

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."  
—Audre Lorde

Volume XXV, Issue 2

Spring 2019

## Are We Equal Yet?

The fight for women's suffrage began over 170 years ago, and women today are still fighting for equality. The demand for equality became public in 1848 with the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls. Organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Mary M'Clintock, Martha Coffin Wright and Jane Hunt, the Seneca Falls Convention was held to declare

Constitutional equality of social, civil and religious rights for women.

The only right the Constitution affirms is the right to vote. Since the 19th amendment, the Constitution has not been amended to state that women and men have equal rights of any other form. In 1923, Alice Paul introduced the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), but it was not passed by both houses of Congress until 1972.

Thirty-eight states were needed to ratify the amendment before it could be added to the Constitution. Soon after being passed by Congress in 1972, the ERA was ratified by thirty-five states, only three states short. It wasn't until 40 years later that Nevada and Illinois finally ratified the ERA in 2018. The ERA is now one state short of becoming an amendment to the Constitution.

Congress put a 1982 deadline on the ratification of the ERA, but women continue to push to ratify the ERA in one of the 13 states remaining: Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah and Virginia. Because the Constitution only grants women equal rights to men in the right to vote, equal

rights based on sex are not specifically mentioned and gender discrimination continues.

The addition of the ERA to the constitution would help clarify the laws on sex discrimination for court cases.



Betty Ford's Limousine Flag

Though other laws exist to protect against sex discrimination, Congress has the power to remove or replace the existing laws simply by a major-

ity. Courts are required to exercise "skeptical scrutiny" when evaluating sex discrimination cases and require "exceedingly persuasive" evidence for these cases.

Equalrightsamendment.org states, "under current court decisions about sex and race discrimination, a white male claiming race discrimination by a program or action is protected by strict scrutiny, but a black female claiming sex discrimination by the same program or action is protected by only skeptical, not strict, scrutiny."

A proposal to ratify the ERA in Virginia was put to vote in January of 2019. On January 15th, the Virginia Senate voted yes to ratify the ERA, but the House still needed to vote. Unfortunately, on January 22nd, a House subcommittee voted down the ERA. This vote decreases the likelihood that the ERA will reach the full House for a vote this year. There is still a possibility that the ERA could be pulled and sent to the floor for a vote. Advocates are continuing to fight to pass the ERA in one final state. "Only when equal means equal, can we all have justice and meet our true potential," (equalrightsamendment.org).

—Rachel Pearson

## From the Interim Director

Welcome to *Attune* Spring 2019. You will find this edition to be entertaining, but above all informative. Hayden Hicks's article called *Child Marriage* is a timely read regarding legislation that is currently pending in Tennessee. The article also outlines the human trafficking epidemic and ways to prevent it. Amy Bosley tells us about Ashton Kutcher's journey to end human trafficking in *A Thorn in the Side of Trafficking*.

Historical information on Feminism and the Equal Rights Amendment can be found in articles written by Rachel Pearson and Emmerson Meuret. If you are interested in supporting quality female character in films read Mik Davis' article. Information on missing and murdered Native Americans is covered in the article by Morgan Taylor. Cyntoia Brown's story is included in Savannah Bayens' story *Unbalanced Justice for Stand Your Ground Law*.

Finally, I am retiring from TTU. It has been an absolute pleasure serving as the Interim Director of the Women's Center for the last two years. I want to sincerely thank the students and staff of the Women's Center for all the hard work and dedication in bringing entertaining, informative and occasionally controversial but timely articles to our readers. This edition of *Attune* will not disappoint.

- Melinda Swafford, Ph.D.



## An Invisible Crisis

In 2016, the National Crime Information Center cited 5,712 reports of slain or missing Native American women and girls. In 2018, Senator Jon Tester reported that over 24 Native Americans, mostly women, were reported missing in Montana alone. There is a lack of laws protecting Native Americans and the absence of necessary training, equipment, personnel and funding for epidemics such as this.

Tribal, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies are aware of this invisible crisis. According to the CDC, homicide is the third leading cause of death among Native American and Alaska Native women 10 to 24 years of age and the fifth leading cause of death for Native women 25 to 34 years of age.

Homicide is not the only violent crime against these women; according to the U.S. Department of Justice, the rate of sexual assault against Native American and Alaska

Native women is more than twice the national average. The high rates of sexual and physical violence have a deep history, which also leads to many cases of violence being unreported. Underreporting is a problem in tribal communities. Many women know their attacker and are scared to report. Moreover, the Indian Health Service provides rape examinations at only 27 of the 45 hospitals it finances. According to a federal report in 2011, the Indian Health Service also lacks adequate policies for treating and tracking rape and sexual assault victims in their hospitals. Charon Asetoyer, a women's health advocate on the Yankton Sioux Reservation in South Dakota says, "We should never have a



for young [Native American] women." Caroline Antone, an advocate for the Navajo Nation's victims of sexual violence says, "I know only a couple of people who have not been raped... Out of hundreds." Shortage of sexual assault kits, lack of access to birth control and STD testing, lack of training on rape examinations — all of these reasons and more are why many of

woman come into the office saying, 'I need to learn more about Plan-B for when my daughter gets raped.' That's what's so frightening- that it's more expected than unexpected. It has become a norm

these cases are never brought to trial. One woman is trying to change this: Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) reintroduced legislation on January 27, 2019, to help law enforcement respond to this horrifying crisis. The bill is called "Savanna's Act," named for Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, a pregnant 22-year-old indigenous woman who was abducted and killed in North Dakota in 2017.

The purpose of Savanna's Act is to clarify the responsibilities of law enforcement agencies when responding to cases of missing and murdered Native Americans; to increase the collection of data related to missing and murdered Native American men and women; and empower tribal governments with resources and information necessary to respond to these cases.

Violence against Native women is an epidemic; isn't it time for someone to be held accountable for the lives of these women and the future of Native populations as a whole?

—Morgan Taylor

## Unbalanced Justice for Stand Your Ground Law

More than half of the women in jail today have experienced some type of abuse in their life. A study done by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that "Of all incarcerated women, 86 percent reported being a victim of sexual violence and 77 percent reported a history of domestic violence." Out of all the ethnically diverse women in prison for killing men, 90 percent killed the man that was abusing them.

When women are convicted of murder, the jail times received are significantly longer than when men kill their female partners. The average prison sentence for men is

two to six years, where women's is on average 15 years or more, according to National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The disadvantage for abused women in the justice system is clear to see.

Cyntoia Brown's story began at two years old, when she was given up by her biological mother. As a runaway in 2004, she faced many rapes and assaults, and began using drugs by the time she turned 16. A physically and sexually abusive pimp named "Kutthroat" forced her into prostitution. One night a 43-year-old man named Johnny Allen picked her up and later that night, while afraid for her life,

she killed him in self-defense. She was tried as an adult and convicted of first-degree murder and aggravated robbery at the age of 16. The court did not grant Brown the *Stand Your Ground* law, which states one has a right to defend themselves against threats, even with the use of lethal force. She was sentenced to 50 years in prison and waited 15 years before she was granted clemency.

The prejudicial treatment of abused women of color seems obvious when Brown's case is compared to George Zimmerman's case. Zimmerman fatally shot and killed teenager Trayvon Martin in

2012. The evening of the incident, Zimmerman called the police to report a "suspicious person." Despite the police giving instructions not to engage with this person, a fight broke out. Zimmerman shot and killed Martin, claiming it was in self-defense. Courts granted him the *Stand Your Ground* law and he was found not guilty. The differences between Zimmerman and Brown's cases are clear. There appears to be a bias in the justice system. Women, especially women of color, who experience sexual, physical or domestic abuse are far more likely to end up in prison.

—Savannah Bayens

Over the centuries, first ladies have represented the epitome of the American women. It is commonly said that first ladies are primarily the hostess of the White House, but time and time again first ladies have used their position as a way to empower women and ignite change.

In 2018 America lost a true marvel, Barbara Bush. She raised millions to preserve the history of the White House, she was poised and private and she changed family literacy in America. Since its founding, the Barbara Bush Foundation has raised and more than \$110 million, providing literacy programs across all 50 states. In the 1950's they lost their daughter Robin to leukemia. Barbara was a human being that had experienced trial and tribulation and still found a way to put service to her country first. Among her charity work, she is noted to be pro-choice, an ally for gay rights and fought against AIDS stig-

## First Ladies, First Feminists

mas. She encompassed many aspects of feminism, like first ladies that preceded her.

Eleanor Roosevelt was the first lady during the Great Depression, where she transformed the title from White House hostess to political activist. Eleanor was an early supporter of civil rights, women and American workers. She is known to have made a list of qualified women for government positions to present to her husband. When her efforts were overlooked, she held press conferences (covered by female journalist only) to inform and encourage women to vote and have a political voice. Eleanor wrote a book called "It's Up to the Women," in which she wrote advice targeted towards women during the Great Depression. Eleanor was more of a cultural feminist; she emphasized the

differences between men and women. She believed that society was missing feminine qualities when society needed them the most.

The second first lady was Abigail Adams, she could also be considered a founding mother of the United States due to her close advisement of her husband, John Adams. Abigail, like most women at the time, received no formal education but indulged herself in her family's library. Just 10 years after the Constitution was ratified, she was an advocate for women's rights, anti-slavery and women's education.

Though her feminism is not perfectly aligned with third-wave feminism, she advocated for the stepping stones. She changed the way society views women, from being fit only to be a homemaker to someone who raises

and teaches the future of the new nation. She saw the value of women when no one else in power did. John Adams frequently sought out her advice during his presidency and she used this position to push for the rights of women.

In a letter between the couple, Abigail seemed to have predicted the basis of modern feminism—she said, "Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

First ladies continue to use their platform for good. Rosalynn Carter, Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton are all examples of modern first ladies. While America waits for the first female president, we must admire what every first lady has accomplished.

—Emmerson Meuret

## Interview— Running Locally

Angela Hedgecough ran for the office of State Representative for Tennessee District 15 in the 2018 midterm elections. She lost to the Republican nominee Paul Bailey. She is from Jackson County and owns a towing company with her husband. She agreed to an interview to discuss politics and coping with loss.

### What made you decide to run for office?

Trump got elected and I became active in trying to stop the agenda: lowering taxes on the wealthy which hurts the poor and cutting our health insurance.

### Why choose to run instead of doing what you were doing: activism?

We needed a voice. There are

very few people who actually get into legislation that come from a pure working class, had-to-scrape-to-get-by just to be able to eat background. We HAVE to start having people in office from an average or below-average—in terms of income level—background so they can understand what we're going through. What ends up happening is people of lower income and lower education levels don't vote because they're not represented.

### What would you like to say about your loss and how you've coped with it since then?

I had hope in the movement that we were attempting. I never saw it as me going to Nashville, but as us going to Nash-



Angela Hedgecough

ville. I wanted to give [this district] a voice, and that's not a political tagline: it's the truth. So, I feel like I've let everyone down.

### Has this experience on the campaign trail changed your activism?

I'm a street fighter. It was difficult on the campaign trail to be true to myself while also

toning down my activism... The strategy was to make me look [more professional] with pencil skirts and pearls, but I'm a working woman who drives a tow truck and wears jeans. I wanted to be true to myself but they [told] me to back off on certain issues. They wanted me to say I was against abortion... I [couldn't] do it because I believe in the right to choose.

### Are you saying you think more activism would have helped you as a candidate?

The best I can say is just be true to yourself. I wanted to have nothing to regret at the end of this, and I don't. All I can say is that you might as well use your campaign for activism to make a stand for issues instead of toning down your beliefs for people who won't vote for you. — Monet Boardman

## A Thorn in the Side of Trafficking

Whether we call him Kelso, Evan or Colt, Ashton Kutcher uses his platform to champion for the pursuit of happiness. On February 15, 2017, Kutcher sat in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

He testified to his committee on behalf of the many children forced into sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Kutcher said, “The right to pursue happiness for so many is stripped away. It’s raped. It’s abused... It is sold for the momentary happiness of another.”

Kutcher is the co-founder of Thorn, a company that builds software to fight against these injustices. Thorn is aided by over 300,000 digital supporters, 30-plus tech companies and over 5,000 law enforcement officers.

In 2015, Thorn built “Spotlight,” software that learns to recognize patterns over time. The more that it is used the more efficient it becomes. In the 2017 Impact Report, Thorn



states their tools have helped to identify 5,791 sex trafficking victims and rescue 103 children from dangerous situations. They have helped identify over 6,600 abusers and helped speed up investigation time by 65 percent.

Thorn continues to do more to eradicate the trafficking and exploitation of children and teens. The company launched an online child sexual abuse deterrence program. This program communicates with people searching online for “child sexually abusive material” (CSAM). The pro-

gram encourages potential predators to seek help and recommends resources. The program has seen over 150,000 instances in which individuals moved on to seek further help.

In 2017, Thorn started a campaign called “Stop Sextortion.” According to the campaign’s website, stopsextortion.com, sextortion is the “threat to reveal intimate images to get you to do something you don’t want to do.”

Thorn collaborated with Pretty Little Liars actress Shay Mitchell on a video to break down sextortion. The campaign encourages victims to not feel shame and reach out to trusted adults. The video also provides information about bystander intervention, a guide to report sextortion and resources for victims, caregivers, companies, friends and policymakers.

Thorn’s work is saving the lives of thousands of children and teens. In a world where an estimated 4.8 million victims were sexually exploited in 2017

alone, companies like Thorn are just beginning to make a difference (Global Estimates of Modern Slavery Report 2017).

You do not have to be a major company to help end human trafficking and the exploitation of children. You can visit Thorn’s website to find out what to do. You can also check out places like Second Life, an organization working to end human trafficking in lower-east Tennessee. On their website, secondlifetn.org, you can learn about human trafficking and what to do when you see or suspect it.

While Kutcher spoke to the Senate committee, he addressed the naysayers, who tell him to “stick to his day job” instead of acting in politics. After telling a story about when Thorn aided in helping find a perpetrator of child abuse, with tears in his eyes, Kutcher said: “That’s my day job and I’m sticking to it.”

—Amy Bosley

According to Tahirih Justice Center’s 2017 report *Falling Through the Cracks*, within the past 15 years, 200,000 children have been legally married, most often to adults. This report describes how laws facilitate child marriage in today’s America.

Of minor-adult marriages, 60 percent involve 16 to 20-year-olds. These marriages are protected under Romeo and Juliet laws, which allow for marriages of minors so long as there is no more than a four-year age difference. The remaining 40 percent involve children, mostly girls, who are forced to marry adults, usually men. For example in 2001, in Tennessee, a 31-year-old man married a 10-year-old girl.

While recent years have seen a lot of reform, 25 states have no legal age as of 2017. In other states, the minimum age for marriage ranges from 12 to 21 years

## Child Marriage

old. As of 2019, only five states limit marriage to legal adults.

Furthermore, nine states allow a pregnancy to lower the legal marriage age. In many cases, not only have rape charges been dropped, but the predator has coerced the girl into marrying him, often by preying upon parental religious beliefs.

Lawmakers try to refrain from legislating against religious practices by creating strict marriage laws. However, theological experts say no major religious texts promote child marriages, and it is strictly prohibited in several religions. While some orthodox Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities have traditions of early marriage, these traditions are not consistent with their religious texts and therefore have no protection under the law. Even if a new

religious movement insisted on marrying off 12-year-olds, outlawing the practice is no different than outlawing ritualistic human sacrifice, which is a part of several religions.

The impact of minor marriage on children is enormous. Seventy to eighty percent of marriages end in divorce, which increases the minor’s likelihood of living in poverty. Fifty percent of married children drop out of school. And all, married children are significantly more likely to experience abuse and serious psychiatric disorders as a result.

The prevalence of child marriages is concurrent with human trafficking. According to the Associated Press, thousands of girls are brought into the country as “mail-order brides.” Many of the girls are coerced into the marriages because their

families believe they will have more opportunity in the U.S. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services only reject petitions 2.6 percent of the time.

Child marriage is also a class issue. TJC found that young people forced into child marriages come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Whether it’s a matter of perceived social climbing or parents selling their children in order to provide for their families, the issue remains the same. Fighting child marriage requires battling poverty and human trafficking. The main solution is outlawing minor marriages, while also creating more opportunities and support for young girls in poor communities. Outreach can keep girls out of these dangerous circumstances while laws barring child marriages are being passed.

— Hayden Hicks

## Upcoming Events Fall 2019

**Body Image & Disordered Eating:** BIDE is an all-inclusive peer support group for students that promotes self-growth and self-acceptance. Have a body and not sure how to feel about it? You are welcome here! The first semi-monthly meeting of the semester will occur in September.

**Book Club:** Our student book club meets monthly starting in September. This is your chance to meet other readers and discuss books and issues of interest.

**SAGE:** SAGE, or Students Advocating Gender Equality, is a group of like-minded peers coming together to create events and support movements on campus promoting equality of all genders.

### Daisy Hernandez:

Daisy Hernandez is a journalist, memoirist, intersectional feminist, cultural activist and an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Miami University in Ohio. Hernandez advocates for political and social issues including feminism, race, media representations of ethnic communities, and queer/bisexual life. She draws inspiration from being raised in a Latino immigrant, blue-collar household, coming out as bisexual, and growing up in her writing to expand narratives for women of color and as a method of activism.



For specific dates and locations, visit our website  
<https://www.tntech.edu/women/>

## Attune Fall 2019 Write for Attune!

We want *Attune* to be relevant and interesting for our readers and are seeking fact-based articles on topics profiling and empowering the lives of women. Students, staff and faculty of all backgrounds are encouraged to submit articles of 600 words or less. Email submissions or questions to [womenscenter@tntech.edu](mailto:womenscenter@tntech.edu) or drop them off at the center.

**Submission Deadline: Sept. 27, 2019**

## Get Involved

The Women's Center has volunteer, HPEO and internship opportunities. Work Study positions are also available for interested students upon interview. Write for our newsletter; help plan, create and host events; hang fliers and other publicity; or create bulletin boards and other informational displays with our staff. Interns can receive course credit hours.

Sociology, human ecology and journalism majors are encouraged to intern, but we are open to students from all approved departments. Build your resume, put your knowledge to work and help your campus community.

Get connected to your Women's Center.  
Like us at **"TTU Women's Center"** on Facebook and follow us on Instagram **@tntechwomenscenter**

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

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Women's Center volunteers at One Billion Rising, an annual event centered around the global movement against interpersonal violence.