

"The world will tell you who you are, until you tell the world who you are." — Tamara Winfrey-Harris

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The Price of Menstruation

Today, about 26% of our global population experience a menstrual cycle, amounting to approximately 800 million people. Of these 800 million, about 14% (113.6 million) have experienced a phenomenon known as *Period Poverty*. The American Women's Medical Association defines Period Poverty as "the inadequate access to menstrual hygiene tools and educations, including but not limited to sanitary products, washing facilities and waste management." In extreme cases, those who menstruate have to use items such as paper, old clothes, leaves and sawdust to manage their periods. Additionally, the lack of proper washing facilities and period supply disposal leads to poor sanitization infrastructure and poor hygiene for those who bleed. This phenomenon not only affects those in underdeveloped and developing countries, but also many people here in the U.S.

Although period poverty happens all over the globe, plenty of Americans, Tennesseans and college students experience period poverty. In the U. S., approximately 1 in 5 menstruating teens struggle to afford period products. In Tennessee, 1 in 4 people who menstruate have missed class due to lack of access to period products. Furthermore, 1 in 5 first-generation college students have experienced period poverty.

You might be thinking, "I have never experienced period poverty, how does this affect me?" One aspect of period poverty that affects us all is the Tampon Tax. Tax on period products creates and sustains period poverty and negatively impacts public health. Healthline defines Tampon Tax as "the sales tax applied to feminine hygiene items such as pads, liners, tampons and cups." These taxes limit many people's ability to purchase period prod-

ucts and exacerbates period poverty. Many argue that period products should not be taxed at all. Jennifer Weiss-Wolf argues in her book, *Periods Gone Public*, that menstruation products should be tax-exempt. In her writings, Weiss-Wolf discusses how each state has tax-exempt items that are determined by that state's government: "I went through every tax code in every state that didn't exempt menstrual products to see what they did exempt, and the list is ridiculous." Weiss-Wolf found that in some states in America, barbeque sunflower seeds, snowmobiles, cooking wine and marshmallows are all tax exempt. Weiss-Wolf argues that if these non-essential items are tax exempt, feminine hygiene products should be too. Period products are often categorized as luxury items rather than necessities for tax purposes. However, period products are essential to maintaining health and safety of not only those who menstruate, but of the general public—they are not a luxury.

Period poverty is a serious public health issue that directly affects everyday people. Period blood is often stigmatized as less "clean" than normal blood. Though there is nothing inherently dirty or unhygienic about period blood, period blood is still blood. Period products that capture blood lead to less exposure to biohazards. Exposure to blood and lack of proper blood waste management is a biohazard and could lead to the spread of diseases such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HPV and HIV. Many people who experience period poverty have to dispose of their makeshift period products in public toilets, ponds, lakes, parking lots or anywhere else they have access to. Lack of

proper disposal potentially exposes the masses to these diseases. Simply put, this problem could be eased or even resolved with easier access to period products and ways to dispose of them. Period poverty affects the entire community—even people who don't menstruate.

Fortunately, many businesses and government parties are working diligently to eradicate and prevent period poverty in some states. In October, California passed the

"Menstrual Equity Act for All" which will provide free period products for over 485,000 Californian students beginning in the 2022-23 school year. Cristina Garcia,

a member of California's State assembly who introduced this law, declared "It is time we recognize and respond to the biology of half the population by prioritizing free access to menstrual products and eliminating all barriers to them." Furthermore, the 2018 "First Step" Act made period products free for incarcerated women in America. While these changes around period products are an incredible step in the right direction, more change is still needed to end period poverty.

To fight against period poverty locally, the Tech's Women's Center partnered with the University Service Center to hold our first annual Period Poverty Drive in November. Period products were collected in the Women's Center and dorm halls. We held our first ever Holiday Social and Service Drive in December, where we assembled 440 period packages to be donated to local food banks and charity organizations. Our donation drive proved to be a great way to give back to the community and made a step in the right direction to end period poverty. We hope to continue this tradition every year with the help of readers like you.

—Aislynn Martin



Panhellenic Sororities: Implementing Inclusion

Since the first chapters of social sororities and fraternities were established in the 1850s, Greek Life has been a definitively binary system with fraternities for men and sororities for women. Sororities, by definition, are autonomous women's-only social organizations. As time has progressed, the precedents set for Greek Life members are changing along with shifting ideas about gender. Some non-Panhellenic (or non-Greek) social organizations have already instituted inclusive policies, but change is still necessary within the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) specifically. In the recent years, several movements have called for national change regarding NPC sorority membership with the goal of eradicating outdated, heteronormative standards in Greek Life policies and bylaws.

College students across the country are calling for the NPC to redefine "woman" in their policies. The NPC's current recruitment definition of woman reads "an individual who consistently lives and self-identifies as a woman. Each women's-only NPC member organization determines its own membership selection policies and procedures." Despite many transgender women certainly fitting this definition, they are still frequently excluded in practice based on the heteronormative precedents set by Greek Life and the varying definitions and membership criteria among chapters. Out of the 26 NPC sororities, only 13 currently have language in their bylaws indicating they are open to anyone who identifies as a woman, which would include transgender women. The remainder of the organizations use the term "women's only" rather than "identifying as a woman" when defining

membership criteria, which is more exclusionary, especially in practice. Of these Panhellenic sororities, only one, Delta Phi Epsilon (DPhiE), has explicit language in its national bylaws about accepting non-binary and transgender members. The NPC's definition of woman frequently conflicts with DPhiE's inclusion policy of non-binary

and transgender individuals. NPC board members have been continuously discussing how to compel other chapters to permit non-binary and transgender members. Nicole DeFeo, International Executive Director of DPhiE, hopes for an affirmative vote to change NPC policies and that national sorority leaders will decide to be "on the right side of history." DPhiE's international leadership team is leading the way for other Panhellenic organizations to create more gender inclusive policies.

Right now, the NPC is not on the right side of history, even though international LGBTQ+ fraternities and sororities such as Delta Phi Upsilon and Delta Lambda Phi exist and many non-Panhellenic organizations accept nonbinary individuals. Alteration to the NPC guidelines is crucial in a time when many state governments are attempting to enforce gender norms through restrictive, anti-trans legislation. As our society progresses, opinions towards

and attitudes about gender have been changing. A recent poll conducted by Orlando-based advertising agency, Bigeye, has shown that more than half of Gen Z reject the outdated system of the gender binary. Roxanne Donovan, president of DPhiE's international

governing board, says that "college is a time to be seen, to be accepted as you are, to explore and discover who you are." In enacting these policy changes, the NPC can provide a greater sense of belonging across all chapters, regardless of how chapter members identify.

The bylaws for Tech's chapter of DPhiE specifically mention accepting non-binary and

transgender individuals. The Tennessee Tech chapter of DPhiE, Zeta Alpha (ZA), is relatively new to campus, and several members identify themselves as members of the LGBTQ+ community. Billy Sunday, a non-binary alumnus of DPhiE ZA says "it's nice knowing I am accepted and I won't be disfiliated because of my gender." While all chapters of DPhiE are working hard to change their policies to include nonbinary and transgender people in their membership, the work doesn't stop there. Other chapters of Tech's Panhellenic, Interfraternity Council and non-Panhellenic community as well as Greek Life communities across the nation who do not already have inclusive policies should be implored to enact policy changes so that individuals are accepted in their chapters as their true selves. By enacting these policy changes and encouraging other chapters to do so, Tennessee Tech can be an example for inclusion on other campuses nationwide.

—Nicki Parish

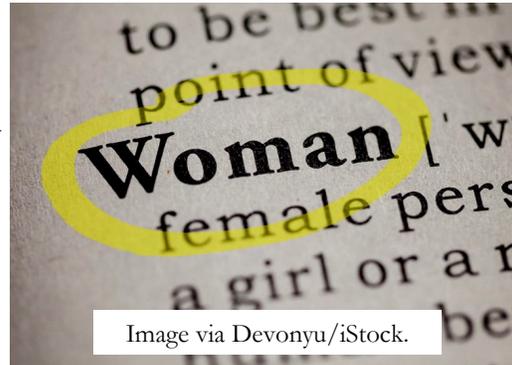


Image via Devonyu/iStock.

Letter from the Co-Editors

This edition of Attune focuses on struggles that many people, including those of us in the Tennessee Tech community, face every day. Whether those struggles are obvious or invisible to the public eye, they each have big impacts on our lives and the lives of those around us.

A common theme among the articles in this edition is one of exclusionary policies across different spheres. Our feature article *The Price of Menstruation* dives into restrictive taxation laws that lead to hardship for people who menstruate. In *Pan-*

hellenic Sororities: Implementing Inclusion, we get a glimpse into the heteronormative and exclusionary Greek Life bylaws that need to change. *Repressing Self-Expression* criticizes professional dress codes and their harmful racist and sexist tendencies. *Knock Sexism Out of the Park* focuses on discrimination in the world of sports while *Flaws in the Laws* shows the dangers of some abortion policies. We also call attention to the mental health struggles many new mothers face that often go overlooked in *Invisible Battles: Maternal Mental Health*.

We've added a guest column for the Commission on the Status of Women, a

Tech committee dedicated to creating a supportive campus climate for women. Julie Stepp, Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, has contributed our first column, *Empowering Roles for Women in Young Adult Literature*. This article highlights some young adult literature that includes positive representation of diverse characters.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Attune and that it helps you to reflect on everyday struggles that impact you and others in your community.

—Rachel Pearson & Nicki Parish

This April: The Clothesline Project

If you have ever walked around the Roaden University Center on Tennessee Tech's campus in April, you may have seen a clothesline full of decorated T-shirts. These shirts are hung every April by the Women's Center as part of an international campaign known as The Clothesline Project.

The first Clothesline Project took place in 1990 in Hyannis, Massachusetts to call attention to violence against women. T-shirts were decorated by survivors of interpersonal violence and were hung on display for the community to see. Since the first clothesline, thousands of

projects have been started all around the world.

Here at Tech, the Women's Center has displayed a clothesline since 1998. The Center displays their collection of shirts every April as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Making a shirt can often be a part of the healing process for survivors. The Women's Center has collected hundreds of shirts through the years, each representing a particular survivor's experience.

Traditionally, the colors of the shirts represent a specific type of violence. Yellow or beige represents those battered or assaulted by an intimate partner or family

member. Red, pink or orange represent survivors of rape and sexual assault. Blue or green represent survivors of incest or child abuse. Purple represents those attacked because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. And finally, white represents those who have died because of interpersonal violence.

Watch for the Clothesline to be displayed

this coming April at Tech. If you wish to create a shirt, reach out to the Women's Center for some helpful guidelines, ideas and materials.



Repressing Self-Expression

It is widely known that a college education is intended to teach practical career skills. We are also taught, however, about the arbitrary concept of professionalism. We learn what professionalism means for how we present ourselves, particularly when it comes to dress. Unfortunately, what we aren't taught is where these dress standards originated, what the laws say about them, whom they serve and whom they harm.

Today's idea of professional workplace dress was developed in the 1950s, when casual work looks first appeared in place of formal everyday looks. Business Insider says that "today, the fields of finance, law and accounting tend to require conservative and traditional modes of dress." Yet, experts conclude that "employees are set to only continue to challenge the boundaries of work dress." This is because many people have had to spend extra time, energy and money to fit into a mold that was never made with them in mind. The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP Global) believes changes are necessary, saying, "the tradi-

tional workplace dress code stems from an antiquated and outdated idea of what is considered 'professional.'" These norms "are steeped in racist and sexist expectations of employees," and reference, according to The Anti-Violence Project, "a history of colonialism, racism and patriarchy." These standards can be exceedingly difficult to challenge, as they have roots in law and culture.



The laws concerning the issue are ambiguous. According to MTSU's *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*, employers can enforce dress codes and uniforms with a rational reason, such as maintaining a specific image, and can ban anything they believe to be distracting. Unfortunately, this practice has allowed employers to

discriminate against some employees for "distracting" things like natural hair or colorful and patterned ethnic clothing. The *Encyclopedia* also states that "dress codes that are consistent with social customs can be upheld." The issue is social customs often uphold discrimination against the protected classes of the Civil Rights Act. In other words, any physical presentation that does not culturally align with the U.S.'s idea of socially appropriate can be forbidden. This standard is much more likely to create a barrier for those of a different culture than the European-descended majority.

These abuses of the law affect real people, with some cases receiving national media attention. According to NBC, a US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against a lawsuit filed in 2016 by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on behalf of Chastity Jones, whose job offer was rescinded because she had dreadlocks. The court effectively ruled "that refusing to hire someone because of their dreadlocks is legal." In another story, Kishshana Palmer told AFP Global that her advisor was concerned "about the clients [she] would attract if

[she] chose to wear brighter colors, wear [her] hair natural and... choose to not blend in." She noted that as she began to "lean into" who she is, she "attracted the best people." Unfortunately, due to the widespread use of dress codes, stories like these are too common.

As Tech students, the majority of us will be looking for employment upon graduation. It is vital to be aware of a potential employer's dress and professionalism expectations during your search. Even if an employer's standards do not directly harm you, they may be harming others and decreasing workplace diversity. According to the Nashville Business Journal, "A 2017 study found that pro-diversity corporations have... more highly valued employees." Essentially, an employer's dress policies can provide insight into how they treat their employees. Be wary of potentially exclusionary language, and do not be afraid to ask potential employers for clarification on their policies. These actions can lead you to an employer who will value you for what you are worth and embrace a wide variety of ideas, attitudes and people. There is nothing more important than that.

—Amber Lovell

Knock Sexism Out of the Park

Today, softball seems like a women's game. But where does softball come from? Softball was created in 1887 as a game for men to pass time while waiting indoors for the score of a football game. Even though today we tend to think of the gender of the players as the main difference between softball and baseball—softball is for women, baseball is for men—softball was originally developed so men could play indoors. The first official women's softball team was not created until 1895, and women's professional softball leagues did not consolidate until the mid-20th century.

Despite this history, people still believe that differences in the two games come down to disparities between men's and women's bodies. A.G. Spalding, the creator of the first Major League Baseball for the National and American Leagues, famously said that "Baseball is too strenuous for womankind." Double standards have been built into softball's foundation. One common misconception about softball is that it is played with a softer ball than in baseball because that's what women need. On the contrary, softballs are larger and weigh almost 30% more than baseballs. The softball actually got its name from the soft boxing glove that

was used in the first game. The idea that women are weaker than men also contributes to perceptions people have about protective gear and safety during games. Some people criticize women who wear facemasks because they seem to be afraid of the ball. However, other safety equipment, like men's cups or leg and elbow guards, are regularly accepted in men's games. Everyone should wear appropriate safety gear without criticism.

The biggest problem with softball being thought of as "baseball for girls" is the way that this thinking prevents women from being able to play baseball, especially in college. In 1972, Title IX enacted that underrepresented genders in school sports must be allowed to be on overrepresented gender teams or separate ones must be made for them. Nancy Doublin wrote in the Bleacher Report that this "separate but equal" rule practically eliminated women from baseball because schools decided to offer softball as an alternative to allowing women on the baseball team. Right now, Tennessee Tech has an official men's baseball team and a women's softball team. There are also intramural fall leagues for both women's softball and men's softball.

In other words, men are allowed to play both baseball and softball, but women only have the option to play softball. There have been intramural co-ed softball tournaments in the spring, but, this still does not allow women to play baseball. These intramural leagues also show that, for casual play at



least, softball really is not "girls' baseball" because men have their own intramural leagues and regularly participate in the sport.

This glimpse into the history of softball might leave us feeling like there are more problems than answers. What seems like a simple gender division is actually a complicated and messy problem grounded in negative gender stereotypes that increases discrimination against women in sports. Women should be able to play either sport without having to worry about someone's notion or stereotype of what they are *fit* to play. Women deserve the same opportunities and chances as men to succeed in the sport of their choice.

—Lilly Davis

Interested in Writing for Attune?

We accept articles written by all members of the campus community, but especially encourage Tech students to write for us.

Have an article idea? Pitch your idea via email at womenscenter@tnitech.edu or come by the office to discuss your topic.



Visit our website to stay up to date about deadlines for next semester's issue!

www.tnitech.edu/women/attune-newsletter.php

Attune is published twice a year by the Women's Center and the Commission on the Status of Women.

WMC Spring Events

Monday Socials: Every third Monday come take a break for doughnuts, coffee and conversation!

First Tuesday Book Club: Join fellow book lovers for discussion of a common read on the first Tuesday of each month.

One Billion Rising: OBR is the biggest mass action to end violence against women in human history. Join us for this event in February.

The Clothesline Project: This project bears witness to interpersonal violence in our community. See page 3 for more info.

Maya Dusenbery: Dusenbery is a journalist, editor and author coming to Tech to speak about gender bias in the medical system on March 29, 2022.

Check out a full list of events on our website!



Invisible Battles: Maternal Mental Health

Bringing life into the world can be tough on mothers and society often overlooks the mother's mental health before and after delivering the baby. Society tells us that following birth, mothers are glowing, happy and full of joy; however, this big change can overwhelm mothers and negatively affect their mental health. According to the CDC, an average of 700 women in the U.S. die from pregnancy-related complications

each year, and 3 in 5 of these deaths could have been prevented. Doctors can overlook signs of a decline in a mother's mental health or sometimes not know that the mother is struggling, leaving her untreated. At times, a mother herself can overlook her own warning signs that she might be suffering with mental health problems.

Baby blues and postpartum depression are two of the major mental health issues mothers can face after giving birth. Baby blues is character-

ized by loss of appetite, crying spells, feeling hopeless or not good enough and major mood swings, but these feelings generally resolve within two weeks of birth. Post-partum depression is more severe and long-lasting. Womenshealth.gov states that 1



in 9 mothers have postpartum depression and 2020mom.org states that 1 in 7 mothers may also experience depression while pregnant; post-partum depression can last up to a year after delivery. Mothers with postpartum depression may stop caring for themselves or their child, or in more severe cases even want to cause harm to themselves or their child. Though they are the most well-known mental health issues, mothers can suffer from more mental illnesses than just baby blues and postpartum depres-

sion. The severest form of postpartum mental illness is postpartum psychosis which requires immediate intervention. Other mental illnesses that can affect new mothers are post-partum anxiety, depressive disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and even post-traumatic stress disorder. The biggest risk to leaving these mental health issues untreated is suicide.

New dads can experience postpartum depression too; as many as 1 in 4 fathers can experience depression in the months after childbirth, especially if the mother is also experiencing postpartum depression. According to 2020mom.org, suicide accounts for 20% of postpartum deaths, including intentional overdoses, and is a leading cause of death in mothers for the first year after childbirth.

By being aware of the mental health challenges new parents can face, we can better support the people around us and especially be on the lookout for warning signs to help prevent suicides after birth. We can offer emotional and material support to the new parents in our lives, and if we notice the baby blues persisting, we can encourage the people we care for to reach out for help. 2020mom could be a great place to start since it is a maternal health website that provides statistics, risk factors, support, advocacy

and educational webinars. Counselors who specialize in maternal health can offer comfort and solutions specific to new a new mother's needs, and some counseling centers, like Ready Nest Counseling in Nashville, specialize in caring for the mental health of families around conception and childbirth. Here at Tennessee Tech, the Counseling Center has a staff of supportive listeners and has a 24/7 crisis hotline. The Women's Center at Tech has new educational literature about motherhood in their library such as *Like a Mother* by Angela Garbes and *Give Birth Like a Feminist* by Milli Hill. And the National Suicide Prevention Hotline is always available to help someone when they are experiencing a crisis.

We all will know new parents, or become one, at some point in our lives. We all need to do our part in supporting new parents by offering our love and support and staying educated about paternal mental health. By staying educated, we can help the new moms and dads in our own lives cope and thrive after birth.

—Savannah Hunter

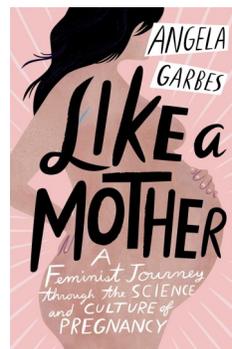
Check Out the WMC Library

The Women's Center has a library that is an extension of Volpe Library on campus! Anyone can check out books from us with the use of a Tech ID or a campus community member ID.

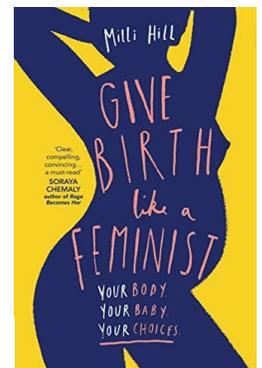
Our collection features a variety of topics across genres including motherhood, women empowerment, feminist theory, biographies, and anything in between.

Come check out books such as *Like a Mother* by Angela Garbes and *Give Birth Like a Feminist* by Milli Hill, featured in our article "Invisible Battles: Maternal Mental Health," Savannah Hunter.

Check out our full library on our website!



Cover art by Libby Vanderploeg



Flaws in the Laws

With the recent abortion ban in Texas, which went into effect in September of 2021, many people are talking about the health consequences of limiting access to abortions. The Texas law prohibits abortions after six weeks, which is well before most individuals know they are pregnant. Even if a person knows they are pregnant and is considering an abortion, they will face many obstacles during the process.

One large obstacle people considering abortion face is waiting periods between required counseling and the abortion procedure, such as the 48-hour period in Tennessee. By the time a counseling appointment can be scheduled, many individuals are already deemed too far along to have the procedure. Along with bans, there are many other ways that abortion access is limited. In 2017, 89% of U.S. counties had no facilities providing abortion procedures, meaning pregnant individuals would be forced to travel for the procedure. In some states, minors would need parental consent in order to get an abortion. Many states that have abortion clinics hold them to a standard

that is very expensive to maintain and difficult to achieve, such as being within 30 miles of a hospital. All of these obstacles mean that pregnant people across the nation have widely different experiences trying to access safe abortions, which often leaves people who have less money and those living in specific states or rural areas in a position where they might feel they have to choose to have an unsafe abortion.

It can be difficult to gain information concerning illegal or self-induced abortion due to the lack of documentation and the secrecy involved. The statistics that we do have, however, are concerning. Former Google data scientist Seth Stephens-Davidowitz says

that people in the U.S. searched for information on self-inducing abortion more than 700,000 times in 2015. Every year, an estimated 8% of global maternal deaths are thought to be caused by complications from an unsafe abortion. These statistics do not take into consideration the number of impairments and conditions that can result from surviving an unsafe abortion. A report from the World Health Organization (WHO) states that seven million people were treated for complications related to an unsafe abortion procedure in 2012 alone.

40% of people who experience these complications never receive treatment.

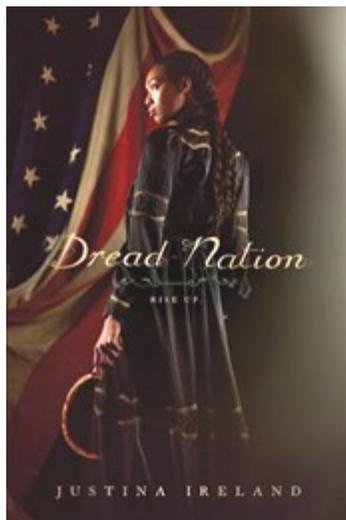
So, what are these unsafe procedures? There are many kinds of “DIY” abortion methods. Prior to *Roe v. Wade*, common methods included coat-hangers, sticks, Coke bottles, and other dangerous household products inserted into the body. Some were told to purchase a certain pill to insert into their internal genitals, which would burn through the uterine tissue. Though some of these methods might still be used today, new ways of accessing abortion have been developed. Many individuals resort to “back-alley doctors,” meaning the procedure might be done by someone unlicensed, unqualified or who does not possess the appropriate supplies or facility to perform the abortion safely and effectively. Another increasingly dangerous method is buying “abortion pills” online or from unregulated sellers. Individuals can also attempt to drink heavily or physically injure themselves in an attempt to terminate the pregnancy.

The evidence speaks loudly: lack of access to safe abortions can be dangerous, and even fatal to the pregnant individual. Restricting access to abortions can lead to people risking their health, and sometimes their life, in order to terminate a pregnancy. As one Texas OB-GYN, Dr. Bhavik Kumar, put it, “I often worry about the women who don’t make it to the clinic” because these people are vulnerable to unsafe abortion practices.

—Madison Sendek



Featured Young Adult Literature



Cover art by David Curtis



Cover art by Molly Fehr and Cristina Pagnoncelli



Cover art by Namina Lorna

Empowering Roles for Women in Young Adult Literature

Fervently read by young people ages 12-18 as well as adults, young adult literature (YAL) has grown to be a significant part of our society. Over the past few years, valuable progress has been made in publishing YA books that build positive representations of diverse characteristics including race, gender identity, ethnicity and sexuality. Below is a small sampling of excellent new books that share the YA girl “coming-of-age story” through a variety of genres, with strong but limited diversity and body/spirit-positive messages.

Capitalizing on today’s zombie craze, Justina Ireland’s *Dread Nation* centers on Jane, born when the dead began walking off the Gettysburg battlefields. Trained in etiquette and combat, she becomes an Attendant who will protect and serve. Reflective of Reconstruction and the Wild West, readers are treated to an action-packed alternate historical fiction zombie story. Jane’s world is full of white

supremacy, secret experiments on black people, walled communities, beauty standards, code-switching and passing privilege – and she’s ready for the challenge.

Some of these stories make old fairy tales new again, as oral tradition tales that were inherently sexist have been rewritten to reflect modern themes. In Elana Arnold’s *Red Hood*, an intimate encounter between the heroine, Bisou, and her boyfriend turns from cherished to mortifying. It sends her running through the forest, where a wolf attack awakens a new, fierce strength in herself. At the heart of Bisou’s abilities, are the ties between her menstruation, the full-moon, damaged boys and vicious wolves. With an impelling exploration of blood, Arnold does a beautiful job (in a sometimes unsettling second person narrative) of sharing the realities of having a period and celebrating positive intimate relationships.

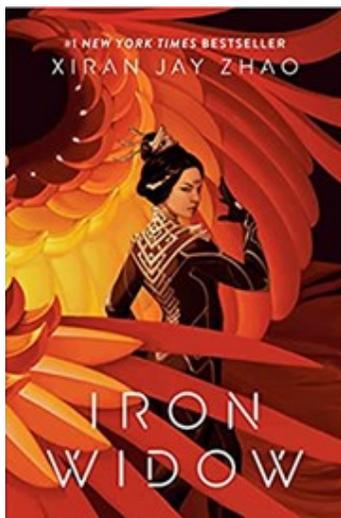
An often-repeated motif in recent YAL dystopian fantasy focuses on girls overcoming

intense patriarchal societies that regard females to be lesser than. Girls find their strengths as they strive for a better path or equal footing in society. Two exceptional stories include *We Set the Dark on Fire* by Tehlor Kay Mejia (a Latinx blend of fantasy and romance) and *Iron Widow* by Xiran Jay Zhao (a blend of Chinese history and mecha science fiction). The most powerful of these might be Namina Forna’s, *The Gilded Ones*, (a West African-inspired fantasy). In Dekka’s world, girls who bleed gold become outcasts, tortured and killed many times by community leaders, only to be resurrected again and again. Dekka’s fate is changed when a mysterious woman takes her to join other outcasts training to be part of the emperor’s army. The story truly blossoms as the girls and women form a community within their army, becoming stronger together as they learn more about themselves and their broken world.

These books are not perfect in representation and empowerment. *Red Hood* pushes the idea that killing wicked men is a means to salvation. In many dystopian stories, girls are pitted against each other or separat-

ed to weaken connections. The opportunities for including more diverse characters (e.g., transgender and non-binary, varying body types) and situations do manifest, but are usually overlooked or minimized. However, these stories probably would not have existed ten years ago. *Red Hood* includes positive and vivid descriptions of menstruation and a boyfriend who epitomizes healthy relationships. *Dread Nation* reveals a zombie war with African American and Indigenous children on the front lines, i.e., “slavery by another name.” These stories offer characters of different races and different shades of skin, a variety of cultures and/or mythologies and self-empowered young women. With stories like these, readers may finally see themselves in main characters or they may find open doors to walk through and learn about those different than themselves.

—Julie Stepp, Ph.D.



Cover art by Ashley Mackenzie



Cover art by Chris Kwon

About the Guest Columnist

Each semester, Attune features an article written by a guest columnist. This semester, Julie Stepp is our guest columnist.

Stepp is an Associate Professor in the College of Education at Tennessee Tech. She is the primary professor for the graduate concentration in School Library Science at Tennessee Tech University. Stepp has been teaching at Tech for 16 years. Previously, she was a librarian at Tech, Motlow State Community College and Middle Tennessee State University. Stepp has proven to be an avid book pusher and audiobook fiend. Graduates of the library science program will tell you that successful librarians collaborate with all aspects of their learning communities and lifelong readers equal lifelong learners.



Get Help:

Health Resources

Counseling Center

931-372-3331

tntech.edu/counsel

Eagle Eye Crisis Hotline

855-206-8997*

Health Services

931-372-3320

tntech.edu/healthservices

Food Pantry

tntech.edu/volunteer/pantry.php

Lactation Spaces

Women's Center & Health Services

University Resources

Title IX

tntech.edu/titleix

titleix@tntech.edu

Campus Police

931-372-3234

tntech.edu/police

Educational Resources

Women's Center

tntech.edu/women

Multicultural Affairs

tntech.edu/multicultural-affairs

Community Resources

Genesis House

Office: 931-525-1637

Hotline: 1-800-707-5197*

genesishouseinc.com

Upper Cumberland Family Justice Center

931-528-1512 or 866-704-1080

ucfamilyjusticecenter.org

Cookeville Police

Main: 931-526-2125

Emergency: 911*

National Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800-273-8255*

National Sexual Assault Hotline

800-656-4673*

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-7233*

thehotline.org

VictimConnect Resource Center

855-484-2846

We can help you navigate resources!

Call the Women's Center:

931-372-3850

Message us on social media:

[@tntechwomenscenter](https://www.instagram.com/tntechwomenscenter)

*resources available 24/7

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Amber Lovell Aislynn Martin

Lilly Davis Savannah Hunter

Madison Sendek



Give Help:

- Donate menstrual products to your local food bank.
- Create a shirt for the Clothesline. Contact or stop by the Women's Center for more information.
- Learn more about Tech's Greek Life and their policies at tntech.edu/studentactivities/greek/index.php.
- Read, distribute or write for Attune.
- Follow the Women's Center on Facebook and Instagram.
- Volunteer at the Women's Center for 10-20 hours a semester.

Contact Us:

Connect with the Women's Center on social media!

Facebook:

TnTech Women's Center

Instagram:

[@tntechwomenscenter](https://www.instagram.com/tntechwomenscenter)

Office Hours:

RUC room 339

Monday-Friday

8 a.m. - noon &

1 - 4:30 p.m.

Visit our website:

tntech.edu/women