must encounter and navigate around the physical canon, subsequently questioning the place of women in patriarchal narratives. This essay will trace the absences of real women in portraiture, statuary, and mummies within the museum spaces of Middlemarch, thereby locating potential counter-canonical histories of women. Through this excavation of women from museum spaces, a subversive level of autonomy may be gleaned from traditionally oppressive representations of women as a people.

Halberstam's theories are preceded in Middlemarch, as George Eliot scrupulously stresses the importance of privileging subjugated narratives and, Onslow notes, rejects the reductive ideal that heroines are often ascribed (453). Dorothea is gripped by aimlessness while in "Rome, the city of visible history" (192), and yearns for Edward Casaubon's acknowledgement of "the little histories which made up her experience" (198). Women's history, being nonsensical, is located within the inconsequential and the everyday; in the overarching and grandiose histories written by men,

the experiences of individual women are often lost and subsequently reduced to that of the few notable female figures whose stories overlap with that of the canon. Dorothea comes to embody the buried stories of women while in Rome, equally as lost in a museum space as the female perspective, thus exemplifying the necessity for counter-canonical spaces. She also acutely feels the challenge, and even the futility, of giving form to previously unexhibited feminine experiences: "Dorothea was crying…to have been driven to [state the cause] would have been like trying to give a history of the lights and shadows" (194). Eliot aptly compares Dorothea's individual experience with the intangibility and inconstancy of lighting, thereby drawing attention to the difficulty of incorporating the narratives of women, hitherto strictly environmental, into a canonical space.

George Eliot's attention to women's nearly subaltern state in the canon is not unique. Barbara Onslow and Colleen Denney both address tangible ways that female artists and museum curators subverted canonical representations of women in the Victorian period, and their work serves as a guideline for identifying subversive female presences in museum spaces. While the obvious solution to canonical representations lies in the promotion of female creators, Denney explains that the concept of artistic genius has traditionally been reserved for men (127). She elaborates that because Victorian women could not flourish in their traditional domestic roles in the public sphere, nor could they completely embody artistic genius on account of their gender, female artists occupied a liminal space in society; in order to escape their ostracization, female artists often needed to buy into "male constructs of imagery" in order to succeed (128,139). Nude portraits, Denney explains, were ideal for exploiting one's own subordination, as using female models allowed women artists to operate within the male canon, while using male models demonstrated that those women could manipulate the canon as well (142). Denney finally notes that while being a commercial artist meant sacrificing one's status as a lady of leisure and accepting isolation from one's own gender (143), women could utilize their femininity in order to manipulate the market (152). Onslow comes to a similar conclusion, stating, "the art gallery [was] open to both sexes of the middle and upper classes equally as spectators. Women, therefore, confidently used the symbolism of portraiture in their fiction, and could, when it suited them, subvert its male meaning" (450). In a sense, having an outsider's perspective afforded women the ability to navigate and influence artistic spheres with a greater level of intention than their male counterparts. Thus, the unsatisfactory simulacrum men created to represent women in these spaces could be subliminally critiqued and countered unbeknownst to male experts in those spheres.

Bearing in mind the subversive potential portraiture held for female creators, Dorothea's struggle to locate her individual experiences in a wider cultural context is ostensibly grounded in her encounters with portraits. Women's portraits in Victorian texts are often the sites of shifting identities, and the malleability of the subject's face stands as a testament to the difficulty of exhibiting the invisible. Due to the inherence of the male gaze in portraiture, Onslow points out that women are divorced and further alienated from images painted in their likenesses: "the portraits to which the various heroines are compared are foreign to them" (461). Commonly, Onslow continues, the male interpretation of women usually renders female subjects inhuman or non-human in their portrayal (464) if they are not first mistaken for a different subject than the artist intended (457) or "disguised… as the object of [the artist's] desire" (460). As a result of being separated from other women by the male gaze, women's experiences in confronting portraits are usually comprised of one woman searching, often in vain, for some semblance of herself in the image.

During moments of Dorothea's self-identification with portraits, despite the seeming futility of such an endeavour, the subject of the painting is given life by Dorothea's attentions. Will Ladislaw broaches the subject of a portrait's vitality with Naumann after the painter expresses a wish to paint Dorothea:

"… and what is a portrait of a woman... painting stares at you with an insistent imperfection. I feel that especially about representations of women. As if a woman were a mere coloured superficies! You must wait for movement and tone…they change from moment to moment" (191).

Here, Will acknowledges the inaccuracies inherent within male representations of women, but he mistakenly assumes the issue to be that portraiture as a medium offers static representations of women. This is an especially interesting mistake for Will to make, since the miniature portrait of his mother that Dorothea constantly returns to is notable for its fluctuating image and vitality. Occasionally, the portrait changes due to Dorothea's interpretations of it: "for the first time she took the miniature down from the

wall and kept it before her, liking to blend the woman who had been too hardly judged with the grandson whom her own heart and judgment defended" (547). At other times, "Dorothea could fancy that it was alive" (275). In seeking out the woman the miniature depicts, Dorothea often faces herself or other people in her life instead. The miniature's changes, always occurring during or just after Dorothea contemplates its visage at length, are active responses to Dorothea's engagement. The subject of the painting self-actualizes and becomes active because of the intense connection Dorothea feels to it. So, while a woman and her history may be disguised within a portrait, she is able to escape that designation through women's access to, and interaction with, art.

Aside from being disguised as representations, women in Middlemarch are often petrified into artistic representations during their interactions with men. Upon learning of Casaubon's terminal condition, "Dorothea sat as if she had been turned to marble, though the life within her was so intense that her mind had never before swept in brief time over an equal range of scenes and motives" (289). Furthermore, Will and Naumann see Dorothea at the Hall of Statues as "a breathing blooming girl" who is "corpse like even in death" (189). In both instances, Dorothea is preserved in a moment of extreme emotionality to the point where she occupies a liminal space, being neither human and relatable nor statue and lifeless. By depicting Dorothea in stone, Eliot highlights that Dorothea's humanity is out of reach whilst she plays the role of the muse. While she is life-like as a stone figure, her appearance and character stagnate and her emotions are hidden from her on-lookers.

While Dorothea becomes a statue at moments of emotional turmoil, Rosamond Vincy's petrification occurs concomitantly with a moment of immense dissatisfaction with her husband: "…when Lydgate was taking part in the conversation, [Rosamond] never looked towards him any more than if she had been a sculptured psyche" (642). Lydgate is aware of Rosamond's force of life and indignance, but he is incapable of connecting and communicating with her in her petrified state. Where portraiture reveals the lost identities of women, statuary exhibits the state of women's narratives when their audiences are primarily male. The unempathetic gazes of men forces women to close themselves off, and their male audience subsequently declare women to be as inscrutable and cold as stone. Even though their stone encasements prevent Dorothea and Rosamond from explaining their personal narratives, though, their individuality is kept intact in spite of their contact with men. Statues cannot evolve or change as portraits do when subject to scrutiny, since portraits themselves function more as reflective objects; so the individuality of the woman is maintained in the act of preservation. That is not to say the identity of the statue cannot be mistaken, as the Sleeping Ariadne in the Vatican Museum, for example, is widely assumed to be Cleopatra at the time of Dorothea's visit (189). However, rather than some change occurring that is inherent within the object, as with the face of a portrait's subject, the mistaken identity of the statue is the result of the audience's misinterpretation of cultural cues.

Just as women's petrified states are attributed to men's inadequate understanding of women, the key to excavating women from statuary lies in the empathy of male audiences. Will Ladislaw stands as the one male character who is capable of empathizing with petrified women to the point of being petrified himself in Middlemarch. Will correctly identifies Dorothea amongst a collection of statues, stating, "when I saw you in the Vatican museum… I knew you at once" (204). Here, Will demonstrates a capacity for empathizing with the plight of women beyond simply recognizing the problematics of their representation. His ability to empathize is highlighted by both his close relationships with Rosamond and Dorothea, the novel's most common statues, as well as the fact that his own petrification occurs in both of their presences. When Dorothea finds Will at the Lydgates' home with Rosamond, "Will Ladislaw…meeting Dorothea's eyes with a new lightning in them, seemed changing to marble" (775). Dorothea enters a pliable, "elastic" (775) state after this interaction. Will's own petrification signals his ability to recognize that women's voices are lost in their representation as statues. The proximity and vicariousness of Will's petrification to Dorothea's past experiences both liberate Dorothea and afford her the opportunity to grow and change, which eludes her in her petrified state.

The mummy operates similarly to the statue in stifling women's narratives; rather than suddenly disintegrating and carrying their narratives with them, mummified women degrade with an excruciating slowness. Traces of disease, as well as an inherent incompleteness, on the body of the mummy signal to missing elements of little histories which are lost or discarded by museums in the name of preservation. In Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Ring of Thoth," a museum attendant named Sosra, arguably a mummy himself based on his immortality,

professes an undying love for a mummified woman, Atma, who thousands of years after her death remains marked by plague (5). The plague scars stand as all that remains of Atma's personal narrative, besides that which is relayed through Sosra. Even then, Sosra defines Atma's existence first by his love to her, and then by the disease under which she languished. Thus, Atma's continued existence is marked by the quintessence of deterioration in the form of her plague scars. Middlemarch, in comparison, features the invalid Mrs. Wrench, whose afflictions are equated to a state of mummification: "[Mr. Wrench] had a wretched lympathic wife who made a mummy of herself indoors in a large shawl" (355). Mrs. Wrench's narrative is never resolved, and Eliot leaves her in a perpetual state of mummification. Ultimately, preservation is the disease which ails Atma and Mrs. Wrench. Neither can ever recovery in their respective texts, and both are doomed to suffer so long as they continue existing. Convalescence, then, is achieved through cessation; one must be allowed to escape the disease that plagues them. This means that, while excavating women's histories from the canon is important, so too is allowing women to exit canonical spaces.

Release and erasure must be distinguished here, as the former implies a diffusion into a larger space while the latter connotes a deliberate removal against the best interests of the subject. While museums attempt to itemize, collect, and hoard an unquantifiable number of stories and experiences, women are inevitably objectified and trapped within the artifacts that represent them. The diffusion of personal narratives, rather than incessant hoarding of those stories, allows for their wider accessibility. Recognizing the diasporic nature of women's little histories is, pedagogically, more equitable. Such a method of record keeping, wherein information is passed along different demographics, ensures little histories, both past and future, do not restrict women to one geographical or material subset. Instead of valuing a long-dead husk of what women's narratives once were, diffusion prioritizes women's histories for their connections to women.

Halberstam's work on counter canonicity, as well as Denney and Onslow's attention to subversive female presences in artistic spaces, serve as useful tools in the excavation of a broader history of women from entombment within canonical spaces. Women's representations in portraiture and statuary are ultimately salvageable through the interaction of their audiences. The perpetually worsening condition of mummified women in museum spaces serves to punctuate the necessity for women to be eventually liberated from the canon completely. This essay has demonstrated that the tangibility of museum collections does not signify historical authority, and, in acknowledging this, invisible little histories may be salvaged.

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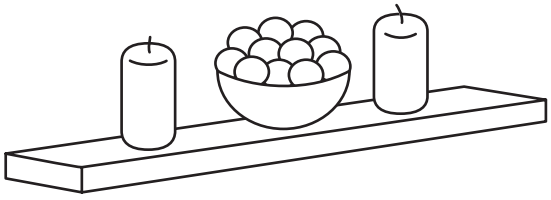
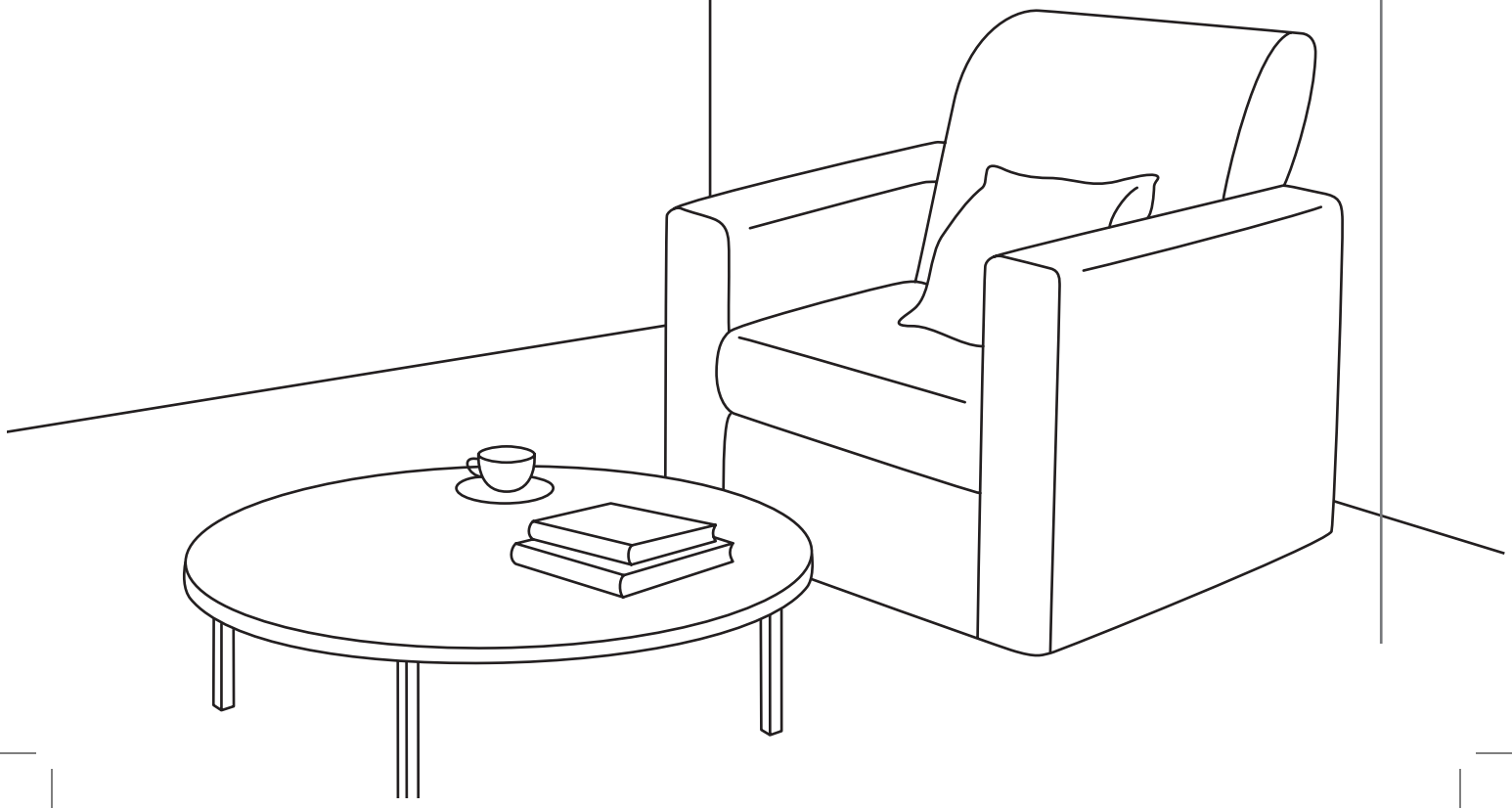
LIVING ROOM

Aleah Isaak



This is my living room
I eat here
I sleep here
This is not your walk-in closet
Your kitchen
Your bathroom
Those are not your towels
You do not cook here
Or arrange the furniture
I picked out the pillows because
they sang to me.
Not to call you,
to call myself
home.



A MANIFESTO FOR THE MISSING, MURDERED, AND SILENCED WOMEN

Alina Champagne

Where have our women gone? Their once sacred and respected souls are nowhere to be seen. All of them taken from their precious lives, some left to be found lifeless, some hidden, but all erased from the world. Their spirits already strong, fierce, and resilient just like the sacred women before them, now stripped and secluded. A special type of genocide on the first nation woman. She is an addict, She is a squaw, She is asking for it, She is a prostitute, She is worthless, and She is a target because no one will miss her or even notice. Cheyenne Marie Fox, Patricia Carpenter, Rhonda Running Bird. She is weak, She is a drunk, She is easy, She is looking for attention. Mary Jane Hill, Tania Marsden, Angela Marie Poorman. The discovery of her death is not shocking as she wasn't a benefit to society but rather a burden. Alberta Williams, Joey English, Claudette Osborne. She looks around herself growing up and has accepted her restrictions as inevitable. As she ages, it is clear that she is invisible. Not the fun kind of invisible where you can turn it off and on but a permanent imprint of invisibility based on her worth. She is nothing. Myrna Montgrand, Simone Sanderson, Tina Fontaine. She looks at the women who are just like her but instead of seeing hopes and dreams she sees instabilities and abuse. This is the life she will live in and be defined as. At a certain point in her life these small evils of her identity scream and sink her down to infinite hopelessness. She envisions a world better left without her as she lives her worthless life every day. Ambition is one of those things that she is supposed to have as a strong woman but the only ambition that she's familiar with is nostalgic and a childhood dream that never flourished. Jessica Parisien, Kirsten Stevenson, Taylor Dillion. She is a problem that cannot be solved. She is silenced and dehumanized. She can no longer see the purpose of her existence. Azraya Kokopenace, Amber Guiboche, Adriana Coronado.

She cannot see her true strength that was carefully hidden by her modern society. Although she cannot feel the brutalization and suffrage of her first nation woman ancestors, she carries it within her identity. She was given the gift of life from these previous women. She is their only existing strength. She is their only voice. Delaine Copenace, Natasha Assin, Sheridan Hookimaw. Her generation of aboriginal women are the only remnants of their sacred women ancestors. The voice of her generation is the only power that the fallen women before her live on through. As long as she exists she still holds this power. Leah Anderson, Marcia Koostachin, Edna Smith. As long as her generation is present, her stories and the stories of the women before her can never go extinct. She searches and searches for ways to tackle the everyday oppression that restrains her identity. The more she discovers about her peoples history the more enraged she becomes with the never ending cycle of devastation. She refuses to accept the casual regard to the slaughtering of her mothers, sisters, cousins, grandmothers, and aunts. Instead of being a victim she will be a victor. She wears the identity of a victor proudly on her arm so she can be reminded every day just how much power she has. Never forgetting the pain and sorrow of her first nation's history is her fuel. Her sense of victory radiates from her presence; her essence is recognized as a strong force of resilience. She is aware that she is still a target as that seems to be in her DNA, her only hope is to exhume the victor inside of her generation of surviving sisters. Her goal is to strengthen those she comes in contact with, they may be targets but when combined, turn into a strong community that becomes harder to target. Piecing back together the puzzle that is her culture so that she can preserve it for her future generations. She has found her own voice and that voice is contagious when heard.

She awakes to sounds of nature. The birds chirping, the sound of a crackling fire keeping her warm and cozy. She stretches and smiles as she takes a look around her. She sees the pictures on her wall that were passed down to her from her mother and is comforted. In her country of First Nations they treasure memories and stories as being fundamental to their existence. Her Nation specifically, is known for their Spiritual Stories that have been passed down for thousands of years. Her favourite story to recollect every morning is that of the missing, murdered, and silenced spirits. This story is the structure to her identity and strength. It is what she had been born from and what she will leave behind in her people when she journeys to the spirit world herself. Her Nation is the capital of the country and is highly respected because of their resistance and resiliency. Her Nation is the source that powers the whole Country. Her Country is preserved and accomplished. Her people are strong and beneficial to the overall human race. Her people are survivors.

COMING OUT (I'M GAY)

James Turowski

Hand-dyed wool

40″ x 23″

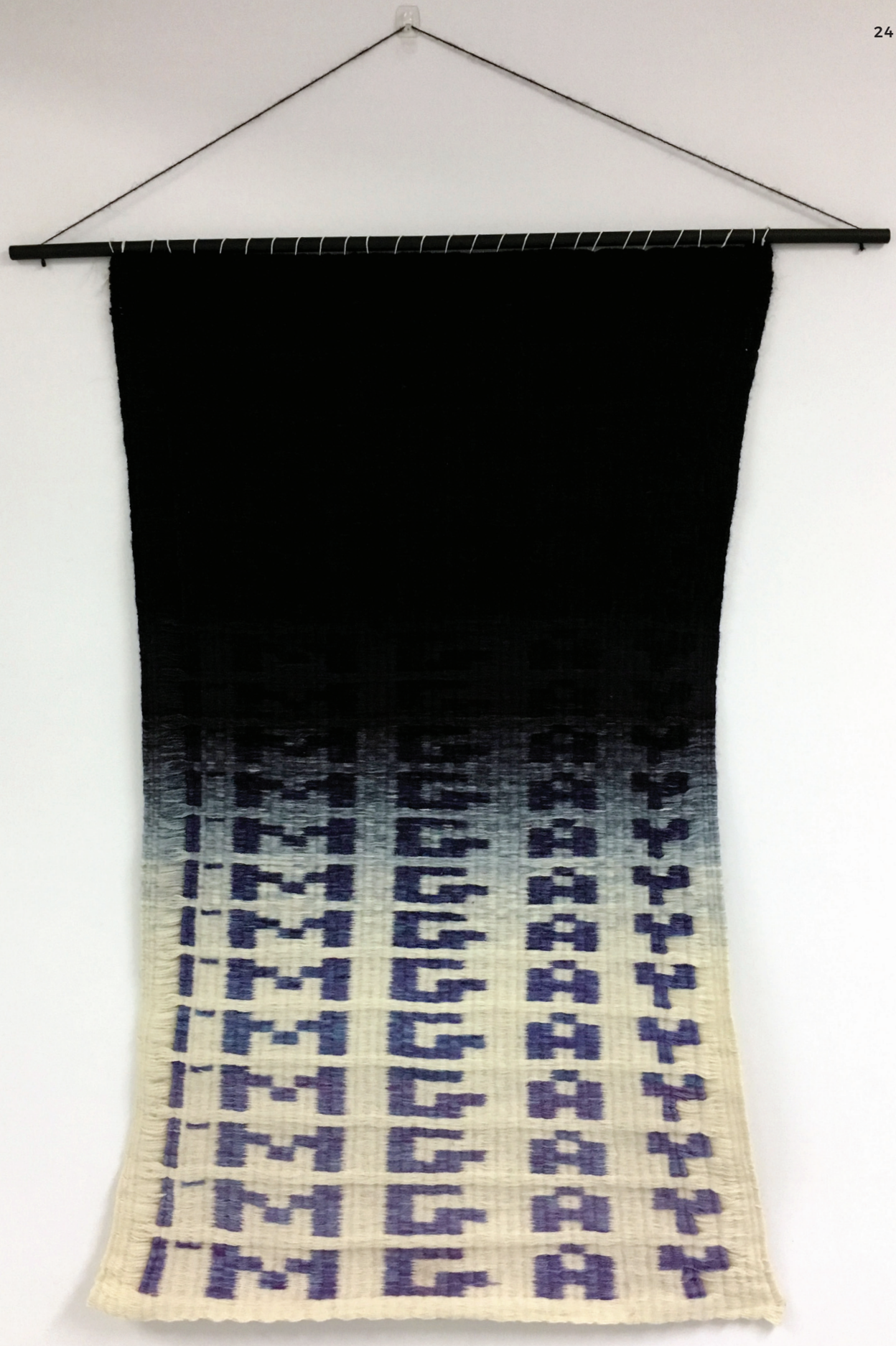
2016-2017

Working in craft mediums such as textiles and ceramics, I work to challenge the expected traditions and pick up on the queer issues surrounding craft and identity, utilizing text, symbolism, and queer history to provide a record of queer experiences.

In creating this work, I was inspired by National Coming Out Day. I wanted to focus on the process of coming out and the ideas and emotions that surround coming out as a cisgender gay man.

I emphasized the repetitive process of coming out (having to do it again and again with everyone you meet) by creating a text-based weaving, a very repetitive process. I also emphasized the aspect of frustration that one feels with coming out, the fact that we have to do it at all, and the fact that it validates or invalidates our sexuality if we choose to come out or not. If you decide not to come out, whether it be unsafe for you to or you do not feel ready yet, people, even members of the queer community, consider that you are 'ashamed' of who you are or taking the 'easy way out' by not coming out.

I considered these varying viewpoints on coming out and my own personal experiences to create a weaving that reflects this. The background colour of the weaving starts as black and fades to a natural cream colour, representing coming out of the 'dark' closet into the 'light' of being out. The lavender gradient of the text represents those feelings as well, starting off analogous with the background, quietly telling only a few people at first. Then it fades to a more saturated lavender, representing being out and telling everybody, and fading once again to a paler lavender because you are tired of the never-ending process of coming out, having to continually come out for the rest of your life.



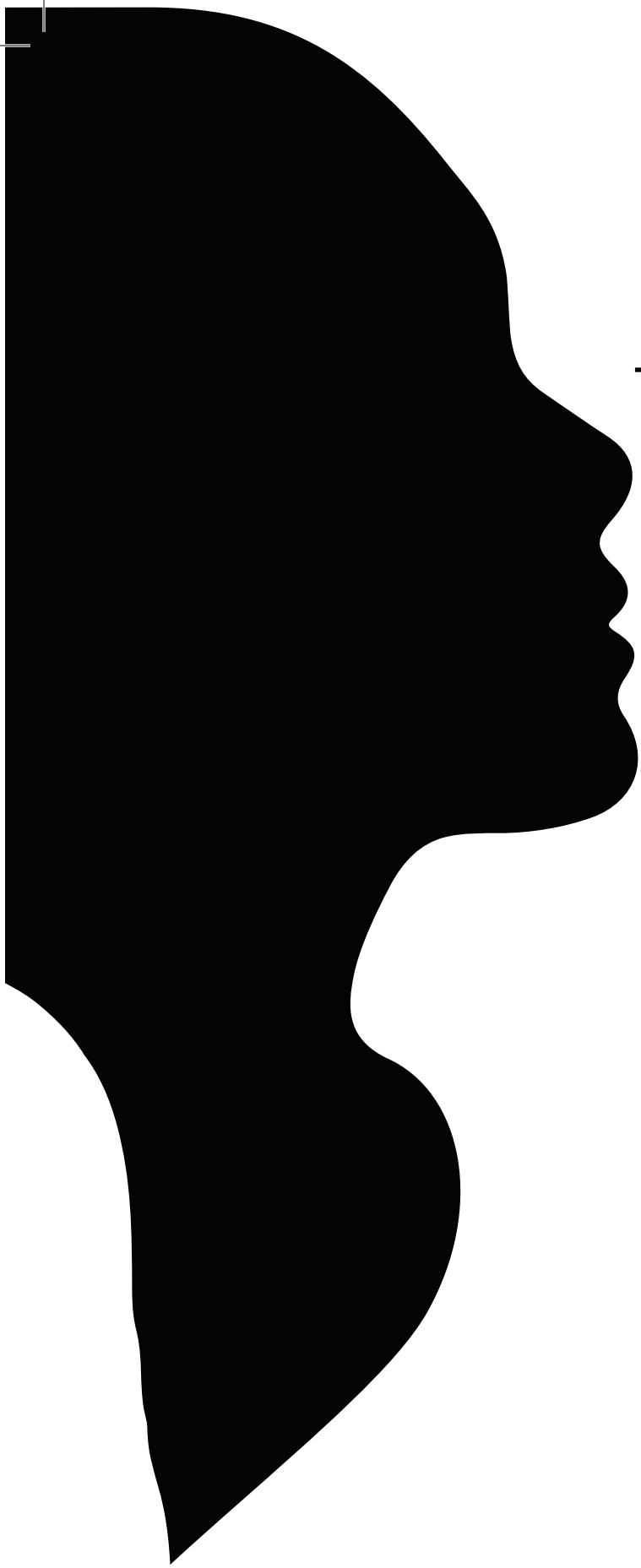
DAMAGED

I had a broken soul and a crippled mind
For insults had made me blind
I couldn't even see my own beauty
Instead I was tortured by the image
created by society
The skinny models on tv, the false images
in the magazines
Made my life a nightmare filled with
terrible dreams

Caged by the idea of perfection
There started the obsession
I only cared about my size
By the media I was hypnotized

I was distracted in school
I cried when I realized I had been a fool
I was desperate for a perfect body
This made it impossible for me to see
That I had been destroyed by society

There was no end to the obsession
This led to hardship and depression
I could not ask for help
In the end it was up to me to fix the
broken pieces of myself



RECOVERING

Sharice Molgat

Every day I struggled
I am still not fully recovered
I felt that my body was wrong
I believed that I would never belong

I am not repaired
But I am no longer scared
I have learned to love my beauty
And share my story proudly

I survived a battle so pointless
But now I can tell women it's not hopeless

There was an end to the obsession
This led to strength and progression
I should have asked for help
In the end I was able to fit the broken
pieces of myself

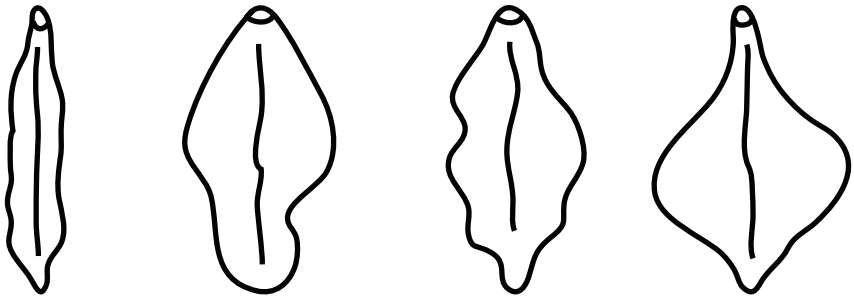
BODY POSITIVITY, LABIA PULLING AND LABIAPLASTY

Chloe Vickar

This piece is written in response to Signe Arnfred's article, "Female Sexuality as Capacity and Power? Reconceptualizing Sexualities in Africa" (2015). Arnfred's piece explores female sexuality in Mozambique, Africa. This response will focus on the "puxa-puxa" practice of labia elongation, and the matrilineal cultural customs around sex and reproduction (Arnfred, 2015, p. 159). I will address possible positive outcomes of this work, making comparisons to a North American and European context, and raise questions and areas of possibility regarding the piece.

Arnfred describes the Mozambique custom of labia pulling, or "puxa-puxa" (2015, p. 159). This practice encourages young girls to "apply a home-made pomade and gently pull the small lips of the vagina with the purpose of making them longer" (Arnfred, 2015, p. 159), with the objective of increasing sexual pleasure for both women and men. The article also describes an initiation process that provides education to young women about sex, reproduction and the female body (Arnfred, 2015, p. 155). These customs take place in the context of the Mozambique matrilineal culture, which encourages women to take on the role of "sexual expert" (Afrned, 2015, p. 154, 155).

From a critical feminist perspective, this piece has many positive outcomes. Arnfred's work provides examples of positive female sexuality. Arguably this is changing, but the recent climate in Canada around sex and female sexuality in particular is that of shame, silence and taboo. In our patriarchal society the expectation is that men are free to flaunt their sexuality and women must pretend their sexuality does not exist. The initiation processes that Arnfred describes as "important for women and for their unity and strength" (2015, p. 154) provide an opportunity for Mozambique girls and women to understand their bodies (from before puberty) as positive, opening the door for opportunities of positive body image throughout one's lifetime. The custom of pulling the lips of the labia minora, which according to Arnfred is taught by "an older female relative (though never her mother)" (2015, p. 159), normalizes female genitalia (and the variations in appearance between bodies), as this practice is continued to be done with other girls



in their community. This is an excellent way for young women to become their own expert about their body and to (hopefully) be made comfortable through this shared experience with other young women. Further, this practice normalizes the female body and gives young girls realistic examples of what female bodies (can) look like, unlike the unrealistic media representations perpetuated in our mainstream North American culture.

In contrast to Mozambique, where labia are elongated (Arnfred, 2015), an increasingly popular practice in the United Kingdom is labiaplasty, the "aesthetic… cosmetic surgical procedure in which 'hypertrophic' (or large) labia minora are excised" (Jones & Nurka, 2015, 62). This procedure is an elective surgery that is only performed for aesthetic and not health purposes. According to Jones and Nurka, the frequency of labiaplasty taking place tripled from 1998 to 2008 (2015, p. 62). This increase may be the result of media influence, cosmetic surgeries becoming increasingly common, the growing popularity of pubic hair removal and finally, pornography (Jones & Nurka, 2015, p. 63). Some pornography provides an unrealistic "standard" for women's genitalia, with evidence of labia minora even being airbrushed out (Jones & Nurka, 2015, p. 63). This also sets an unrealistic standard for men, in a heterosexual context, who see these artificial examples of labia minora in pornography and expect all vaginas to have a similar appearance.

A second positive outcome of Arnfred's piece is intergenerational respect built between generations of women that participate in initiation processes. The matrilineal context of Mozambique sets a culture of trust between older and younger generations, especially in terms of passing knowledge and experience. The goal of "educating young women as sexual experts" empowers young women to explore their sexuality, capacity for reproduction and agency as women (Arnfred, 2011, p. 156). In contrast, the Broadway musical "Spring Awakening" tells the story of Wendla, a teenager growing up in Germany in the late 19th century. The song "Mama Who Bore Me" addresses the struggle of growing up without a way to make sense of puberty, adolescence and womanhood (Duncan, 2006, track 1). Wendla becomes pregnant when she has sex without understanding how reproduction works, after her mother purposefully lies to her about conception (Duncan, 2006, track 17), and Wendla tragically dies from a sub-standard abortion (Duncan, 2006, track 18). Unlike in "Spring Awakening," the communities of Mozambique use knowledge as power to educate women to be in charge of their bodies (Arnfred, 2015).

I am curious as to how, from a Western perspective, we can use this as an example to create positive ways of exploring and understanding female sexuality and female genitalia. I wonder how, without appropriating these cultural practices, North American culture could learn from the ways in which women in Mozambique are growing up with realistic ideas about what their genitalia look like, with an informed understanding of reproduction and the capacity of the female body, and build trust through intergenerational learning.

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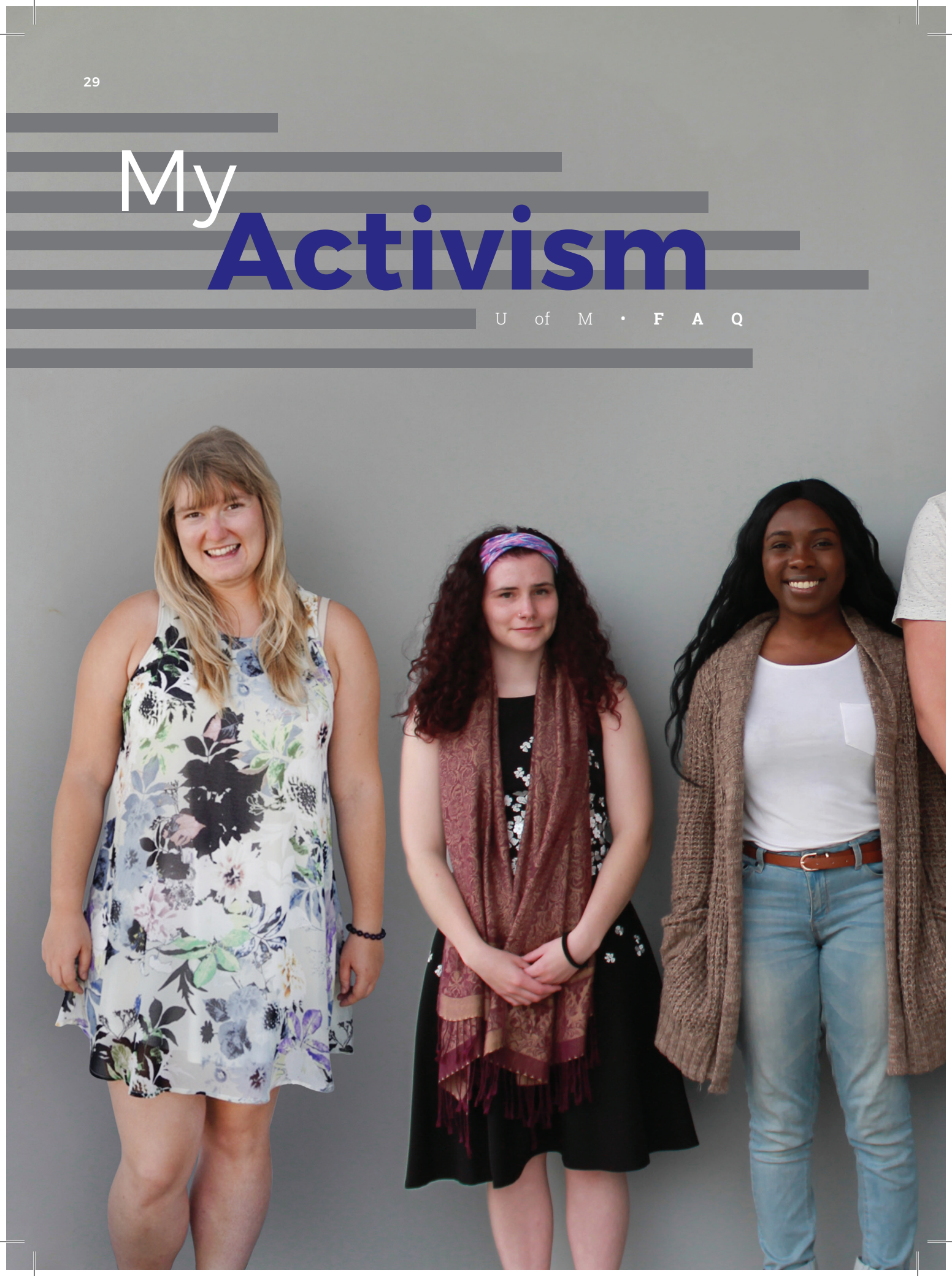
My Activism

U of M • **F A Q**



EMILY LOWES

My activism has always involved animals. When I was twelve years old, my family and I adopted a dog from Kentucky. He was physically abused by his owner and because of this he suffered physical and mental damage. Adopting Harlequin opened my eyes to the horrible things happening around me. I began volunteering and fostering dogs and cats and performing across Manitoba with my dogs to promote animal rescue. I now have three dogs of my own who help me to promote animal rescue. Their rehabilitation has allowed them to excel in various dog sports and perform at high calibre events promoting rescue dogs. I have been volunteering with animals for eight years in Winnipeg and I am currently an adoption coordinator for Rescue Siamese. Helping cats find their forever families is one of the most rewarding tasks as it is very important for me to speak for those who do not have a voice. The overpopulation of cats in our province alone is staggering and I believe everyone needs to play a role in correcting this. I am passionate about sharing my knowledge on pet ownership to ensure that when an animal is adopted it will stay with their new family their entire life. I currently volunteer with local rescues, spearheading initiatives that have raised much needed funds.

TRINDA PENNISTON

My friends know me best for my passion and interest in researching human sexuality and sexual health. I spend a lot of time talking about sex openly with others, and when I'm not talking I can usually be seen reading about sex; anything from academic articles to "just-for-fun" novels. My activism primarily involves advocating for sexual and reproductive rights, advancing sexual and mental health resources, and providing crisis and sexual-assault support on campus and in the community. I also have a huge interest in educating others about sex/sexuality and taking on leadership roles as a mentor or advisor.

Naturally, my interests have led me to pursue a career in Clinical psychology where I can do it all – research, therapy, and teaching and advising undergrad and graduate students throughout their academic journeys – from a feminist perspective, and in a field that is lacking perspective from women of colour. The work I do is enervating, albeit rewarding, and I value self-care just as much as my work and extracurriculars. I love watching movies with friends, both good and bad, and especially in theatres. I also really enjoy reading novels and comic books, especially those with psychological or philosophical themes centered around sex and sexuality. My twin sister is also my best friend, and I spend a lot of time with her playing videogames. Overall, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of FAQ this year, and I encourage everyone to find what makes them happy and to do more of it!

COLE HORNICK

My activism focuses on the stigmas that many people with disabilities experience throughout their lives. I have volunteered and worked with children and adolescents for seven years now. They really impacted my life and have taught me more than I have taught them. My main passion is working with children with disabilities. I currently volunteer for a local non-profit called Manitoba SwimAbility. Within this organization I have spent time teaching swimming and working with children with many different abilities and strengths. I also work for the University of Manitoba MiniU programs and I have worked with many children during camp with all different disabilities. The children in both of these organizations have taught me to really reflect on my own life, and the many things I take for granted. This of course helps with my Women's and Gender Studies degree, since not only do I learn about the abilities I have but I also learn about the privilege I receive. Working with youth with special needs has really impacted the way I take on feminism in my own life. Many of these children have overcome so much in their lives already. Seeing their strength and fight has really shown me how to make a difference in the world.

JOHISE NAMWIRA

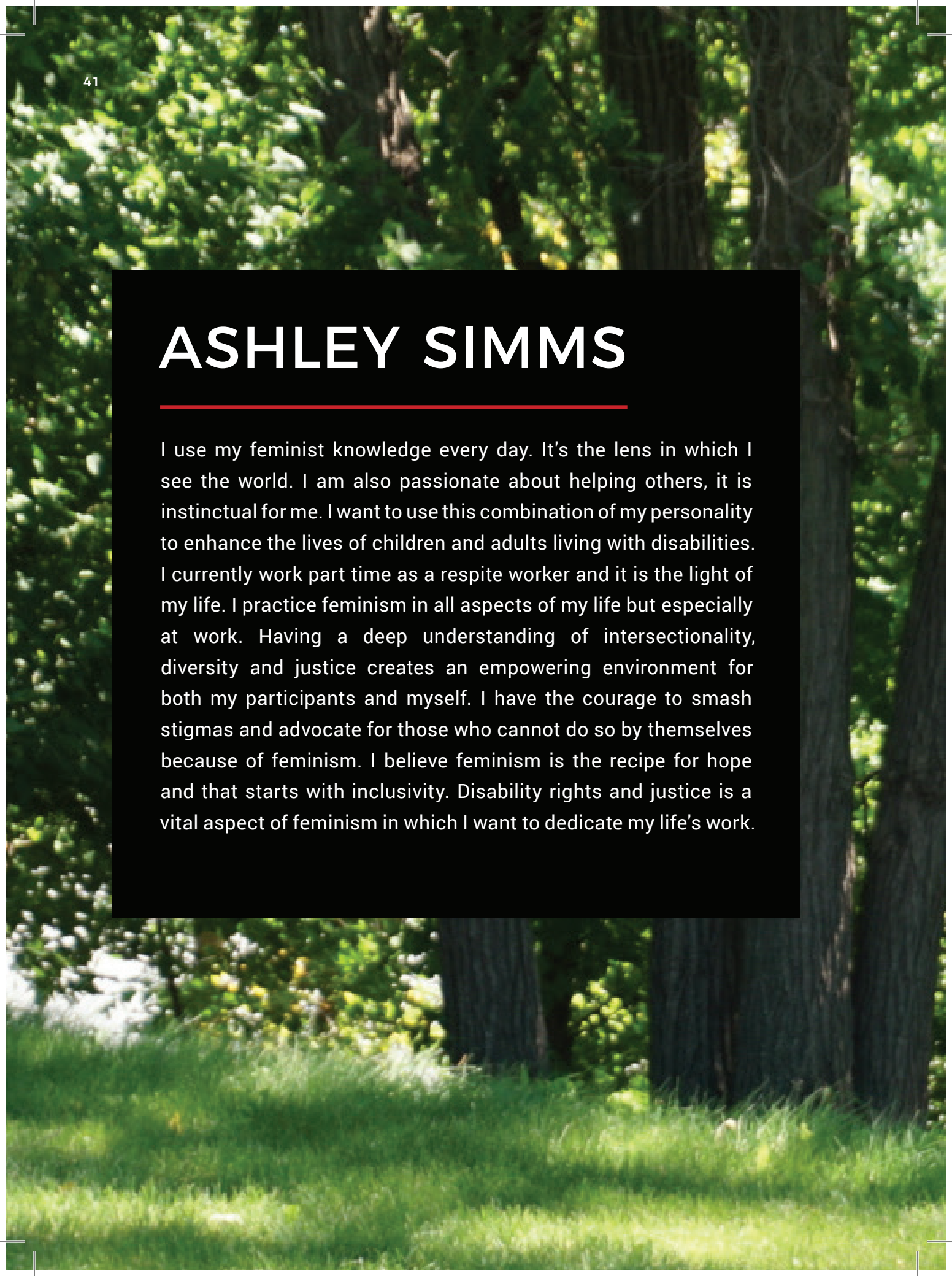
I'm a Congolese born Canadian woman who takes pride in my African heritage. I speak English, French, Swahili and Intermediate Spanish, which allows me to meet and communicate with various people with unique backgrounds on a daily basis. My cross-cultural upbringing shaped my appreciation for diversity and love community involvement. With a background in music, theatre, film and martial arts, I mix activism and art to empower others. I have taught theatre lessons at Native Youth Theatre, I currently teach Karate classes at Goju Karate St-Norbert, and I work with adults with disabilities through St. Amant. In each of these roles I have had the privilege to not only teach and support others but to learn immensely from them too. Although my strength is in public speaking, I am conscious of the importance of listening as a form of empowerment. Recently, I was chosen among 338 women to attend Daughters of the Vote, in Ottawa. This event selected female leaders from each Canadian Riding and for the first time in history, we filled the House of Commons with women of diverse race, class, ethnicities and religious backgrounds. The most memorable moments during that conference were not the times I spoke. Rather, it was the time I listened to the experiences of the other women surrounding me that I felt that my work and my passion mattered because other people shared that belief too. I'm a 3rd year student at the University of Manitoba doing an honours degree in Women's and Gender Studies. I hope to go into the field of International Human Rights with a special focus on race, gender equity and decolonization.

SYLVIE CÔTÉ

I remember on Halloween of 2015, I was at an after hours night club with my friends, and I watched three lovely girls hula-hoop dance. I was mesmerized. I have had hobbies in the past, like playing the piano or creative writing – but they were not activities that I pursued often enough or that brought me enough joy to keep on with them. So I purchased my first hula-hoop in late December of 2015. I learned many new tricks within the first few months, playing for hours every day. The summer came along and I worked on flowing – putting the moves I had learned together into a smooth dance. At the time of writing, I am still developing my flow and sometimes learning new tricks for lack of time.

I think hoop dancing is feminist because dancers are taking up space. Men are encouraged to take up space in this North American society and learn to expect that they will get it, whereas girls are expected to shrink themselves – whether in the form of hunching their shoulders, crossing their legs or developing an eating disorder. As with all dancing, there are so many variations and ways to express oneself; each person's flow is unique. In this case - the hoop becomes an extension of one's body, allowing one to take up more space and express themselves in different ways (as opposed to just dancing with one's body). There are many kinds of hoop sizes, colours, tubing and tape that allow one person's dance to change and grow. Furthermore, hooping is an activity that can help to make one physically and mentally healthy.

I think hooping can strengthen one's character as well. Hoop dance is a very individual practice for me. While one could take their hoop dance to the public, practicing tricks over and over for hours and days is something I (personally) would not do for other people – it is really for my own enjoyment and satisfaction. Additionally, one can learn qualities like patience, persistence and determination in learning a new trick or spinning a new flow. And showing off one's skills, whether through videos online, in clubs, or in parks or festivals, for example, is a courageous and brave thing to do. This is why I think hoop dance is feminist.



ASHLEY SIMMS

I use my feminist knowledge every day. It's the lens in which I see the world. I am also passionate about helping others, it is instinctual for me. I want to use this combination of my personality to enhance the lives of children and adults living with disabilities. I currently work part time as a respite worker and it is the light of my life. I practice feminism in all aspects of my life but especially at work. Having a deep understanding of intersectionality, diversity and justice creates an empowering environment for both my participants and myself. I have the courage to smash stigmas and advocate for those who cannot do so by themselves because of feminism. I believe feminism is the recipe for hope and that starts with inclusivity. Disability rights and justice is a vital aspect of feminism in which I want to dedicate my life's work.

FETISHISM

Emily Lowes

As Canadians, we live in a society that thrives off consumerism. We base our self-worth off of what we own and what we can afford to buy. We are so entrenched in being able to own what is trending that there is a disconnect between what we are purchasing and the creator of the product. There is a relationship with the product itself, but no relationship with the producer. Karl Marx coined this idea as "commodity fetishism". I argue that although obsessions with commodity may seem harmless, that there are serious individual and societal issues that stems from commodity fetishism.

We practice commodity fetishism everyday of our lives. It is shown through our daily decisions, such as where we buy our coffee to the technologies we choose to use. An argument that many consumers make is, "What is so wrong with having preferences?" The issue here is that our preferences are being controlled by what society tells us is popular and trending. The argument that Karl Marx makes states that "the process of commodity fetishism allows them to bracket off the commodity form from the various 'metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties' that make possible the very existence of commodities" (Cluley&Dunne, 2012, p. 254). We feel as if we need the product to be happy and are willing to wait in long lines for hours and stay up until midnight for a product to be released. But this obsession with consumer goods comes at the price of those who make the product. Many of the products we use everyday are a direct result of slave labor in other countries, and even at home.

There seems to be a common assumption that in today's society that workers are paid fair wages for the products they make. There is a sense of denial that the clothes we wear are commonly made by children in places like India and the Sudan. Popular brands, such as Gap clothing, is well known for it's exploitation of labourers, both children and adults, and yet people still rush to shop there. A study in 2010 found that the factories used by Gap in India require workers to "put in up to eight hours a day overtime…seven days a week" for which they are paid "half the legal minimum rate required by the ETI and Indian Law" (Chamberlain). Although when we put our jeans on, we care more about the label than this exploitation.

I have been aware of Canadian and American countries using slave labour for quite some time. But, up until recently, I was not aware of privatized prisons using inmates as producers for little to no income.

Upon reading into this issue, I found that companies use tags stating "Made in the USA" or "Made in Canada" are not necessarily made fairly. For example, Colorado Corrections Industries "enters into contracts with private businesses that want inmates to help with the labor of producing goods" (Curry, 2015). In the case of Whole foods using inmates to farm tilapia and make cheese, they were paid "as little as 74 cents to as high as $4 a day for the goods and services made at CCI (Curry, 2015).

The policing system in the United States racially profiles citizens and this is reflected in the number of black people incarcerated across the country. Institutional racism in America leverages people of the dominant culture, in this case white people, and oppresses other racialized groups. According to the US Department of Justice, in "2014, 6% of all black males ages 30 to 39 were in prison, compared to 2% of Hispanic and 1% of white males in the same age group" (2014). Privatization of prisons is essentially a way to work the legal system to make slave labour "legal". The same people who are racially profiled by police and receive unjust sentences for petty crime, are the same people making our clothes and farming our food.

Commodity fetishism causes us to dehumanize the producers for our own profit. It reinforces a capitalist society that, as feminists, we are working against. Being aware of where your products are made can be seen as an individual form of activism. Focusing on buying local and supporting small businesses can help us work towards deconstructing the capitalist and patriarchal society in which we function.

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I AM FINE

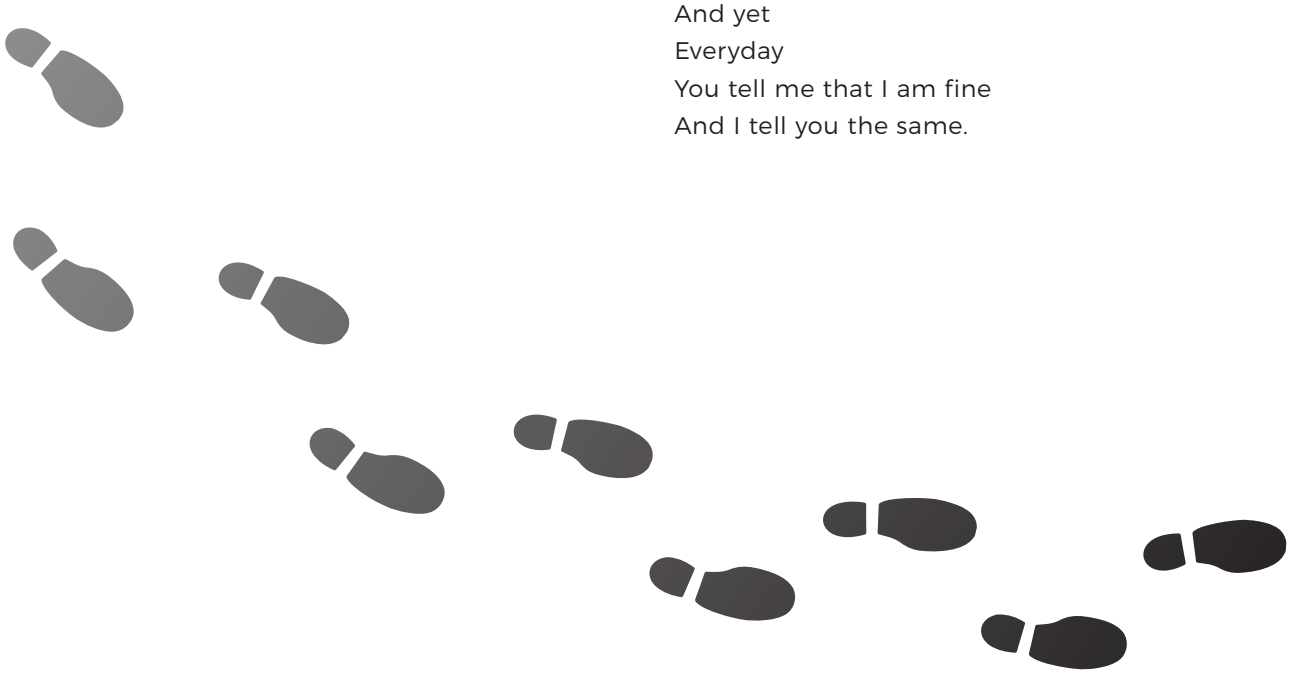
Emily Lowes

I am fine.
Walk one step, two step, three step, four
Moving forward
Moving ahead
It creeps up from deep within,
threatening to unleash itself
Threatening to sink its fangs
deep within my flesh
Yet, I smile
I laugh

I sit and wait as it claws at my throat,
threatens to strangle me but leaves me
waiting every time
It is not this easy, there is always more
It would never show me that amount of
kindness
To release me from its grasp
My body convulses as it oozes from me
My fingertips try and rid my skin of this feeling
My eyes swell shut trying to hide what
surrounds me.
But
I am fine.
I am fine.
I am fine.

Walk one step, two step, three step, four
Moving forward
Moving ahead
I am not stressed, I have a disorder.
What is mine is not yours, what is yours is not mine.
It makes me weak
Attempts to hurt me and end me
Stress is not anxiety
You are not me just as I am not you.
The equation does not work
Your stress is not my anxiety.

Everyday I wait for it to gurgle up from within me, waiting to ruin me with a single wave
And yet
Everyday
You tell me that I am fine
And I tell you the same.



A BRIEF CRITIQUE AND ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSES ON BLACK FEMINIST THEORY

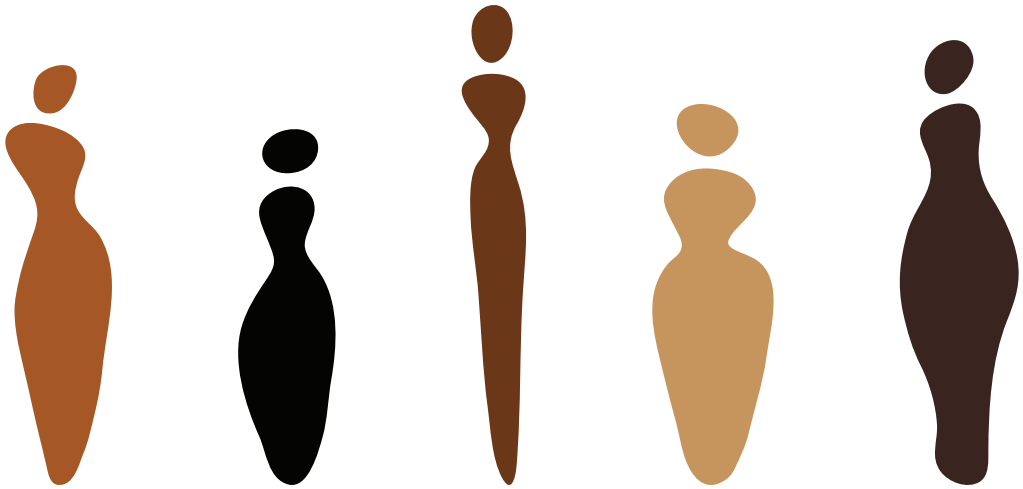
Trinda Penniston

To fully understand feminism, one must visualize beyond a Eurocentric, Western perspective. One must also acknowledge the perspectives and experiences of those who struggle with oppression that intersects with, and goes beyond sexism. Black feminist thought is a unique kind of feminism consisting of ideas, thoughts, and analyses produced by and for Black women. Black feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins and Notisha Massaquoi discuss Black feminist thought in their writing and outline the unique set of challenges that Black women face as a group. Although Black feminist thought focuses on intersectional consciousness raising, I believe some of the discourse on Black feminist thought fails to acknowledge several intersectional issues encountered in Black women's lives in navigating our identities.

Black feminist discourse brings awareness to Black women's unique experiences, and resists intersecting forms of oppression by race, class, and gender. Collins (2000) in her article "Distinguishing Features of Black Feminist Thought," enlightens readers by acknowledging Black feminism as an intersectional social theory, and writes about Black women as a collective group of distinct individuals set apart by race and sex. However, the issue with Collins' analysis is that she describes Black feminist thought in a way that sounds as if it only reflects the experiences of African-American women, and that the thoughts, ideas, and intellect of Black feminist thought come exclusively from African-American women. Collins also describes Black women as a highly diverse collective group with individual experiences and differing needs, but often refers to Black women only within a U.S, or Afrocentric context.

Collins (2000) makes clear in her writing that there is a "definitional tension [in naming] Black women's knowledge" (p. 21). She notes how "Black women's self-definitions become… difficult to achieve [when] the very vocabulary used to describe Black feminist thought comes under attack" (p. 21). Specifically, Collins illustrates that it is more important to process the reasons why Black feminist thought exists rather than arguing through definitions and terminology. I do not disagree; the terminology used to define Black feminist thought serves less significance than the reasons for its existence. Be that as it may, I believe the terminology used to define and acknowledge those who are Black feminists, and to whom Black feminist thought is important to, is an important issue of Black women's identity that is worth arguing within the discourse of Black feminist thought.

When referring to Black feminist thought and Black women as a collective from an American, Afrocentric perspective, the thoughts, ideas, needs, and experiences of Black women who do not identify as African or American are ignored. To illustrate, I identify as a Black woman, but my identity lies in a Caribbean-Canadian context, one that is neither African nor American. Thus, I have difficulty connecting with the issues Collins outlines in her writing on Black feminist thought. When Collins continuously describes the struggles and experiences of U.S. Black women, and uses the umbrella term African-American to refer to Black women as a group, I feel that my history as a Caribbean-Canadian woman is erased, and my experiences are ignored in the discourse of Black feminist thought.



It is imperative that a discourse on Black feminist thought refers to those who espouse the theory (i.e. Black women) with more inclusive terms and perspectives. Notisha Massaquoi, another Black feminist, accomplishes this much better in her article "Future Imaginings of Black Feminist Thought". Massaquoi's analysis notes how American Black women's experiences influenced Black feminism in Canada, however she also acknowledges the differences in history and felt oppression of Canadian Black women. Massaquoi (2007) expands on Collins' analysis of Black feminism by acknowledging the "space fought for and claimed by Canadian Black feminists," and acknowledges how our foundation is "firmly replanted in Canada via the Americas, Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean" (p. 11).

Certainly, not only does Massaquoi address Canadian Black women's experiences in her writing on Black feminist thought, she also acknowledges how Black women's lives are influenced by a deeper history within other national identities. One of the most compelling components of Massaquoi's article is how she brings into her writing the thoughts and experiences of other Canadian Black feminist writers. Massaquoi directly names each writer and highlights the unique struggles and challenges that each of them encounter as they navigate their identity as Black Canadian women with multinational histories. Although Massaquoi introduces intersectional elements of Black feminist thought that were missing from Collin's article, both Massaquoi and Collins overlook other intersecting elements of many Black women's identities that go beyond race, gender, and nationality.

Unlike the articles by Collins and Massaquoi, the article "A Black Feminist Statement" was written by a large group of Black feminists called the Combahee River Collective (1983). Together, they write about Black feminism as a "[struggle] against racism, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression" and discuss Black feminist thought as an "integrated analysis and practice based on upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (p. 210). Also unlike Collins and Massaquoi, the Combahee River Collective do not refer to Black women or Black feminist thought from a narrow perspective based on nationality or Afrocentrism. Rather, they acknowledge that the condition of all black women needs to change, noting the continuous struggle both with and against black men, as well as white feminists, against racist and sexist subjugation (Combahee River Collective, 1983).

Despite the Combahee River Collective's acknowledgement of interlocking forms of oppression, when I read the Combahee River's writing, I feel that they also overlook many intersecting elements of Black women's identities. Specifically, they note that Black women have a "position at the bottom," and they use this position to note that "if Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression" (Combahee River Collective, 1983, p. 215). However, in saying this, as well as in the rest of the collective's discourse, there is a large focus on the racist and sexist oppression of Black women without much discussion on other interlocking systems of oppression.

Although other oppressive systems are discussed, the conversation is brief and is not provided with the same deliberation as racist and sexist oppression. I have found that within their writing, the Combahee River Collective, as well as the other Black feminist scholars have forgotten about the Black women who are in even lower, more vulnerable positions. Once Black women are free, that will only necessitate the destruction of racist and sexist systems of oppression, thus forgetting about hetero- and cissexism, ableism, and other forms of oppression that the collective have made it their goal to fight against. I favour the term Black women used by the Combahee River Collective, because I perceive it as an all-encompassing term to refer to all Black women, with any identity and in any position of power. However, I find it interesting that there is minimal discussion of other intersecting forms of oppression that go beyond race, class, and sex, assuming the Combahee River Collective's members include Black women who encompass numerous intersecting identities.

Audre Lorde, in her article "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," voices her frustrations with being the sole Black, lesbian speaker asked to participate in a feminist conference that represented a predominantly white movement (Lorde, 1984). Within the writing produced by the Combahee River Collective, readers should expect to hear from more Black voices. Considering that Combahee and other Black feminists criticize white feminism for ignoring intersectional experiences, they should not be doing the same within Black feminist discourse. Similarly, I voice my frustration with not hearing from other Black feminist voices, including Trans Black women, (dis)abled Black women, Black women who are not middle-upper class academics or scholars, and non-American Black women. If Black feminists are to illuminate their resistance to all interlocking forms of oppression, more attention must be granted to interlocking identities, especially those that are often ignored in feminist theory and discourses.

To this point I have idled on the problems that I have found within Black feminist discourses, but I do not want to silence the voices of Black feminists, nor do I want to denounce Black feminism as a flawed and failed theory. Rather, I believe my criticism comes from a valid and personal place as a Caribbean-Canadian Black woman, who does not identify as African or American. My criticism also comes from a position of power, as I am a straight, cis-gendered, able-bodied, middle-class Black woman with a quality education. When I imagine the Black woman being free I imagined myself, as many other Black women also do. But, when I think of myself and my freedom I cannot think of the freedom of all women, because when I am free, many of my sisters will be left behind. It was this realization that galvanized my criticisms of the Black feminist discourses that I have had the opportunity to read and analyze, but I will acknowledge that my criticism is parochial as I only challenge the three aforementioned readings.

Overall, a fully inclusive discourse on Black feminist thought may not exist, as it is difficult to capture the full extent of Black women's unique lives and identities. Be that as it may, it is crucial to equally acknowledge the differing histories, nationalities, and experiences of Black women if discussing Black feminist thought as a theory of diversity that resists all intersecting forms of oppression. The discourses on Black Feminist theory, such as those by Collins, Massaquoi, and the Combahee River Collective are writings that I revere as each provide an excellent clarification of what Black feminism is, and what it means to Black women. But it would be ignorant of me to overlook the flaws in their delineation of Black feminist theory. A statement like the one made by the Combahee River Collective is a powerful one, and resonates well with all Black women alike, but it may be too powerful a statement to make when one informs Black feminism from a perspective that ignores the unique experiences of so many women.

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MEN & Feminism

Cole Hornick

Katy Kreitler's 10 questions all men should ask themselves about masculinity:

1. Insecure because your body wasn't big enough, strong enough, or slim enough?
2. Pressured to be tough, aggressive and competitive beyond your comfort zone?
3. Ashamed of your interest in cooking, fashion, dance, or some other activity because you were told it made you "gay" or "a girl"?
4. Offended by media representations of helpless adult men who cannot feed, clothe, or bathe themselves without the help of a woman?
5. Burdened by expectations to objectify women, have sex with many women and be sexually aggressive?
6. Helpless when dealing with feelings of sadness, hurt, and shame because you were taught to believe that emotions show weakness and that "real men help themselves"?
7. Confused at how to be sensitive and kind but still be sexually desirable?
8. Alone when you suffered an injury but had to "handle it"?
9. Afraid of being called a "sissy," "wimp," "f*g," "p*ssy," or "b**ch,"?
10. Ambivalent about what it means to be a "real man"?

(Kreitler, 2012)

For my feminist theory in action project, I decided to look at how masculinity impacts my life, and how being a feminist has helped shaped the way in which I let masculinity and society affect me. I chose to analyze the article "Why Men Need Feminism Too (Really, You Do!)" by Katy Kreitler, which was posted on the Everyday Feminism online magazine. In this article, Kreitler discusses how men need feminism just as much as women do, providing 10 questions men should ask themselves about masculinity, challenging men to learn more about feminism and how it can help them. At the end of the list, Kreitler argues that "if even one or two of these is true, then you need feminism." (Kreitler, 2012). After looking at each of the questions, I searched for evidence for these men to read, as to help them have a better understanding of feminism.

To answer the first and second questions – yes, I have felt all three of these statements, and have tried many different ways to "fix" myself. However, the real thing that needs fixing is how our society views masculinity. The hierarchy of masculinity that our society has created places "hegemonic masculinity" – introduced to us by R.W. Connell – first and foremost, while putting pressure on every other man to live up to this standard. This "norm" suggests that every man needs to be white, middle class, muscular, must not show any emotion other than anger, and have a family and a higher education – which is an unreachable goal for most men. How can feminism help? Well, feminism introduces the idea that we as a society have created gender, and by doing so we have also created this invisible "standard" everyone must live up to. Judith Butler highlights this point in her article "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (2007). According to Butler, "there are thus acts which are done in the name of women, and then there are acts in and of themselves, apart from any instrumental consequence, that challenge that category of women itself." (P.191) Though in the context of women, we can consider this in the context of men as well. For example, we produce this narrative to believe that men need to follow these "norms" or act out these "standards" to be seen as a real man, when all along we as a society have set these unreachable goals. So, my question to you is: how can you set your own goals and will they be in reach?

In response to the third and fourth questions –yes, I have felt ashamed and I have recently been called a "girl" by some of my family members. Not to mention I have heard all the names used. I haven't really been able to relate to the fourth question, but it did make me think about my family during gatherings, at which all the men sit around while the women make and clean up supper. So, how has feminism helped me fight back against the name-calling and the shame that other men put on me for certain not "manly" actions? Well, I considered Sara Ahmed's article "Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness"(2010). In this article, Ahmed makes one think about how even one "kill joy" can change the way certain people think about things. You might not be able to change the whole world, but if you can change the perspective of at least one person, you have made a difference. Will you join me in being a kill joy and maybe one day we will see change?

When it came to the fifth and sixth questions, they really hit home. Not only have I been on both sides of the objectifying women coin, I myself have struggled with my emotions all my life. We are taught at a young age that we have to attract women and if you don't, you're not a man. Then when you get a bit older, you and other boys your age start to talk to women in a way that is in a sense oppressing them – making them an object that you as a man must control and own. This makes me think of the feminist theorist Antoinette Burton. In her article "Female Emancipation and the Other Women" (1995), Burton discusses how Victorian women would oppress women in India by making them the "other". Just like the Victorian women, men have created these "others" (men who don't treat women like shit). We need to realize that this is just repeating history. We need to learn from this mistake and start to educate younger generations so they to can learn how to treat people better. If we don't, we will constantly be treating women as if they are sexual objects and it's not getting much better – you see younger, and younger boys sexualizing women. My question for you is: how can you change your future as to not repeat history?

The seventh question made me think about why men need to be emotionless, and if they do show emotion why is it always anger. Why can't a man be sensitive? When I was young, similar to most of you, I was told boys don't cry – or fed the phrase "sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me". Things like this have made it hard for men to show their emotions. Additionally, why is it that showing your sensitive and being kind results in not being sexually desirable? Well, if we look Adrienne Rich's article "Notes toward a Politics of Location" it will help explain this a bit. In her article, Rich argues how sexualized our society is, and how we sexualize almost everything. Rich suggests that "perhaps it is possible to be less fixed on the discovery of 'original causes'. It might be more useful to ask, how do these values and behaviors get repeated generation after generation?" (Rich, 1983, P.224-225). So, instead of questioning why, we should be thinking about how we can make being sensitive and kind just as desirable as other traits men have. Therefore, I challenge you to further explore what it means to be sexually desirable and how to change this.

The eighth and ninth questions go hand in hand. Simply put, if you get hurt and ask for help, you are more likely going to be called most of those names, or maybe even called a "woman." So why are these words so powerful? Because, to a hegemonic man, it's being seen weak, passive, etc. However, in reality men and women are very similar. Let's look at the article "Biological Data" by Simone de Beauvoir. In

her article, De Beauvoir talks about how name-calling has its positives and negatives depending on your sex, arguing that "from a man's mouth, the epithet 'female' sounds like an insult; but he, not ashamed of animality, is proud to hear: 'He's a male!'" (De Beauvoir, 1989, P.21). So why is this? Because for centuries women have been seen as the weaker sex, therefore when a man uses terms or slang for women, it is usually to show his dominance over another. So, next time one of your friends or maybe even yourself calls someone one of the slang terms, will you speak up?

The last question asks, what is it to be a "real man"? Well, I think that's something every man needs to find out for himself. To me, being a real man means that I'm not afraid to show others my true colors and go against social norms. I believe that if we all took the time to look at how our society is affected by the "standards" we live by then just maybe we would see some change. I will leave you with a quote from the article:

"The thing is, it's patriarchy that says men are stupid and monolithic and unchanging and incapable. It's patriarchy that says men have animalistic instincts and just can't stop themselves from harassing and assaulting. It's patriarchy that says men can only be attracted by certain qualities, can only have particular kinds of responses, can only experience the world in narrow ways. Feminism holds that men are capable of more – are more than that." (Keitler, 2012)

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SEX WORK AND THE EFFECTS OF RACIALIZED AND GENDERED DISCOURSE IN CANADIAN LEGISLATION

Critical Response to Smith's Cultural Genocide Article

Johise Namwira

Examples of oppression vary in terms of structural inequality through race, gender and other forms of identity politics however, our social perception of oppression is largely influenced by whom we define as oppressors and whom we define as oppressed. Using sexual oppression in the Canadian context, I will explain the consequences of biased definitions of oppression historically and in current political debate. My argument is largely influenced by Andrea Smith's article on cultural genocide, highlighting the importance of an intersectional analysis of oppression.

In brief, Smith (2005) challenges the popular belief of rape being "nothing more or less than a tool of patriarchal control" (Smith, 2005, p7). The previous rape myth was largely emphasised in white dominated movements of women's anti-violence however, it fails to include other forms of oppression as intersecting factors. Race theorists such as Kimberle Crenshaw argue that oppression must be analysed through a combination of racist and sexist power dynamics rather than separating the two factors (as cited in Smith, 2005). Crenshaw specifically analyzes the relation between male-dominated conceptions of race and white dominated conceptions of gender in order to understand a clearer picture of violence against women (Smith, 2005).

I find Crenshaw's approach particularly interesting as it highlights a complicated problem within our social understanding of oppression. As people experience different forms of intersectionality, personal experiences of oppression vary greatly. The diverse interpretations of individual experiences questions how certain forms of oppression are defined and whom benefits in such circumstances. There is historical evidence of cases where popular beliefs of oppression justified the oppression of marginalized individuals. For example, Smith recognizes that Native women and men experienced sexual violence by white settlers because they were perceived as threats for colonialism (Smith, 2005). In this case, both experienced colonial oppression however Smith notes that such violence did not affect Native men and women in the same way (Smith, 2005). While both were victimized for the benefit of white colonial power, Native women were targeted due to their female identity in addition to their race. (Smith, 2005). In this case, the intersectional analysis of race, gender and colonialism offers a better representation of gendered and racialized experiences of oppression. More importantly, it demonstrates how the various definitions of oppression can in fact ignore or silence the experiences of marginalized individuals.

A recent example of a biased definition of oppression can be found in the political discussion on Bill C-36. In theory, the previous bill criminalizes the act of providing, offering and obtaining sexual services in a public place (Parliament of Canada, 2015). The preamble of the bill specifically states "the Parliament of Canada recognizes the social harm caused by the objectification of the human body and the commodi-

fication of sexual activity" (Parliament of Canada, 2015). In addition the bill claims that "it is important to protect human dignity and the equality of all Canadians by discouraging prostitution, which has a disproportionate impact on women and children" (Parliament of Canada, 2015).

The Canadian government's stance on sex work is contradicting in terms of what and whom the bill really aims to protect. Through a male gaze, the bill constructs sex work as a gendered issue that is a threat to the female body and community. The patriarchal view on sex work fails to recognize that race and class are also contributing factors to violence within sex work. That being said, criminalizing brothels and safe environments for sex work does not entirely make the practice disappear. Rather, it pushes specific racial, gendered and class groups into ostracized areas of violence. Although the bill aims to protect violence against women in theory, what we see in practice is a replication of Canada's history of colonial power and social control over racialized women. In this case, the bill essentially benefits those whom perceive sex work as a moral threat and therefor want to "cleanup" certain areas for better public attraction and economic gain (Ferris, 2015, p XX). Effectively, the policing of sex work benefits the interests of capitalist and white male power.

In conclusion, Smith (2005) use of an intersectional analysis facilitates an understanding of the interlocking relationship between race, gender, colonialism and other forms of oppression. The intersectional theory allowed me to create an informed critique on the government's current discussion on Bill-36 and the politics that surround the public's understanding of sexual oppression. As demonstrated in the previous examples, oppression relies on situations of unequal power to justify the personal benefit of the oppressor. This being said, it is crucial to study the intersecting power dynamics that support definitions of oppression within social contexts in order to determine how a problem can be effectively be addressed without further marginalizing certain individuals.

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RIGHTS INFLUENCING WHY **WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE UNITED STATES ARE MANIPULATED INTO SEX TRAFFICING**

Sylvie Côté

Sex trafficking in the United States occurs when "an adult is induced by force, fraud, or coercion to perform a sex act for money or anything of financial value" (Gerassi, 592). There are many issues surrounding sex trafficking, but due to the limited scope of this paper, my research is focused on the factors influencing which women and girls become victims and the manipulation tactics traffickers use to perpetrate this victimization. These issues are important because they violate the Universal Declaration of Human Right's (UDHR) Article 5, which reads: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (The United Nations). The factors influencing which women and girls are chosen, in addition to many tactics used by traffickers to manipulate victims, are in play before sexual slavery begins. Thus, I will not be drawing on Article 4 (no one shall be held in slavery) to enhance my analysis. In this paper I argue that one factor influencing the sex trafficking of women and girls in the United States and Canada is the State itself, and the systemic and institutional oppression faced by victims and potential victims.

Women and girls who are victims of sex trafficking are targeted because they already suffer from intersectional oppressions. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center in the United States found in their 2015 report that 91.4% of sex trafficking victims were female, and 33.3% were minors (NHTRC). However, other factors traffickers look for in potential victims are women and girls who live in poverty; who are in an environment that has an unsupervised, dysfunctional and/or fatherless family dynamic; and who are in unstable housing conditions or have grown up in the foster care system (Tidball et al, 65; Gerassi, 597). The ideal age for buyers of coerced sex is 11-14 because girls that age are often biologically infertile and, as Tidball et al. explain, girls have not had the opportunity to contract sexually transmitted diseases (61). Traffickers target women and girls who are already living in an impoverished environment, and are already experiencing oppression from their family, community, or at the institutional level, which makes these potential victims easier to manipulate.

Typically, the trafficker begins a romantic relationship with his or her victim, spending money on her, flattering her, and making her feel loved in order to build trust (Reid, 493). The victim feels safe and secure because she experiences less oppression than in her previous life due to the financial means, affection, attention and support of her trafficker. Whether or not the trafficker has forced sex on his or her victim, he or she will use manipulative techniques in order to control the women and girls. Even though victims may realize that their rights are being violated due to the cruel or degrading treatment received from their trafficker, many choose to stay in order to avoid the institutional and familial oppression of their previous life.

Joan Reid outlines two types of techniques used by traffickers: entrapment and enmeshment. Examples of entrapment include the normalizing of prostitution through friends who are also sex trafficking victims or through viewing pornography; by isolating the victim, such as moving to a different city or limiting social media and cellphone use; disorienting the victim by making them dependent on drugs and/or alcohol; through gang affiliation because of the victim's need for belonging; or through a victim's intellectual disability (493, 497-501; Sethi, 215). Entrapment violates Article 5 of the UDHR. For example, isolating a victim from her family and friends through the ruse of a vacation to another city is cruel because once there, she is unable to go home and no longer has access to her support

group, and must rely on her trafficker for financial support, among other things. This situation makes the victim vulnerable to psychological manipulation and physical harm. Many women and girls are unable to self-identify as victims because they are manipulated past realizing their vulnerability and exploitation.

The second technique that Reid outlines is enmeshment. This technique involves shame and blackmail; making the victim complicit in other forms of crime; controlling the victim through pregnancy, such as not letting the mother see her child until she has reached the day's quota set by her trafficker; and intimidation, such as threatening to hurt or kill the victim's family (Reid, 501-502). Enmeshment violates Article 5 because victims must comply with the trafficker's demands otherwise they will face dangerous consequences to themselves or their loved ones. The trafficker might turn in his victim to police enforcement as a prostitute, which is an example of how the system works against those who are already victims. These scenarios demonstrate manipulation, and make a victim's leaving her trafficker difficult for fear of later repercussions to her person either from her trafficker or the state itself.

While most American women and girl sex trafficking victims experience institutionalized oppression, Indigenous women and girls in Canada have historically been, and still are, especially exposed to state injustice through colonialism. Research shows that residential schools, child welfare agencies, and resulting issues such as unemployment, homelessness, and drug and/or alcohol use, demonstrate that Indigenous women and girls are more likely to fall victim to sexual exploitation (Bourgeois, 1426, 1439-1440). The Canadian Government's sanctioning of residential schools, for example, meant the violation of Article 5 in the UDHR, because "generations of indigenous children [were] educated in violent residential schools and subjected to physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual abuse and gross neglect" (1443). Thus, Indigenous women and girl victims and potential victims of sex trafficking are at a disadvantage because they face interlocking social oppressions, and are therefore more likely to be taken in by traffickers through their many manipulation techniques.

Canada has, however, made some strides towards ending sex trafficking. November 2005 saw Canada's first human trafficking offence. That is, the first time someone was charged for human trafficking. Moreover, the RCMP began the Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre, with goals for developing protocols for trafficking investigations, creating national awareness and developing international partnerships (1431), with one of these international partnerships being the National Human Trafficking Resource Center in the United States. In 2012, the federal government created the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (1431). However, Gerassi explains that data collection is difficult because of the "covert nature of sexual exploitation" (594). Thus, the prospects of succeeding seem limited at the moment. Another challenge that police in America face is the acknowledgement that sex trafficking even exists in their communities (Farrell et al, 208). A final problem involves how the North American public glamorizes prostitution and pornography while simultaneously devaluing it, promoting a rape culture through a combination of ignorance and acceptance, increasing the potential for and acceptance of sex trafficking. Sex trafficking is a systemic and institutionalized issue that does not have enough resources or interest to see its end because of Canadian government sanctions in the violation of Article 5 of the UDHR.

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CONFESSIONS FROM AN UNDERGRAD WHO WAS VERY CLOSE TO DROPPING OUT

Ashley Simms

Dear Student,

I would like to share with you a story about myself and how I ended up a happy (still anxious, but nonetheless happy) university student. I am entering my fifth year this fall and I wish I could tell you that university life gets easier as you go through your academic experience but that did not happen for me. As much as I want to tell you that the courses you take will teach you what you need to know, the harsh truth is the failures that you experience will teach you more than any textbook. As much as I want you to never have to voluntarily withdraw from a course that is putting your GPA and mental health at risk, I need you to know that trying again is the better option and please stopping rushing through your degree. You have time, I know you want to finish your degree as quickly as you can but overwhelming yourself with a heavy course load and pushing the limits of your mental wellbeing is not worth the rush. Instead I urge you to use this time to learn how to truly take care of yourself, your first few years in university are building stamina for your marathon through life.

University is really fucking hard. Do not listen to people who tell you otherwise. That "I'm suffocating in my own stress" feeling students tend to experience is due to the extremely competitive environment which creates immense pressure to be perfect for every assignment, essay and exam. Enough of this survival of the fittest bullshit. What happened to sharing knowledge so we can grow and change the world? Isn't that why we are here? It's easy to lose sight of what is important when you're exhausted from all the times that you cried your heart out because the anxiety of deadlines, demands and responsibilities are so overwhelming you end up paralyzed with fear.

Someone told me that those experiences will make you grow as a person, that learning to feel comfortable riding through panic and pain is what builds strength, wisdom and character. She explained how resiliency and persistence is what creates success in life. When you get knocked down, you figure out a way to stand back up. When I heard this advice in my third year from my psychologist I did not believe her. My mental health was a mess, I was feeling like an absolute failure and one panic attack away from leaving my degree behind me. I had thought to myself, *this is impossible for me, I can't cope with this mental and physical pain. I'm just not well enough for university.*

I had always been an anxious kid but I was able to mask it with personality. Let's just say I was not shy. In my second year of university I felt like there was an emotional storm inside my head that flooded my life which lead me to cognitive behavioural therapy. It wasn't an easy decision; I thought it made me weak. Contrary to what I had thought, this process allowed me to discover an entirely new perspective on my mental health. At age 20 I was diagnosed with a disability which answered a lot of questions and gave me a lot of peace. I was not weak or incapable or lazy or any of those things I had naïve preconceptions about. It was (and at times still is) scary but I feel more empowered now that I know I can learn to manage. I had to make serious lifestyle changes in order to stay a student after my diagnosis but I'm thankful every day that I did. They were not easy changes but they saved me.

I am able to continue my studies because I asked for help, which again was not easy for me. I would not be able to be a student if I had not allowed myself to be vulnerable and acknowledge for once in my life that I was NOT fine. Once I was honest with myself and able to listen to my body, a spark was ignited in my heart. That energy is called hope. When I found out there was a name for this feeling I've had for as long as I can remember, I was able to begin a path of healing. I'm not saying life gets easier once you begin to listen to yourself because trust me, healing is not a linear process.

Sometimes you take steps back. Sometimes you think you're doing really well, you are in the right mindset, you can do this, you finally have things figured out, finally found medication that actually works, you remind yourself with validation that you are smart- just distracted! The power of positivity… then you get a D in an incredibly important course after you worked as hard as you absolutely could and fuck up your GPA and have to repeat that fucking course that almost made you drop out of university entirely… and you are once again back to that familiar feeling of total and complete failure. The difference is this time you have hope. If you have hope you can call for support and create strategies to move forward again. Please do not give up, even when you feel like there is no hope or escape from inside your own head. In the most painful moments, remember that healing is not linear, we grow at different speeds and take this time to focus on finding your resiliency.

This year I will apply for graduate school. If you asked me two years ago about a master's program I would have cried from the thought of 5 more years of school. Just the thought of one more day sitting at a desk made me cry. I will be forever grateful for the Women's and Gender Studies program at the University of Manitoba. It was like putting on feminist glasses and suddenly the picture was clear. One of my professors kindly encouraged me to change my focus from psychology to Women's and Gender Studies because she saw the passion it sparked in me and I am forever grateful for that moment. She was right. These ideas made the world make sense to me. This amazing community accepts that I am disorganized, notoriously late and aversive to deadlines yet love me for who I am. Women's and Gender Studies taught me how to use my voice and that my voice matters. They continuously encourage my ideas and challenge my skills. They taught me how to redirect my anger and turn it into empowerment. I have learned how to speak up against injustice. Because of Women's and Gender Studies I have learned to respect myself. To be self-reflexive. I have learned to love effortlessly across difference. I have had the opportunity to learn from the most brilliant and compassionate mentors. I have learned how intersectionality is the foundation to our identity which means that as living beings we are fundamentally interconnected. Because of feminism I know difference is our strength.

If your learning style deviates from the average, university is running a marathon where you can never catch your breath despite months of preparation and training. Our generation must resist the dominant discourse around academia so the gift of knowledge is accessible for all types of learners, in all types of races, genders, abilities, sexualities and economic classes. My undergrad degree is not merely about the "facts" I learn in the classroom but a safe space to explore my identity. To make a positive impact in this world. I was one panic attack away from dropping out but I am thankful every day to those who support me so I can be myself and help create a better world as a student.

When university life is overwhelming, when you're ready to call it quits and walk away, remember what ignites your spark. My hope is fuelled by feminism because we understand that we are all in this together. Healing and change cannot be done alone. Create new discourse and challenge the oppressive ones. Don't give up.

The future is feminist.

Sincerely,

Ashley