

Margaret  
Cunningim  
Women's Center

## Generation gap divides and unites family women

*Tonnya Kennedy, Information Officer,  
News and Public Affairs, A&S '87*

We're a kaleidoscope of cultures. The women in my family. Different cultures not brought about by differences in race or region. Rather by the times in which we were born.

As in most communities inhabited by many cultures, bearing many languages and perspectives, there's often conflict—conflicts of ideas and priorities. But more often than not there's a consensus. A realization that everyone has something to offer.

Attend the annual Fourth of July picnic or church homecoming and you'll see us there. Women of many hues and histories, but with a common bond. Perhaps it's a common ancestor. A shared physical trait. Maybe even the Watkins' hips, which seem to afflict the women of my family as we mature. We share names, too. A granddaughter is the namesake of a grandmother. Then there's a first cousin who shares names with another first cousin and a great aunt.

The elders cast sidelong glances at our skirts too short and blue jeans too tight. Perhaps it's our hip-hop hairstyles or attention-grabbing makeup. With a click of their tongues, they disapprove of our late night hours and all too frequent and temporary boyfriends.

We look upon their old sayings and antiquated ways with amusement. Thinking we're the first generation to really experience life, break convention.

We call it freedom. This ability to come and go as we please. To work most any place we choose, though with an unwanted cynicism common

among young women such as I, we acknowledge there are some doors yet unopened, some ceilings yet to be raised. We call it freedom. This opportunity to climb the ladder of success, leaving home before dark and returning home long after our children are in bed.

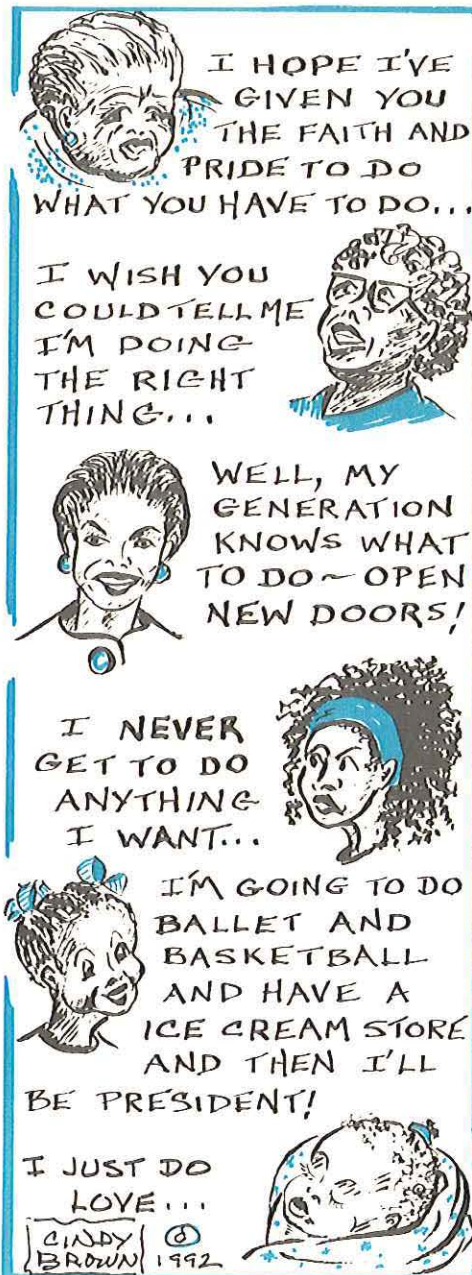
Women of my community, who were born before or on the cusp of the women's rights movement, look upon the struggle with a benign indifference. Struggling to be acknowledged as human beings, they had little time to devote to women's rights. Even today few bask in the rights acknowledged as a result of the movement. Mostly the women of my community, of older generations, still hold jobs in female-dominated occupations—occupations that are striving for parity with traditionally male jobs. However, they, and we, acknowledge those of us coming of age in the 80s, 90s, and beyond are beneficiaries of the movement. Undeniably, women can enroll in most any university, join law firms, apply for credit, and grab at the rungs on the corporate ladder.

Our elders lament our lack of insulation from the world, an insulation they may have felt as keepers of the hearth, theirs or someone else's. They pace the floor, wring their hands and pray for divine intervention, knowing all too well the good and bad the world has to offer.

They don't envy us our coming of age in a time fraught with blatant and politically-sanctioned disregard for human life, the growing desperation of our nation's inner cities, and all the ills created by this indifference.

My elders tell me that hatred still abounds, though cloaked in less intimidating disguises. My mother reminds me of the glass ceiling. She acknowledges that women of her generation and before had few life choices. But she says attempting to thrive and even to survive in my generation isn't any easier. "The door of opportunity is open on one end, but it's closed on the other," she says.

*(continued page four)*



Pro-choice rallier

# Sims' journal highlights march on Washington

Michael Sims, Special Collections, Jean and Alexander Heard Library

Sims accompanied 750,000 others to the pro-choice march in Washington, DC, April 5, 1992.

### Saturday 4 April 1992

11:00 a.m. Thanks to a snowstorm, we're trapped in a trucker haven in Virginia. Is Operation Rescue investing in cloud seeding?

8:00 p.m. We made it. Waitress in restaurant is cordial until we mention why we're in town; then she's, well, civil.

### Sunday 5 April

8:30 a.m. Before we even board the Metro for the ride into "the District," we're adopted by local activists. One male with them—the leader's teenage son. Tomorrow the *Post* will estimate the crowd was seventy-eight percent female.

10:00 a.m. Thousands of us gather on the Ellipse. A friendly, loud, well-

behaved crowd, passionately pro-choice. Few are shy. Signs: Catholic Mothers for Choice, Oregonians for Choice, even Tall Left-handed Blonde Woman from Indiana for Choice.

11:00 a.m. Peter, Paul and Mary sing. Candidates speechify. We already number at least in the tens of thousands. Bella Abzug wins Largest Hat award.

11:30 a.m. Surely there are hundreds of thousands of us now. Female, black, white, Oriental, punk, formal, straight, gay, old, young, parents, grandparents, the obviously moneyed, the apparently poor. Is it my imagination, or are the curtains at the White House rustling nervously?

12:00 noon. We begin to move. Slowly. There are so many of us. You could hold a Beatles reunion in this crowd and it wouldn't show. We can't see the ground. Our feet tell us we are now on pavement, now on grass. Chants ripple across us in waves. Occasionally they are less than respectful toward our elected leaders.

1:00 p.m. Token opposition overwhelmed on sidelines. Several dressed as ghouls with white faces and horror-movie props. We chat with a phalanx of police, mostly male. A beefy middle-aged one says, "I think this is a great day." A spry septuagenarian wears on her lapel a suggestion of what Washington can do with the New World Order.

2:00 p.m. Presumably the Cheese

Heads for Choice are from Wisconsin. Behind a banner we find the United MIT Nerds for Choice.

4:00 p.m. We sprawl on the lawn before the Capitol Building. No, there isn't room to sprawl; there are too

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*Is it my imagination,  
or are the curtains at the  
White House rustling nervously?*

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many of us.

5:00 p.m. Well, although some are still coming, it's time to go. We did it. Pro-choice advocates have never gathered in such numbers. Of course, Jane Fonda will get the photo ops. To Bill Clinton will go the sound bites. But the rest of us will take home memories of a wonderful day—the old man pushing his granddaughter in a wheelchair, the woman perched atop a streetlight waving banners and shouting, and most of all the many small children learning from their parents that rights are seldom granted unless they're demanded. ■



### Women's VU

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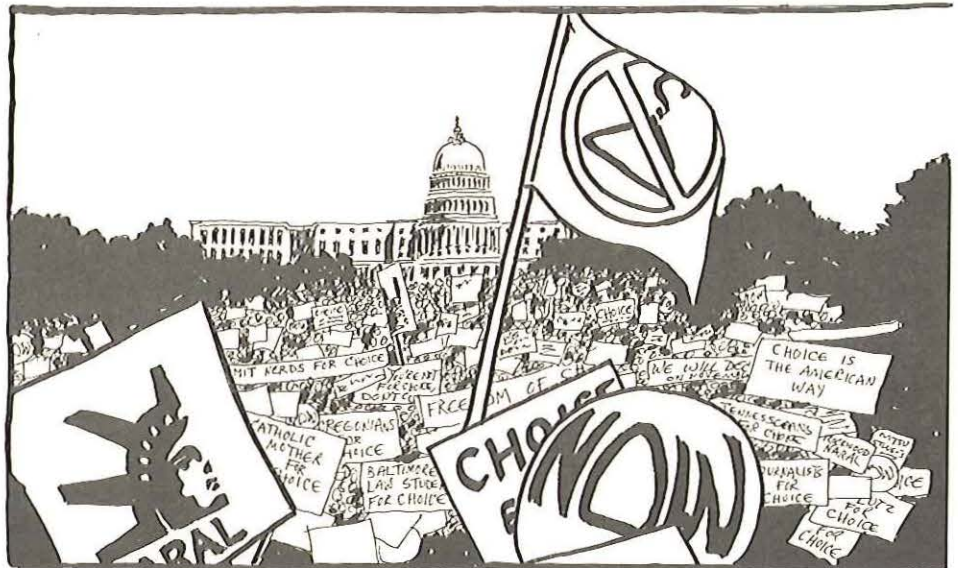
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## Readers reply Can feminism and romance coexist?

Roblyn Rawlins, Technical Secretary,  
Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology,  
VUMC

To answer your reader who wonders, "Can I believe in romance and still be a feminist?" I can only say, "YES, YES, YES!" Feminism is about women having the freedom to choose their own paths, and if your path leads you to romance, then you may wander down it, picking all the roses you desire, and still be a feminist.

I wonder if her question implies a different view of what romance really means. If romance means only candy and flowers and a man sweeping you off your feet, then it could be opposed to the principles of feminism. But if romance to you means what it does to me, then it is both easy and immensely pleasurable to combine romance and feminism. What could be more romantic than deep, serious discussions and debate about your feelings and beliefs with your chosen partner, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and love? I treasure both my husband's and my own views and perspectives on life. The time we take to explain them to one another strengthens our marriage; and a strong, loving, mutually-supportive marriage to a feminist man fulfills my romantic needs much more than a stereotypical romance with its metaphors of loss of personal control and being swept away.

It took me a long time to find my (feminist) feet: the most romantic thing my husband can do for me is admire them and help keep me on them, upright, proud, and standing beside him as his equal and his partner.

Editors note: In February we asked our readers to respond to an inquiry we received asking "... can I believe in romance and still be a feminist?" We received a number of verbal responses and two written ones. All of these seemed to concur that the

(continued page four)



## Not for men only: twenty million women suffer from abnormal hair loss

Beth Colvin Huff, RN, MSN  
Associate in OB/GYN

Although baldness is often thought of as a predominantly male trait, it can and does occur in women. It is estimated that about twenty million women suffer from some degree of abnormal hair loss.

Hair follicles are constantly in different stages of growth. As the hair shaft reaches the end of its usual life, it is released from the follicle and new growth will begin. This is the normal hair loss seen when brushing or washing the hair. Illness, poor nutrition, pregnancy, and some medications may hasten hair loss and generalized thinning can occur from any of these conditions. Once the medical condition is corrected, normal hair growth usually resumes.

Androgenetic alopecia is just one of many types of abnormal hair loss. It is also known as male pattern baldness but has been long recognized in women. It appears to be under the same hormonal influence as in men. The hair follicle becomes extremely sensitive to the presence of androgen hormones, of which testosterone is one. Women normally produce androgens and hair loss is not necessarily an indicator of high levels of these hormones.

Somehow, the follicle is genetically predisposed to diminish in size when exposed to androgens and this produces a very thin, poorly pigmented hair shaft. In women, these sensitive follicles tend to be more diffusely distributed throughout the scalp. Women will often have a normal frontal hairline with very thin hair on the top and sides of the head.

Hair loss may begin as early as the teens and early twenties which can significantly impact developing self-image. It is extremely important that once the hair loss is noted to be excessive, a thorough medical evaluation be performed. Underlying diseases must be ruled out before any therapy is prescribed. A dermatologist will examine the hair and scalp and may need to perform a small biopsy to examine the condition of the follicles.

Therapy may combine cosmetic, medical, and surgical approaches. Hair weaving and hair pieces can cover small areas of thinning. Hair products may add body and a thicker "feel" to the hair. A good hairdresser can make recommendations on styles that will present the remaining hair attractively.

Surgical therapy, in the form of hair plugs and scalp transplants, has been utilized more in men but in some cases may be an option available to women. More recently, minoxidil in a topical solution has been studied in women. This drug has been studied in men for years but had not been marketed toward women. Although the results are not overwhelming, the drug does show some promise for relief of this condition.

If you feel that the amount of hair loss you are experiencing is excessive, see your health care provider for further evaluation. ■

## News quotes

### Yogurt folk remedy may assist fight with vaginal yeast infection

Eating yogurt has long been popular among alternative healers as a remedy for vaginal yeast infections. Because scientific evidence of its powers to cure has remained elusive, however, most doctors have hesitated to recommend it seriously as treatment for this ailment, which afflicts half of all women at some time in their lives.

But a small study published in the current issue of *The Annals of Internal Medicine* suggests that this inexpensive folk remedy may be as effective as its proponents contend. The researchers at the Long Island Jewish Medical Center in New Hyde Park monitored thirteen women while they ate yogurt containing a bacteria [*Lactobacillus acidophilus*] often added to commercial yogurt and while they did not. While eating the yogurt the women had a third the number of yeast infections on average.

The researchers had originally enrolled more women in the study, but many of the women found the yogurt so effective a remedy that they refused to stop taking it for the second half of the comparative study, reducing the number of participants. The study researchers warn that they found that not all yogurts that claim to carry *Lactobacillus acidophilus* actually do.

*New York Times*  
March 10, 1992

### Women of color receive fewer financial aid awards than male counterparts, AAUW head says

The gender gap still persists in financial aid awards. Women of color are hardest hit, receiving only a small fraction of aid awarded to men of color in some financial aid programs, according to testimony by Anne L. Bryant, executive director of the American Association of University Women (AAUW). Speaking before the House Subcommittee on Post-secondary Education, Bryant noted that women received smaller federal aid awards, virtually equal state aid, and lower institutional aid than men.

In 1990, the average total aid package in grants and loans, combining federal, state, and institutional aid, was \$3,605 for women and \$3,843 for men, a gender gap of six percent. For women of color the gap was far larger:

- The average Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant to African-American men was eighty percent higher than the average award to African-American women.

- The total federal aid award to Hispanic men was thirty-four percent higher than the average Title IV award to Hispanic women. The average Title IV award was thirty-seven percent higher for Hispanic men. Only forty-two percent of the average college costs of Hispanic women was covered, compared to seventy-three percent of the costs for Hispanic men.

For a copy of the testimony, contact AAUW, 1111 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.

*About Women on Campus,*  
National Association for Women in Education  
Spring 1992

## Reply (from page three)

two are not mutually exclusive.

Rev. Tom Baker, Jr., of Woodmont Lane, wrote, "Feminism emphasizes intellect; romance, [emphasizes] emotions. Yet intellect must not be value free. Feminism trusts realism; romance enjoys fantasy, yet at the same time must not be fact free (consider AIDS). The knight in shining armour rescuing his fair lady is warped romance when it does not include feminism and the essential ingredient of respect." ■

## Gap (from page one)

Their caution is not without pride and hope, however. Pride over a daughter, cousin, or niece who has crossed the first hurdle unscathed. Hope that she'll be able to keep up the pace as the hurdles get harder to cross, the stakes higher. Few of my generation, my mother's or grandmother's say they would trade places with the other. That's despite the worst their time has to offer, but more importantly perhaps it's because of the best each generation has to offer.

No doubt the young women coming of age in the year 2000 and beyond will look upon us—their mothers, cousins, and aunts—with much the same amusement as we did our elders. And like our elders we too, one day, will gather at the annual Fourth of July picnic or church homecoming and click *our* tongues. ■

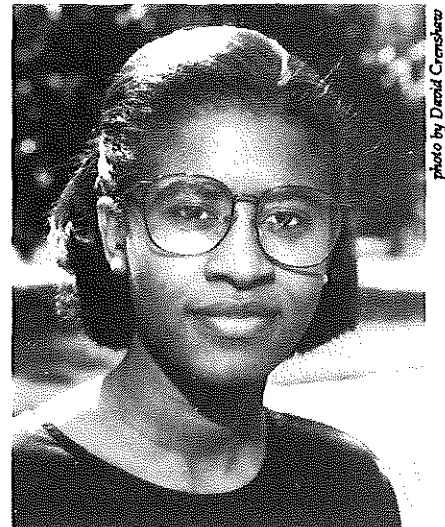


photo by David Crumshaw

Tonnya Kennedy

# Women's poetry dates back as far as 2300 B.C.

Joanne Feit Diehl's *Women Poets and the American Sublime* is largely a study of five notable women poets. The writer focuses on Emily Dickinson, Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, Sylvia Plath, and Adrienne Rich, and discusses their work in relation to the American sublime. Diehl believes that the poetic sublime is an experience identified with men, and she shows that these women poets revise the tradition of the sublime and can be said to belong to a counter-sublime.

Adrienne Rich's *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979-1985* is a collection of prose writings by this noted writer and poet. Some chapters were previously published in anthologies and journals, while others were originally presented as speeches. Included in the volume are selections on a variety of topics, such as poetry, Lorraine Hansberry, Jewish identity, feminism, sexism, and racism.

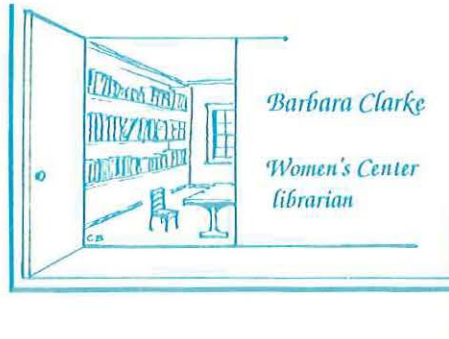
Another interesting volume is *Love Poems by Women* edited by Wendy Aulford, Helen Kidd, Julia Mishkin, and Sandi Russell. This is a collection of poetry written by about two hundred women from all areas of the world and dating from 2300 B.C. to the present. Those poems not originally in English have not been translated. There are short biographies of all the poets, and the works are arranged according to broad theme.

*Shadowed Dreams: Women's Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance* edited by Maureen Honey is a collection of 148 poems by thirty-four African-American women. The selections were written between 1918 and 1931, and many originally appeared in leading black journals like *Opportunity* and *The Crisis*, which during this period published almost as many poems by women as by men.

Most of the women are not well-known today, as their work has largely been ignored by critics and excluded from anthologies. Racism is a theme in about half the poems, while other frequent topics are nature and love.

*The Forbidden Poems* by Becky Birtha is the first collection of poetry by this African-American writer and

poet. Topics appearing frequently in her works include racism, lesbianism, breaking up with a lover, family, gardens, and nature.



*Out of Plumb* by Elizabeth Hahn is a slim volume of poetry by this well-known Connecticut-based writer who lives part of each year in Nashville. (Hahn is a member of the Cuninggim

Center Writers' Workshop when she is in town.)

Most of the poems collected for this work have been published before, and several have won awards. This former professor of English writes on a wide variety of subjects, and among the poems in the book are: "Panache" (reprinted on page six of this newsletter), "Near the Divinity School," "My Father at 36," "Trash Man," and "At the Shelter."

The library has on videotape Carol Gilligan's lecture *Joining the Resistance: Psychology, Politics, Girls, and Women*, delivered on March 17 at Vanderbilt.

Thanks to the following persons who have donated books to the library this year: Susan Baird, Helen Baldwin, Howard Boorman, Tonnya Kennedy, and Sherre Dryden. ■

## News quotes (from page four)

### Hill's legacy continues in Chicago

Senator Alan J. Dixon's vote to confirm Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas last year upset many women, among them Carol Mosely Braun, the Cook County, Ill., Recorder of Deeds. On Tuesday Mrs. Braun defeated Mr. Dixon in the Illinois primary. If she beats Richard S. Williamson in the general election this fall, she will become the first black woman to serve in the United States Senate. A University of Chicago Law School graduate who served in the Illinois General Assembly and became assistant majority leader, Ms. Braun said the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings shattered her view of the Senate as "a Valhalla where decisions were made by serious men—instead we saw they were just garden-variety politicians making bad speeches."

*New York Times*  
March 22, 1992

### May calendar

#### May 11 (Monday)

Book Group discusses *Composing a Life* by Mary Catherine Bateson. Facilitator is Judy Helfer, 5:15 p.m. to 6:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

#### May 19 (Tuesday)

Women and Self-Image. Nancy A. Ransom, director of the Cuninggim Center, leads a workshop designed to provide information about the meaning of self-image and mechanisms for maintaining a realistic and positive self-image. 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., Cuninggim Center, Franklin Building, West Side Row. Registration is limited and is needed by May 15. Free. Call 322-4843.

# Announcements

## Call for nominations

### Mary Jane Werthan Award

Nominations for the 1992 Mary Jane Werthan Award will be accepted now through the summer. This award to a person who has made a noteworthy contribution to the advancement of women at Vanderbilt will be presented at the Margaret Cuninggim Lecture November 10, 1992.

The first recipient (1988) is the woman for whom the award is named, Mary Jane Werthan, first woman elected to the Vanderbilt Board of Trust. Marillyn Craig, librarian at the Jean and Alexander Heard Central Library, received the award in 1989. In 1990 the award was given to Bill Jenkins, vice-chancellor of administration. This past fall Miriam Cowden, Board of Trust Life Trustee, was named the recipient of the Werthan Award.

Letters of recommendation for the 1992 award may be sent to the Cuninggim Center.

## Conferences

The International Women's Studies Institute offers a two-week program on *Women of Polynesia*, past and present, on the island of Hawaii, August 2-14, 1992. Faculty for the program are drawn from the University of Hawaii and the Hawaiian community. Featured speakers are

anthropologist Jocelyn Linnekin and Carol Fan, Director of Women's Research, University of Hawaii. For more information check the bulletin board at the Cuninggim Center.

**Environment, Daily Life and Health: Women's strategies for our common future** is the theme for the Fifth International Congress on Women's Health Issues which will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, August 25-28, 1992. Some of the workshop topics are global conditions, sexuality, women's bodies, technology, and socialization. More information is available at the Cuninggim Center.

## Announcements

The Rape and Sexual Abuse Center holds its next quarterly training session for crisis line volunteers May 28 to July 6. Crisis line counselors provide emotional support, practical help, information, and crisis intervention by telephone to sexual assault victims and their families. Volunteers receive twenty-five hours of comprehensive training and fulfill their volunteer commitment from their own homes. Contact Kim Troup at 259-9055 no later than May 15.



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**"How to Work and Have a Life"** is the title of a workshop offered by the YWCA on two Tuesdays in May. If you're having a hard time getting it all done, this workshop may be what you need. Not only will it offer suggestions on using your time and energy more efficiently, it will also help you identify what gives you a sense of well-being.

The dates are May 5 & 12, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., fee \$50, plus \$5 for the workbook. Marie Jennings, M.Ed. is the instructor. For more information, call the YWCA at 269-9922. ■

### *Panache*

*Lacking it, one  
tends to impute too much  
to others,  
seeing in their impulse,  
adroit discrimination,  
calculated savvy.*

*Still,  
the urge for adulation  
is not wholly folly.*

*One should  
on some joystiff  
occasions,  
throw one  
self out  
—both boots kicking—  
over  
the gulf of golly.*

Out of Plumb  
Elizabeth Hahn

## Women's VU

Subscription information: return this form or call the Women's Center at Ph (615) 322-4843, Fax (615) 343-0940.

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- A yearly subscription to off-campus addresses is \$5.00. Please make checks payable to Vanderbilt University.

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