

ATTUNE

If it's a woman, it's caustic. If it's a man, it's authority. If it's a woman, it's too pushy. If it's a man, it's aggressive in the best sense of the word." - Barbara Walters

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Campus Rape Prevention Efforts

A grant from Tennessee's Department of Health will add a new presence to the Tennessee Tech campus aimed at prevention and awareness of sexual assault. Genesis House, Inc., was awarded the grant for use on the university's campus in cooperation with Dean of Students Ed Boucher.

The new program will allow Primary Prevention Educator Tara Bates to make presentations to the campus community to raise awareness of sexual assault and educate them about ways to prevent and avoid sexual violence. Bates is a 2008 graduate of Tennessee Tech with a degree in Political Science. A second, male peer mentor will also be employed to recruit students and to form a TTU chapter of One in Four.

Bates notes that the projects primary goals are "to increase knowledge of what constitutes a healthy relationship, improve student and staff awareness of sexual assault issues, improve knowledge of rape threat factors, reduce male rape myth acceptance, reduce the likelihood of raping by utilizing male peer groups, and increase bystander knowledge to intervene to prevent a possible sexual assault."

Although the university administration invited Bates to campus, she does expect to face some obstacles.

"One of our goals is to change attitudes concerning sexual assault, and changing attitudes is never easy," says Bates. "Also, increasing male involvement in prevention efforts might be somewhat difficult at first, because traditional prevention methods have been

couched in terms of what women can do to avoid being attacked."

The program focuses on individuals and encourages them to stand up for each other and speak out when they see something that doesn't seem right.

"This presents its own challenge, though, in that we are not encouraging paternalism," notes Bates. "We do not need a knight in shining armor. We need honest people—male and female alike—to intervene in potentially dangerous situations."

The hope is that if people are exposed to enough of this information and are made able to relate to it on a personal level, some change is bound to occur.

"I think that our programs will be effective in reducing acceptance of rape and sexual assault," says Bates. "I believe that the campus community will gain an increased awareness of services available through the university and the Cookeville community."

Everyone on TTU's campus is encouraged to get involved with the program's efforts.

"Part of our goal is to organize a One in Four group on Tech's campus," says Bates. "So if you are interested in helping spearhead a new student anti-violence group, this is a great way to get involved."

On Nov. 19 and 20, a program called One in Four will take place on campus and on Nov. 24 students are invited to attend "Can I Kiss You?"

"Regardless of whether you are part of a religious group, a male group, an athletic group, a sorority or fraternity, or are a non-traditional student, please lend your numbers to this campaign" encourages Bates.

- Bailey Darrow

Letter From the Coeditors

What do you and the media have in common? Maybe more than you think.

The first thing many people think of when relating themselves to the media is its influence on body image. It is a topic that evokes emotion and uproar in the hearts and minds of many, and we believe that is what brought forth the unusually large number of submissions for this issue of *Attune*. All of these submissions were greatly appreciated and carefully reviewed. We tried to select some of the more intriguing ones that look at the media from a variety of angles. We encourage everyone to continue to share with us your articles for our spring issue. The topic and details can be found on page 5.

Another topic we felt our readers should be made aware of is the new sexual assault awareness and prevention program that is big news for the entire TTU campus. The program is about taking action together to solve a problem, not blaming. The program asks students to take personal responsibility, change how they think and how they communicate with each other. Cooperation within the campus community can make a huge difference in the lives and safety of everyone, female and male.

We hope that you will read these articles with an open mind, give each of them some thought, and use your own experiences to apply these issues to your unique circumstances.

Please visit us at the Women's Center, let us know what you think, and help us empower you!

Don't get "Dooiced" for Networking

Social networking sites like MySpace, Facebook and myYearbook have seen growing popularity in recent years. While these sites may be a good way of keeping in touch with people who have moved away or reconnecting with old friends, females of all ages are using social networking sites for other purposes. Employers are catching onto this trend and searching out background information on their employees, both current and prospective, online.

The term "dooce" is defined on *Urbandictionary.com* as "1. To be fired from your job because of the contents of your weblog. 2. To get fired from your job because you post about your job on your weblog."

The term was coined by Heather Armstrong when her blog, *dooce.com*, was the reason for her termination from her job in 2002. In her blog, Armstrong wrote about her life living in Los Angeles, dating, and her job as a web designer. When her employers found the blog, Armstrong was fired sparking huge debate about the

First Amendment right of online postings. Since then, stories of people being "dooiced" and even "pre-dooiced" have been on the rise.

While many companies do not have a clear policy about the web content of their employees, job hunters are reporting cases where they enter an interview situation to find that the interviewer has "googled" them or looked into their postings on everything from news feeds to MySpace.com.

Stacy Snyder, a student at Millersville University in Pennsylvania, was denied her education degree and teaching certificate days before it was to be awarded in 2006 based on a picture that she posted on her MySpace account labeled as "drunk pirate." The university decided that the picture was "unprofessional" enough to rescind Snyder's degree. Snyder is currently in the process of suing the university in federal court.

The taboo of provocative dress and the behavior of a "proper woman" has tran-

scended generations. Arguments about the topic vary. Some women would argue that they feel empowered knowing that the simple way they dress can draw so much attention while others would argue that they would like to be recognized as a thinking person rather than an object of sexuality. As women have made the move to the online world, they have taken these schools of thought with them and, for those who portray themselves online in a provocative manner, it may have lasting effect on other aspects of their lives.

Former Mayor of Arlington, Ore., Carmen Kon-tur-Gronquist was recalled from office after pictures were posted on her MySpace account of her posing on a city fire truck in lingerie. Gronquist argued that the photos revealed less than the average swimsuit and were taken in preparation for a fitness competition and has defended the photos strongly. However, these arguments did not save her position. In the town of 500 people, a recall committee was established and Gronquist

was removed from office in early 2008.

A Kaplan survey of administrative officers at top-tier colleges revealed that 10 percent use social networking tools to further evaluate applicants. Of that, 38 percent say that online profiles negatively affect their view of the student. Some also use Google to find out more about a student.

While First Amendment Rights as applied to the world of the internet are being strongly debated, it may be in the best interest of online users to simply be careful of what kinds of incriminating information makes its way online. Social networking sites and online blog communities may be a fun and easy way to keep in touch with family and friends, but keep in mind that they will not be the only ones viewing the things posted. Reputations past, present and future may also be at stake.

-Bailey Darrow

Upcoming Events

November 7 - Cristina Page, "The Right to Agree," a Center Stage event, 7 p.m., Derryberry Hall Auditorium

November 19 - One in Four: a sexual assault awareness presentation for women, 7p.m., Derryberry Hall Auditorium

November 20 - One in Four: a sexual assault awareness program for men, 11 a.m. , Derryberry Hall Auditorium

November 24 - Can I Kiss You?, 6 p.m., Derryberry Hall Auditorium

December 1 - World Aids Day

For more information about these events, please check the Women's Center web site at www.tntech.edu/women

Shattering Perceptions - Women in Politics

Saturday Night Live viewers were recently treated to former cast member Tina Fey's Sarah Palin and Amy Poehler's Hillary Clinton giving a joint press conference. "Tonight we are crossing party lines to address the now very ugly role that sexism is playing in the campaign," Fey's Palin announced.

"An issue which I am frankly surprised to hear people suddenly care about," Poehler's Clinton deadpanned.

Successful satire depends on the audience recognizing the issue being satirized, and the *SNL* sketch did not disappoint. This year has provided us with an unprecedented presidential race, in which both the Democratic and Republican parties have sought to be the first to place a woman in the U.S. executive branch.

First was Senator Hillary Clinton's groundbreaking race for the Democratic presidential nomination, losing marginally to Senator Barack Obama. Senator John McCain then surprised the nation by choosing Alaska governor Sarah Palin as

his running mate in the Republican bid for the oval office. Throughout the entire campaign, the media struggled to cover the female candidates without appearing sexist, achieving varying levels of success.

Criticism came first from supporters of Hillary Clinton, who claimed that the media and public were ignoring blatant cases of sexism against the New York senator. When Clinton herself mentioned it, she drew sharp criticism from a little-known governor who had yet to springboard into the national spotlight.

"When I hear a statement like that coming from a woman candidate with any kind of perceived whine about that excess criticism or, you know, maybe a sharper microscope put on her, I think, man, that doesn't do us any good. Women in politics, women in general wanting to progress this country. I don't think it's, it bodes well for her — a statement like that."

Sarah Palin made the comment during a Newsweek forum on Women in Leadership held in March, five months before the tables would turn and she would find herself the subject of media attention that the McCain campaign would brand as sexist. The campaign seemed to sequester Palin for a time, limiting interviews and appearances.

Was the treatment of Clinton and Palin sexist? At times, certainly. When Clinton had an "emotional moment" before the New Hampshire primary, she was critiqued as pandering to women voters. Later, Sarah Palin's ability to be a mother and vice president was questioned. Both campaigns had legitimate concerns, but considering Governor Palin's comments during the Democratic primary, it seems McCain's campaign overreacted.

All political candidates face scrutiny, especially in this age of 24-hour cable news

reporting and instant access provided by Internet sites and blogs. When a relatively unknown vice presidential candidate emerged, it should have come as no surprise that she would face more intense questioning, as the nation attempted to learn who this woman is.

However, in my opinion, had McCain chosen an unknown man as his running mate, the scrutiny would have been just as intense. It comes with the territory of politics. With so many real cases of sexism going unchecked every day, it's important for all female politicians to only bring to attention actual incidents of unfair treatment. Sexism isn't a claim to hide behind, but rather a real problem that still exists today.

However, one positive truth of this presidential campaign remains. Both Clinton and Palin have shattered perceptions that women can't achieve the highest office in this land. Yes, we can!

- Sara Kruszka

Four Fabulous Role Models for Women

So many young women are trying to find their place in the world. Media, although we would like to say it doesn't, have a huge impact on the way we view ourselves and the other women around us. We strive to identify with someone, even if they are not "real."

Minutes after the death of Anna Nichole Smith there were headlines everywhere. The news was happy to provide all the juicy details that we "needed." What happened? What's going to happen to the baby? Who gets her estate? It was all anyone could hear about for months. And, of course, you can't turn on the TV or radio without

hearing the latest on Britney Spears, Paris Hilton or Lindsay Lohan. These things seem to be emphasized over the many soldiers dying every day for our country.

Although it's getting harder to find great "role models" for women, there are many out there. I think many of us, young and old, are trying harder to push away the negative and seek out those individuals that inspire us. Here are a few women that I find inspirational:

Oprah Winfrey. Winfrey is one of the most successful women in the world and the first African-American female billionaire. What truly makes her a very inspir-

ing woman is not how much money she has in the bank but her time and money spent on philanthropy and human rights activism.

Nancy Pelosi. Pelosi was elected as the first female Speaker of the House in 2007. She helped to support the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS program and has worked to expand access to Medicaid for people with HIV, and increased funding for the Ryan White Care Act. She is also known for her strong-willed questioning of the Iraq War.

J.K. Rowling. According to Forbes, Rowling is the second richest female entertainer in the world. While struggling

as a single mother on welfare, she created and wrote her first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. That novel, and the ones that followed, would go on to make Rowling the first author to claim the title of billionaire. Her popular series continues to encourage children to read for pleasure.

Tina Fey. Fey made history by becoming the first female head writer for *Saturday Night Live*. Although *SNL* is widely revered as a "boys club," it hurtled Tina Fey into television stardom. She is currently heading her own successful series, *30 Rock*, on NBC and is also an accomplished screenwriter, actress, working wife and mother.

- April Stover

He Said-She Said

Your roommate shows up disheveled and in tears. When asked “What’s wrong?”, she replies that the guy she met at a party forced her to have sex with him.

Your response is: “Oh my God! Are you alright?” or maybe “Would you like me to call the rape crisis center?” However, the response given by many people in this situation is “Well, maybe you shouldn’t have worn that skirt” or “Why did you go to his room?”

Victim blaming appears to be a standard response to allegations of rape. Media coverage of recent high profile rape trials—Kobe Bryant and the Duke lacrosse team, to name a few—seems to validate victim blaming through biased reporting that focuses on the defendant’s story while discounting the victim’s version of events.

The Kobe Bryant case involved a 19-year-old woman who was an employee of the hotel that Bryant was visiting. The woman alleged that Bryant had used physical force to coerce her into having intercourse.

However, Bryant claimed that their sexual encounter had been consensual. This claim is not unusual in cases of acquaintance rape. Most men accused of rape jump instinctively to that defense—“She didn’t say ‘no!’” which leads me to believe that society really needs to address the issue of consent. In fact, Bryant made a public statement (9/01/04) which highlights the need for further discussion of consent: “Although I truly believe this encounter between us was consensual, I recognize now that she did not and does not view this incident the same way I did.” This statement is a step in the right direction, but it still seems to provide men with an excuse—“She said ‘no’ but I didn’t think she meant it! I really thought she wanted to have sex.”

The media seemed to capitalize on Bryant’s celebrity status to vilify the alleged victim leading the court of public opinion to believe that she was using negative publicity against Bryant to propel herself into fame. The entire

Kobe Bryant case is an example of how the myth of “real rape” (which is often differentiated from date rape) persists—the media’s coverage leads readers or viewers to believe that the woman must be lying, because who *wouldn’t* consent to sex with Kobe Bryant?

The Duke University fiasco also involved allegations against members of an elite group. The alleged victim in this case, however, was an African-American exotic dancer hired by the primarily white lacrosse team to perform at an off-campus party. The men, of course, denied that any sort of assault occurred, but they did in fact hire an exotic dancer. This is proof of an underlying culture which views women as commodities for hire, something to be used and discarded. This should have been as big a blow to the team’s credibility at trial as the accuser’s profession was to *her* credibility.

Media coverage was initially sympathetic to the alleged victim, perhaps even *too* sympathetic. I am in no

way arguing that members of the media should automatically assume the rich, white athletes were innocent. My argument is that rather than sensationalize a story which has all the elements of a headliner—scandal and interracial gang rape—the media has an obligation to present the facts as they emerge. That isn’t to say that editorials and op-ed pieces should be ignored, but if coverage of a story is somewhat one-sided and then new evidence causes the tide to turn, the media are left looking foolish and often overcompensate for their previous unbalanced coverage by turning on the accuser.

The various media have substantial influence in American culture. We can only hope that they will conduct themselves in a professional manner. For, as I learned from comic books, “with great power comes great responsibility.” However, Stan Lee might have added for my benefit: “. . . to cover high profile rape trials fairly.”

- Tara Bates

Reporting on Female News Reporters

As little as 50 years ago, the idea of a woman reporting the news or having any type of real influence in American media was still quite rare. Contrast that with today, where the highest-paid and possibly most respected celebrity in American media is Oprah, and where, for the first time, one of the major presidential hopefuls was a woman: Hillary Clinton. Though we have come a remarkably long way from the strictly male-dominated media of just a few years back, there is still quite a ways to go.

The success of Winfrey and Clinton seem to indicate that the sexist attitudes of Americans are changing drastically, but how common actually are women in the media? While there are several women in high profile U.S. media positions like Diane Sawyer and Katie Couric, we are far from gender parity.

According to the Radio-Television News Directors Association, the percentage of women in the television news workforce in 2005 was 40 percent, and according to the Center for Media and Public Affairs, women made up only 25 percent of correspondents reporting news on the major networks in 2004.

This is quite ironic when we consider that the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication reports that women have made up the majority of college journalism majors since 1977. So where exactly does the problem lie?

Many women in media have encountered what is called a glass ceiling, a term meant to imply that, while they may have all the qualifications for a career, there is an invisible force that prevents women from climbing the proverbial ladder to obtain a higher position in the field (1991, U.S. Dept of Labor).

Though this country is certainly nowhere near a level of absolute gender equality (particularly in the media), we are definitely on the right track. And while women made up only 40 percent of the television news workforce in 2005, this was up from 39.3 percent in 2004 – not a huge improvement, but a step in the right direction.

- Alex Hagenbuch

Toying with Self-Esteem

Media are all around us—in the news, magazines, television commercials, billboards, movies, etc. No woman can go untouched of media influences. From a young age the media teaches girls how a woman is supposed to look and act, and it continues to teach them through adulthood.

Young girls learn to dress, act, and speak by watching TV, playing with toys, and looking at books/magazines. A popular pastime for young girls is to watch Disney princess movies. Dawn Wilensky explains in "Putting Princesses to Work" that Disney Princesses are the fastest growing Disney Consumer Products, and in 2006, the princess products account for 15 percent of the \$23 billion dollars worth of global retail sales produced by Disney. This growing popularity of Disney Princesses illus-

trates that little girls want to be princesses and be swept away by a charming prince on a white horse. Young girls are taught that they must be skinny, beautiful and dainty, like a princess, in order to find a prince. In addition, Barbie supports the media image of a perfect woman. Barbie is tall, skinny, blonde, white, beautiful, and, therefore, popular. However, as Phil Ament relates in "BARBIE® DOLL," if Barbie were a real person and she was five foot six inches tall, she would weigh 110 pounds and her measurements would be 39-21-33. The likelihood of any woman achieving this body type is 1 in 100,000. The media are instilling a picture of beauty that hardly any girl can attain.

As young girls grow into their pre-teen years, life is no longer about **learning** how to be beautiful in soci-

ety; life is about **being** beautiful in society. Pre-teens see girls their age on TV, like Hannah Montana, who are skinny, white, pretty, popular, and famous. They also see celebrity girls in magazines and on TV, like Brittany Spears and Jessica Simpson, who have beautifully shaped bodies, large breasts, and a lot of guys who like them. In order to be like these girls in the media, pre-teens will diet, wear excess make-up, tight clothes, push-up bras, and short skirts.

Pre-teens are trying to be older and more mature, and this doesn't change when they reach their teenage years. Teenagers work hard to be a "Barbie," but the stress to be perfect is greater as they get older because of the fear of going unmarried. In order to resemble Barbie, teens often go to extremes. Students Against Destructive Decisions, an organization that involves

peer-to-peer youth education, declares that over five million Americans have an eating disorder, and approximately 90-95 percent of anorexia sufferers are girls and women.

Things do not change as girls become adults. Women are constantly worried about their weight, causing eating disorders or depression. Statistics from the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance show that depression affects approximately 14.8 million American adults, and 50 - 75 percent of those patients have eating disorders.

The media have lasting effects on every age group of women. Society has no right to teach women what is beautiful. Every woman is different, and therefore, should have her own definition of beauty. After all, isn't accepting differences what America is all about?

-Courtney Carr

Feminist Scrapbooking - Call for Submissions

Former Cookeville resident and current Women & Gender Studies major Anna Eisen is collecting submissions from feminists of all ages in order to develop a scrapbook (actual and online) collection of feminist expression and connection. Expensive tools, fancy paper, or a creative background are not at all necessary to express your thoughts, revelations, or frustrations about what it means to be a feminist – i.e., what it means to be you. The key to the project is that you do it alongside someone else (hopefully with a feminist friend, in this case), thus creating a social setting similar to a quilting bee of the past.

This is not a project limited to women. The only important participant qualification is being a feminist, however loosely one may define that. Submitted pages may range in size from 8.5" x 11" to 3" x 5," and contributors are encouraged to create multiple pages if so inspired. The pages do not even need to be necessarily about "feminist scrapbooking," but rather serve as a record of each person or the group somehow. *Focus on documenting something that is important to you.*

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Attune Spring 2008 Call for Submissions

"Women and Environmentalism"

Students, staff and faculty of all backgrounds are encouraged to submit fact-based articles of 600 words or less about:

- women leading in the environmental movement
- reviews of environmental books by women
- environmental changes that more women should/could get involved in
- suggestions for women wanting to make a difference in the environment
- female green movement leaders
- other related topics

All works must be original and submitted by the authors themselves.

E-mail submissions to womenscenter@tnitech.edu
Deadline for submissions is February 5, 2009.

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