

Margaret
Cuninggim
Women's Center

As if one weren't enough: the synergy of racism and sexism

Princess E. Patton, Editor of The Tennessean's Letters to the Editor section and an editorial page columnist

Can racism and sexism intersect? You bet, and my best advice to a woman caught in this position is to hold on for a bumpy ride. I know. As a black woman I've lived that nightmare several times.

Those days are still fresh in my mind. And even though they are a part of the past, they are also a part of the bridge that brought me to where I am now.

"Bam," was the sound of my supervisor's chair slamming against the wall behind my desk as he reeled from reading a letter I had left for him. All eyes in the office were fixed on him as he came roaring to my desk, waving the letter in one hand.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked, shaking the letter within inches of my face as I sat at my desk.

"It's a copy of a letter I sent to the personnel department because I disagree with your refusing to consider me for the job I applied for," I said.

"I know what it is," he said. "You're like a traitor in the camp. I can't work with someone I can't trust. You just stay away from me."

This wasn't the first opening in my department for which I had been overlooked. It was just the first one that I decided to do something about.

On a previous occasion, my supervisor had explained to me that he was hiring a "more qualified male" applicant from outside the company. Besides, the man needed a job and was willing to relocate. I, on the other hand, had a husband and a two-

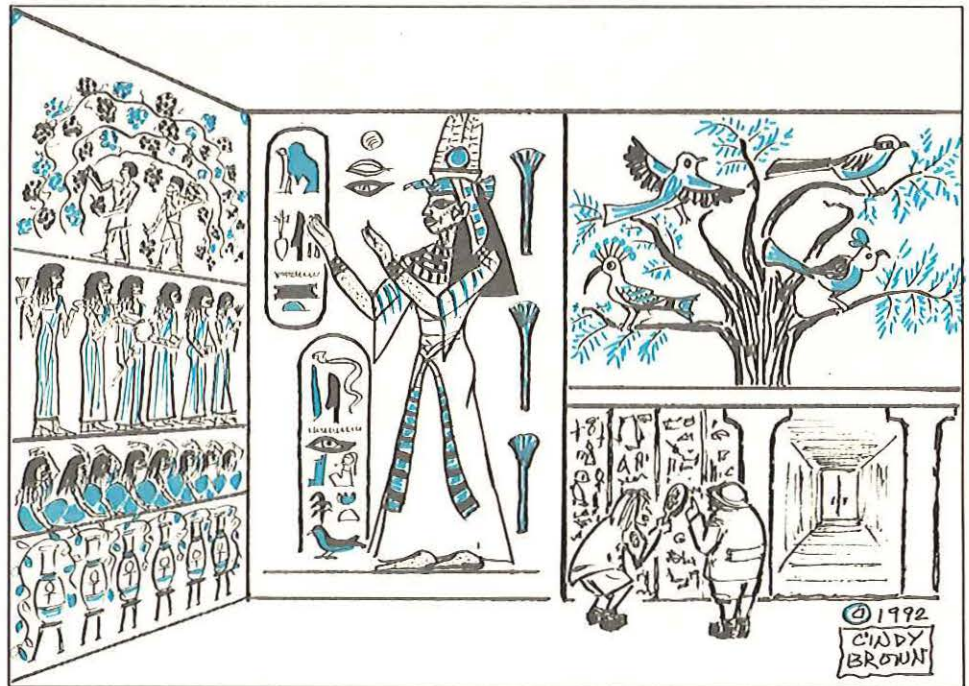
income family. Then he reassured me that he was impressed with my credentials and said that if I remained within the department there would be an opportunity for me to move up in the future. I trusted him.

Six months later when I made a formal application for another opening in the department, I was not even interviewed. The next thing I knew, the job had been filled. I asked for a meeting with him and he explained that I did not get the job because I wasn't "ambitious enough." The

white female he had hired had no children, but I had three and would probably have more.

I did not know at the time that the questions he was asking me were illegal, but I did know that he was wrong. Friends and colleagues within the department came to me to express their regrets and offer explanations: "He doesn't feel that you fit into the company's image," one said. "If all you had to do was stay in the office and send out news releases, it wouldn't matter. But the fact is, he doesn't feel comfortable sending you to represent the company because you are black."

There was an in-house hiring guideline at the time which gave preference to applicants within the department if that person was either female or a member of a racial minority. I was both, but I didn't even rate an interview. So I filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity
(continued page four)



"You're right! It does say 'Nofretari, queen of all Egypt, supports her sisters in the fight against discrimination in the workplace'."

Speaking of women . . .

VU's Harris chooses to 'lead by example'

Anita Linde, activities coordinator, International Services, interviews Donna Harris, co-captain of the Vanderbilt Women's Basketball Team

Donna Harris, a junior at Peabody College, majoring in human development, is a woman of contradictions. Though she "hates working in groups," her teammates found her to be such a compelling leader that they voted her co-captain of the women's basketball team this year: "Quite an honor and a pleasant surprise," Harris admits. And while she described herself as "not very outgoing," this student of human development is, in fact, a lively and engaging young woman who knows her own capabilities and "where [she is] going . . ."

A Nashville native, Harris graduated from nearby Father Ryan High School in 1989, having enjoyed

considerable success on both the tennis and basketball teams. When asked about the support she was given for her athletic endeavors, Harris replies that her "blessed family" gave her all the encouragement she needed to excel on and off the court. "I received and continue to receive support from all angles," notes Harris, "from my immediate as well as my extended family." She speaks particularly glowingly of her "highly principled" mother and very supportive sister, whose influences on her life have been profound. "They let me be myself. I know I don't need to prove my individuality to them."

Harris explains that when she and her older brothers and sister were growing up, their parents did not want them to have outside jobs, preferring that the children concentrate all their energies on "school and sports." For Harris, this concentration clearly paid off. She earned a basketball scholarship to Vanderbilt, which she chose because of its "proximity to home" and excellent "academic/athletic tandem." An extremely gifted athlete, Harris has been the third leading scorer each season since her arrival at Vandy, during a career that has afforded her "many great memories."

When questioned about the most valuable lessons she has learned from her physical training, Harris responds that the "hard work, dedication and fun" have made her realize how lucky she is to be part of "something everybody wants": the sense of belonging and fulfillment that come from being on a team.

Indeed, her teammates provide much of the moral support necessary to balance the demands of academics and athletics. "There is a real team spirit that has developed from working together toward a common goal." She says it is this loyalty and camaraderie that keep Harris and her fellow players going, despite the long hours of work and worry: "We believe in and count on each other."

Harris' post-graduation plans are still unclear, but she says she would like to explore the field of clinical



Donna Harris
co-captain of Women's Basketball

psychology as a way of reaching out and helping others. She is especially interested in working with children who are "in need." Until then, she will continue to "lead by example," maintaining the respect and reinforcing the aspirations of her teammates. "I believe the role of co-captain is not just a symbolic one," Harris professes. "As co-captain, I have to sweat as much and work as hard as I can, because higher expectations are placed on me." Thus far, Harris has more than lived up to those expectations. ■

Women's VU

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Save these dates:

March 17 — *Joining the Resistance: Psychology, Politics, Girls, and Women.* Public lecture by Carol Gilligan, Harvard professor of education, 7:30 p.m., David K. Wilson Hall, room 103.

March 18 — *Racism and Sexism on the College Campus: What Can We Do?* Bertice Berry, PhD in sociology and comedienne. Lecture at noon in Sarratt Cinema and comedy routine at 7:00 p.m. in the Stadium Club.

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1992

Calendar
of
Events

Margaret
Cuninggim
Women's
Center

For further information call the Cuninggim Center at 322-4843.

3 (Monday)

Dissertation Writers Group I meets from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

4 (Tuesday)

Cuninggim Center Advisory Board first spring semester meeting, Katharyn A. May, chair. 4:10 p.m., Opportunity Development Center, Baker Building, Suite 108.

6 (Thursday)

Lunchtime Book Review. Vivien Fryd, assistant professor of fine arts, reviews *Women, Art, and Power* by Linda Nochlin. Nochlin, professor of art history at Yale University, investigates the themes of gender and power in nineteenth- and twentieth-century art. 12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

10 (Monday)

Book Group discusses *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich. Facilitator is Annette Boyer. 5:15 p.m. to 6:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center Lounge. New members are welcome.

11 (Tuesday)

So You Think You'd Like To Go To Medical School? A panel of women medical students discusses medical school and medicine as a career for women and answers questions. 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

12 (Wednesday)

Dissertation Writers Group II meets from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

12 (Wednesday)

Writers Workshop meets from 5:15 p.m. to 7:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center. New members welcome.

12 (Wednesday)

Challenging Some Myths About Childbirth led by Penelope F. Wright, director, Perinatal Parent Education. Program addresses sources of fear associated with childbirth and birth as depicted in popular culture. Reservations are required and are limited to first twenty persons. 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

19 (Wednesday)

Why Not A Career In Business? A panel of Owen Graduate School of Management students discusses career options and routes of entry for women in business. 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

25 (Tuesday)

What's It Like To Be A Woman In Law School? A panel of law students discusses law school and law as a career and answers questions. 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

26 (Wednesday)

Writers Workshop meets from 5:15 p.m. to 7:15 p.m., Cuninggim Center.

Please save and post. Individual flyers for these programs will not be sent.

Fighting racism and sexism (from page one)

nity Commission.

The most important lesson I learned from the Commission was that what I was about to embark on might prove to be more difficult than accepting being passed over for a job.

My caseworker agreed that I had a valid complaint and that there were federal guidelines barring an employer from harassing or dismissing an employee who had chosen to file suit, but my supervisor could still make it hard for me. That turned out

The most important lesson I learned from the Commission was that what I was about to embark on might prove to be more difficult than accepting being passed over for a job.

to be an understatement.

The days prior to resolution were disastrous. It takes a great degree of stamina to go through something like this, and I wouldn't recommend it to everyone. I had made a vow that no matter what he did or said to me I would not let him see me crack. I'd persevere through the day, but at night I'd go home and fall apart in front of my family. I subjected them to crying spells and choruses of "It's the principle of the thing." And like referees at ringside, they'd pump me up and get me prepared to face the next round.

There were many days that I considered quitting, but I reminded myself that someone had to pave the way so that people like my supervisor would have to assess the worth of each individual based on his or her

Page 4, *Women's VU*, February 1992

qualities and not on some arbitrary prejudices.

From advice I received from the EEOC, I learned that the biggest mistakes I made were in 1) talking too much and not getting things in writing, and 2) waiting too long to complain. I should never have accepted "no" as an answer the first time I was overlooked.

At the urging of the EEOC, I began to keep a record of everything of significance which transpired between my supervisor and me. It was not important that he accepted or acknowledged any correspondence, only that I made the effort and sent copies of those letters to the personnel director.

I had forgotten that my supervisor reported to someone higher. My letter to personnel was redirected to the department head. His receipt of the letter was his first indication that there was a problem within the department.

He asked me to drop the suit and promised me that the situation could be corrected within the department. I trusted him and he didn't fail me. Since the job had already been filled, he promised that the next job opening within the department would be mine. In the meantime, he made concessions that made me happier, more secure and the transition easier.

As time went on, the relationship between my immediate supervisor and me improved, but he never apologized for what happened. I've learned that people don't apologize in the corporate world, but that doesn't matter so much to me anymore, as long as they do the right thing.

I'll never forget the conversation between my supervisor and me when he said forthrightly, "You'll never write for this company." I always wondered if he recalled those words the first time my byline appeared in a company publication. And it all could have happened so differently. ■



Preventive measures can help women with recurrent cystitis

Is there anything I can do to prevent recurrent cystitis?

Fortunately for the great number of women who suffer from it, the answer is yes. Cystitis, or inflammation of the bladder, results when bacteria (usually the E. coli strain found in the gastrointestinal tract) make their way up the urinary tract to the bladder. It is more prevalent among women, mainly because a woman's urethra (the tube that carries urine out from the bladder) is only about a quarter of the length of a man's, making it that much easier for infectious agents to reach the bladder. Once you've had a bout with it, the symptoms of cystitis are all too famil-

iar: the urgent need to urinate often, even if it's only a few drops at a time; painful burning during urination; potent, cloudy, sometimes bloody urine; general cramping and aching in the abdominal area; and sometimes even fever, chills, or low back pain.

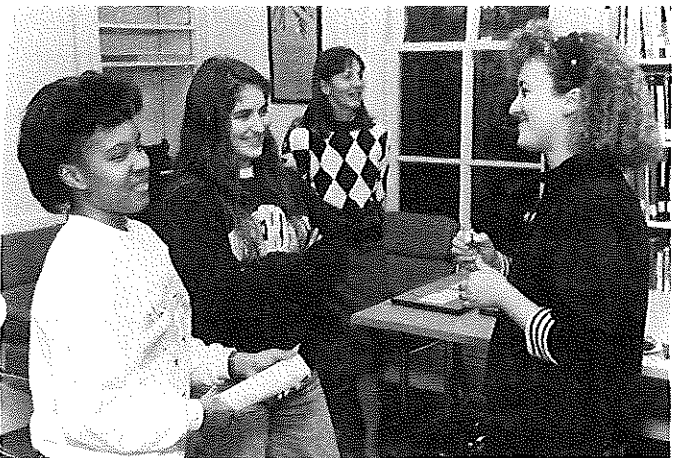
If you are prone to cystitis, drink lots of liquids in order to flush the urinary tract of both bacteria and the urine it feeds upon. It is particularly important to induce urination after sexual activity, as intercourse is one of the more common ways for bacteria to be transported up to the bladder.

Cranberry juice is a good choice of liquid: the vitamin C creates a more

(continued page six)



Crowd in library at ceremony applauds remarks given by Sherre Dryden.



Librarian Barbara Clarke (3rd from left) shows students, Chajuan Fitzgerald, Teresa Fulmer, and Yasemin Yardimci, the library now located on first floor of Franklin Building



Law student Jill Espelien signs guest book next to terra cotta sculpture, "Memories," by Yoné Sinor

Cuninggim Center Open House

More than 150 friends came by the newly expanded Cuninggim Center on a drizzly Monday. They saw the renovated, handicap-accessible first floor of the Franklin Building (former home of Opportunity Development Center), the second floor offices of the director and assistant director, and an exhibit of sculpture by Tennessee native Yoné Sinor. The exhibit continues at the center through February 14.

Guests were entertained with music by Blair students John Kelley and Stephanie Jones, and enjoyed refreshments.

A brief program began at 4:30 p.m. with remarks by Sherre Dryden and Katharyn May, chair and chair-elect respectively, of the Cuninggim Center Advisory Board. Nancy Ransom, director of the center, then thanked (in humorous verse) and presented lithographs of Kirkland Hall to those who were instrumental in arranging for the expansion: Provost Charles Kiesler, Associate Provost Thomas Burish, Dean Jacque Voegeli, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor Susan Gotwald, and Chancellor Joe B. Wyatt.

The program concluded with Mr. Wyatt hanging the Board of Trust Resolution naming the women's center for Margaret Cuninggim.

January 13, 1992

photos by David Crenshaw

News quotes

Walking, regardless of pace, improves health of female heart

Women who walk three miles a day five days a week reduce their risk of heart disease, regardless of how fast they walk, a new study has found.

The study, published in . . . The Journal of the American Medical Association, expands on previous findings that even low levels of physical activity have health benefits when compared with a sedentary existence.

The study of 102 women found that those who took twelve minutes to walk a mile and those who took twenty minutes each had the same increase of six percent in high-density lipoproteins, the so-called good form of cholesterol. They also had the same reduced risk of heart disease.

"Walking can be as beneficial as running, without the risk of injury," said Dr. Kenneth Cooper, director of Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research, where the study was conducted.

"It's never too late to exercise, and exercise at even low levels is inherently beneficial," Dr. John J. Duncan, an author of the report, said. Dr. Duncan noted the participants had normal levels of cholesterol and normal blood pressures before the study, and were twenty to twenty-five percent overweight. The women did not lose weight, but decreased their percentages of body fat as fatty tissue was replaced by muscle tissue.

The New York Times
December 24, 1991

Earnings gap between the sexes greatest for workers after age fifty

The earnings gap between the sexes narrowed during the 1980s, but income equality for the 6.2 million women over fifty who work full time remains an elusive goal.

Women of all ages are paid about seventy-two cents for every dollar that men earn. But the "gender gap" widens with age, leaving women age fifty and older with only sixty-four percent of the wages paid men.

While this is about a four-point improvement over ten years ago, previously unpublished earnings data show that older working women are closing the gap mainly in low-paid, female-dominated occupations—but not so much in higher-paid professional and managerial jobs.

While barriers to non-traditional occupations are tumbling as younger women take jobs formerly reserved for men, the world of work for women over fifty reflects career choices, occupational pathways, and child-bearing patterns of the 1950s.

Analysts attribute the gender gap among women over fifty to four factors:

Education. Women in the past concentrated on fields that did not prepare them for such high-paying careers as medicine, law, and engineering.

Work experience. Because women take time out for child-bearing, they have less tenure than men in their jobs, which translates into lower earnings.

Occupational choice and occupational segregation. Women dominate certain occupations, which, if not low-paying to start with, often become that way.

American Association of Retired Persons Bulletin
November 1991

cystitis (from page four)

acidic urine, which helps kill bacteria. If the higher acid concentration causes burning when you urinate, drink more water as well, to dilute the acidity. But remember that cranberry juice cannot cure a bladder infection; antibiotics are necessary for that. Avoid caffeine and alcohol. While they do have a diuretic effect, it's healthier to just drink more water or juice.

Personal hygiene is important too. When using toilet tissue, wipe from front to back. Avoid tight pants or panty hose. Cotton underwear keeps the body cooler and drier, which discourages bacterial growth. Perfumed soaps, bubble baths, and some laundry detergents can cause irritation and inflammation.

If cystitis recurs despite your best preventive measures, consult your doctor. You may have an anatomical problem such as a constricted urethra, which could be helped by surgical correction.

Reprinted from *The Johns Hopkins Medical Letter: Health After 50*, August 1990. ■

"Tremendous amounts of talent are being lost to our society just because that talent wears a skirt."

—Shirley Chisholm
Unbought and Unbossed

Books document women in labor force

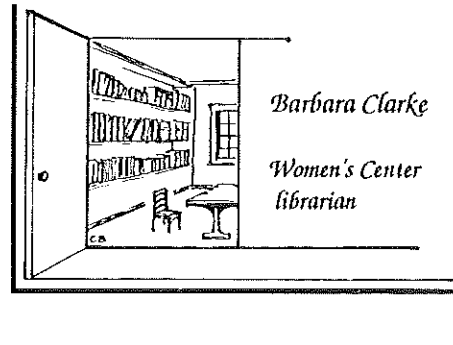
The Outer Circle: Women in the Scientific Community edited by Harriet Zuckerman, Jonathan R. Cole, and John T. Bruer is an excellent sociological study of women in American science. The contributors explain why women still generally remain on the fringes of the male-dominated scientific community.

At present about thirteen percent of all scientists are women, and this percentage has tripled in the last fifteen years. About twenty percent of all scientists now obtaining doctorates are female. Women are less likely than men to work in industry and more likely to work in educational institutions.

The writers explain why women scientists have not advanced as quickly as have women in other fields; interviews with three distinguished female scientists are included. Women scientists are less likely to have advanced degrees, so they are less likely to hold senior positions. On average they have less experience than their male peers, as they have joined the work force in greater numbers only in comparatively recent years.

The contributors attempt to

explain why women publish significantly less than male scientists; this is shown to be unrelated to the demands of home and family. The reasons are complex and subtle, and appear to be connected to the discrimination experienced by women in just about every sphere of their working life. Some employers discriminate because they assume that family obligations



Barbara Clarke

Women's Center
librarian

will affect women's work histories.

There is still an "old-boy network" in the scientific world, and women do not have equal opportunities for collaboration with other scientists. This situation affects women's rates of publication and citation, their laboratory productivity and their chances of

promotion. Women are more likely to be outside social networks, less likely to edit or to be reviewers for scientific journals, and less likely to participate in conferences or to lecture or consult.

In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organizations by Cynthia Cockburn is an interesting new book on women in the work force. While the research took place in Great Britain, many of the findings are relevant to the workplace in other countries.

The book is based on studies of four organizations or companies, and interviews with over two hundred of their employees. One-third of those interviewed were women. Many women will find the conclusions somewhat disturbing.

Cockburn notes that when women have power within an occupation, this occupation either is not yet powerful, or is losing status in the eyes of its wider organization or of society as a whole. Many of the men interviewed felt that equal opportunity has been overdone, and that women's complaints of inequality are exaggerated.

Successful women are still greatly resented, though this sentiment is not usually expressed openly. Many women are made to feel out of place, and are discouraged from seeking promotions. Some of the men were angry both at women who try to be mothers and employees, and at those who "cheat" by remaining childless or single.

As older men retire, male power is not dying out, though its forms are changing. Cockburn explains why it is logical for men to resist women's progress, and she offers useful suggestions for women who are attempting to advance within companies or organizations.

Other recent arrivals in the library include: *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* by Anne Firor Scott; *The Second Rape: Society's Continued Betrayal of the Victim* by Lee Madigan and Nancy C. Gamble; *Job Queues, Gender Queues: Explaining Women's Inroads into Male Occupations* by Barbara F. Reskin and Patricia A. Roos; and *Ivory Power: Sexual Harassment on Campus* edited by Michele A. Paludi.

News (from page six)

Women underrepresented in elected Tennessee government

Tennessee ranks fortieth in the percentage of women elected to their state legislature, allowing issues such as sexual harassment and child care to be ignored, the National Women's Political Caucus president said.

"From the recent controversy over Clarence Thomas, we see a male club that just didn't get it about sexual harassment," Harriett Woods [National Women's Political Caucus president] said.

"Women have to be there to advocate for themselves."

In Tennessee, only fifteen of the one hundred thirty-two members of the General Assembly are women: 11 percent.

Tennessee has no female mayors in cities of more than 30,000. The state has never had a female governor, and only four of the forty Metro Council members are women.

Six Nashville judges are women, including Martha Craig Daughtrey, who last year became the first woman to ever be elected to the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Nationally, 18 percent of the state legislators are women, and six percent of the members of Congress are female. Ironically, the majority of registered voters are women—53 percent.

The Tennessean
October 13, 1991

Announcements

Campus

February home games for VU Women's Basketball:

- Feb. 8, Arkansas, 2:00 p.m.
- Feb. 12, Kentucky, 7:00 p.m.
- Feb. 18, Penn State, 7:00 p.m.
- Feb. 23, Auburn, 2:00 p.m.
- Feb. 27, TN Tech, 7:00 p.m.

Students for Women's Concerns is dedicated to the education and celebration of women's issues and accomplishments.

Group meets Tuesday, February 4 at the Cuninggim Center, 5:30 p.m. Yoné Sinor discusses her sculpture exhibit currently at the center. A reception follows.

The Susan Ford Wiltshire Essay Prize. The Women's Studies program and the Women's Faculty Organization announce competition for the best undergraduate and the best graduate papers in 1991 by Vanderbilt students on a topic concerning women. Deadline March 1, 1992. For more information contact the Women's Studies office at 343-7808.

Employee Mammogram Screening Program. As an employee, spouse, or volunteer at Vanderbilt you may be eligible for approximately a fifty percent discount on a mammogram. You must be age thirty-five or older and presently have no

symptoms of breast disease. To register come to Employee Health Service at 2525 TVC, Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Registration cannot be done by phone.

After completing the one-page registration, schedule your mammogram at the new Vanderbilt Breast Center, located at the Village at Vanderbilt. The center also offers support groups for women with breast cancer. For more information on the Breast Center call 322-2064.

Community

Athena Award March 28

During March, Women's History Month, twelve local women's organizations join together to select and honor one woman to receive the distinguished Athena for professional excellence. The award celebrates the potential of all women as valued members and leaders of the community.

This year's presentation is on Saturday, March 28, 5:00 p.m. at the Parthenon. Tickets are available at the Cuninggim Center and Opportunity Development Center.

How to Succeed in Business Without Being One of the Boys. YWCA course designed to teach women how to further their careers through communication skills and self-understanding. Three Tuesdays beginning February 18, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Fee \$45. Instructors: Martha Gennett and Katie Peebles. For more information call 269-9922.

Pro-choice march in Washington, DC, April 5

Save the date: Sunday, April 5, 1992. The National Organization for Women, along with many co-sponsoring organizations, is planning a pro-choice march in Washington, DC.

Tennessee NOW is taking reservations for a bus to the pro-choice march. Cost is \$85. Scholarships are available from local chapters. Call 269-7141 to reserve a space.

Call for papers

Sixth Annual Western Kentucky University Women's Studies Conference, September 24-26, 1992. Conference theme is Women: Voices, Visions, and Vexations. Proposals for individual papers/panels and complete sessions are invited in all areas of women's studies. Abstracts for papers should be approximately two hundred words. Deadline March 6. For more information see Cuninggim Center bulletin board.



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Women's VU

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