

# THE SIREN

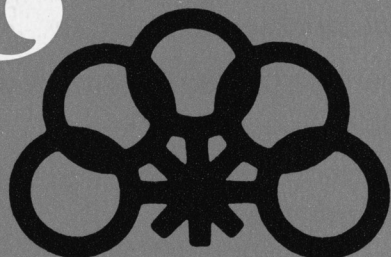
FEMINIST MAGAZINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

**“WHAT THIS COUNTRY  
NEEDS IS MORE  
UNEMPLOYED  
POLITICIANS.**

— Angela Y. Davis

The  
National  
Women's  
Political  
Caucus

We,  
have  
a lot,  
to win



# THE SIREN

WINTER 2013

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## OFFICIAL BUSINESS

The Siren is published and produced by the ASUO Women's Center. We are the only student-led feminist publication on campus. It is our mission to cover contemporary feminist issues and act as an outlet for the creative and intellectual development of women. Our staff consists of an editorial board of Women's Center staff who solicit contributions from volunteer writers and artists.

BACK COVER AND MASTHEAD IMAGES  
COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF OREGON  
ARCHIVES.

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*University of Oregon Student Unions joined together to protest the Senate allotting Overrealized Funds to UO Executive without going through the proper channels. The action by the senate was eventually overturned.*

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# CONTRIBUTORS



## CHRISTEN MAGARET

Christen Magaret is a senior at the University of Oregon studying Journalism with a focus on photojournalism. After living in Texas for the first twenty years of her life, she followed her family to Central Oregon, made her way to Eugene and never looked back. When Christen isn't taking photos, she lives for hanging with her cats Tonka and Supertramp, daydreaming of her yearly John Day fishing trips with her dad, and immersing herself in the beautiful environment this state has to offer. Upon graduation, Christen hopes to be able to combine her passions of photography and animal activism into one awesomely badass career.



## LAETITIA BÉRAUD

Laetitia Béraud is a French exchange student from Lyon majoring in political science. She came to the University of Oregon to start studying journalism and meet The Duck. Apart from eating frogs and baguettes, she enjoys writing especially about the cultural differences between Europe and the USA. She also likes to play the piano, soccer and badminton. Don't start talking about cats or politics with her otherwise you'll be stuck with her for a couple hours. Also interested in gender issues she hopes to add her "French touch" to The Siren.



## ERIN DOERNER

Erin Doerner is a first-time contributor to the Siren. While growing up on the tundra in North Dakota, she realized her passion for writing about social issues – and figuring out how to walk to class in 20 below temperatures (wear A LOT of layers). After graduating with degrees in Psychology and English in 2009, she moved to Eugene to pursue graduate work in psychology. Erin is now exploring classes related to women's issues. While she currently works at a bookstore, she hopes to pursue a career in journalism or a related field. In her spare time she enjoys cooking, taking day trips to the coast, and curling up with a good book.

# 'zine

Survivor Empowerment Alliance

**To raise awareness about how sexual assault and the UO mandatory reporting protocol affects our campus community.**

**Submissions can be sent to  
SEAZine@uoregon.edu**

The 'Zine will be comprised of personal stories of survivors, those who have and have not gone through the reporting process on campus. For those who chose not to report, articles will be published anonymously.

We will also publish opinion pieces on the UO's mandatory reporting protocol, responses to rape culture, support for survivor-centered sexual assault responses, and resources.

There will not be University employees checking the email account, so the anonymity and confidentiality of people who submit entries will be protected, if so desired.





ASUO Women's Center staff, volunteers, and friends kick back with Jaelyn Friedman after her successful lecture in LLC Performance hall.

## OUT/LOUD Planning Committee:

Out/Loud is the largest all ages, 1-day Queer Women's Music Festival in the NW. This is a place for folks to celebrate the diverse voices of queer female artists, from slam poets to rock goddesses, in a safe place for LGBTQQI and Allies. Though this festival is taking place on June 1st, the OUT/LOUD planning committee meets every Tuesday before the event to plan out the details of who and what we want to make this year's OUT/LOUD experience all it can be.

So far we've developed mission statements and goals for this festival, as well as the place, time and duration of the event. Every year we students have the option to change the places, times and setup. The planning committee has proudly announced our decision to make this a day full of fun, interactive queer performances and activities. We've also established a rough lineup, and are in the process of contacting artists to gauge the interest and expenses of bringing them here. In the past years we've had amazing artists including God-Des and She, Nina Sky, Andrea Gibson, Tender Forever and Krudas Cubensi. Though we can't guarantee who's coming this year- we're feeling an energetic, dance-worthy day followed by a rock concert.

To help plan this year's OUT/LOUD experience, join us in the Women's Center Lounge on Tuesdays at 4:15pm. Winter Term we'll be focused on creative fundraising and outreach to local high school GSAs and organizations in the community who should be involved in making OUT/LOUD a success for all queer ladies and allies on and off campus. Be on the lookout for more updates, and feel free to email me if you can't make the meetings but still want to be involved.

— Chelsea Pfeifer, LGBTQ Coordinator

## EDITOR'S LETTER

What a crazy political race it has been.

It's been mind-boggling to me--now that I've come into my feminist own--to see the political conversations about taking rights away from women, which we have already won.

My partner was recently talking to me about his grandmother, and how she was lamenting the political turmoil against abortions and birth control rights. She remembers protesting and fighting for those exact rights, and now we, the generation of her grandchildren, are fighting once again.

On the plus side, I have seen this fight bring many of us together. Right before November 6th, a volunteer sent me the link to a video (which was stuck in the middle of a public service announcement to encourage voting) titled "You don't own me." (You can view this video on our Tumblr.) It is a compilation of 'video chat' type clips of women of all races, ages, sexual orientations, singing the song, "You Don't Own Me" originally sung by Lesley Gore in 1963. The video was really moving and motivating to me.

I think it has also brought us together on campus. I loved going to my classes and hearing from my professors, as inconspicuously as possible, that they believed some of the arguments were as ridiculous as I thought they were.

Also that Obama, a man I have seen as rather amazing, and taking our country in the right direction has been criticized for trying to 'appease' populations of color and in poverty. Or maybe he's just making laws that benefit those populations and some folks just can't take it.

While this election has made me more than a little cynical in terms of some of the educated leaders in this country, it also gives me hope that we are going in the right direction.

With the reelection of President Obama, our rights aren't being taken away and we can look forward to four more years of trying to educate others in a way that matters.

In this issue, we look at some ups and downs of the rather political year we have had. We also take the time to reflect on what politics we hold dear, and how we think of the way our political selves manifest in everyday life.

— Kylie Wray, Editor-in-Chief



# NEAT

WORDS BY ANNA BIRD

## Hurl: California bans...psych!

This piece was originally going to be a “Neat” about California’s ban on conversion therapy for minors, and how they would be the first state to initiate such legislation. I had a lovely piece that described the horrors of these therapy practices, the extremely negative effects it has on those who go through it, and why it is totally awesome that California State Senator Ted Lieu sponsored the bill to end the atrocious therapies.

HOWEVER, as of late-December, this subject has taken a turn for the hurl-variety. The ban has been put on hold until its “constitutionality” can be argued in future court hearings. Religious groups have sued for a block on the law, with the golden argument that it infringes on their First Amendment rights.

Well, I would like to use my First Amendment right to verbally hurl profusely all over the disgusting argument that any form of counseling or therapy practices can change a person’s sexuality on the basis that homosexuality is wrong and unnatural, and therefore should be “fixed.” Conversion therapy has been a growing anti-gay trend since the 1970s. The proposed bill would make these therapies illegal to practice on minors, which would be a huge gain for LGBTQ youth as well as LGBTQ communities. The kids whose parents put them through these forms of therapy are made to believe that there is something inherently wrong with them that they need to fix in order to be loved and accepted by their families and God.

It has been proven time and again that these therapies are ineffective (obviously) and can cause serious emotional and psychological damage (duh). So it is baffling to me that religious institutions are using the Freedom of Speech argument as a means to further and justify their hateful and violent

agendas, and that they are willing to fight all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court (which is a possibility) in order to continue these therapy practices. Like having queer kids is the end of humanity and they must save all who can be spared, instead of preaching love and acceptance and helping to guide youth through turbulent times without making them ashamed of who they are.

In the meantime I will use my own version of prayer in the hopes that this bill will hold up in the courts.

## HURL: Female Governors

WORDS BY KYLIE WRAY

A gathering of young minds, coming together to inform the students on the University of Oregon campus on issues of diversity: Ethos Magazine staff meetings. For the last two terms, I have been working as a designer for Ethos. I thought it would be a fun way to build my portfolio, and it really was. However, there were occasional moments when working for a publication that is not typically feminist got to me.

Enter hurl subject.

During our first meeting of the fall term, we did a team building exercise in the form of Ethos Trivia. This entailed splitting into groups and being the first group to answer the questions about our magazine, the campus, popular culture, and the news that were thrown at us. The game proceeded at a fast pace. It got a little heated. And the room was abuzz with whispers of deliberations and yelling at the hosts of the game.

“Name three student publications on campus, other than Ethos.”

“The Siren, The Daily Emerald, The Oregon Voice.”

“Name the AMC hit series about a 1950’s advertising firm.”

“MAD MEN!”

Then the fatal question was asked:

“Can you name three of the 10 US female governors?”

Silence.

“Can you name two?”

Silence.

“How about one?”

“Umm... Sarah Palin?”

After this, we simply moved onto the next question. There was no scolding from our esteemed editor-in-chief or associate editors that we as journalists should be aware of these sorts of things. We just moved on. Forgot about it. It’s excusable that we don’t know

female politicians. Who would?

For the staff of a university publication that has won several awards, this sort of ignorance is inexcusable. For the sake of journalism, I hope more staff members than just me went home and researched this subject.

Maggie Hassan. Jan Brewer. Susana Martinez.

## NEAT/HURL: The Truth Project

WORDS BY CHELSEA PFIEFER

In the midst of October, UO Campus was granted the pleasure of witnessing The Truth Project’s generous display of 8-month-aborted fetuses on huge poster boards for everyone to see. Stationed for a week at the EMU amphitheater, they passed along handbills that uncovered “the truth” about abortion. Claiming to be unaffiliated with religion, they ironically insisted that abortion is immoral. Okay, so you don’t support abortion- that’s fine. Blowing up horrifying images that could emotionally trigger passerbys -- not okay. Students for Choice AND Students for Life were appalled at the methods The Truth Project used to relay their message. They compared abortion to genocide, which is not only untrue but is offensive to survivors of genocide and their families.

When Students for Choice caught wind of this appearance, we made signs to show support for those who might feel attacked by these gruesome displays. Roughly 20 of us silently stood outside the amphitheater, holding our signs to ensure that people know they have options and should feel good about their reproductive choices.

The longer we were out, the more people stopped by to help hold signs in solidarity.

As much as The Truth Project makes me want to hurl, the passion and activism of our student body was the neatest part of my week.



# HURL

## Women's History Month Wikipedia Parties 2013

Have you ever gone to Wikipedia in search of information about a feminist activist, scholar, writer, artist, scientist, historical figure only to find there's no entry for her?

Have you ever visited a Wikipedia page only to realize that they had information wrong about feminist history or significant female historical figures?

Chances are that your answer to one of these questions was yes. Women are underrepresented on Wikipedia, both as Wikipedians and as historical and political agents.

Beginning on International Women's Day 2013 (Friday, 3/9/13), Fembot will be sponsoring Wikipedia Parties throughout the month of March to celebrate Women's History Month and to continue the work of addressing these problems already begun by feminist colleagues around the world.

On Friday, 3/9/13, Sarah Stierch will visit the University of Oregon to conduct a Wikipedia Workshop for undergraduates, faculty members and graduate students interested in learning how to contribute and edit content on Wikipedia.

On Saturday, 3/10/13, groups will convene to put their new skills to the test and contribute entries on feminist figures (from history, art, literature, politics, government, social movements, science, technology) to Wikipedia.

In addition to the Fembot group in Oregon, we are hoping that Fembot Collective members around the world will join the party. Working with Sarah Stierch, we will work to coordinate entries and match our sister parties with Wikipedians in their local communities.

# NEWS BRIEFS: POLITICS

WORDS BY MARINA CLAVERA

Ovaries everywhere rejoice. Obama is re-elected. Women's reproductive rights are supported in health care plans. "Women are not interest groups. If you truly value families don't play politics with women's health..." Thank you, Mr. President. We are lucky to have a president that supports equal work for equal pay, supports gay marriage, isn't attempting to define "legitimate rape," or declaring rape as God's will. I think most of us (God included) can agree that rape is rape. It is always a terrible crime. It is never the victim's "fault". No questions.

Wisconsin's Tammy Baldwin is the first openly gay politician, AND Wisconsin woman elected to U.S. Senate.

Gay marriage supporters turn out in huge numbers at the 2012 elections. Marriage rights for gay couples pass in Washington State, Maine, and Maryland. In Minnesota voters reject an amendment banning gay marriage. Faith in humanity is restored with a 4 for 4 win.

In yet another instance of UO student voices being ignored, Climate Justice League's Take Back the Tap was shot down in the last stages of the policy process. After 3 years of educational policies, research, and polling, administration is still not on board. Staff and students both continue to support a bottled water free campus.

Joe Biden goes shopping at Costco. Meanwhile, Mitt Romney uses his dad's free McDonald's for life card. Yes, apparently if you're a venture capitalist those exist.

The UN recognizes Palestine as a non-member observer state. Only 9 nations voted against this, including the U.S., Canada, Czech Republic, and Panama.

Thank you student unions and student groups for organizing! After a couple of lengthier-than-usual ASUO Senate meetings where students met in protest, \$142,000 transferred by ASUO Senate to get Macklemore on campus for Mallard Madness was ruled unconstitutional by ASUO Constitution Court. The money has been returned to the over-realized fund. This is a win for the livelihood of culturally cultivating student programs. Yes, it's great Macklemore released "Same Love", but let's be real, the video is pretty heteronormative. Let's use this money for programs that have a lasting effect on the lives of students.

The Survivor Empowerment Alliance, angry feminists, and justifiably concerned students continue to fight for a survivor centered campus policy surround sexual assault. Students voted to get anonymous report forms back on campus. They are still not here. The completed policy regarding mandatory reporting is still nowhere to be found, at least in a way that is available to students (many of whom are mandatory reporters themselves). If it's not written down, it's not law right? Looks like we'll have to go about our day using our best judgement.

## If you want to see more change:

So, are you psyched or freaked that Barack Obama is still President? (If you don't agree with Obama's views, don't sit back and wait for four more years to pass. Get involved! Exercise your right to participate in our political process and add your voice to the conversation. Your views are just as important as anyone else's.

If you are eligible, make sure you are registered to vote in the state of Oregon or whatever state you can vote in. Become involved in activism, whether it is or is not directly related to one of these issues. Get behind a cause you are passionate about. Volunteer your time with community organizations, have conversations with friends and family about their political beliefs, learn as much as you can. If you are too young to vote, there are still countless ways to make a difference.

State and local elections matter too. The presidential election may get a lot of coverage, but often state and local government affects our lives in much more intimate ways on a daily basis. If you vote in your local elections, for example, decide who YOU want for Mayor of Eugene or Oregon State Senator, you are letting your community know what voices YOU want speaking for YOU in our local, regional and national political dialogues.

It is easy to become disconnected or even apathetic about politics. We lead busy lives with many commitments. Our priorities may be different based on a multitude of factors both within and outside of our control. But keep this in mind: when you may be feeling like all of this does not matter, if you were too busy to vote, when you say you just "don't care" about politics, please reconsider. If you are a woman or identify as a woman, think about all of the women here in Oregon who 100 years ago fought with everything they had for you to have the right to cast a ballot alongside your male peers. Think also about the women of color who had to continue fighting for years to come. Do not take a step backward when they took a step forward for you. Make your next steps count.

# FOUR MORE YEARS

WORDS BY ERIN DOERNER

Whew, finally. The election is over and President Obama has been re-elected. Aren't we all glad that the political ads, the debates, and the ridiculous (and often false) statements about the other candidates have come to an end?

I sincerely hope you all voted in both the presidential and local elections if you were able to. It's one of our most valuable rights as citizens. Every time you vote, you are acknowledging the sacrifices made by those who fought tooth and nail for you to have that right. November 5<sup>th</sup> marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Women's Suffrage in Oregon. It took a lengthy series of six statewide votes to finally narrowly pass by 52 percent to 48 percent. Almost immediately, the landscape of politics in our state started to change. For example, according to an OPB report, in 1913, a group of women reformers (and their allies) disgusted with terrible workplace conditions succeeded on getting the nation's first minimum wage bill on the ballot. Women also played a substantial role in reforming legislation relating to the death penalty and public health, among other major issues. Now more than ever, we can honor these brave women's commitment to equality for all by participating in our political process. By voting, you are exercising your voice and advocating for what YOU believe. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 206,072,000 Americans are eligible to vote but only 146,311,000 are registered. Of young people ages 18 to 24, only 58.5% are registered to vote. Sadly, the most commonly stated reason for not voting? We are "too busy" and have a "conflicting schedule". We have an advantage in Oregon because we have mail-in ballots, so I hope you used yours.

The presidential election came to 60,902,250 votes (50%) for President Obama versus 57,964,551 votes (48%) for Mr. Romney. President Obama received 303 electoral votes while Mr. Romney received 206 votes. To win the presidency, 270 electoral votes were needed. According to the early National Exit Poll conducted by Edison Research, young people ages 18 to 29 made up 19 percent of all voters in the presidential

election. Oregon's seven electoral votes went for President Obama, with 54.4% of voters voting for him, and 42.7% of voters casting their ballots for Mr. Romney.

About a week after the election, Mr. Romney made comments to his top donors that President Obama had won re-election due to a number of very generous "gifts" that his administration had made to "blacks, Hispanics and young voters" during his first term. The Los Angeles Times quotes Mr. Romney as saying, "The President's campaign focused on giving targeted groups a big gift – so he made a big effort on small things. Those small things, by the way, add up to trillions of dollars." He said young women in particular voted for Obama because of free contraception coverage under Obama's healthcare plan. In addition, young voters responded to the administration's plan for partial college loan interest forgiveness and health care coverage under their parents' plan under they're 26 years old. Mr. Romney also stated that Obama's "promise" of healthcare coverage "in perpetuity" was "highly motivational" for African American and Hispanic voters, along with people living in poverty. Lastly, Romney remarked that the Obama campaign had made him appear "anti-immigrant" and that the administration promised to offer "amnesty" to the children of illegal immigrants. This, he said, turned out Hispanic voters in "record numbers". Several high profile Republicans (including Newt Gingrich and Bobby Jindal, among others) have since publicly condemned his remarks. President Obama has not responded to Mr. Romney's claims.

Now that he has been re-elected, what was President Obama's previous record on issues relating to women?

## Women in the Workplace

President Obama's first act that he signed as president was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, which relaxed the statute of limitations for equal-pay lawsuits. While prior to the election, Mr. Romney would not



say whether or not he would have signed it into law, and Paul Ryan (Republican Vice-Presidential candidate) voted against the act. President Obama also championed the Paycheck Fairness Act, now rejected twice in Congress, which aims to address male-female income disparity in the United States. According to data from the United States Census Bureau in 2008, white women made 77 cents for every dollar earned by a white man, while black women earned 61 cents and Latinas earned 51 cents in comparison. Historically, women have been marginalized in the political arena. For women who want to go into politics, many have found limited opportunities for moving up to more powerful positions. According to the Center for American Women and Politics, women hold less than 17% of positions in the U.S. Congress and only six Federal Executive (Cabinet or Cabinet-level) positions. Of the 90 women who served in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, 24 were women of color. When the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress convenes in January, a record number of women – 20- will serve in the U.S. Senate. To address women's historical limitation to judicial appointments, in his administration's four years, President Obama has tripled the number of women on the Supreme Court, bringing the total to three out of nine positions.

### **LGBTQ Issues**

Also in 2009, President Obama signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which expanded existing hate crimes law to include crimes motivated by a targeted individual's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. He also repealed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) which prevented service members who identify as gay or lesbian from serving openly in the military. In July 2011, a federal appeals court barred the military from restricting gay or lesbian service members' right to serve openly. Soon after, the President and other military officials sent a certification to Congress that set the end of DADT for September 20, 2011. It is extremely unlikely, now that President Obama has been re-elected, that DADT would be reinstated during his next four years in office. In May 2012, President Obama stated his support in a nationally aired interview for the legalization of same-sex marriage and marriage equality for all.

### **Federal Financial Aid**

In 2010, President Obama signed the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act, which ends the process of the federal government giving subsidies to private banks to distribute federally insured loans. It also increases the Pell Grant scholarship award to \$5,635. He has offered several ideas for helping lower-income students attend a college or university. According to a University Business report, Congress approved President Obama's plan for a four-year, \$10,000 college tax credit for families earning up to \$180,000 a year. Increases in the fixed rate Federal Perkins Loan program were also approved.

### **What President Obama Promised**

President Obama's re-election website ([www.barackobama.com](http://www.barackobama.com)) has a special webpage called "Women's Issues," which states, "From cracking down pay discrimination to making sure women can get birth control and preventive care with no co-pay or deductible, President Obama has fought to give women more control over their health and more opportunities." He has stated that he believes "a woman's health care choices are personal decisions, best made with her doctor – without interference from politicians".

### **What Seems Likely To Happen**

#### **Access to Healthcare**

Thanks to President Obama's health care reform, often called "Obamacare", many insurance companies are beginning to fully cover birth control without including co-pays or deductibles as part of preventive health care for women, potentially saving women up to \$600 a year. "Obamacare" seeks to put an end to health insurance companies charging women more than men for the same coverage, and would force them to cover mammograms, cancer screenings, including cervical cancer and HPV screenings, HIV counseling and screening, and STI counseling, as part of routine preventive care. According to Planned Parenthood, women use birth control for an average of 30 years, so this could add up to \$18,000 saved on birth control expenses over a woman's lifetime. As over 50% of women ages 18-34 say they've struggled to afford birth control, this could be a huge money

saver for women that are also trying to put themselves through school, start careers and begin independent adult lives while being able to control whether or not they become pregnant. President Obama believes, according to his website, "Women aren't a special interest group. Economic issues are women's issues. Women's rights are civil rights." He has stated, "We know we are better off when women are treated fairly and equally in every aspect of American life, whether it's the salary you earn or the health decisions you make."

President Obama believes that *Roe v. Wade* should be upheld. In 2008, in the third Presidential debate, he discussed his view that both pro-choice and pro-life people can come together "...and say, 'We should try to prevent unintended pregnancies by providing appropriate education to our youth, communicating that sexuality is sacred...'" To support his beliefs, President Obama voted for a \$100 million education initiative aimed at reducing teen pregnancy and providing access to contraceptives for young people. He feels that access to adoption options as well as additional support services for single women who choose to keep their babies should be increased. He has stated that ultimately an unintended pregnancy can be a tragic situation and that nobody is "pro-abortion". President Obama firmly believes in a woman's right to choose and make her health decisions on her own or with her doctor's help.

Under "Obamacare", 3.1 million young Americans have gained access to continued health coverage. Previously, young adults could be excluded from their parents' health insurance coverage when they turned 18. Now young adults are able to stay on their parents' plan until they are 26, often accessing free preventive care.

#### **Women in the Workplace**

President Obama has been a vocal supporter of women's right to equal pay for equal work and reducing hiring and employment discrimination. It's likely that we will continue to see him supporting and promoting legislation that showcases his strong beliefs about women's rights in the workplace and beyond. Hopefully in his next term President Obama can succeed in bringing us to closer to equal pay through his support for similar anti-discrimination workplace legislation.

## OUR BODIES, OUR HEALTH

***“We are seeing it. We are seeing the fabric of this country fall apart, and it’s falling apart because of single moms.”***

- Rick Santorum, 2012 Vicepresidential Candidate

***“If it’s a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to shut that whole thing down.”***

- Todd Akin, Candidate for U.S. Senate from Missouri

***“Artificial birth control is unnatural and immoral.”***

- Pat Buchanan, Political Commentator and Author

***“If I thought that the man’s signature was required, REQUIRED, in order for a woman to have an abortion, I’d have a little bit more peace about it.”***

- Alan Dick, Alaska State Rep.

***“If we are going to pay for your contraceptives and thus pay for you to have sex, we want something. We want you to post the videos online so we can all watch.”***

- Rush Limbaugh

***“Planned Parenthood, we’re going to get rid of that.”***

- Mitt Romney, 2012 Presidential Candidate

***“If these young women are being responsible and didn’t have the sex to begin with, we wouldn’t have this problem to begin with.”***

- Ted Davis, Commissioner from North Carolina

### WORDS BY CHELSEA PFIEFER

These are merely a few of the terrible, ignorant comments made by public figures this year concerning women’s reproductive health. Threats to defund Planned Parenthood, redefine rape and repeal Roe V. Wade show us that women’s basic rights are still questioned and remain controversial topics of discussion. Decades later, women and allies must step up to reclaim freedoms that we hoped were secured. Although I’m sure we’re far from convinced we live in a non-patriarchal, non-oppressive country, it’s still frustrating to hear echoes from arguments won decades ago.

It’s interesting to note that almost all of these quotes are putting most or all of the blame on women. Women can’t get pregnant by themselves.

These threats are further proof that we don’t live in a so-called “Post-Feminist” time. We need to identify and stand as feminists now as much as ever, and show some solidarity and strength in our abilities to make our own choices. Our bodies are our own to use and protect how we want to. Even with a liberal president in office, these concerns are relevant and need to be spoken for. If these rights and definitions are opposed by so many, then we clearly haven’t won as many battles as we sometimes hope.

Stay active in protecting women’s health by keeping up with the news, volunteering for S.W.A.T. or Students for Choice, or take action in your community with Planned Parenthood. The War on Women isn’t over, so stay involved and advocate for these basic rights.

# THE MIND BEHIND THE NEW JIM CROW

Michelle Alexander Visits the University of Oregon and leaves students with important thoughts.

WORDS BY JESSICA ROJAS

***“We need to shift the public consciousness, nothing short of a movement poses any help... we must seek out opposition and the hard battles...this is far from running from the big fight, it is to frame and move. The most rewarding times are when people are coming together; making sacrifices whether they win or lose...keep fighting for what they believe in. It makes life worth living although it is not always convenient”***

Recently, students at the University of Oregon hosted guest lecturer, Civil Rights attorney and author of “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness”, Michelle Alexander.

Alexander was invited by the Oregon Humanities Center to discuss her new book and her work educating the public on the disproportionate growing rates of incarceration for people of color, in particular Blacks and Latinos. Prior to her lecture, I was fortunate to hear her speak to a group of students who are involved in learning about issues surrounding the Prison Industrial Complex and the creation of safe communities.

Something our visiting scholar brought up right away was the vulnerability of women as the fastest growing population in prison, particularly women of color. As a feminist, I urge our readers, and anyone concerned with the welfare and well being of women, to learn more about the Prison Industrial Complex and efforts to bring about restorative and transformative justice.

However, the topic of Michelle Alexander’s book is not a popular one. In fact, she stated that in the process of writing her book many of her mentors discouraged her, advising her to “not go there”. To bring up issues of race and to correlate prisons as a new form of legal slavery was not a popularly supported subject during Obama’s campaign. She also

describes the time following Obama’s election as “post racialization”, a time during which people have become reluctant to discuss race.

While popular consensus may agree that discrimination against anyone based on race is wrong, according to Alexander the labeling of large numbers of people of color as convicted felons is proof that we are creating a racialized 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizenship, one that resembles the days of slavery.

Alexander reminded her audience of the “war on drugs” era, supported by former president Ronald Regan, which targeted the policing of Blacks for consumption and sale of crack cocaine. Later studies revealed that whites use drugs at the same rates as people of color, yet do not make up the same proportion of the incarcerated. In her book, *The New Jim Crow*, she brings attention to this by saying:

“Nationwide, African-American prison admission for drug offenses rates had increased 26 times between 1983 and 2000, 22 times in case of Latinos, and 8 times for whites. Three-fourths of the imprisoned have been blacks and Latinos, while the majority of illegal drug users and dealers are white.”

Alexander also made clear that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which prohibits slavery, also allows for slavery to operate if incarcerated.

For those of our readers who do not know, convicted felons cannot obtain certain forms of employment, face barriers to housing due to discrimination, do not possess the right to bear arms, in some states lose the right to vote, and they may almost never graduate beyond this category.

When we think of those who are vulnerable, we cannot forget those deemed as illegal immigrants. I would also like to mention that women are usually the primary caregivers of children, so when one or more parents are incarcerated, we need to ask who is providing care for these children.

All of the incarcerated groups include women, so I highly suggest to our feminist



readers to learn more about the Prison Industrial complex, read Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow*, learn about your local women’s prison and county jails, ask what sort of conditions are present and what sort of resources are available in your community to help those in transition. If you do not see what you are looking for, do some research on how you can promote safety and justice in your community.

With that, I leave our readers with Michelle’s words in hopes of helping us create solutions to the problems she has posed:

***“We must deal with the realities of the role that capitalism has played into mass incarceration, the roles of creating surplus labor pools for easy exploitation. We need to create new language as the old models of capitalism and socialism aren’t matching today’s world. We need to advocate for basic human rights and any economic system that does not honor that is immoral.”***

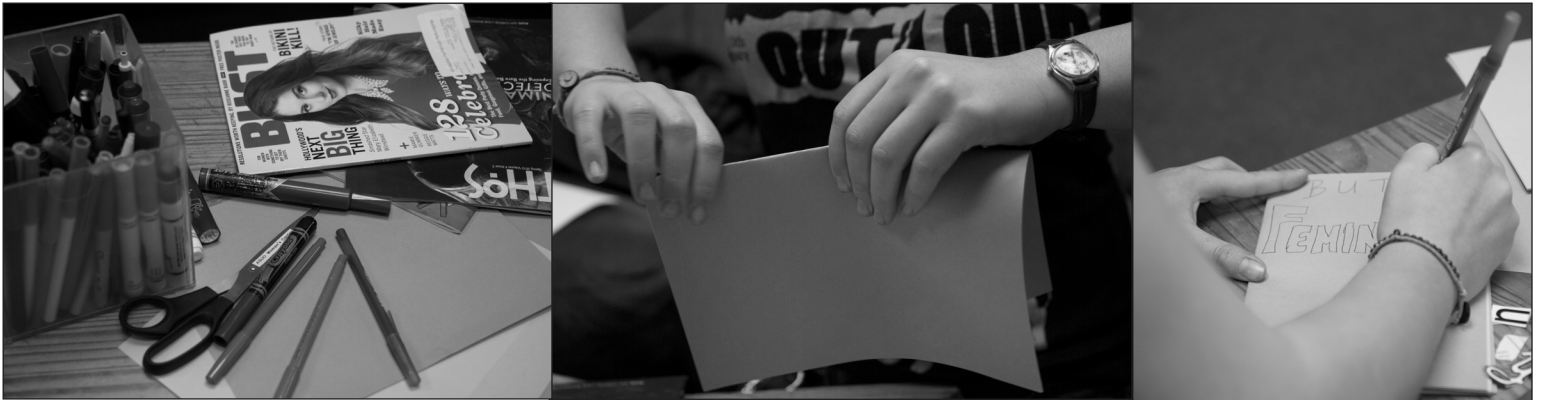


# BE HEARD: HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN 'ZINE

WORDS BY CHELSEA PFIEFER

PHOTOS BY CHRISTEN MAGARET

In the height of 90's Riot GRRRL angst, feminists from across the country compiled 'Zines to express their thoughts, feelings, questions and disturbances with popular culture. What's a 'Zine, you ask? 'Zines are mini DIY (get it?) magazines filled with drawings, xeroxed images, poetry, memoirs, essays, etc. They can cover broad themes such as Sexuality or Gender Expression, or more specific like your experiences being vegan. Not only is 'Zine-making really fun and creative, it's a tool for political speech and expression that is often overlooked. Even if you never show anyone your work, crafting 'Zines is a great way to reflect and develop your own responses to the world around you.

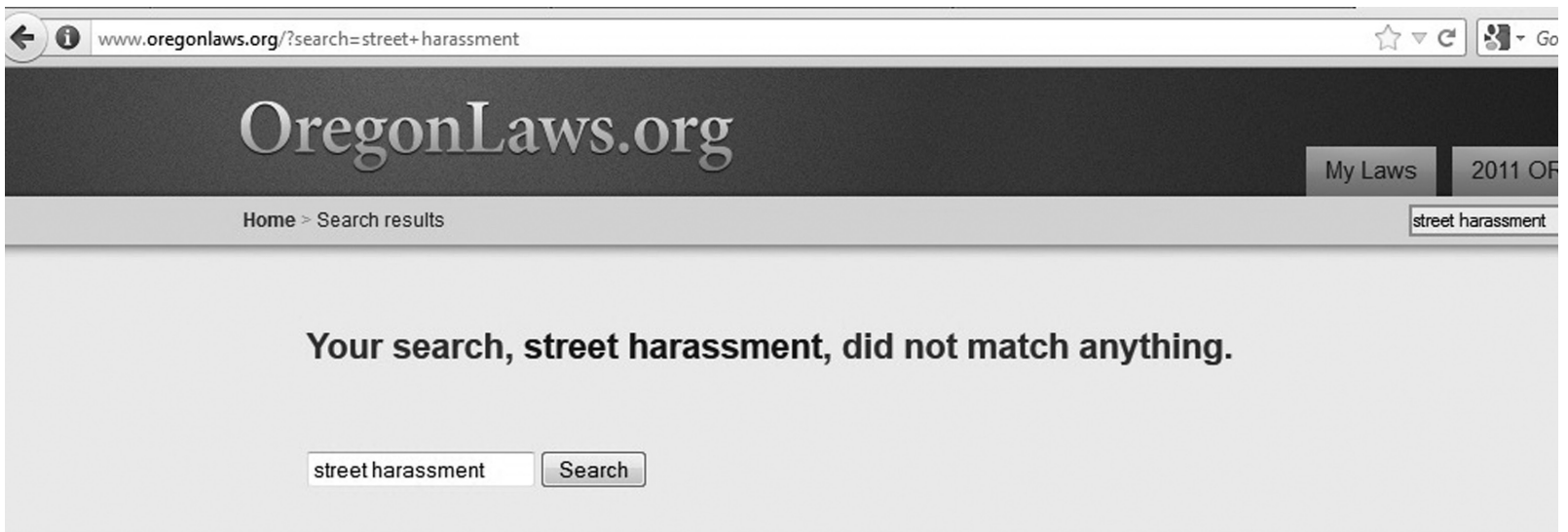


## HOW TO GET STARTED:

1. Make sure you have some printer and/or construction paper handy.
2. Get a hold of at least one sharpie or marker (preferably several)
3. Fold each paper in half to form a booklet (hamburger style)
4. Choose a theme or concept (i.e. "But Feminists aren't funny: examining a sexist humor culture")
5. Start writing/drawing/cutting out magazine images/whatever your heart desires
6. Make photocopies and share them! (or keep them, whichever you like)

**NOTE:** There is no one way to make a 'Zine. You can make them full pages, or really small ones by folding a piece of paper into pages. The point is to creatively express your beliefs, opinions and politics and have fun doing it.





## IS STREET HARASSMENT A POLITICAL PROBLEM?

*From Europe to the US the problem of street harassment varies in its extremes. But regardless it is a problem that needs addressing.*

WORDS BY LAETITIA BERUARD

People often ask me what I miss about France. A lot, that's for sure. But more importantly I can tell you what I don't miss. I've been in Eugene for two months now, I walk a lot, and I can tell you: I haven't felt safe like this for a long time.

Followed; target of public masturbation; path blocked; sexual touching or grabbing; verbal comments; honking; whistling; stalking. No matter the level of such actions, most women experienced it at least once in their life. It's hard to put a name on this. It can be a vague concept but it's called "street harassment".

Sexist insults or behaviors are common in the streets of Lyon, my home city. In the United States I feel like you have this personal "bubble" people are not allowed to enter. In France, especially the more you go South, the more this "bubble" becomes less impermeable.

"French people are really verbal" Katie says, a UO student who studied abroad in France last year. It usually begins with an innocent "Hey les filles" or "Hey Mademoiselle" ("Hi girls", "hi miss") "They touch you. Sometimes it's harmless, sometimes it's funny." Sometimes it doesn't end well.

From a problem to public action to try to resolve it, it takes three steps according to sociology studies. First, a problem becomes a social problem through categorization, it means it is understood as problematic by a majority of the society. Second, this social problem can enter the political arena and become a political issue at the very moment when people think that the solution can only come from public intervention. Then the political issue is debated. Last but not least, the step to public action requires the government to take measures.

Street Harassment across countries is a very good example of a problem that has been ignored in the political arena. Street Harassment is still working on the first step, still trying to legitimize the struggle and define the problem.

Without a precise, consensual definition, you can't have a law. That's the unfortunate truth I, as a French woman, found out a couple months ago. The "Conseil Constitutionnel", equivalent of the Supreme Court, repealed the law against sexual harassment on the work place because the legal definition was too vague. It led to a legal vacuum and dozens of postponed trials.

Scholars have been trying to define "Street Harassment" but for now, none of the definitions has met a general approval. Micaela di Leonardo, author of "Political Economy of Street Harassment" (1981) says: "Street harassment occurs when one or more strange men accost one or more women in a public place. Through looks, words, or gestures, the man asserts his right to intrude on the women's attention, defining her as a sexual object, and forcing her to interact with him."

Hawley Fogg-Davis does not hesitate to call it "sexual terrorism" in "A Black Feminist Critique of Same-Race Street Harassment" (2005) because you know it will happen but you never know when.

Tiffane Heben, author of "A Radical Reshaping of the Law: Interpreting and Remediating Street Harassment" (1994) introduces the notion of graduation. She makes three categories: severe; moderately severe; and least severe. Then she classifies behaviors in these categories. For example, physical acts are severe street harassment whereas whistling is least severe according to her.

According to sociologists, any social problem is susceptible to becoming a political one and to initiate public action. But the question remains the same: what triggers this movement?

Sophie Peeters, a Belgian cinema studies student, produced a documentary called "Femmes de la rue" (Women of the Street) showing the everyday sexist insults in the streets of Brussels. The film which was broadcast this summer, provoked reactions on the internet and triggered a public debate in Belgium and other European countries. In a word, street harassment cropped up in the

political debate.

After weeks of debates, the city of Brussels established an administrative fine. Now, street harassment has a legal definition in this city. If you are caught, you may have to pay a fine that can be as much as 250 euros (\$320). Before this, racist, sexist or homophobic insults were punished but you needed to press charges. This new law gives a new tool to the police to fight against street harassment.

But as we have seen, each step of the process has to be passed. Talking doesn't mean action. Even if the law was passed in Brussels, this is not the case at the national level or in other countries. In France, the issue was raised and virulent debates took place. Street harassment became for a few weeks a social problem, people realized it was there all along. But the summer often referred to as the "political vacancy," is now over and despite the reassembly of Parliament, street harassment is not a political debate anymore.

What about in the United States? The Civil Rights act (1964) prohibits sex discrimination in the work place. Therefore, sexual harassment is defined as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that tends to create a hostile or offensive work environment." The Education Amendments of 1972 also prohibits sexual harassment in schools.

But if sexual harassment happens in a public space, and you want to complain, you can be confronted by a legal vacuum. There is no such thing as a law against street harassment. Individual states legislation can also be misleading.

All of this raises another question. Why should street harassment be the subject of a law? There are already laws against sexist insults and stalking! These laws presuppose that the victim knows who is targeting him/her. Moreover, recent surveys have shown that near

every woman has experienced street harassment. Is it feasible to press charges against an unknown person on the street? The feeling of impunity is, among other things, why voices start to arise.

For an issue to become a social problem it needs publicity such as collective mobilization, media coverage, and politicization. In the United States you have some interesting initiatives, for example: "ihollaback" an activist website, where women can share their stories. Now the website is available in 12 languages with local activists in 54 countries. However it seems that the movement is failing to make the step from activism to the political arena. In this period of the presidential election and great political debates, street harassment has not been acknowledged once by either of the candidates.

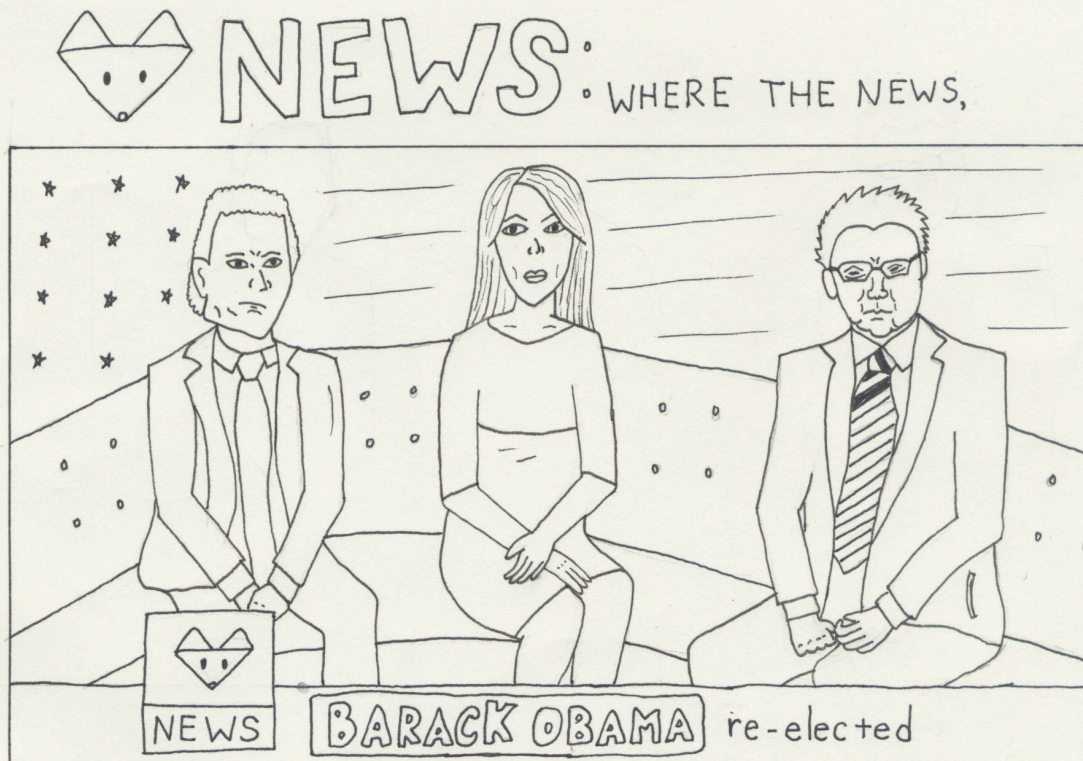
In the case of the Belgian student film being the catalyst for public action, it gave hope to feminist movements across the world. But Brussels stays an exception rather than a rule. And the promise of a national law on the topic in Belgium fell into oblivion.

Should the movements focus more on prevention? Or a way to push for a legislation? Should the problem be treated as a global one. Or should activists focus on a specific area to have greater results? These are questions the feminist movements have to answer before initiating any action. What is for sure is that street harassment has a long way to go to be recognized as a political problem and even a longer way before public authorities take action in this direction.

**To view the documentary discussed in this article, "Femme de la rue" from Sophie Peeters, with English subtitles visit this website:**

<http://www.stopstreetharassment.org/2012/08/brussels/>

POLITICAL CARTOON BY JULIA RILEY



**SPEAKS FOR ITSELF!**

# “A NEAT TIME TO BE A FEMINIST.”

*Professor Leah Middlebrook applies feminist theory to her regular Comparative Literature and Spanish classes.*



WORDS BY MARINA CLAVERA

PHOTO BY CHRISTEN MAGARET

**I had the chance to sit down with Professor Leah Middlebrook and talk to her a little about what she does. A professor of Comparative Literature and Spanish, she gets fired up about poetry, Cervantes, getting people reading, feminism, problems she has with the word feminist, economic inequality on campus, and helping out non-traditional students. She's basically all around awesome!**

**THE SIREN:** What are the biggest challenges and rewards of teaching a 101 class?

**MIDDLEBROOK:** We don't know who we're going to get in our freshman classes. People can come from school districts who don't do any writing at all or very little reading, and then we have people from really elite private schools from all over the country. It's such a mix at the lower division level. Figuring out how to teach to that mix, and getting everybody pretty much on the same playing field, noticing how you can help strengthen

people's self confidence, and just teaching them the basic skills they need--that's it for me. That's why you teach at a public university.

**S:** How do you approach the objectification of women in poetry, in a blazon for example, while still lending artistic credit to the poet?

**M:** I've always taught the idea of representation. I don't say, "the woman is this", or even, "the woman was thought of as this". What I'm really talking about is an artistic medium that uses a particular technique and the label "woman" is then put on it, or feminine endings are put on the words if we're talking in Spanish, but it's not connected to actual women. What we do get a lot of fun out of doing is seeing how so many women, and men, I have to say as well (Cervantes was a super feminist and so was Lope de Vega)...have played with those tropes, and with that representation, and poked fun at it.

**S:** Is there a particular text you love, but

find troubling to teach in a large classroom setting?

**M:** Part of *The Woman Warrior's* quest is to take on American racist hate speech. One of the absolute central turning points in that memoir involves some extremely ugly language. I tell you what, for a long time I would use that language in the classroom, because I grew up in the seventies and in the seventies the idea was, "if you can name it you can tame it". I think something that we recognize now, that I certainly did not recognize until maybe 5 or 6 years ago, is that attitude is often an attitude of someone who is protected by privilege. I think that it's much easier for me as a white woman who grew up in a middle class household to use certain kinds of words that you simply cannot use if you didn't have that privileged, very, very secure upbringing (as crazy as my family was). I myself had to learn as a teacher (unfortunately by making some big mistakes with my students), there is some



language that is just too painful. The speaker of the text is Chinese American. She's in college and is working a job at a paint store. Her boss tells her to order some more of a color. It's sort of a certain color yellow the boss describes using racial slurs. She realizes that her heroism is going to be to stand up to this--"I don't like that word I had to say in my bad, small person's voice that makes no impact. The boss never dared to answer."

**S:** With a text like *Huckleberry Finn*, where there have been new versions of the text released editing out racial slurs, do you see this as erasure of an important part of history, or something that should be taken out, out of sensitivity for people's differing backgrounds?

**M:** I feel that the language is extremely important. It's part of the work of art. Half of my family is Jewish. My step-father came to this country when he was kicked out of Austria by the Nazi's. He and my mother bought a sofa they really loved. It was a Persian carpet that had been made onto a sofa. One day we were all looking at it, we realized that this old carpet on it was old enough that it had Swastika's all along the bottom because it's a mystical symbol. There it was. It was really shocking, but at the same time it is an essential symbol in a whole tradition. So I do think that to take those images and symbols out of the artworks into which they're woven is kind of beside the

point. I think that the more important point is to learn how to reflect with students and with each other all the time about what hurt is, what vulnerability is, what hatred is, and what violence is--to find ways to engage in a way that's productive and meaning producing, which often means not directly using the language. I don't think we should take it out. I think the words should stay in the book, but then it's our burden to contextualize and give students space.

**S:** As a feminist and someone who values diversity what is your view of the UO campus?

**LM:** One place I am really feeling my feminism these days is recognizing how many students we have on campus that are mothers. They are living out their undergraduate life while also taking care of children. The more sensitive I become to that, the more I just think "bravo"! I did not have children myself. Just to see what that's like, and to see what these women are achieving makes me totally thrilled for them. I'm also so excited by the social attitudes expressed by people in their early twenties and late teens now. It is such a different world than the one I grew up in, and that's thrilling...I guess it's a neat time to be a feminist. It's a neat time to be at UO. It's also a complicated time to be a feminist, because I think my own feminism is so bound up in broader issues of economic and social diversity. That's why it's complicated for me to

say I'm a feminist.

**S:** What challenges do you face in making the classroom a safe space for students?

**LM:** A couple things have happened recently that all of us as a faculty have to address. I myself am really struggling with it. It has to do with the economic inequality on campus and tremendous hike in tuition and fees. As a faculty member trying to accommodate economic diversity and give my students access to the same challenges and opportunities as everyone else. It's just so shocking. There was a student of mine who really needed some extra credit and I said, "I think you should make time to attend this lecture. It's two points on your course grade; it's a high stakes extra credit." He said, "I take the bus here everyday from cottage grove and the last bus leaves at a certain time, so I can't be there." I thought, "Duhhhh." I just felt terrible about that so I'm glad my consciousness got raised about it. It's a challenge. That's why I think we could really use some mentoring. I think that all of us need it on economic issues, and extremely diverse preparation of our lower division students. As a faculty we could really benefit from some clear, supportive, helpful, and consistent, and almost sort of inescapable university language about what our population really is.

## **MICHELLE OBAMA, FROM PAGE 12**

Many folks have argued that the mission of this campaign focuses too much on "obesity" and children being "over-weight," making the conversation more about what kids are eating, how much they're eating, and how much weight they're gaining because of it. This is largely reinforcing the cultural idea that your body weight is directly related to your health, which in turn justifies body shaming and perpetuates bullying. Because of Obama's prominence, and because she is at the head of this campaign, many are worried that her well-intentioned mission will instead be detrimental to young kids. Along with providing healthy eating tips and getting kids to be more active, the Let's Move campaign should also stress the importance of healthy body images and encourage health at every size.

If only these were the issues that the media explored instead of which dress she chose to wear at the Town Hall Debate, or how "in shape" she is. Michelle Obama is undoubtedly beautiful, and yes, she is

helping to change some ideas about women's bodies in her proud display of her muscular arms and legs, but it is unfortunate that most conversations regarding Obama have to do with her looks. In almost every mainstream media outlet, she is put on "Best Dressed" lists and scrutinized for her outfit choices. Her physical fitness is at the center of conversations on diets and exercise. Besides her personal style and workout routines, her work with military families, and the Let's Move campaign, most people know very little about Michelle Obama. Mainstream media isn't as interested in delving into her supreme intelligence, or past achievements, when there's the pressing issue of discussing her top wardrobe picks during the Election campaign.

Michelle Obama is not perfect, but as an intellectually strong, successful African-American woman, she is now a role model to thousands of young women of color and is in a unique position to help change the course of history. She is doing extraordinary things for women as a political advocate.

It can be assumed that President Obama's strong hold on a woman's right to choose in her own medical decisions, and his signing of the Lily Ledbetter Equal Pay Act can be largely attributed to his wife. She is well spoken, gracious, and funny. She finds ample opportunity to humanize her husband, and strays from the traditional role of First Lady by letting a group of middle school students teach her "how to Dougie."

Most people know very little about Michelle Obama's life prior to the White House and everything she accomplished in that time. It is my hope that it will be her impact and contributions as First Lady, and her leadership as a woman of color that will gain more recognition in the future, instead of the contents of her closet.

## REVIEWS

# THE WHIPPING GIRL: A TRANSEXUAL WOMAN ON SEXISM AND THE SCAPEGOATING OF FEMININITY

WORDS BY CHELSEA PFEIFER

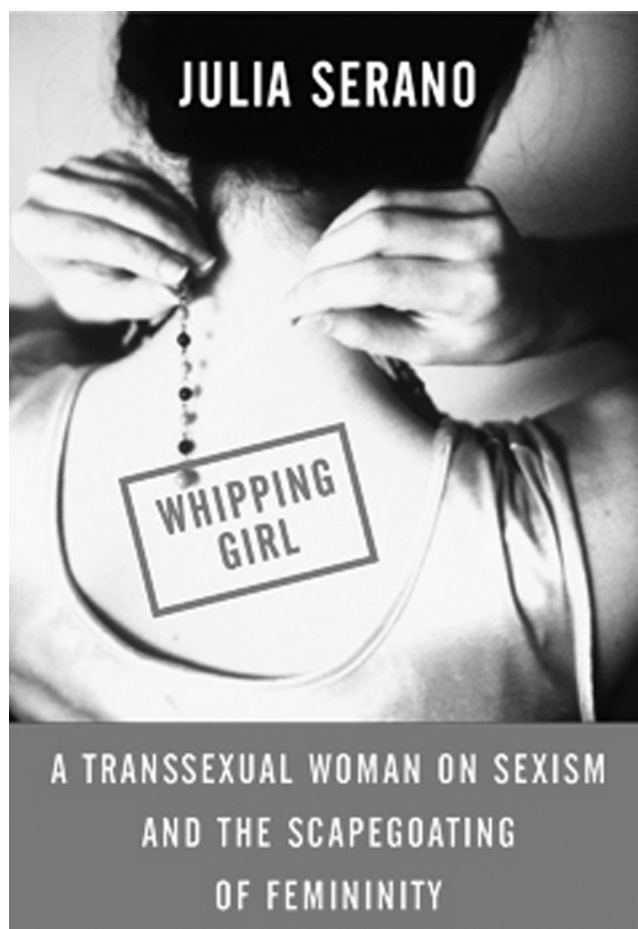
What does it mean to be Trans in a society that patronizes feminine expression? What is cissexism and where do we see dehumanization, skepticism and exclusion of Trans women from both Queer and Non-Queer spaces? These are merely a few of the questions Serano explores in this manifesto.

She lays down some basic terms and concepts to begin with, explaining the differences between sex, gender and subconscious sex. While including personal anecdotes and experiences, Serano debunks myths and reveals the prejudicial mind-frames used within institutions and how that perpetuates sexism. She explains her personal struggle with rescinding her male privilege. She points out, "The hardest part has been learning how to take myself seriously when the entire world is constantly telling me that femininity is always inferior to masculinity" (Serano). These systemic hierarchies are critically examined in her book, as she looks to larger avenues of patriarchy.

The concepts slowly build on each other so the reader doesn't feel intimidated or confused with her writing. Both people with a very high understanding of queer and feminist theory and/or Trans experience, as well as people who are completely unfamiliar, can benefit from the critical points Serano makes in this book.

The questions Serano poses regarding attitudes of femininity and sexism as connected to and within Transphobia aren't often discussed. It was refreshing to read about Trans Feminism, especially considering other books and memoirs that I've read that either recant feminist beliefs or don't mention them. For Serano, feminism is inseparable from her existence. She insists that respecting femininity- regardless of biological sex- is the only way to equality. She writes, "No form of gender equity can ever truly be achieved until we first work to empower femininity itself." (Serano) *The Whipping Girl* is so politically charged and smart in a way that involves everyone, regardless of identity, in a conversation about conceptualizing gender. As a biologist, activist, writer, Trans

woman and Queer woman, she has a variety of insight to provide on this subject and I truly appreciated reading about her perspective on patriarchy, privilege, and the interconnectedness of oppression.



## SAPPHO

Thursdays at 5pm  
in the Women's Center Lounge

We are a discussion-based group where we cover issues of being queer and/or being female-identified. It's a casual place where we can eat food and hang out with other queer ladies.

# THE PURITY MYTH: HOW AMERICA'S OBSESSION WITH VIRGINITY IS HURTING YOUNG WOMEN

WORDS BY ANNA BIRD

*The Purity Myth* is a cultural critique written by Jessica Valenti, which has been made into a documentary by the Media Education Foundation. Jessica Valenti is a feminist blogger and author as well as the founder of Feministing.com.

The basis behind *The Purity Myth* is an examination of the modern-day Virginity Movement that has swept mainstream American society and popular culture, and why our government seems to be obsessed with controlling women's bodies through reproductive oppression. Insert the most recent legislative pursuits to confine sexual and reproductive rights, and the overwhelming focus on the capabilities of a uterus in the 2012 elections. Valenti presents the idea that female sexuality in our society is seen as something that ultimately determines

worth—such as the assumed tie between purity (aka virginity) and femininity, and the importance that is placed on female virginity. Whereas boys and men are not held to any kind of standard with their own sexuality because as the saying goes, “Boys will be boys.” This is seen over and over again with politicians, religious leaders, and scattered throughout mainstream media.

She sees the cultural expectation for women to ward off any form of sexuality as incredibly problematic to young girls who are raised in an image-based world that is constantly sexualizing women and girls in the media. It's creating this very unrealistic expectation for women to be sexually desirable to men, but whilst remaining “in control” of any sexual interactions and maintaining their purity (aka virginity). If you don't do either of those things, and \*gasp\* have sex, then you are immediately shamed and shunned, while the man suffers no backlash because, again, “boys will be boys.” In *The Purity Myth* film, Valenti includes interviews with Britney Spears and Miley Cyrus—two young female celebrities who claim their virginity as an important part of their identity, while maintaining extremely sexualized images in the media, but also being “positive” role models for young girls.

She also includes clips of conservative lawmakers, religious leaders, and media heads who adamantly refute feminism, blaming feminist ideals for the decline of society. These are all, of course,

old, white men who use their positions of power to perpetuate shame and insult to those women and young girls who are “impure,” which, as Valenti point out, usually comes down to women of lower socio-economic status and women of color.

Valenti talks about the ceremonies put together for young girls called “Purity Balls.” For these balls, the girls go as their fathers’ “dates” and generally wear really fancy white gowns. They get their hair and makeup done, and look prom-presentable...for their fathers. They dance with their fathers and eat dinner with their fathers, which is all fun and great until they ceremonially pledge their virginity to their fathers, and oftentimes receive a ‘purity ring’ to wear as a symbol of their promise. This goes along with the

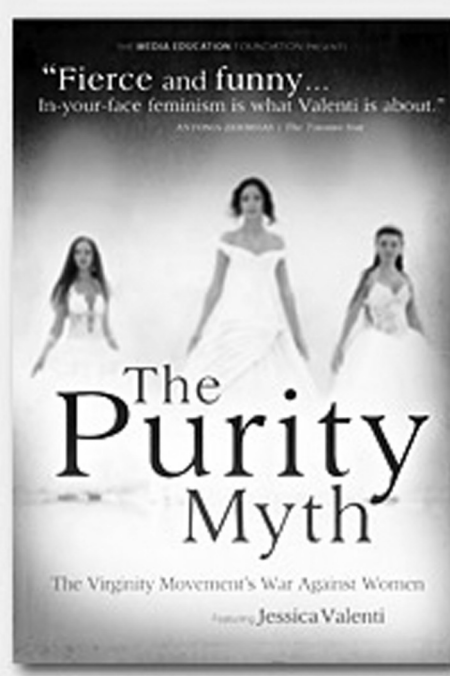
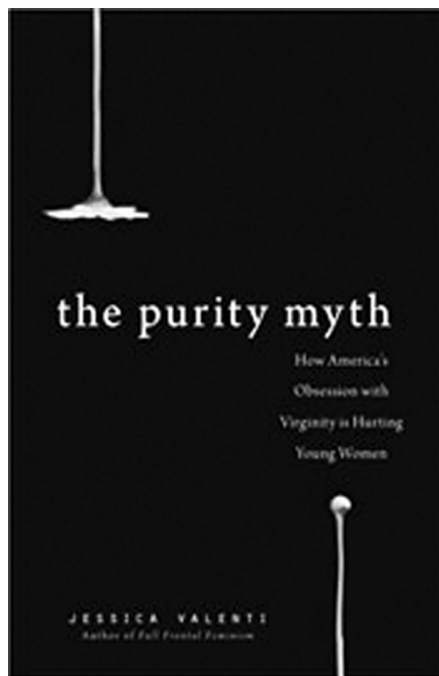
(extremely creepy) idea that girls don't own their sexuality—their fathers do. That is, until they get married and then their husbands hold all rights and ownership.

Another issue she talks about is the problems behind tax payer-funded abstinence-only sex education and how ineffective, unscientific, and harmful they are for young kids by shaming any kind of sexual practice, and misinforming them about real-life situations. Abstinence-only education has been

proven unsuccessful in

barring young people from indulging in sexual activity, but if they don't receive proper (i.e. factual, inclusive, relevant, positive, etc.) sex education, these experiences can often end negatively with young people not knowing their options, where they can go for help, what they can do differently, and so on.

There is a great depth of information and analysis in *The Purity Myth* and Valenti delivers it in a very clear, straightforward, educated, and honest way. She brings up a lot of interesting points and examples that will make you über frustrated, but don't fret because feminists like YOU really aren't ruining society. So pick up *The Purity Myth* to get educated and then maybe Yes Means Yes! by Jessica Valenti and Jaelyn Friedman for solutions to create a more sexually positive and safe culture.



# BEYOND A SINGLE STORY. FULANI AND BEROM: RECONSTRUCTING THEIR PERSPECTIVE OF THE GENOCIDE

## Introduction

**A**frican stories especially those involving atrocities, are proliferated and sold as the only story to Western outsiders. Most of those stories paint a picture of Africans as victims needing the help of heroic saviors to rescue them from their problems (Paul Jeffery). In a single story, Africa and Africans are depicted as fragile, lacking strength, and objects to be pitied. Unfortunately, it is this same story of Africa that is being sold to the West and sells most in the humanitarian aid market (Paul Slovic). Single narrative and images induce a far greater psychological response by engaging a person's moral intuition according to Paul Slovic. Paul Jeffery states that the use of images has the ability to create a single story and can lead to "disaster porn". Because stories send diverse messages to other people, the single story imposes and creates an impression of vulnerability, convincing outsiders that Africans by their very nature are weak and pitiable creatures, who cannot solve their problems nor defend themselves. Yet, need the help of outsiders in order to overcome their huge problems.

Outsiders (especially from the West), rely on the single story that is fed by the media, humanitarian aid agencies and government without getting a perspective from Africans themselves. Paul Jeffery's notion of the dominant narrative is greatly informed by Slovic's psychic numbing reinforcement effect of the single story by the media. The image of the starving child is powerful because it stirs high levels of empathy and gives the tragedy a face to associate it with. A photo of an individual reduces the overwhelming effects of the tragedy and gives the event a focal point for observers to connect with. If the purpose of the story is to rally aid or communicate need, the image will show the individual in need and the narrative will be depicted in the image visually. The focus is on a single story, which is entirely misleading. The effective marketing images become the only story that is told, for example those of an impoverished and starving child. The image does not allow the observer to take into consideration the causes for the child's starvation. Repeated exposure of similar images to the viewer creates the single story, such as that of a country full of starving children that need food donations. Yet, the country in which the photograph was taken may not be full of starving children, nor does simply sending food solve the systemic issues. Paul Jeffery emphasizes the use of the alternative narrative and its importance in telling a more complete story. By ignoring the whole story you are contributing to violence and retelling the dominant narrative. The dominant narrative does not communicate the social vulnerability that created the possibility for the tragedy to occur or escalate initially. The single narrative is "disaster porn", image upon image of the effects of the tragedy or event. If the whole story is not communicated, the underlying conflict may never be resolved.

In my experience and relationship with Westerners, I would say that the single story is reinforced in two major ways: first by media, which produce negative stories about Africa and, second, past histories of Africans with colonialists which confine Africans to stories told

by their colonizers. Past historic contact of Africans with Western colonists also fosters the single story as Africans become limited to story of the colonists as the only story. Story of the colonists about Africans not only shapes how the outside world sees Africa but it also affects the story Africans tell about themselves. The single story fails to recognize Africa's pre-colonial histories and strength of Africans, but only reinforce the story of division, chaos and wars. The single narrative ignores historical colonial context that are connected to histories of conflicts and violence occurring in Africa. By disregarding past histories of colonialism and its contribution to problems in Africa, the single story reinforces vulnerability and continued escalation of violence.

In their first encounters with Africans, most Westerners related first to knowledge or stories presented by the single narrative (through the media or colonialist histories) and assume that the experience of all Africans are the same with those portrayed by the single story.

During my first visit to America, my roommate asked where I had learned to speak English and was confused when I told her that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove and thought I lived with elephants in the forest. But, what struck me most was that she felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, an African was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning pity. Her single story of Africa was one characterized by chaos, catastrophe, and death. The single story told her that there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her, having no capacity of feeling more complex than pity, and potential connection as human equals. But, there is a story of Africa and Africans that the single story bypasses. Deeply embarrassed and puzzled by how the single story portrayed my identity as an African, I began to talk about my diverse experiences, recreating my perspective about my heritage, culture and background. Because the single story gives only one impression about Africans, it is important for Africans themselves to recreate their own story to counteract those told by the single story. By reconstructing their own stories Africans can bring a mental shift in the perception of outsiders, who are being fed with the single story. The key to changing the perception of outsiders occurs when Africans become more passionate and interested in the stories they tell themselves, which will discredit the single story being told about them.

Reinforced in many different ways, the single story places people in a box and limits them based on that one story. African themselves become confined to the single stories told by past histories and the contact with colonial institutions. Most Africans see themselves in the light of past experiences and accept the story that was imposed on them by the history instead of recreating their own story of the occurrence. I believe that when Africans begin to recreate their own version and perspective of the past can they invoke their unique identity and positive self-perception.

— Blessing Abbah

POETRY BY JULIA RILEY

**Body:**

My body is a temple, I bid you tread with care,  
 It's been with me since birth and I have worked to treat it fair.  
 It was I who nursed it's broken arm and itched it with a spoon.  
 I fed it chicken noodle soup and told it "get well soon!"  
 I stuck with it for miles in it's slow and lengthy stride.  
 I shared in all it's shaming and I reveled in it's pride.  
 We may not always get along, we'll have our ups and downs,  
 But it's me my body counts on to always be around.

You were not there when I lay broken, praying pain would ease with time.  
 You didn't feel this body shaking when somebody crossed the line.  
 You'll never know my bodies changes; how I bend and bleed and grow,  
 Which is why I seethe in anger when you dare to claim you know.  
 How can you say you have more knowledge or that you know what is best  
 When you've never gone through labor nor had a baby at your breast.  
 You may have sired many children, might have studied Harvard Law,  
 But claiming rights over our bodies is one more line that I must draw.  
 It is a cruelty unthinkable to force our future's shape,  
 But fuck you if you believe that we should EVER excuse rape!

My body is a temple, to this I must give voice:  
 We cannot allow for anyone to take away our choice.

**MY BREASTS AND I:**

Our introduction was relief  
 not much but it would do.  
 This time however was but brief  
 complications would ensue.

For though I've come to love them  
 in their well proportioned curve,  
 they present a certain problem  
 which does grind upon my nerve.

For if you know me but at all  
 you'll know I live between.  
 Not in either clearly fall  
 and not quite what I seem.

And every other pair of eyes  
 do seem to make their guess  
 deciding where my body lies,  
 which box would fit me best.

Their roving glances calculate  
 their mouths do pinch or sneer.  
 All whilst my heart does palpitate  
 in beating back the fear.

But what does make me most annoyed  
 is how conclusions rest  
 on that which I cannot avoid  
 which sits upon my chest.

I do not hate them in themselves  
 but only how they're seen.  
 Strangers forced opinions delve  
 so far from in between.

And so I grow resentful  
 of every silent jeer.  
 Quickly patience dulls  
 and so I make them disappear.

Please don't assume you know me  
 just because I look like so.  
 If you really care, ask freely  
 and be certain that you know.

You may not understand it  
 and I think that that's okay.  
 Just don't expect to make me fit  
 because duality's here to stay.

**FROM THE POET:**

For me the practice of chest binding is both a protest of the importance that society places on the presence of breasts as crucial to womanhood, and an outward expression of my queer butch identity.

FEMINIST FUN

<b>The Feminist Crossword</b> --By Mario Battaglia						<b>Women and Politics</b> Difficulty: Try it—it's gonna be easier than ya think!							
1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14					15		16						
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60	61	62						63					
64								65					
66								67					

**ACROSS**

- 2012 Secretary of State's middle name
- 2012 election: 1st Hindu ever in Congress, Tulsi
- Infuriated
- Obama DNC Acceptance Speech: "...we are surely blessed to be citizens of the greatest nation \_\_\_\_"
- A foot's attire for bad winter weather
- Non Oregon residents, out-of-\_\_\_\_
- 2012 election: state with the first all-woman delegation
- 2011 election: Zambian President, Michael \_\_\_\_
- Neurosis* album \_\_\_\_ *That Never Sets* (2 wds)
- Ellen Muth's retort in comedy-drama *Dead Like Me*: "I excel \_\_\_\_ (2 wds) giving a shit"
- Veil for Muslim women that covers the hair and neck
- French country code for Romania
- Natl. human rights org. founded and led by women veterans, offers legal services, peer support, increases women vets visibility and improves their access to equal opportunity, equal protection and equal benefits. acronym spells a graceful bird
- \_\_\_\_ polish
- Alternative to the SAT

- Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize winner for her promotion of indigenous rights, author of *Crossing Borders*, creator of indigenous political party, Tum
- Green Party supporter and 2008 performer at the Democratic National Convention, DiFranco
- Colloquial idiom: "up and \_\_\_\_" (2 wds)
- Political equivocator; falsifier
- Number of "lords a leaping"
- Magician phrase "here it is" (pl.)
- Republican Vice President nominee in 2008, Sarah
- Compact \_\_\_\_
- Popular café on 13<sup>th</sup> near U of O
- First openly gay politician to be elected to the Senate and the first woman elected to represent Wisconsin in the Senate
- Body of water that is part of the Arctic Ocean north of Siberia
- Ornate wardrobe
- A leading candidate for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination along with Obama
- Afternoon naps in Spain
- Romney's: "...\_\_\_\_ full of women"
- Lousy campers deciding shelter: "shall we sleep in a hotel \_\_\_\_" (2 wds)

**DOWN**

- Reindeer strap used by Santa
- \_\_\_\_ upon a time
- Nancy \_\_\_\_, mystery solver
- Breakfast \_\_\_\_ browns
- Filled with horror or shock
- \_\_\_\_ *ventricosa*, large sea urchin known commonly as a "sand dollar"
- Term to express surprise or emphasis
- Opposed to; against
- Endurable; tolerable
- 1990 Academy Award winner for Best Actress in *Misery*, Kathy
- "\_\_\_\_ you ready?"
- New 2012 Ford Mustang \_\_\_\_
- Depart. established for US security
- \_\_\_\_ perception
- Exalted woman in Catholic faith
- Nucleobase in the nucleic acid of RNA that bonds with adenine
- When popular spiced tea is gone, say
- President of the Tigray region of Ethiopia, Gebru
- Caused to spiral around, as in thread
- Voldemort's snake
- Yoko \_\_\_\_, Japanese artist, author and peace activist married to Lennon
- One name used for the Christian God
- Native American activist org. founded in 1968 with a focus on leadership and sovereignty
- Complete reversal of travel direction
- Hierarchy of winged nocturnal mammals, you could say
- Approx. hour of appearance
- Color of West Virginia in 2012
- Limo chauffeurs could be in this
- Packages of Japanese noodles, yaki-
- Actress Leland in *All That Jazz*
- A position taken by a political party
- Eugene crossword creator
- "You talking to \_\_\_\_ (2 wds) her?"
- Margaret Tredeau: "I can't be a rose in any \_\_\_\_ lapel"
- Shakespeare's *King Richard III*: "O coward conscience, how \_\_\_\_ thou afflict me!"
- \_\_\_\_-out, brand of correction fluid
- Obama to Romney in 2012 foreign policy debate: "...whether it's now \_\_\_\_ --you've been all over the map"
- Birds abode
- Commercial bank in Kenya (abbr.)
- Muhammad \_\_\_\_, pro-boxer
- \_\_\_\_-Tin-Tin, famous WWII dog

As part of the Lyllye B. Parker/ Women of Color Speaker Series and in preparation of the Social Justice/Real Justice Conference.

ASUO Women's Center Presents:

# CALEEN SISK

Free Salmon Dinner and Keynote Talk

Caleen Sisk, Spiritual Leader and Tribal Chief of the Winnemem Wintu: The intersectional struggle for recognition, women's rights, and the environment.

January 25, 2013

5 - 8 p.m. @ UO Many Nations Long House  
1630 Columbia Street, Eugene, OR



Co-Sponsors: The UO Multicultural Center, Environmental Studies,  
Native American Student Union, Café Mam, ASUO

This event is wheelchair accessible, childcare reimbursements available for UO Students.  
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**THE POLITICAL ISSUE**