



WOMEN'S VU

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

February 2004, Volume XXVI, Issue 6

THIS JUST IN...

We are thrilled to announce that our Director, *Linda Manning*, has been nominated for this year's **Athena Award**. Athena Award nominees are selected on the basis of professional excellence and leadership, community service, and also for actively and generously assisting women in their attainment of professional excellence. Having the opportunity to interact with her as our leader on a day-to-day basis, the Women's Center staff feels that this nomination is long overdue. Although the award recipient will not be announced until March, we want to congratulate Linda on her nomination and wish her the best of luck!

This year's Margaret Cuninggim Lecture, part of the Chancellor's Lecture Series, presents Judy Chicago speaking on *At Home* in Kentucky.

In the late 1990s, under the direction of Judy Chicago, participants from Western Kentucky University and the surrounding community transformed an entire house into an art installation. Participants working in different media explored the theme of domestic spaces as experienced by both women and men. Donald Woodman directed participants in creating a photo-ethnography of the installation and in exploring photographically the meaning of home in Kentucky. This photo exhibit will open at Sarratt Gallery the day of the lecture.

Judy Chicago is a well-known artist, author, educator and feminist whose work has spanned four decades. Her work has been exhibited across the U.S. as well as Canada, Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

of the Arts. It was through this program that the historical precedent for *At Home*, the famous installation, *Womanhouse*, was produced. It was groundbreaking in its openly feminist point of view and helped to establish Chicago's work. The social impact of *Womanhouse* helped to initiate a worldwide Feminist Art movement.

Her prolific body of work has been the subject of many articles and books. For more information on her work, please refer to her website, www.judychicago.com.

Thursday, February 26, 3:30 pm
At Home in Kentucky Exhibit Opening
 Sarratt Gallery, Sarratt Student Center
4:30pm Reception
 Vaughn Lobby, Sarratt Student Center.
5:30 pm Lecture, Sarratt Cinema

For more information, please contact the Women's Center at 322-4843 or our website at www.vanderbilt.edu/womenscenter

In the early 1970s, Chicago pioneered a Feminist Art program at the California Institute

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Nomination forms for Mentoring Award and Muliebrity Prize due March 30th.
- 3 Rus Funk writes of Mobilizing Men in the Women's Movement
- 4 In the Library: Barbara Clarke reviews a new release for Black History Month
- 5 February calendar of events
- 7 Women's Health Matters: organic alternatives to tampons
- 8 Announcements

MAKING HISTORY: CAROL MOSELEY BRAUN

"When barriers of gender and race fall in America, our nation is richer for it..."
 Carol Moseley Braun

Although her candidacy came to an end on January 16th, Carol Moseley Braun did something no other woman has ever done. In her bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, she made it onto twenty primary ballots across the country. She follows in the footsteps of Sen. Margaret Chase Smith in 1964 (5 ballots) and Rep. Shirley Chisholm in 1972 (14 ballots).

Moseley Braun is not new to breaking barriers. During her Senate term (1992-1998), she made state, party and national history as the first female Senator from Illinois, first female African

American Senator and first African American Democratic Senator. She was one of six women in the Senate at the time.

In her years as an Illinois House Representative (1978-88), Moseley Braun was often praised for her ability to build coalitions comprised of people of all races and backgrounds. She has always been a strong supporter of healthcare and education reforms. In 1985 she was the chief sponsor of the Urban Improvement Act, which called for the creation of parents councils in every school in Chicago. She also introduced legislation to increase pay for teachers and professors.

In 1992, Moseley Braun was elected to the U.S. Senate. She served on *continued on page 2*

Nomination Deadline for Muliebrity and Mentoring Awards March 30th

The Women's Center is seeking nominations for two awards given annually to recognize achievements by and in support of women on campus.

The Mentoring Award honors a member of the University community who has fostered achievement by Vanderbilt women. The award will be announced in April and the honoree will be presented with a special gift and certificate.

The Muliebrity Prize is given to an undergraduate student who demonstrates leadership in activities that contribute to the achievements, interests and goals of women and girls, or that promote gender equity. The award will be announced in April at the annual Magnolia (formerly Kudos) Dinner, where the honoree will be presented with a cash award of \$100 and a certificate.

If you know someone who is deserving in either of these categories, **please submit your nomination by March 30th to the Women's Center at 316 West Side Row, 37235.** A curriculum vitae of the nominee is also welcomed.

Nomination forms are available at the Sarratt desk, at the Women's Center, or online at www.vanderbilt.edu/womenscenter.

Women's VU is published monthly September through

June at the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.

Campus Address: Franklin Building, 316 West Side Row

Mailing address: Box 351513, Station B, Nashville, TN 37235

Phone: (615) 322-4843;

Fax: (615) 343-0940.

E-mail address: womenctr@vanderbilt.edu

Visit our website at:

www.vanderbilt.edu/WomensCenter

Linda Manning, director

Jennifer Hackett, associate director

Sandra Harrell, co-director, Project Safe

Vicky Basra, co-director, Project Safe

Barbara Clarke, librarian

Robin Van Arman, office manager

Misa Culley, editor (direct line 343-4367)

This is a copyrighted publication. Articles may be reproduced with permission of the editor. Letters to the editor are welcome. Send them to the above address or e-mail the editor at misa.culley@vanderbilt.edu

MAKING HISTORY: CAROL MOSELEY BRAUN continued from page 1

several committees including the Judiciary Committee; the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee; and the Small Business Committee. After losing her bid for re-election in 1998, President Clinton appointed her as Ambassador to New Zealand.

Her candidacy was endorsed by the National Organization of Women and the National Women's Political Caucus.

Although the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center does not officially endorse any candidate, we wish to congratulate Ms. Moseley Braun on her ground-breaking efforts on behalf of women in politics.



Get Out the Vote!

Yes, it's that time again, folks--another election year and time to stretch those voting muscles. If you're an ol' hand at voting, it's like riding a bike. If you've never cast a vote, here's your chance to flex some political muscle.

There are many websites designed to assist you in registering to vote, but it's best to check out your home state's voter registration site. If you don't know where to start, I'd suggest a look at www.election.com. It has all the voter registration information, including absentee ballot info, and deadlines by state. Also included are your local election offices and phone numbers. Some states even allow you to register online or you can print out the .pdf form on the website. It doesn't get much easier than that.

And just for you Tennesseans, the deadline to register for the Primary Election is July 6, 2004 and the deadline to vote in the General Election is October 3, 2004. Check out the website www.state.tn.us/sos/election/register.htm for more information.

If you're struggling with the decision of which candidate to choose, every candidate has a website complete with bios and statements. It's never too late to do your homework and there's not much of it at that--the field of candidates keeps shrinking!

And, just to make a point about how important your vote is--

Did you know....?

--According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 16 million unmarried, unregistered women and 22 million unmarried women who DID NOT vote? If unmarried women voted at the same rate as married women, there would be more than **6 million more** voters in the electorate. (website Women's Voices. Women Vote., www.wvw.org)

--Tennessee ranks **50th** in all states for political participation of women. This composite ranking includes the number of women in elected office (.8%); number of women who are registered voters (64.2%) compared to the number of women who actually vote (44.7%). (Institute for Women's Policy Research, www.iwpr.org)

Make a difference in your world--VOTE!

Educating and Mobilizing Men to End Rape

The Women's Center has a program on campus called **Men Promoting A Solution (MPAS)**. It is an organization of men striving to positively influence Vanderbilt and Nashville area men's perceptions and treatment of women. Led by two graduate students, *Jinu Mathew* and *Jon Little*, the program hopes to educate and call men to action.

"We envision a society in which women live free from the fear of sexual violence. To this end, MPAS will offer a variety of programs on campus introducing men to the concept of feminism. We seek individuals who may or may not consider themselves feminists, but who support equality of the sexes just the same."

In the following issues of *Women's VU*, MPAS will provide multiple male perspectives on feminism and men's role in the movement. Articles by prominent male activists, Russ Funk and Brian Pahl, will be featured in the February and March issues.

If you are interested in MPAS, please contact Jonathan Little (jonglitt@hotmai.com) or Jinu Mathew (jinu.mathew@vanderbilt.edu); comments and suggestions are greatly appreciated. Also, please be sure to look for MPAS-related advertisements and programs in the near future.

Rape is a men's issue!

This statement runs in the face of what is commonly believed, but rape *is* a men's issue – it is an issue that affects men directly, one in which men should be involved to work to end.

Women and men do not "get raped." Rather, rape is done – it is an act that is chosen and perpetrated by somebody (saying that someone got raped suggests that no one actually perpetrated the act). The research suggests that 95% of the time the majority of perpetrators are male. **Rape is a men's issue because it is men who do it.**

Men are raped, too. Men victimize other men sexually, in dating and other partnership relationships, and as strangers. Like with women, most of the time when men are raped, they are raped by other men. For many reasons, men are hesitant to report their experiences of being sexually victimized, and attempt to heal from their trauma on their own. **Rape is a men's issue because men are raped.**

Men know women and other men who have been raped. The statistics consistently indicate that roughly 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men are raped in their lifetime. Most men know, and love, more than 4 women and more than 7 men, so the chances are that men know and love women and men who have been raped. **Rape is a men's issue because men love the women and men who have been victimized.**

Not only do men know women or men who *have been* raped, it is likely that men know other men who *have* raped. In addition, because men's violence occurs on a continuum of sexist behavior, men likely know lots of other men who perpetrate more of the "subtle" forms of sexual assault – harassment, talking about women or women's reputa-

tions with other men, etc. Men are affected by knowing and probably loving men who have perpetrated rape. As an exercise, consider the 4 men you care most about. Now consider that one of them is found to be a rapist. The rage, sorrow, shame, sadness that men feel is an indicator of how painful it is to live with the knowledge that a man you care about may have perpetrated any form of sexual assault. **Rape is a men's issue because men know and love men who have raped.**

Women are afraid of men sometimes. Most men know the experience of walking down a street at night and having a lone woman walk towards us. We feel and see their fear. Most men feel some level of frustration or even anger that women are afraid of us. But in order to stay safe, women need to maintain some level of wariness of men. It is impossible to tell the difference between men who might rape and the men who wouldn't. **Rape is a men's issue because women are afraid of us.**

At its core, rape is a violation of a woman's human rights. A basic, often unstated, human right is the right to personal autonomy and bodily integrity. What this means is that everyone has the basic right to decide who touches them and how. A second basic human right is to be free from violence. In addition to the rights that are violated because of rape, are women's human rights that are violated because of the threat of rape. Women make decisions that limit their behaviors and options as a result of the *threat* of rape – to walk down a street at night, to go to a movie, to use public transportation, which classes to take, to go to this or that party, to walk across campus, etc. A person's basic human right should be to walk wherever they so choose. Because women do not have the same rights as men to choose when and where they will go, women's human rights are being restricted. **Rape is a men's issue because human rights are being violated.** Whenever a group's or a person's human rights are violated, it is an issue for all of us!

So What Can Men Do?

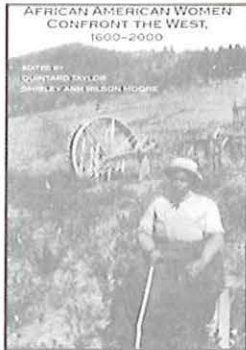
Since rape is a men's issue, it is important that men take some initiative and respond to rape– individual acts of rape, as well as the fact that rape occurs. Men Promoting a Solution (MPAS) is an organization on the Vanderbilt campus and offers an immediate opportunity for men to get involved. Other ideas of what men can do include:

- Organize a men's fundraising event for women's services
- Offer child care at the local domestic violence shelter or a women's sponsored event
- Ask before we touch a woman
- Listen to women
- Become a big brother
- Put out a bowl for donations to a women's cause when you have men friends over for the Superbowl, the Final Four, the World Series or the summer cookout
- Build a "women's memorial wall" in your community to honor the women who have been raped.
- Confront sexism when we see it

continued on page 8

IN THE LIBRARY

BARBARA CLARKE
Women's Center Librarian



African American Women Tame the Wild, Wild West: A look at their many contributions

Although the written history of the western United States has usually focused on white men's activities and accomplishments, there were women settlers from the earliest colonial days. Until recently, little was written about black women in the West. Their achievements were notable though in many areas their numbers were not large.

To fill the gap, historians Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore have edited *African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2003) in which they show that "whether they resided in populous urban areas or in small, agrarian communities, African American women in the West immersed themselves in the political and social currents affecting all black people and, by the twentieth century, all westerners." For years material about black women was not thought important enough to be collected by archives. Relying on biographies and black newspapers, the contributors found much material in oral histories and from church records.

African American women migrated west with colonists as early as 1598; Isabel de Olvera, who worked as a servant for a Spanish woman, moved to New Mexico in 1600. Some of the early migrant women were seeking better lives for themselves and their families while others accompanied white explorers or settlers as servants or slaves. Many of the African Americans who moved from the South to the West after the Civil War hoped to escape from racism and segregation but generally found that racism flourished everywhere.

Short selections from original documents and papers are interspersed among the articles. One vignette describes Sarah Gammon's life on the Montana frontier while another consists of a letter written in 1862 by a Texas slave to her husband, the servant of a Texas cavalryman stationed in Arkansas. The contributors describe the fascinating lives and accomplishments of black women of diverse backgrounds and in different eras. Readers will learn about the lives of early Western Afrohispanas; the wealthy and enterprising San Francisco settler, Mary Ellen Pleasant; the black women who fought to be allowed to travel on streetcars in nineteenth-century San Francisco; an African American Mormon; the early Hollywood film industry and African American actresses; job discrimination in twentieth-century Denver; black women and the Las Vegas gaming industry; and women, gender roles and the Black Panther Party.

Among our other books on black women's history are:
Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil

Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970 by Lynne Olson, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* by Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, and *Black Women in America* edited by Kim Marie Vaz.



CUNT by Inga Muscio (Seal Press, 2002)

Book review by Jennifer Hackett, Associate Director, MCWC

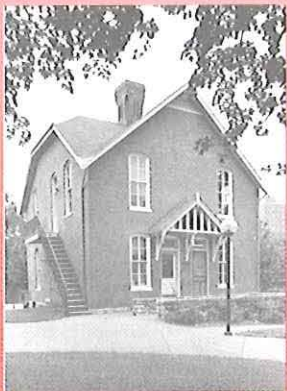
Getting over the title is the hard part. *Cunt* isn't necessarily the book cover that you'd think to take to the coffee shop or home to your folk's house for the holidays. But it is an unapologetic look at a topic that isn't often talked about. (For example, when the *Vagina Monologues* first came to campus four years ago, Demetria Kaladimos, News Channel 4 anchorwoman, wasn't allowed to say "vagina" on the air when attempting to describe the play.) This book is a humorous and serious hodgepodge mix of personal musings, challenges for society - examining many women's issues through the funnel of the one true thing that unites persons born female.

After a lengthy series of preludes including a foreword by Dr. Betty Dodson, there is an introduction by a *man*, who rightly states that reading the book has changed his relationship with every woman he knows. He also acknowledges some harsh truths about what it is to be a person with a vagina, or as the author prefers to say, what it is to be a person with a cunt. Finally, after a brief preface (in which Inga Muscio uses the word, "cunt," 45 times, presumably to get you accustomed to hearing it in a new context) the title of the book is the first thing the author tackles.

The author breaks down the etymology and history of the word for the reader. According to Muscio, cunt used to be a very positive, endearing word for women. Also, it turns out that the word, "vagina," actually means "a sheath for a sword." As a lesbian, Muscio points out, "I ain't got one of those." She needed a new word to describe this important part of her anatomy. Dissatisfied with baby talk ways of referring to the important parts between her legs, she's reclaiming the word cunt for herself and all of womankind as a positive, loving term.

Full of genuine insight, quirky witticisms, and prolific swearing (sometimes gratuitous, sometimes useful), the author uses a conversational tone that takes us through the three sections of her book. After tackling the word itself, she moves into anatomical/sociological issues and finally into a section that works toward a reconciliation of women with their own bodies. The book concludes with a useful guide of stores, videos and websites that will help women toward empowerment utilizing the power and pleasure of her own body.

Cunt is an off-the-beaten path book that might take some courage to open and then some more courage to read with an open mind. If you keep reading, even if you don't agree with everything that she has said, you will be glad that you did. If nothing else, it sure stirs up the conversation when you answer the question, "so what have you been reading lately?"



February 2004 Calendar of Events

PLEASE SAVE AND POST

Unless otherwise indicated, all groups are open to all people and are held at the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center at 316 West Side Row on Vanderbilt University's Campus.

For directions, please consult the map at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/WomensCenter/contact.html>. For more information, please call 322-4843.

(Newly forming) Faculty Women's Scientific Writing Group

What: This new group provides internal review, feedback, advice, support and goal setting for writing and submission of manuscripts to peer-review journals.

Who: This meeting is open to any woman in the scientific field. For more information, contact Heidi J. Silver PhD, RD, CNSD at heidi.j.silver@vanderbilt.edu or call at 936-1299.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

Lecture with Lisa Jarvis, creator of *Bitch* magazine

What: *Bitch* Magazine seeks to be a fresh, revitalizing voice for feminism. It welcomes complex arguments and refuses to ignore the contradictory and sometimes uncomfortable details that constitute the realities of women's lives.

When: 4:10pm

Where: Furman 114

Who: This event is free and open to the Vanderbilt and larger Nashville communities and is co-sponsored with the Women's Studies department.

For more information contact: womens-studies@vanderbilt.edu

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

Professional Graduate School Q and A

When: 3-7pm. (Please see hours listed below)

What: The Women's Center and the Career Center will be hosting a Professional Graduate School Q & A. Two to three women who are currently enrolled in each school will be available for an informal dialogue over refreshments about the application process, the benefits, the drawbacks and the real experience of being a student in a professional graduate degree program.

Who: Whether you are considering an application here at Vanderbilt, or are just interested in learning more about what it's like in a professional graduate school in general, come by to get valuable tips and information, and a little something to eat and drink. Free and open to both Vanderbilt and the greater Nashville community.

3-4pm Divinity School and Human Development Counseling Program

4-5pm School of Business

5-6pm Medical School and Nursing School

6-7pm Law School

For more information, call 322-6518 or contact jennifer.hackett@vanderbilt.edu.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

BLAST (Bi Women, Lesbians And Straight Women Together: Friendships Across Our Identities)

When: 6:00pm-7:00pm

What: Too often lesbians, bi-women and straight women are portrayed as being on opposite sides of great chasms of difference. Yet women throughout history have had loving friendships with their mothers, daughters, and best friends despite differing sexual identities. Please join us in a casual conversation and celebration of our differences and our friendships.

Who: All women from Vanderbilt and the greater Nashville community are invited. Co-sponsored with the VU GLBT Office. For more info. Contact jennifer.hackett@vanderbilt.edu or patricia.k.gardner@vanderbilt.edu

WEDNESDAYS, FEBRUARY 4, 11, 18 AND 25

Vanderbilt Feminists (Vandy Fems)

When: 5 pm (Meets every Wednesday)

Who: Specifically for undergraduates (women and men), but open to all.

What: An undergraduate student group concerned about women's issues on campus, and promoting equality between genders.

Contact jessica.n.heaven@vanderbilt.edu or jessica.l.bearden@vanderbilt.edu for more information. **Or just come to a meeting!**

TUESDAYS, FEBRUARY 3, 10, 17, 24

Creative Life Planning Group

When: 12pm -1:00 pm (Meets every Tuesday)

Who: A group for all dedicated to living life intentionally and creatively. Open to everyone in the community and is usually attended by women between 40 and 90 years of age.

Call 322-4843 for more details!

FEBRUARY 8, 9 AND 11

Vagina Monologues

When: 7:30pm at Sarratt Cinema.

What: Writer and performer Eve Ensler created a one-woman show that speaks of women's bodies covering subjects often considered taboo, risqué, and threateningly empowering. This year, an all VU student cast brings the performance to you!

Who: All are welcome to come. Ticket info can be found at www.vanderbilt.edu/WomensCenter

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Book Group

When: 5:15-6:15 pm

(Meets the 2nd Monday). *continued on page 6*

February Events Calendar

continued from page 5

Who: This is a group for anyone of any age who loves to read.

What: This month's book is *Ashes to Ashes* by Tami Hoag.

For more information, contact Jane Du Bose at jdubose@bellsouth.net

Look on our website for upcoming books under the book group at www.vanderbilt.edu/WomensCenter

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10 AND 24

Creative Writing Group

When: 5:30 -7:00pm (Meets the second and fourth Tuesdays)

Who: Calling all writers of all ages! We are forming a new creative writers group. No previous writing experience necessary! Everyone is welcome to come and discover the writer within.

For more information, contact jennifer.hackett@vanderbilt.edu or 322-6518.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Cyberdating, with Linda Herbert-Ford and Laura Roza

When: 5:00pm, Sarratt 189

What: The speed of a mouse click can unite people across continents and provide a soul mate or a nightmare. Get the insider secrets from the experts with E-Solutions Press' newest release, *The Online Dating Survival Guide*. Presented by Project Dialogue.

Who: This program is free and open to all VU students. For more info, contact marci.hunt@vanderbilt.edu.

THURSDAYS, FEBRUARY 12 AND 26

Vandy Moms

When: 11:30-12:30pm (Meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday)

Who: Working Moms of any age! Women who juggle! Open to all working mothers, partnered or single.

What: A support network that provides advocacy for working moms in the Vanderbilt and larger communities. It also provides programming to inform, empower and enrich. The meeting on the 12th will be on **Women and Depression**. Contact misa.culley@vanderbilt.edu or call 343-4367.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Eaten Alive performance

When: 7:30pm, Sarratt Cinema

What: Come see the show that dares to reveal that eating disorders have little to do with eating. Performed by Eva Van Dok, Broadway actress and recovered anorexic/bulimic.

Who: This performance is co-sponsored by the Athletic Department and is free to the Vanderbilt and larger Nashville communities.

Contact carleen.britton@vanderbilt.edu for more information.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Learn to Meditate

When: 4:30-5:15pm

What: Meditation is a form of relaxation, prayer, centering and a great time out just for you. Come and learn the basic technique of meditation so that you can de-stress yourself the next time you need it! Local expert, Bliss Wood, will be leading.

Who: This program is free and open to the Vanderbilt and larger Nashville community.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Girl Scout Cookie Night!

When: 4:30-7:30pm

What: In cooperation with Rand Dining Services, the cutest future entrepreneurs are at Rand serving you dessert, Girl Scout style. If you like what you've had, come on out and buy some of their wares!

Who: Open to all. Dinner at Rand is a la carte, and the cookies with dinner are free! Contact jennifer.hackett@vanderbilt.edu for more info.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Living with Loss

When: 12pm-1:00pm (Meets the 3rd Wednesday)

Who: Open to all members of the Vanderbilt and larger communities. Dr. Linda Manning, Director of the Women's Center and Shelly Sowell, Human Development Counseling Masters Candidate, will facilitate this discussion.

What: This is a monthly lunch group for those who have lost loved ones or are anticipating the loss of a loved one. This forum provides a safe space for people to

share their stories, express their struggles, and connect with others who are also experiencing loss. Bring a brown bag lunch; drinks are provided. Please feel free to email shelly.sowell@vanderbilt.edu for more information or to answer questions.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Dissertation Writers Group

When: 3:45-5:00pm (Meets every three weeks)

What: After a hiatus, the DWG has returned to the Women's Center! It is a group to support through the process, as well as to provide critical feedback and goal setting.

Who: PhD candidates who are at the dissertation writing stage. For more information, contact roxy.dicker@vanderbilt.edu

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Sistahs Reading Sistahs

When: 12:30pm - 1:30pm (Meets the 3rd Thursday)

Who: A book group for everyone interested in reading African-American women authors.

What: This month the group will be discussing *Water Marked* by Helen Elaine Lee.

Contact angela.d.davis@vanderbilt.edu for more information.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Getting Real: Uncovering the Hidden Agenda of the Media Market

When: 6-7:30pm

What: In conjunction with IMAGE Week, the Women's Center presents Tricia Gardner doing her acclaimed presentation on how women are presented in the media and affected by it daily.

Who: This program is free to the Vanderbilt and larger Nashville communities. Contact jennifer.hackett@vanderbilt.edu for more info.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Judy Chicago: "At Home" exhibit (see details on page 1)

The "At Home" exhibit is hosted at the Sarratt Gallery supported in gracious part by the Departments of Art and Art History, Communication Studies, Philosophy, English, History, Women's Studies and the Sarratt Visual Arts Committee.





Women's Health Matters

So, you consider yourself a modern, socially aware, environmentally responsible kind of woman, right? I mean, the first clue is that you're reading this article. Maybe you recycle, or don't eat red meat, or you use echinacea to combat the flu. However, if you channel your inner hippie, I think you'll be surprised to learn that a product that 73,000,000 women in the U.S. use every year is contributing to water pollution, overloaded landfills, damage to beaches and wildlife, and could be harmful to your health.

I'm talking about tampons, ladies, especially "mainstream" brands. That's right, a product that you use every month, regulated by the FDA, is not only hurting the environment, it may also be compromising your health.

The two major problems with conventional tampons include the fibers that are used to make tampons and the bleaching process of those fibers.

You're probably under the assumption that tampons are made from 100% cotton. In reality, there are other fibers blended with the cotton, including rayon. Rayon is a by-product of the chip mill industry, one of the most environmentally ravaging industries in the U.S. Rayon is an artificial fiber and is abrasive to a woman's vaginal wall. The fibers can cause tiny cuts and can become imbedded in the tissue.

All of the major tampon brands use the chlorine bleaching process to whiten their products. Somewhere along the line people have equated white with sterility, so tampon companies bleach out the cotton, rayon, and polyester fibers to give the appearance of cleanliness. In actuality, tampons are not sterile, so the bleaching is purely for cosmetic purposes. Chlorine has been linked to dioxin production, a potent carcinogen. Dioxins have also been linked to infertility, endometriosis, and immune system damage. The effects of dioxin are cumulative, and can still be measured 20 to 30 years after exposure. Dioxins from tampons are also released into the environment through ground water and other avenues, affecting wildlife and the food we eat.

You might be asking yourself how a product that is potentially unsafe is still being produced and sold to millions of Americans every year. Unfortunately, most of the major studies done on the presence of chlorine and dioxins

in tampons have relied on data *provided by* manufacturers of feminine hygiene products. Independent research done by various groups does indeed show the possibility of tampon use being detrimental to a woman's health, but until more of these studies can be funded and conducted, there is no way to know whether the tampons that you use every month contain these chemicals. Several members of Congress have called for independent investigation of the safety of tampons. As we've seen with the tobacco industry scandal, just because a manufacturer SAYS a product is safe doesn't necessarily mean that it is.

OK, so now that there's a question mark in your mind about tampons, maybe you're wondering, *what are the alternatives?* There are actually quite a few, both internal and external.

The closest cousin to your mainstream tampon would be the 100% organic cotton, non-chlorine bleached, rayon free tampons you can buy at health food stores. They are typically applicator free and come in different absorbencies, just like regular tampons, and you still throw them away after each use. They are more expensive than mainstream tampons, but they are a good option for anyone who wants to use something more familiar.

Another internal option is the sea sponge. If you've ever used a natural sponge in the shower, or to apply foundation, you know what I'm talking about. You can find them at the drugstore, at a health food store, or online. You basically insert the clean, squeezed damp sponge just like a tampon. When it's full you take it out, rinse out the blood, clean it, and reinsert. You can clean them using tea tree or lavender oil, or by boiling. The awesome thing about the sea sponge is that you can use it over and over, saving money and helping the environment. The downside is that when the sponge is full, it's full. If you sneeze or laugh when your sponge is full, you'll get leaks. Also, the sponge can start to disintegrate after about four months, so you do have to replace them periodically.

The third internal option is "The Keeper." It is a soft, natural gum rubber cup that you fold in half and insert like a tampon. Your blood collects in the cup internally, and when it's full, you simply pull on the applicator, remove the cup, dump it out, rinse it and dry it, then reinsert. It is designed to fit a

woman's body so it is as comfortable as a regular tampon. This product is made and distributed by women, and the rubber is tapped from trees without killing them.

Your fourth choice, my personal favorite, is the washable pad. That's right, just like your granny wore! These are typically made from flannel, and most brands and patterns have inserts that increase the absorbability depending on what you need for that phase of your flow. You can make your own or buy them. The two main producers of flannel pads are Lunapads and Glad Rags. Benefits of using washable pads are the reusability factor and saving money. It can take some getting used to, but I don't use anything else.

If these options seem outrageous to you, just try one out on a Sunday when you're hanging out at home. That way, there's no stress about an "accident" happening out in public, just in case the method you chose isn't the best one for you. It might be that you use 100% cotton tampons most of the time, but use a sea sponge or flannel pads at home. Or just use tampons for special occasions and use a reusable option most of the time. It's up to you!

To further encourage you to try something new, the Women's Center is going to have samples of these products for you to try! There will also be a pattern for making your own pads available, and some political action materials from a group called Tampaction.

There are tons of great websites with more information about this topic, and I recommend doing some research about whatever method you choose to try. Follow all the cleaning and care instructions included with each product very carefully.

Here are some other resources:

<http://www.lunapads.com/index.html>
<http://urban-armor.org/urban-armor/index.html>
<http://bloodsisters.org/bloodsisters/>
<http://www.web.net/terrafemme/>
<http://www.onewoman.com/redspot/>
<http://www.ingalagringa.com/>
<http://www.seac.org/tampons/>

Also, if you have any specific questions and can't find the answer online, my email address is angelfunk@mac.com. *Angel Funk is a local Licensed Massage Therapist and has been researching this topic for over the ten years.*



Educating and Mobilizing Men to End Rape

continued from page 3

- Confront local bookstores that sell pornography
- Volunteer to work with the adolescent boys of women who are at the local battered women's shelter
- Write a letter to your congresspeople to support stronger laws in support of women who are victimized and programs to stop rape or domestic violence
- Donate to your local rape crisis or battered women's shelter

What men can do to end rape is limitless. The impact of men's involvement could be dramatic. We *can* create a world (or state, or city or campus...) free of rape. We *can* make it possible for women and men to enjoy the full range of human rights. Men can and should be a part of the solution.

Rus Ervin Funk currently works at the Center for Women and Families in Louisville, KY. He has been working to end violence against women for 20 years. He can be reached at rfunk@cwfm-power.org

Editor's Note: Rus has included a suggested reading list of books on this subject and related topics. You may view this list by logging on to our website, www.vanderbilt.edu/womenscenter, and clicking on the Project Safe link.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 10 AM TO 3:30 PM

Conference on Psychology, Religion, and Homosexuality: Critical Responses to Reparative Therapy, 103 Wilson Hall, Vanderbilt University. Co-sponsored by Human Rights Campaign, the Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality, and the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture. For more information, contact Christopher.Sanders@Vanderbilt.edu

COMING UP:

APRIL 25TH, MARCH FOR FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN WASHINGTON, DC

A public demonstration in support of abortion rights and reproductive freedom for all women. Check out the website www.marchforchoice.org. This historic event is being coordinated by NOW, Planned Parenthood, NARAL, and the Feminist Majority Foundation, and local chapters all around the country are mobilizing hundreds of thousands of pro-choice people to attend. To find out how to reserve your seat on the bus and be part of the Tennessee delegation, contact vandymarch4choice@hotmail.com for more information.

Printed on recycled paper

Vanderbilt University is committed to principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action

Women's VU mailing list

Women's VU is sent free, on request, to all Vanderbilt students and to faculty and staff at a campus address. Subscriptions are available to off-campus readers for a suggested donation of \$10 per year. Please include your check, payable to Vanderbilt University, with your subscription.

- Please send my free subscription to a campus address. (Student subscriptions are free to *any* address.)
- Please send my subscription to an off-campus address. Donation is enclosed.
- Please correct my name on your mailing list.
- Please remove my name from your mailing list.

Name _____

Address _____

- Student (specify school & year) _____
- Staff Faculty Administrator Other

Mail to the Women's Center, Vanderbilt University, Box 351513 Station B, Nashville, TN 37235

Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center

Vanderbilt University
316 West Side Row
Box 351513, Station B
Nashville, TN 37235

Return Service Requested