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# Origyns: Reclaiming our feminist voices

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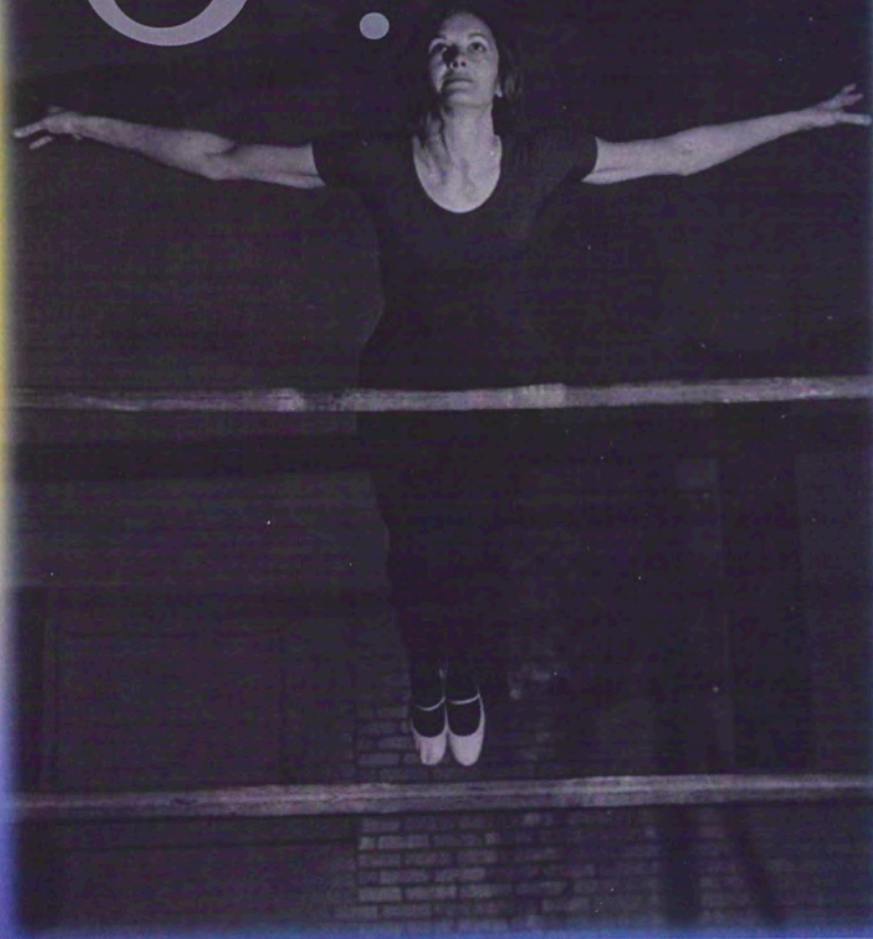
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Origyns

Ομιδλυσ



# Mission Statement

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Bruno

Articles Editor: Zoe Grossman

Layout Editors: Christal Andrews, Lavanya Devdas, Monique Golden

Origyns is a publication that showcases the works of feminists at Lehigh University. Origyns was originally published in commemoration of the Thirty Years of Women at Lehigh University (1971-2001) celebration, but it is now published annually. This edition arrives in the wake of the Forty Years of Women at Lehigh celebration and on the twentieth anniversary of the Women's Center.

Origyns contains any type of work that explores gender or feminism. This can include essays, articles, poetry, short stories, and artwork. Some pieces were written specifically for Origyns, while others arose out of a class or as a personal reflection.

The views or opinions contained in this publication are those of individual students or faculty members and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of Lehigh University or its affiliated Women's Center. The appearance of hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by Lehigh University or any organization or view referenced within such a hyperlink.

Anyone who would like to submit a piece for future publication may do so by contacting the Women's Center at [inwnc@lehigh.edu](mailto:inwnc@lehigh.edu).

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Editor's Note: Origyns reserves the right to edit and revise any submitted pieces for content, clarity, grammar, mechanics, etc.

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# Letter from the Editor, Volume XI

Over the course of this past year, it has been my honor and privilege to serve as the Editor-in-Chief of *Origyns*, the Women's Center's literary magazine. I first came to know about the magazine, and ultimately to be involved with it, through my capacity as an intern at the Women's Center during the fall semester of 2011. At the time, I was fresh into my first semester as a graduate student, pursuing my MA in English and my graduate certificate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. I wanted my internship to wed my primary interests in women's studies and creative writing in a practical, tangible way—which is when Dr. Rita Jones, director of the Women's Center, introduced me to *Origyns*. And, as they say, the rest is history (or more appropriately, *herstory*).

This edition of *Origyns* arrives at a pivotal moment—in the wake of various celebrations in honor of forty years of undergraduate women at Lehigh, the twentieth anniversary of the Women's Center on campus, and at a time when women's interests and their bodies seem to be the key focus of the media and the news. As you read through the following pages, you will notice—perhaps not surprisingly—that a great deal of the scholarly articles, creative writing pieces, and poems are written about bodily integrity, including body image issues, rape and sexual assault, the media's distortion of images, etc. Some of these pieces are particularly evocative, which is why we, the editors, have included 'trigger warnings' before the pieces that we feel may cause a strong reaction in readers who have a history of assault, eating disorders, or other issues that the pieces address. Many of the pieces, both scholarly and creative, contain a great deal of food for thought. My hope is that you are able to walk away from this edition of *Origyns* feeling that you know even more about the struggles of the current women's rights movement, both in the wider realm and on the more personal level of women's private lives.

Furthermore, if any of these pieces strikes you, I hope that you will feel inspired to do even more research into women's issues and feminism, with the goals of raising awareness and potentially getting involved in various activism opportunities. If you are particularly interested in becoming involved and you are not sure how to begin, I would suggest that a good place to start would be the Women's Center.

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Bruno

Articles Editor: Zoe Grossman

Layout Editors: Christa

## **My Identity as a Woman...**

By Lavanya Devdas

As a girl, I was taught to be observant, but quiet.

As a teenager, I was taught to be active, but wary.

As a woman, I was taught—be proud of who you are, but humble.

For every year, month, week, day, minute and second,

I have recognized gender at play.

I finally taught myself—A woman, an advocate, an ally, a leader, and most of all,

a Feminist.

For in recognizing the ideals of feminism, I found the true essence of me—

a genuine, authentic me.

# The Media's Distortion of Women

by Rachel Rodden

## Bodies

By Anonymous

*Always, bodies surprise me about how systematic, mechanistic, yet impressionable bodies of all kinds are. They never fail to impress me. To me, there is no reason to not love and appreciate your own—it's your vehicle on the road of life.*

# The Media's Distortion of Women

By Rachel Rodden

The media clearly shows that it defines beauty as flawlessness. Perfect skin, perfect hair, perfect figure, and if you weren't born with it, you can surgically have it fixed to your liking. It's quite depressing for teenage girls to flip through magazines and see photo-shopped images of women, which they cannot possibly imitate because these images are half-human, half-technology. But the media continues to silently criticize those who don't fit the stereotype of the perfect woman, by not supporting all types of beauty, and by neglecting to recognize that perfection does not equal beauty.

The media is selling lies by manipulating what images the public sees. It is interfering with girl's self-esteem, and their image of what's considered acceptable beauty. The media is showing its audiences a "beauty" that does not exist, only one that is altered to extremities, in which an original photograph barely resembles the one that is eventually shown to millions of people. The media is sexist towards women, and minimizes them to images, without personality or intelligence. These photographs are then cut out of magazines by teenage girls as inspirational pictures of what they should strive to be like, which is a completely unattainable goal. Magazines claim that teenage girls can have the same results as the celebrity on the cover by following step-by-step directions on how to get washboard abs or the perfect, wavy hair. They have celebrities swear by tanning lotions and skin products, claiming they used them and that's how they achieved the results they have. Advertising companies know just how to catch vulnerable girls, convincing them that they need a product to physically improve their looks, and a celebrity's face associated with the product only increases the probability that girls will purchase the item. When girls try this product, however, they end up nowhere close to the results for which they had hoped. This can lead to eating disorders, including anorexia and bulimia, because girls want to become skinner; such failures can also lead to obesity, because some girls feel their goal is unattainable, and in response eat emotionally, which only increases their deep disapproval of themselves. Depression is also widely seen, because teenagers think the world does not see them as good enough to be considered beautiful.

Even the most physically beautiful models and celebrities are photo-shopped and airbrushed before the public is shown their photos. This could be one of the many reasons many famous people get plastic surgery, because even though they are beauty and fashion icons, they are also deemed as somehow flawed by those who are promoting them. When reading magazines such as *Star*, article titles often read something like, "45 best/ worst beach bodies." Within these pages, you find celebrities in bathing suits with circles drawn around areas of cellulite and fat, with the caption, "Hot or Not?" And teenagers look at these images as normal for achieving their goals, when none of this is necessary in the first place.

When an image is photo-shopped, there are a number of steps. Although the majority of women who are in magazines are wearing a huge amount of make-up, their faces and bodies are still edited to meet standards that businesses want for representing their companies. Even skin tones are widely edited; the skin is smoothed, and wrinkles and blemishes are removed, showing a 40-year-old woman, without a wrinkle or spot in sight. Eyes are brightened to unnatural sapphire blues, even if they were originally a different color. Teeth are whiter and brighter than imaginable, eyebrows are raised, lips are plumped, and the face is thinned accordingly. Hips are shaped, an hour glass figure is created (hereby, erasing parts of the body that do not fit), arms and legs are thinned and edited in a way that emphasizes muscle. Air-brushing an image is like doing plastic surgery, minus the recovery time, but equal to the danger and risk.

It is reassuring to know that not all beauty product companies feel the same way about real beauty. For example, *Dove Soap* created a campaign for real beauty in 2004. *Dove* shows real women, not hybrid images that cannot be considered real. In their commercials you will see women of all shapes and sizes, races and features. The *Dove* campaign has started a global discussion on what real beauty is. *Dove* realized that only 2% of women globally consider themselves beautiful; although the media is not 100% to blame, it certainly plays a significant role. *Dove* conducted a survey of 1,200 teenage girls, and 72% of them said they felt pressure to be beautiful, yet only 2% actually considered themselves beautiful. According to the *National Institute on Media and the Family*, studies have shown that the media's focus on the perfect body image has affected the way children think. How are young women supposed to enjoy their lives and prosper if they do not consider themselves worthy?

The average teenager spends more time watching TV than she does any other activity other than sleeping. Teenagers watch an average of 6.5 hours of TV per day; by the age of eighteen they have already viewed 350,000 commercials, which influence their lives more than they know. TV shows, movies, and commercials are just as able to alter peoples faces and bodies to get the desired effects they are looking for, only increasing the number of fake images the public, especially teenagers, see on a daily basis.

The problem is, it seems there is no reasonable way to find a solution. This is because the media permeates everything we do and everything that we see. It is in the print media and everything we read, including newspapers, magazines, and journals. Its influence is clear in the entertainment industry, in all we see, including TV shows and movies. Most commonly it is seen in advertising; it will never be stopped, because making money is the goal of every business, for it is fundamental to maintaining an efficient economy. It is sad that in our world the most efficient way to make money is by basically saying what real women look like will never produce enough profit, so therefore alterations must be made to improve them.



When you look at pictures of models and actresses, you can see they are created in a way that makes sure they will sell. A billboard advertising face cream, without a doubt, will feature a model with flawless skin to increase your interest in purchasing the product. Make-up commercials cannot afford to display a model with a blemish, because isn't that the point of cover-up? The media today goes to all kinds of extremes to hide people's flaws, when these "flaws" are actually what make each individual person unique. The reality is that everyone is flawed, and no product in the world can make anyone perfect.

When you live in a society that tells you how to look, how to dress and how to feel, you soon lose the personal qualities that make you who you are. Your so-called flaws are what make you human and different; they don't make you stand out, but rather help you fit in. The media claims to be promoting self-improvement, but in reality, it is forcing self-destruction. It is damaging the lives and self-esteem of millions of young girls, just to sell products and make money. But consumers fall for it everyday. Every time you buy any type of *self-improvement* product, you are conforming to the lies the media is telling you. But it is unrealistic to expect people not to purchase these products, because our culture is now intricately intertwined with the beauty business. More companies should take the honest initiative, like *Dove Soap*, and promote the real woman, as she is, not what the media thinks she should be. In order to stop the media from destroying how our children perceive beauty, a change must occur; but, in order for that to happen, people must stop supporting the type of beauty the media splashes all over every magazine cover. Beauty is everywhere and in everyone; when individuals begin to realize this, then sooner or later so will the media, but who will take the first step?

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# Beauty

By Anonymous

**Trigger Warning:** *The following piece may be upsetting for those who have dealt or are dealing with eating disorders.*

I wanted to be beautiful;  
I wanted to be thin.  
I thought to be a woman;  
I must starve myself within.

To be dainty as a daisy,  
And sexy as a rose—  
I loved my peaking ribcage,  
And was happy to expose.

With every pound that faded,  
Looking slimmer than I'd been,  
I craved desirability,  
To be a true woman.

But soon the femininity,  
That I had longed for most.  
Began to seep out from my bones  
As I was diagnosed.

Anorexia,  
My transformation had a name.  
I learned my empty body  
Was something that caused shame.

My simple rounded breasts,  
Had blended in with bone.  
My flattened hips and stomach,  
Looked as if I'd never grown.

When the reoccurring blood drops,  
Separating youth,  
Had ceased to still remind me,  
I began to see the truth.

A woman in a girl's body,  
Trapped in fragile state.  
Hunger threatening health.  
Beauty depending on weight.

Crying to my Mother,  
I begged to not be beat.  
My world looked different through  
tearful eyes,  
And I began to eat.

# Red Oak Frame

By Anonymous

**Trigger Warning:** *The following piece may be upsetting for those who have dealt or are dealing with eating disorders.*

My red oak frame  
nested on curled, carved legs  
is the first thing I see  
each morning  
and is the last thing I see  
each night.

My red oak frame encompasses  
this body, which I have learned  
is not beautiful.

My red oak frame punctuates  
every bulge,  
every blob,  
every imperfect bit  
of me.

Right now,  
I look into my red oak frame  
and I grab onto my bulge  
and play with it,  
feeling it  
through my fingertips,  
as I swirl it around  
and mold it like putty.

I've held it before.  
We are old friends.  
I held it once, after  
Christopher from Social Studies  
called me a pig  
and oinked at me  
and pointed at my bulge  
when I bought two sides  
of fries instead of none.

I went home  
and looked into my red oak  
frame  
and grabbed my bulge  
and slapped it.

It's just too big.  
It wants,  
but does not deserve.

I did not eat again  
for thirty-four hours  
and never again  
in front of Christopher from  
Social Studies.

I held my bulge once again,  
after my grandmother caught my  
eye  
when I finished the food  
on my plate  
from Christmas dinner  
before everyone else.

She winked at me,  
as if to say,  
"You're a hungry girl!"

I went upstairs  
into my room  
and looked  
into my red oak frame.

I grabbed my bulge.  
I slapped it.  
I ran into the bathroom  
and knelt before the porcelain  
throne

and for the first time,  
at thirteen-years-old,  
I jammed my index and middle  
fingers  
down my throat  
and emptied myself.

I sat  
and I smiled,  
because I was finally  
accomplished.

But then,  
I grabbed my bulge,  
rubbing it,  
and with a frown,  
I wondered  
if it was too late.

It's just too big.  
It wants,  
but does not deserve.

I hate it.  
I hate me.

But that was then.  
because I was too thin.

Today is a better day.  
I look into my red oak frame  
and I grab my bulge.  
I pat it.

Today my mom said she worried  
about me,  
because I was too thin.

It is a little bit smaller  
and though I don't fool myself  
into thinking  
that she is right,  
I let myself smile.

I look into my red oak frame  
and the bulge in my fingers  
is now my pride,  
my motivation,  
my reason.

I never thought  
anybody would tell me,  
"You are thin."

But it's just my mother.  
She doesn't know anything  
about being thin.

She thinks it's okay  
to eat dessert  
and then watch TV  
and then go to bed.

She thinks it's okay  
to have a burger  
and a milkshake,  
and not feel  
guilty.

She thinks it's okay  
to let her food sit  
and churn  
and settle  
and become  
fat.

She is fat.  
What does she know?

I gotta work  
to hear the same  
from someone who matters.

But even so,  
it is nice  
to hear  
that someone notices  
all of my hard work  
is working slowly,  
slowly,  
slowly,  
but surely,  
one day,  
I might really be thin.

• • •

Today is new.  
But I already ruined it  
by eating.

I've been bad.

I got up  
and brewed coffee,  
as usual,  
and sipped it,  
as usual.

I don't deserve it,  
but I want more,  
more,  
more.

So then I added  
a generous amount of creamer  
to my dark pool.

And it ripples outward,  
polluting my safe drink.  
And then I drink it all.

And then since I had creamer,  
I wanted a glass of milk. And cereal.  
So I poured some of both  
into my mint bowl from  
Anthropology  
and devour it.  
I do not even taste,  
just swallow  
and swallow,  
swallow everything  
until it's gone.

And then I put the milk away  
and saw the bacon hiding in the back  
and then I cooked it  
in its own fat,  
swelling with grease  
and crackling with protest.  
And I ate it all.

And then I wanted more.  
So I cut some cheese slices  
from the cheddar block  
leftover from my mom's dinner party.  
And I ate it all.

And then I froze.  
It's over now.  
And then I burst into tears.  
What have I done?

How could this have happened?

# Red Oak Frame

By Anonymous

Trigger warning: the full wing  
piece of my mind is those  
who have been coping with  
eating disorders.

And then I pace  
I wanted a sign to tell me  
I was not alone

And then I race

to the bathroom

and kneel in obedience

to what has become my master.

It comes quickly now.

When I run upstairs,  
I catch my own glance  
in the red oak frame  
and my eyes,  
burning with frustration,  
activation,  
motivation...  
they pierce my heart.

And then I pace.  
And then I race  
to the bathroom  
and kneel in obedience  
to what has become my master.  
It comes quickly now.

I went home  
and I found my red oak  
frame in the same  
spot as always

and I found it  
filled with my reflection

and I found it  
filled with my reflection

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Guilt.  
Then relief.  
My red oak frame holds  
the mirror  
where all my reflections  
are formed  
and all my thoughts  
are born.

The red oak frame exposes me,  
as the physical manifestation  
of my baggage.

I found it  
filled with my reflection  
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filled with my reflection

My bulge,  
my blob,  
my imperfect bit:  
it's me.

This red oak frame holds  
and captures  
and traps  
my brain,  
my heart,  
myself.

And I'm stuck here.



*Submitted by an anonymous student to accompany "Red Oak Frame."*

# Finding the Beauty in Body Image

By Megan Woolbert

The dictionary defines body image as: "the subjective concept of one's physical appearance based on self-observation and reactions of others"(1). If someone were to ask you to describe your appearance, what would you say? Would you describe yourself as tall or short, tan or pale, light-haired or dark-haired? Unfortunately, for some people, the immediate responses are "fat," "big nosed," "plump," "stocky," "bony," "puny," or "ugly." These individuals identify themselves with harmful labels relative to society's stereotypical views of the "ideal human body." There are numerous factors that cause an individual to develop an unhealthy self-image. In this essay, I plan to analyze these factors and the destructive physical and mental effects poor body image can have on an individual. I will also discuss how advertising companies and health awareness organizations have worked hard to stop this unhealthy cycle of negative body image formation.

Researchers report that women's magazines have ten times as many ads promoting weight loss than men's magazines, and that 75% of women's magazine covers include messages about how to change body appearance via diet, exercise, or cosmetic surgery (2). If you flip through any issue of *Allure*, *Cosmopolitan*, *In Style*, or *Vogue*, you will see countless airbrushed pictures of underweight models with "perfect" bodies and flawless faces. What advertisers do not reveal is the extent to which these images are edited, ultimately misleading the public. Twenty-five years ago, the average fashion model was 8% thinner than the average woman. Today, that percentage has increased to 23% (3). As a result, women who compare themselves to these models often develop deep insecurities about their appearances and weight.

The excessive number of ads people are exposed to on a daily basis is astounding. The average young person views more than 3,000 ads per day on television, on the Internet, on billboards, and in magazines (4). This may seem like an unrealistically high number, but as I sit here at my desk typing, I cannot help but notice two different weight loss advertisements flashing on the right side of my computer screen. The first ad displays an animated character gripping its large gut in both hands. Every few seconds, miraculously, its stomach shrinks, grows back, and then shrinks again. The words along the bottom of the photo scream: "One trick for a tiny belly: cut down a bit of your belly every day using these tips!" The second ad is promoting the South Beach Diet. A gorgeous blonde model is standing in front of the ocean with her hands reaching high above her head, accentuating her rail-thin waist.

Words written across the clear blue sky behind her read: "REALLY need to lose weight? Try the diet that's worked for millions of people." Personally, I would love to have the ability to shrink my stomach in a matter of seconds, or walk down the beach and look as carefree as that South Beach blonde model. What I find compelling is that I am not the only person who has seen these ads today. Even more importantly, I am most likely not the only person who desires to appear like the figures in these ads. This is a perfect example of how seemingly insignificant advertisements can subconsciously take a major toll on the self-image of countless impressionable teenage girls and women.

A common misconception is that advertising only negatively influences the body images of women. In reality, men feel equal pressure from the media to be fit, lean, and muscular. The average issue of *Muscle and Fitness* magazine features advice for men on fitness training, and getting in shape, motivating them to transform their bodies. The magazine's monthly covers flaunt shirtless men with ripped abs and bulging muscles. While I support exercising regularly, and maintaining a healthy physique, I cannot see how headlines like: "We can rebuild you," and "Get a sports star body," make it easy for men to feel comfortable in their own skin (5).

Television and movies can also alter a person's perception of his or her weight and overall appearance. Amber A. Spainhour is a psychologist at Missouri Western State University who has performed a study on the effects of film on body image (6). Spainhour's experiment tested 129 male and female college students. Seventy of the participants viewed a clip from the movie *Hairspray*, displaying a heavy actress dancing. The remaining fifty-nine participants watched a similar clip from the movie *Grease*, but this clip showed a slender actress dancing instead. At the conclusion of each scene, the participants completed a 25-item questionnaire called the Body Parts Satisfaction Scale. The findings of this study demonstrate that the movie clips did in fact have an effect on the participant's body image. The students who watched the clip from *Grease* were less satisfied with their body image, compared to the individuals who watched *Hairspray*. In addition, female participants were less satisfied with their body image compared to the male participants.

In my opinion, the most harmful television shows for a person's body image are makeover reality television programs. These shows are based on drastically changing people's appearances by providing them with style tips and even plastic surgery. The popular show, *What Not to Wear*, features participants who are nominated by family and friends, who believe the subject needs assistance in improving his or her current appearance and fashion sense. In each episode, "unfashionable" items in the participant's closet are critiqued by the show's hosts, and eventually thrown out. Next, the participant purchases an entirely new wardrobe, and then is transformed by a hair and makeup stylist.



## Modeling the Beauty in Body Image

What bothers me most about this superficial reality show is that by the end of the episode, the participant usually looks like a completely different person. Aren't our family and friends supposed to accept us for who we are, not for what we look like? How is this person supposed to feel confident with their "new look" when they know their loved ones were willing to publicly embarrass them on national television for being "unfashionable" or "ugly"? *What Not to Wear*, among other reality television shows, ultimately promotes the same destructive stereotype—that the key to happiness lays in attaining an attractive exterior appearance.

What concerns most researchers today are the ways boys' and girls' body images are being influenced, beginning as early as six-years-old. I know that when I was in kindergarten, I had an entire toy-bin filled with Barbie dolls. I admired Barbie's long hair, pretty face, and trendy clothing. But did I ever consider that if Barbie were scaled to life-size, her body would be too thin to support her vital internal organs? A human Barbie would be approximately 6ft tall and weigh only 101 pounds. This body type would not have the body fat necessary for menstruation (7). Clearly, Barbie's body is unattainable in the real world. So how do these aspects of Barbie's appearance have such a profound impact on the body image of young girls? There is a possibility that by spending so much time playing with Barbie dolls, young girls gradually develop false impressions of what they should look like. Similar to Barbie, research has shown that, "action figures have become increasingly muscular and devoid of body fat" (8). These unrealistic toys can subconsciously create false impressions of ideal beauty and body type into the minds of young children, male as well as female.

As a freshman in college, I can say from personal experience that there is immense pressure to attain an attractive physical appearance. Buying certain clothing to fit in, including applying makeup to hide facial "flaws," or going to the gym more often to maintain a thin figure—the extent to which teenagers obsess over body image has become increasingly unhealthy. Most meals with my friends are consistently spent discussing what foods we should not eat. I am so tired of hearing girls complain that they cannot have dessert because they did not go to the gym that day. I will admit that I am also guilty of falling into this trap of obsessing over food and weight, but can you blame me? With the constant pressure to be thin, I find it difficult to stay grounded, and to remain unaffected by the constant buzz urging me to have a "perfect" body. My guy friends do not make it any easier when they sit in the dining hall and make comments about certain girls like: "She's so hot" or "Wow, she looks great, she lost so much weight." College is also an environment where racial and ethnic prejudice is often the source of hurtful comments about other people's appearances. Even though these comments are usually made out of ignorance, they can have a huge impact on another individual's self-esteem and self-appearance (9).

Although I have argued how detrimental media can be for a person's body image, there has been a recent positive shift in advertising. The *Dove* beauty product ad campaign launched in 2004 showcased "real women" posing in just their underwear. These ads had limited editing and featured women ranging from sizes 6-12. *Dove* explains that, "The principle behind the campaign is to celebrate the natural physical variation embodied by all women and inspire them to have the confidence to be comfortable with themselves" (10). In addition, this past summer, a *L'Oreal* magazine ad was banned in the UK. The ad featured a heavily air-brushed picture of Julia Roberts promoting Teint Miracle foundation. The UK's Advertising Standards Agency claimed that the ad "breached the advertising standards code for exaggeration and being misleading" (11).

Even more recently, the clothing company *American Apparel* held a contest: "The next BIG thing," in search of a plus-size model to showcase their new clothing size of XL. *American Apparel*'s contest gained the public's attention for multiple reasons. The company has been known for resisting the manufacture of larger sizes, and consequently one contestant in particular made a controversial statement criticizing the contest. Nancy Upton is a student at Southern Methodist University who found the campaign both degrading and offensive towards plus-size women. Upton felt that, "*American Apparel* was going to try to use one fat girl as a symbol of apology and acceptance to a demographic it had long insisted on ignoring" (12). Upton and her photographer friend, Shannon Skloss, worked together to submit spoof photos of Upton bathing in salad dressing and guzzling chocolate sauce. These photos were eventually voted #1 by the public, making Upton the winner of the contest. However, on September 14th, *American Apparel*'s creative director excluded Upton from the list of winners due to her mocking "the positive intentions of the campaign" (13). In my opinion, it takes individuals like Nancy Upton, who are not afraid to protest the common stereotypes of the "ideal body," to ultimately create a healthier attitude towards body image across our culture.

Another effort to promote healthy body image is NED Awareness week. This stands for National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, which is held during the week of February 26th-March 3rd each year. The campaign's aim is, "to ultimately prevent eating disorders and body image issues while reducing the stigma surrounding eating disorders and improving access to treatment" (14). Health education courses in high schools and colleges also help raise students' awareness regarding body image issues and their connection to a person's overall mental, emotional, and physical health.

Clearly, body image is an important issue in today's world, affecting women and men of all ages. Although numerous influencing factors exist, such as advertising, media, children's toys and even peer-pressure that create negative body image stereotypes, many companies and organizations are finally taking steps to promote positive self-image and self-respect. Most compelling of all, we find that often, just one individual trying to make a difference in advocating for the importance of a positive and healthy body image, like Nancy Upton did, can end up making all the difference in the world.

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## ***Again: A Sestina***

By Katie Johnston

*Imitating Marilyn Hacker's "Towards Autumn"*

**Trigger Warning:** *The following poem may be upsetting for those who have dealt or are dealing with domestic abuse.*

As she enters the shelter,  
the residents watch pain  
walk through the hall. Again and again,  
with each new member of this broken family,  
these women are reminded of their love  
that hates with sordid, strained kisses.

The cold follows her in, kissing  
bruised arms under the shelter  
of blankets. At home, he showers her with love  
and the next minute, shrouds her with pain.  
Three and five, her children (her family)  
are faintly told again and again

that they cannot see Dad again.

The only loving kiss  
she gets: hateful fist to her face. The family  
she helped create is a shattered sense of shelter  
that she could not escape. The pain,  
after all, is caused by the man she loves.

She hopes to kiss away the pain  
with shelter, her makeshift family  
teaches her how to put faith in love again.

# Tory

By Lisa Kong

**Trigger Warning:** *The following piece may be upsetting for those who have dealt or are dealing with sexual assault.*

Tory finished reading her essay aloud. No one moved or dared to breathe. Even I, normally never at a loss for words, was speechless. The teacher awkwardly fumbled through some perfunctory remarks, and then asked another girl in the class to read her essay.

The story Tory shared with the class is tragically not an uncommon one, yet it struck me as a story that could only have occurred someplace remote and far away. She told the class that she had been set upon by three assailants in a women's bathroom at an amusement park. After beating her, they sexually assaulted her. It must have taken her an unspeakable amount of courage to report the incident to the police. It must have taken her no less courage to recount this painful event to us. Two years later, she received a notice from the police informing her that the rapists had been apprehended. For the police, the case may have been successfully resolved, but for Tory, there can be no closure.

In the U.S., one woman out of every three has been a victim of this horrid crime. One of the most disquieting aspects of sex crimes is how many go unreported. The most common reasons given by the victims for not reporting these crimes are that they think their situation is more of a private or personal matter than an actual crime. They also fear reprisals from their assailants.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, somewhere in the United States, a woman is raped every 2 minutes. Statistics estimated by U.S. Bureau of Justice (1999) indicate that 91 percent of rape victims are female and 9 percent are male, with 99 percent of sex offenders being male. In 1995, 354,670 women were the victims of rape or sexual assault. Recent statistics have become even worse. Over the last two years, more than 787,000 women have become victims of rape and other sexual assaults. It is terrifying to read this list of statistics, for they reveal that the threat of rape is all around us in our daily lives. One out of every four rapes takes place in a public area or parking lot. Thirty-one percent of female victims reported that their assailant was a stranger. At least 45 percent of rapists were under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and in 29 percent of rapes, the offender used a weapon.

For every reported case, as many as ten cases may go unreported. The F.B.I estimates that only 37 percent of rapes are reported to the police every year. Even worse, the official statistics provided by the Department of Justice show an even lower number of 26 percent being reported. In 2005, there were 191,670 cases of rape or sexual assault reported; however, only 16 percent were reported to the police. Unfortunately, many of these thousands of reported cases are not reflected in the federal government's annual crime report because the report uses an "archaic definition of rape that is far narrower than the definition." It must be a difficult and complicated process to figure out the details of every case; I was surprised by how many reported cases remain unprosecuted every year because of the limits created by this restricted definition.

When assessing sexual assault cases, the F.B.I uses this definition of rape: "the carnal knowledge of a female, forcibly and against her will," which was written more than 80 years ago! Steve Anderson, Chief of the Nashville Police Department, says that the F.B.I's definition creates a confusing standard for police departments. Although to police officers, one reported incident may seem like just one of thousands of cases, for women like Tory, rape causes irreparable damage to their rest of their lives.

According to the 2010 Uniform Crime Report, released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, there were 84,767 sexual assaults in the United States that year. The Federal Bureau claims they represent a 5 percent drop from 2009, yet this number is misleading because the definition used in these statistics does not take into account sexual assault cases that "involve anal or oral penetration or penetration with an object, cases where the victims were under the influence of drug or alcohol, or cases with male victims." One staff member at the Department of Justice, and the Director of the Office on Violence Against Women, Susan B. Carbon, expresses her concern over the reported data, saying that such misrepresentations can portray a very, very distorted picture. She also adds that this misinformation can send wrong messages to victims; if their cases do not fit into that very narrow official definition, they are not considered victims and their rapes will not statistically count.

Today, colleges and universities are putting more effort into taking responsibility for investigating and preventing sexual violence on campus, especially after the April, 1986 crime case involving Jeanne Clery. Jeanne Clery was nineteen-years-old when the crime occurred. She was a freshman at Lehigh University, and was raped, tortured, and strangled by a stranger who forced his way into her dorm room. As a current student at Lehigh, this was not something that I wanted to read, or admit about my school in which I otherwise take great pride. Moreover, it was more frightening to read that the stranger who assaulted her was also a Lehigh student.

With grief in their hearts, Jeanne's parents spent the rest of their lives trying to make college campuses safer for women. They fought hard to publicize the dire need for colleges to disclose sexual crimes that occur on campus, and find solutions to prevent future crimes. Twenty-one years ago, in November 1990, Congress passed a disclosure law, now known as the Jeanne Clery Act. It requires that institutions of higher education publicly disclose all crime that occurs on campus to both students and their parents. This way, colleges and universities are forced to take greater responsibility for proceeding with proper punishment, as well as providing adequate prevention.

According to S. Daniel Carter, the Director of Security on Campus, Inc., which was created by the Clerys, there has been a 9 percent drop in violent crimes on college campuses since the enactment of this federal legislation. However, we must not be satisfied just with the reduced crime rate; we must put emphasis on providing long-term protections against sexual crimes, because the effect of sexual violence becomes even more severe after the crime occurs. Carter stresses the post-traumatic effects among victims, who suffer from triggers of panic and pain; they are "re-victimized again and again as they are forced to encounter the assailants on campus day in and day out."

The Clery Act provides these affected victims with a bill of rights that requires colleges to provide basic services for survivors, including the same opportunity the assailant has to bring supporting witness testimony into disciplinary proceedings and also opportunities to consult police, receive counseling, and have the option of changing classes as well as dorms.

I think that every girl in the classroom that day was made aware of Tory's vulnerability. Any one of us could have fallen victim; it was just Tory's misfortune that she happened to be the one that time. The crime of rape highlights the inequality in power between men and women. Although women have achieved legal and political equality in certain societies, the ubiquity of this crime clearly shows that women still have a long way to go. American women have made great strides toward equality in some areas, compared to those of developing countries. However, the United States still struggles with one of the higher rates of rape among countries that publish statistics relating to this crime. Interestingly, countries such as Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, where the subordination of women is blatant and institutionalized, are among countries with the lowest reported incidence of rape. This absence of correlation suggests that the inequality that gives rise to acts of violence against women is more fundamental than simply forcing women to wear veils in public.

We women need to better understand the culture of violence against women and isolate its true causes. We have to take a page from the US Civil Rights Movement and tirelessly agitate, educate, and mobilize. That afternoon, when Tory told us of her rape, she was conveying to us a cautionary tale, and challenging us to act and refuse to play the role of victims. Through her courage, she was empowering herself and dared the rest of us in the classroom to do the same.

I am ready, Tory.

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# Sexual Assault

By Katie Kiewel

**Trigger Warning:** *The following piece may be upsetting for those who have dealt or are dealing with sexual assault.*

One out of every four women is a victim of sexual assault each year ("Sexual Assault Statistics"). Sexual assault is a silenced issue, yet it showers over every college campus, including Lehigh University. Perpetrators are targeting victims by sex, and are causing women to become singled out and subjugated. The culprits, mainly males, are not the only factors causing this growing phenomenon; the media also illustrates, through movies, music, and ads, that women are to be generalized as inferior people who show little objection to sexual aggression. The statistics are soaring, even as women increasingly suffer from the prolonged effects after surviving sexual assault. Meanwhile, these occurrences are happening right before female college students' eyes, with no stimulus to break the trance and express private fears over becoming just one more statistic.

College women are actually the most vulnerable of any group age for being targeted for sexual violence; this fact helps reinforce the need to break the silence and speak out against these atrocities in one's own community. Many college campuses, including prestigious institutions, like Princeton, Duke, and Yale, have recently caught the national media's attention, yet these same scandals are rampant on college campuses across the country, without receiving any attention at all. Sexual assault is typically glossed over as an action that can be rationally justified; perpetrators shift blame away from themselves. Yet, women on college campuses have personal rights that certainly deserve respect; this issue of pervasive sexual predation must be addressed because of the negative impacts young females suffer, and the victimization of all women that prevails across our society.

Common misconceptions stem from confusion over what sexual assault actually is. Lehigh University defines sexual assault as "rape, attempted rape, unwanted touching of intimate parts of another person, or subjecting a person to physical sexual contact against his/her will or without his/her consent. A person who is unable to make a reasonable judgment concerning the nature of harmfulness of the activity because of his or her intoxication, unconsciousness, mental deficiency or incapacity, is considered unable to give consent" (Lehigh University's Women's Center). Many times, sexual assault is confused with rape, which is defined as "the unlawful compelling of a person through physical force or duress to have sexual intercourse," according to Dictionary.com. Although rape is formally defined as forced sexual intercourse, all other forms of unwanted sexual contact also constitute sexual assault, due to lack of consent on the part of the victims.



All forced unwanted physical, sexual contact should obviously be defined as sexual assault. Once one is able to distinguish the difference between these two terms— rape and sexual assault— one becomes able to further his or her understanding of this crucial issue with less confusion.

As most of us are aware, women are not the only victims of rape. Males are sometimes subjected to the cruelty of sexual abuse as well, typically by other men. While rape and sexual abuse is not solely specific to women, according to BARCC (Boston Area Rape Crisis Center), nine of ten rape survivors are women. In line with these BARCC statistics, according to Smartersex.org, women are ten times more likely to become the victim of sexual abuse. According to the same site, men raped 99% of women rape survivors and 85% of male rape survivors.

BARCC also reports that 90% of rape survivors on college campuses know the person who raped them. As these documented statistics illustrate, women who are targeted are often the ones who enable a sense of security for the perpetrators. According to these same statistics, men who assault women commonly share certain characteristics; two of the most prevailing factors are frequent abuse of alcohol and mistreatment as children (World Health Organization). It appears that an unstable home life while maturing into young adults can be a huge factor in the likelihood of committing future rape. As will be discussed later in this paper, the consumption of alcohol and drugs also drastically increases the chances of rapes or sexual assaults.

Along with these shocking and disturbing statistics, one must also wonder what type of long-term effects can result from being sexually abused or raped. As one can imagine, some of these effects can be quite serious; sexual aggression frequently leaves the victim with lifelong issues. According to the World Health Organization, some of these long-term effects include post-traumatic stress syndrome, depression, sleep disturbance, eating disorders, emotional distress, and suicide attempts. While a large number of these long-term effects reflect damage to emotional and mental health, physical health also becomes a serious issue as well. Many times the victim is left with a sexually transmitted disease or unwanted pregnancy. As illustrated by [rainn.org](http://rainn.org), victims of sexual assault are 73 times more likely to be depressed, 26 times more likely to abuse drugs, 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol, and up to 4 times more likely to commit suicide. As revealed in an article on [turningpointservices.org](http://turningpointservices.org), the average age for a woman to experience rape or sexual assault for the first time is between eighteen and twenty-one.

With such statistics as these, it becomes quite easy to understand why college life provides the perfect environment for rape; young females, all around the age of highest risk, living among young males who exhibit strong desires to explore sexual relations. Increased alcohol and drug consumption only contribute to the perfect opportunity for rape to occur. On [oneinfourusa.org](http://oneinfourusa.org), one finds that out of all rape cases reported, 75% of the men who committed rape were under the influence of alcohol, and 55% of the women who were raped also admitted to alcohol consumption. When we understand what alcohol does to the thought processes of the drinker, it is not hard to see why alcohol is such a common factor.

Over consumption of alcohol impairs judgment, lowers inhibitions, increases violent behavior, and intensifies sexual desire in certain atmospheres; it also lowers the victim's ability to recognize the early warning signs of sexual assault and rape (k-state.edu). Another shocking statistic cited on oneinfourusa.org is that 55% of all gangbangs occur in a fraternity house on a college campus.

The media also helps instill the idea that creating an environment where rape is prevalent is not just a norm but actually the cool thing to do. Too often music videos and music lyrics help stimulate the impression that college parties typically end in sexual encounters with intoxicated women and a steamy story to tell the next morning. Songs such as "Love Game" by Lady Gaga and "Love in America" by JTX tell us that women want to ride "disco sticks," and that during parties, women's buttons on their levis "will come loose." Because the norm on college campuses often involves acceptance of partying with alcohol and intimate encounters promoting sexual arousal, it is imperative that colleges and universities do all they can to increase awareness and enact preventive measures against sexual assault and rape.

For many, rape and sexual assault may seem like a problem they can discuss as something that only happens to others, while assuming something like this would never happen to them or anyone else in their communities. Unfortunately, this is a claim that our student body at Lehigh cannot make. In 1986, Jeanne Cleary, a freshman at Lehigh, was raped and murdered in the Carothers dorm. She was sleeping in her bed in her room at 6 o'clock in the morning, when someone intruded into her room and raped her, and then strangled and killed her (npr.org). When Cleary's parents found out about their daughter's death, they vowed to help make campuses around the country safer and to promote awareness of this common crime. This is one of the reasons why our campus now has the measures it does to help prevent sexual assault and rape. Although it took Lehigh University a terrible incident like this to spark advocacy for women and prevention programs against sexual assault on its campus, our progress in addressing this issue only goes to show how strong our Lehigh University community can be collectively.

As briefly mentioned earlier, the media appears to be playing a large role in the ever-increasing number of sexual assaults and rapes. Music, movies, TV shows, and magazines all contribute to the growing impression that women at parties are drinking, and that when this happens, they become automatically willing to have sex in almost all circumstances. Movies like *American Pie* and *Beer Fest* help falsify reality by promoting the idea that having sex with random, drunken, attractive women is not only common, but completely socially acceptable. This can only exacerbate the problem, encouraging men to have this idea in their head when they enter a party, making it more likely for men to enforce this social norm whether the woman wants it to happen or not. Along with movies, music increases the scope of this ever-growing problem as well.

Songs like "Friday Night" by Katy Perry give young people the impression that waking up in the morning with a stranger in the bed is "cool" or "normal." This song also tells us that "taking too many shots" and "forgetting whether you even kissed" or hooked up with a stranger may be a mistake now, but tomorrow will be just another Friday night party, where the pattern will repeat. The reality of what women seek at parties becomes clouded by the media's fantasized version of said parties, which actually creates a false idea that just increases the likelihood of rape and sexual assault.

This issue is continually growing more and more urgent; it is up to communities to stand together to raise awareness of this terrible problem, and start demanding changes in how women are portrayed in the media. Women are facing life-long problems, and are being targeted by generalized ideas that stereotype women; all of this is coming from the media. Lehigh University students commonly brag about and have a well-known reputation for throwing the best parties, replete with copious amounts of alcohol. While the idea of wild parties is usually portrayed as being positive, and the bragging rights for going hard are quickly attributed to Lehigh students, the relationship between sexual assault and alcohol consumption is certainly not one that Lehigh students should brag about. The Lehigh University community collectively could set an example for other colleges, and also help implement change on a global level with the many opportunities open to those who participate in our community. The issue goes beyond just the oppression of women; communities should share a sense of connection and unity, and should be filled with individuals interacting together with a goal of personal development as well as communal growth. No person ever asks to be raped, yet many are raped regardless ("The Right Rape Statistics"); this constitutes a major violation of human rights, and ought also to be regarded, in my opinion, as a national scandal.

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# Slut

By Sarah Bruno

Walking down the street today,  
someone driving by  
rolls to a stop, like an ellipsis,  
and he yells, "Slut!" at me  
before speeding off.

This happens near a school;  
there are children walking by,  
not too far away from where  
I am now frozen.

They are listening,  
their eyes wide,  
like dots at the bottom  
of exclamation points.

Now granted,  
I was wearing a skirt—  
and maybe the wind  
had lifted the hem, ever so slightly,  
revealing my upper thighs—  
the curves of my legs  
forming parenthesis,  
as though citing my sex—  
because sometimes,  
Nature makes a tease of me.

And sometimes,  
I like the way the way  
that my thighs sound when they  
brush up against each other  
as I walk— a soft *slap, slap*—  
like bare feet on hard wood.

I like the way my hips sway—  
the way they rise and fall  
in a life-giving,  
life-affirming swagger—  
when I feel comfortable in  
my own skin.

But that is no excuse  
for the word,  
hurled like a lasso,  
intended to enclose me  
in brackets of shame—  
which I do not feel.

So I continue to  
walk down the street;  
my heels fall like periods,  
making declarative statements,  
all along the sidewalk.

