

## BECAUSE YELLOW IS BEAUTIFUL, BECAUSE BROWN IS BEAUTIFUL: AN APAHM REFLECTION ON LITERALLY, BEING A WOMAN OF COLOR

by Julie Jinwon Park

*“Living in India made me understand that a white minority of the world has spent centuries conning us into thinking a white skin makes people superior; even though the only thing it really does is make them more affected by ultraviolet rays and wrinkles.”*

—Gloria Steinem

Time to update, Gloria. The above quote opens Steinem's 1978 essay "If Men Could Menstruate," and how things have changed since 1978! These days, women's magazines and scientific experts, the actual overlap of which remains a mystery, extol the virtues of protecting our skin from the deadly rays of the sun. Tanning beds are out; SPF and floppy hats are in. Even though we know that the claim of science and Steinem that "healthy" tan is actually healthy is basically outdated, the original con that "white is right" still flourishes.

When packing for my semester abroad in Taipei, Taiwan, I threw in an umbrella as a last minute addition because Taiwan's unpredictable weather ranges from monsoons to earthquakes. The only

predictable thing about the weather is the heat. Every day, no matter whether I'm walking around my dorm or in a busy shopping district, I see women clinging to their open umbrellas like security blankets, even though there's not a drop of rain to be seen. The umbrellas are protection against the sun, not just to avoid UV rays, but also to prevent the much-feared tanning of the skin. To supplement umbrellas skin whitening creams and bleaches are sold over the counter in abundance. One popular type marketed by Pond's is a kit with separate creams for the day and night, evidently to suppress the unpredictable reaction of naughty, self-activating pigments.

Just like it used to be in the States during the earlier part of the 20th century, pale skin in Asia is considered fashionable. As a status symbol at one time, white skin was an indication that the bearer didn't have to work outside in the fields or expose her skin to the harsh elements of the sun. Her skin was a silent boast of a pampered and protected existence. (Nowadays, because the masses

can easily afford umbrellas, white skin is no longer rationalized as a socioeconomic status symbol. It simply happens to be "attractive.") The increasing popularity of tans in the States marked a reversal in the symbolism behind the color of the skin—a golden tan was a sign that you could afford the leisure time to enjoy the sun's kiss during a romp in the great outdoors (or at least catch a daiquiri by the pool). Self-tanner took off in sales during the late 90s as warnings of UV rays and wrinkles increased. So much for wanting to go natural.

The irony is obvious; women of color abroad and at home yearn for lighter skin while white women want to be dark (sometimes). The differences split when we look at the rhetoric behind both sides of the story. For instance, the prize of white skin has taken on a politicized meaning for women of color abroad as Western advertising has infiltrated international media in a 21st century version of colonization. Also, white women don't seek tans to emulate people of color. They still set their own standard, which makes their skin color a trend that

changes by season, not an assertion of identity.

This entire obsession over skin color also ranks men of color below white men and women in hierarchies of oppression. While Asia and Asian American men are feminized in their own unique ways, our culture has no so-called “paper bag test” that in past years prized light skin for African American men as well as women. Similar quandaries are also pervasive within Latino cultures. While I try to remember my SPF, in Taiwan the brown tint to my yellow skin makes me stand out more than my horrendous accent. I, who was once called “Milky White” by my sister while growing up, got a tan this summer! Yes, I’m an American, an Asian American, (As a Korean American, I got a kick when one fellow classmate mentioned how he loved “my culture” here in Taiwan. Of course, no one forgets that he’s American—he’s white!) and a proud woman of color who can sit on the MRT (Taipei’s subway) and empathize with India.Arie through my headphones as she croons about the beauty of brown skin.

Going back to Asian men, I type this article from an Internet cafe in Taipei. The air rings with explosions and drilling from the gamers huddled over games of Counterstrike. Although female gamers have gained notoriety, they are absent today; I am the only female present. When the males around me leave the cafe, they’ll run down to the subway, go meet friends, or maybe make a telephone call. Still, I guarantee you that none of them would even think to crack open an umbrella.

## APAHM 2002 AT VANDERBILT

by Jenny Adamchek

Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month is a time to celebrate the history, present and future of Asian Americans, and at Vanderbilt we celebrate Heritage Month during November. To commemorate Heritage Month, the Asian American Student Association (AASA) brings keynote speakers and cultural performances, as well as having films and discussions. The goal is always to discover ways to better define the identity or term of “Asian American,” and to translate those discoveries to cultural, social or political action. The theme this year focuses around the identity of Asian Americans in pop culture. The difficulty in trying to define Asian American in terms of pop culture is that Asian Americans fall into a category that is not completely Asian nor completely American, yet Asian Americans are stereotyped and lumped into the same category as Asian. Many people believe that major elements of Asian pop culture such as anime and the cute Hello Kitty and other San Rio characters are inherently a part of all Asian Americans’ pop culture as well. Adding to the

confusion is the fact that Asian Americans are not very widely represented in American pop culture as anything other than the typical “Asian.” While certain actors such as Jackie Chan tend to support stereotypes about Asians and Asian Americans, other actors and members of the media like Lucy Liu, The Rock and Lisa Ling display a more realistic and positive

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## WOMEN'S WISDOM

Nobody objects to a woman being a good writer or sculptor or geneticist if at the same time she manages to be... good looking, good tempered, well groomed and unaggressive. —Leslie McIntyre

In passing, also, I would like to say that the first time Adam had a chance he laid the blame on a woman. —Nancy Astor

In my heart, I think a woman has two choices: either she's a feminist or a masochist. —Gloria Steinem

## Missing in History: Patsy Mink (1927-2002)



Patsy Mink was the first Japanese American female lawyer in Hawaii, and she was the first woman of color and Asian American to be elected to Congress.

Born in Hawaii December 6, 1927, as a child Mink experienced firsthand the prejudice many Japanese Americans were subjected to after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Because her own father, though returned, was taken for questioning in the days following the bombing, Patsy grew up understanding that she could—and would—be singled out solely on the basis of her ancestry and race.

Nonetheless, Mink worked hard academically and excelled, graduating as valedictorian of Maui High School. She originally intended to become a doctor and moved to Nebraska where friends attending the University of Nebraska thought they might help her be admitted to the school. Upon her arrival at UN, she discovered that she was to be put up in special housing for “colored” students. It was at this point in her life that she began challenging prejudice and bias: she protested this housing policy of UN and succeeded in evoking its change. Unfortunately, she was taken ill and had to return to Hawaii; there she finished her

undergraduate degree.

Though she had planned to become a doctor, Mink discovered upon completing her baccalaureate degree that only one, all-female medical school in the country admitted women. Upon suggestion from a coworker, she applied instead to law school and was accepted to the University of Chicago. She met her future husband there and graduated and married—both—in 1951. Unfortunately—again—Mink could not find work as a lawyer in Chicago—no one would hire an Asian woman. She became pregnant and worked at the UC Law School library. Six months after she gave birth to her daughter Gwendolyn, the family returned to Hawaii.

Even in Hawaii, no one would hire Mink for their law firm. So, she opened her own practice and taught at the University of Hawaii. It was at this time, after attending Democratic Party meetings, that Mink’s political career began to take shape. First she began working on the campaigns of others, and after she had collected some knowledge about the political system, and with the strong support of her hus-

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## “GIRLS WITH GUITARS” EXHIBIT OPENS AT MCWC GALLERY

*by the artist, Julia Jordan*

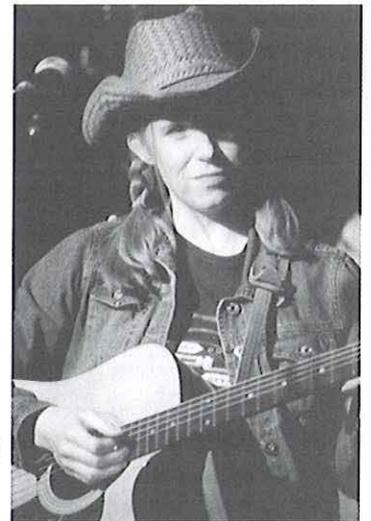
The photographs of this exhibit were taken this year over a period of three months. The project began as a lark and turned into a labor of love. Two Wednesdays each month I tried to capture ephemeral moments of joy, passion, pathos, humor and pain...music... gossamer wisps on the evening breeze. The women of Girls with Guitars were my cooperative, cocky, candid models.

Girls with Guitars is a group of singer/songwriters, all pursuing individual careers, who come together two Wednesdays a month to sing, play and laugh with each other before loyal, adoring followers. I am one of the loyal, adoring followers, continually amazed, moved and delighted by this eclectic mix of talented, beautiful, accomplished women.

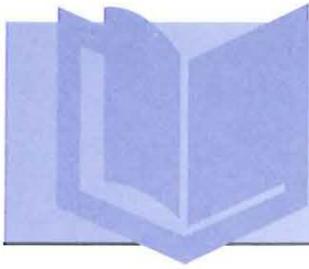
These women inspire me. They each bring a unique voice to their collaboration, unique in both songwriting and performance style. Each is worth the trip as an individual performer. But, holy moly, when they sing together—in two’s, three’s, four’s, all the way up to the whole “Go West/Annie’s Farm/Let Me Out Here” gang, collaborating not competing—it’s ambrosia for the soul—I dig it.

I want to thank the Girls with Guitars: Lisa Carver, Toni Catlin, Kimberley Dahme, Christian Durand, Mary Gauthier, Cindy Kalmenson (founder and hostess w/ the mostest), Annie Mosher, Lani Nash, Robin Ruddy, Cathey Stamps, Cheley Tackett and Nicole Witt. My thanks also to the Boss, Joyce Arnold, for introducing me to Girls w/ Guitars and making me dust off my camera in the first place to take her picture.

I shoot in black and white almost exclusively. For me, and the type of images I take, I believe color is more distracting than revealing. All of the photographs in this exhibit were taken with Ilford 3200 film without a flash. If at all possible, I prefer ambient light. This allows the performers to forget I’m there and is less distracting to fellow audience members. The images are printed on Ilford Multigrade Cooltone paper, some fiber and some resin coated.



*Please join us in welcoming Julia Jordan to the Women’s Center gallery. An opening reception will be held Thursday, November 7, 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm.*



## IN THE LIBRARY

**BARBARA CLARKE**  
Women's Center librarian



### NEW VOLUME EXPLORES DIVORCE

*For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered* (Norton, 2002) by E. Mavis Hetherington and John Kelly has received considerable publicity. Hetherington, professor emerita of psychology at the University of Virginia, believes that divorce is not always harmful to families and that it may be very beneficial. This is contrary to the findings of another recent and well-publicized study by Judith Wallerstein.

Hetherington has been studying families over time for 45 years. Some of the findings in this volume are based on the Virginia Longitudinal Study of Divorce and Remarriage, which began in 1973 and in which groups of mainly white, middle-class families have been followed for many years. Her claims are based on studies of almost 1,400 families and over 2,500 children, some of whom were followed for over 30 years. She feels that in order for findings about families and divorce to be valid, research should continue for long periods after divorce occurs. Often remarriage and stepfamilies enter the picture.

The researcher considers that this is "a book about options and opportunities, about the choices to be made that can lead to fulfillment or to dissatisfaction and despair." She realizes that divorce can frequently be devastating for parents and children, and it appears to heighten vulnerability to illness and psychological trauma. However, it also rescues many families from domestic violence and provides many people, particularly girls and women, opportunities for great personal growth. About

20 percent of divorced adults flourish because of their experiences during and after divorce; they develop skills and talents they had not needed before.

One quarter of children from divorced families suffer from serious behavioral or psychological problems compared with about 10 percent of other children. Although most children of divorce lead normal and productive

lives, the girls are twice as likely as others to be divorced as adults. As divorced fathers are less likely to support their families, their children are less likely to attend college.

The writer remains optimistic about the future of the family and suggests how the negative effects of divorce might be minimized for adults and children. She stresses that she is not pro-divorce, but that it is frequently

the best solution for an unhappy and destructive marriage.

Sociologist Maxine Leeds Craig examines several related topics in *Ain't I a Beauty Queen? Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race* (Oxford University Press, 2002). Appearance has long been important to African Americans, who associated grooming with dignity and with personal and racial pride. Craig illustrates how black ideas about beauty have evolved over the past century and how beauty and appearance have played major roles in resistance to society's ideas about black inferiority. She adds that "Using oral history interviews and African American publications as my main sources, I study the

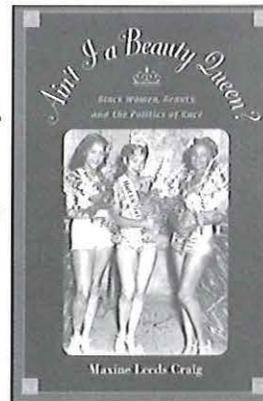
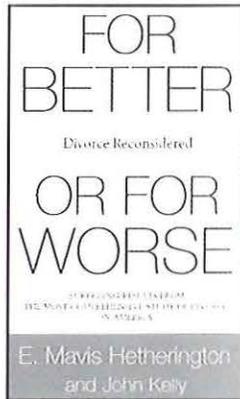
ways in which African Americans contested and reshaped classed and gendered racial meaning."

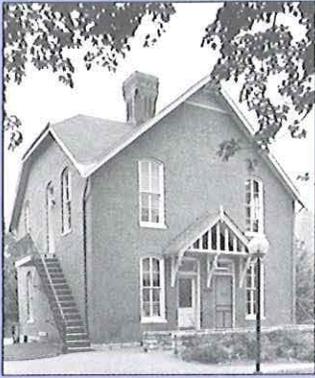
Hairstyles and concepts of beauty reflect society's ideas about gender, race and class. For many years black and white men and women tended to consider that women with light complexions and European features were more beautiful than their darker sisters and those with definite African features. Light skin was often associated with the black middle class. During the 1960s the "Black is beautiful!" motto helped foster racial pride. From the 1920s until the flourishing of the Black Power Movement, black girls and women straightened their hair and for a time some men did also. After the Afro fell out of fashion in the 1970s, most black females were again straightening their hair.

For many years African American women were prohibited from competing in beauty pageants and many black newspapers ran beauty contests, where

in the early years all of the contestants were light-skinned. Over the years there were many regional beauty contests for black women and the first Miss Black America pageant was held in Atlantic City in 1968. At the same time several blocks away feminists were protesting against the Miss America pageant.

In 1983 for the first time a black woman became Miss America and today images of minority women are increasingly visible in the advertising, fashion and beauty industries.





**Margaret  
Cuninggim  
Women's Center**

*Calendar  
of Events*

**PLEASE SAVE AND POST.**

Unless otherwise stated, all programs are held at the Cuninggim Center, Franklin Building, 316 West Side Row and are open to newcomers at any time. For more information on the events listed, call 322-4843.

# NOVEMBER

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3**

*Race for the Cure.* At the Metro Center. The Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center along with Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta and Zeta Phi Beta sororities are sponsoring a team for walkers and runners to support the quest for the cure for breast cancer. Please come and be a part the cure with us! Registration to be on the team is \$15. Shuttle transportation will be provided should you need it. For more information about registration, contact [jennifer.hackett@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:jennifer.hackett@vanderbilt.edu) or 322-6518.

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM**

*Consciousness Raising Group.* For graduate students, faculty, staff, and community members. The topic for November is the psychology of women: relational and mutuality discussion. Bring \$3 for pizza, snacks and drinks. Contact Sarah Walton at [sarah.a.walton@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:sarah.a.walton@vanderbilt.edu) for more information.

**TUESDAYS, NOVEMBER 5, 12, 19, 26, 12:00 NOON – 1:00 PM**

*Creative Life Planning Group.* A group for all dedicated to living life intentionally and creatively. Topics to be determined.

**WEDNESDAYS, NOVEMBER 6, 13, 20, 27, 7:00 PM**

*Vanderbilt Feminists (Vandy Fems).* This group is specifically for undergraduates (women and men), but open to all. Vandy Fems discuss women's issues on campus and promote equality between the sexes. For more information contact [stacie.r.furia@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:stacie.r.furia@vanderbilt.edu) or [justin.f.keith@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:justin.f.keith@vanderbilt.edu).

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 4:00 – 6:00 PM**

*Artist Reception for Julia Jordan.* Julia's photography exhibit "Girls with Guitars" will be on display from November 4 – December 20. Refreshments will be provided. Free and open to the public.

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 5:15 PM**

*Book Group.* A group reading women authors – for all who love to read. This month the group is discussing *Children of God* by Mary Doria. Facilitator is Rita Hall.

**TUESDAY NOVEMBER 12, 5:15 PM – 6:15 PM**

*Women, Spirit and Poetry.* A group for all who are interested in poetry and the spirit. Eva Touster, professor emerita, will be presenting.

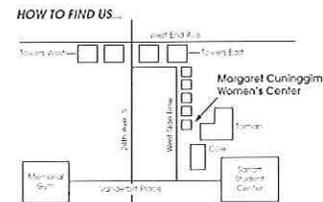
**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

*ABCs of Car Maintenance.* In the Lewis Hall Reading Room. (Lewis Hall is across from the Student Recreation Center.) This very popular annual program fills up fast—reservations are required! Pat Claybaker is back to teach us the fundamentals of keeping your car running. Contact [Jennifer.Hackett@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Hackett@vanderbilt.edu) or 322-6518 to reserve your spot.

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 12:00 NOON – 1:00 PM**

*Reading Sisters.* A book group for everyone interested in reading African-American authors. This month the group will read *Testimony* by Felicia Mason.

## How to find us . . .



*The Cuninggim Center is located in the Franklin Building at 316 West Side Row.*



## WOMEN AND BLEEDING DISORDERS: AN OXYMORON?

by Mavis Harrop

Traditionally anyone who has heard of someone with a congenital bleeding disorder thinks of men. Even though it is usually men who are born with hemophilia, women can have hemophilia but more commonly have a medical condition known as von Willebrand Disease.

If a man with hemophilia has a daughter, she will automatically be a carrier. Sometimes she also has the symptoms of the bleeding disorder such as heavy menstrual cycle or even bruising and joint bleeds. These women are called symptomatic carriers.

Von Willebrand Disease is a congenital bleeding disorder that is the most common of bleeding disorders and occurs equally in women and men. VWD is caused by a deficient or defective blood protein called von Willebrand factor (VWF), a clotting factor in the blood. If a person has an altered VWF protein or low levels of VWF, it takes longer for the bleeding to stop.

There are three types/degrees of this condition, which range in severity from mild (Type I) to severe (Type III). Type III behaves like severe hemophilia with symptoms

including heavy menstrual cycles, bruising, and joint bleeding primarily into the elbows, knees, or ankles. There can also be muscle bleeding. It is important to know how to recognize if you might have a bleeding disorder and receive appropriate treatment.

You may assume that your internist or gynecologist would be aware of women with bleeding disorders, but often this is not the case. The National Hemophilia Foundation has a program called Red Flag designed to educate as many people as possible, including physicians and other medical professionals, about women and bleeding disorders. Have you been concerned about heavy menstrual cycles but thought everyone else must be having a similar experience? Have you had more bruising than your friends? Do you have frequent nosebleeds? If you have any of the following symptoms, you may have a bleeding disorder.

- Heavy menstrual periods
- Excessive nosebleeds
- Easy bruising
- Bleeding gums
- Heavy bleeding following dental work, surgery, injury, or childbirth

-History of someone in your family having a bleeding disorder

There is treatment available to you. There are comprehensive treatment centers throughout the country including one right here at Vanderbilt. The Vanderbilt Hemostasis and Thrombosis Center (HTC) is located in the Vanderbilt Medical Center. We have a team of professionals who are involved in the care of persons with bleeding disorders. These professionals include both pediatric and adult hematologists, a nurse coordinator, a licensed clinical social worker, a physical therapist, and a genetics counselor. There are also referrals made to other specialists as needed.

If you think you might have a bleeding disorder, do not hesitate to call the Vanderbilt HTC at 936-1765 to have an evaluation. There is treatment available that will improve your health and quality of life. You can also check with the Vanderbilt Student Health Center or the National Hemophilia Foundation for information. The number at NHF is 1-800-42-HANDI or on the Internet at [www.projectredflag.org](http://www.projectredflag.org).

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*Mink, continued from page 3*

band, she ran in 1956 for a seat in the Territory of Hawaii House of Representatives and won. In 1959 she ran for the Territory Senate and won again.

When Hawaii became a state in 1959, Mink lost in a bid for U.S. Congress, but in 1962, she won. She won again in 1964 and remained a continuous member of Congress for 12 years. Although she was defeated in a Senate race, she remained politically active for many years and in 1990, once again, she entered the political arena, this time as a House Representative. She remained in this position until her recent death on September 28, 2002.

Patsy Mink's reputation as an advocate for equal rights and affirmative action cannot be overemphasized. The National Organization for Women has established an online tribute for Mink that runs 20 pages. NOW asserts, "Girls and women [have] lost one of their most valiant and steadfast supporters. Every woman today who is enjoying the fruits of her education and job opportunities, and every girl who has a chance to play sports in school, owes a nod of thanks to Mink who unremittingly and dauntlessly challenged old stereotypes and helped engineer steady progress for women over the last four decades—parallel to Mink's career in politics" (<http://now.org/history/patsymink.html>).

representation of Asian Americans in pop culture. These Asian Americans embrace their heritage, speaking about it publicly, but do not limit themselves to being categorized merely by their Asian ethnicity. Lucy Liu and The Rock do not play solely in roles where they eat only with chopsticks or represent the meek Asian man or the shy lotus flower. Lisa Ling does not speak with a heavily accented voice while reporting from various locations around the world nor on her morning TV show, *The View*. These Asian Americans act and speak much like any other Americans, with the only differences being in their facial characteristics and the pride they take in the rich culture and history of their parents and grandparents.

One particular issue that we will address is the identity of Asian American women in pop culture. There are many stereotypes and one can even say expectations regarding the woman of Asian descent. These stereotypes and standards placed on Asian women are taking its toll on Asian American women. The beautiful and submissive geisha girl, like in the opera *Madame Butterfly* or the old movie *Sayonara*, still lingers today as being the epitome of Asian women. On the Internet, one can still find mail order brides from various parts of Asia, which compare the girls to the geisha girl type as a selling point. It comes as no surprise that Asian American women become frustrated with the constant display of this image. To complicate matters, even Asian women today are being affected by this idea of the stereotypical Asian woman that is dominant in Western pop culture. Plastic surgery in countries such as Korea has risen to thirty percent among women, compared to three percent here in the U.S. Many Asian women desire to look more sophisticated and Westernized. Asian American women are bombarded from both cultures to fit into a mold. Being Asian American, however, means that a woman falls between these two cultures, as a combination of both and not quite fully part of either. This November, AASA will bring the group Yellow Rage to Vanderbilt in an effort to learn about and sort through the stereotypes and expectations placed on Asian American women in pop culture and in daily life. Yellow Rage is a spoken word poetry group made up by founders and members Catzie Vilayphonh and Michell Myers. The two women made their first appearance together in "Black Hair, Brown Eyes, Yellow Rage" at Russell Simon's Def Poetry Slam in Philadelphia.

Catzie and Michelle speak out on topics from fetishes regarding Asian American women to cultural appropriation to ethnic pride. It is our hope that bringing such a dynamic group to Vanderbilt will help to deconstruct any preconceived notions of Asian Americans due to negative or stereotypical representations in pop culture and help Asian Americans and Americans alike to better understand the concept of Asian American identity.

To learn more about APAHM events and happenings throughout the month of November, contact Jenny Adamchek at [jenny.l.adamchek@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:jenny.l.adamchek@vanderbilt.edu).



Patricia Ann Pierce

## VANDERBILT'S PATRICIA PIERCE HONORED BY YWCA

Patricia Pierce was inducted into the YWCA's Academy for Women of Achievement (AWA) on October 8, 2002. The AWA celebrates women who provide encouragement to other women by example and accomplishment.

Ms. Pierce has been employed by Vanderbilt for 24 years and currently directs the Opportunity Development Center (ODC); she is responsible for everything associated with equal opportunity and affirmative action at VU, from compliance regulation to dealing one-on-one with employees who may have grievances. She has been awarded the Mary Jane Werthan award given annually by the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center to recognize those who have contributed to the advancement of women in the Vanderbilt environment.

In addition to her professional duties, Ms. Pierce volunteers extensively with organizations that promote and assist women, and she has conducted various workshops on gender issues, cultural diversity, and affirmative action.

MCWC proudly salutes and congratulates Patricia Pierce.

# A N N O U N C E M E N T S

## A FORUM FOR PEACE

An opportunity for anyone interested in on-going conversations regarding the possibilities of peace in the modern world. Please contact David Wood at [david.c.wood@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:david.c.wood@vanderbilt.edu).

## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

Join the Lady Commodores Saturday, November 30 and Sunday, December 1 for the First Tennessee Basketball Tourney. For more information about this and other women's basketball events go to <http://www.vucommodores.com/womenhoop/>. For tickets call 1-877-44-VANDY.

## SUPPORT NOW

Looking for holiday gift ideas? The National Organization for Women offers a wonderful selection of items for sale online. Heighten awareness—and support NOW—with your gift-giving this year. Go to <http://www.now.org/catalogfiles/catalog.html>.



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Student (specify school & year) \_\_\_\_\_

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