# CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN GENDER SEXUALITIES AND WOMEN'S STUDIES ZINE

GSWS-1101-002 Sally Mennill

EDITED BY MARISSA CHARLES & VANESSA WASHINGTON

## *Letter to the Editor* Darcie Gardiner

Dear Editor,

I wanted to write in to speak about the current affairs of our society, a society where everyone is "woke" and "cancelling" someone is the current trend. A society where everyone likes to preach kindness and inclusion but instead wreaks of selfrighteousness and judgement, a society where the only opinion that seems to matter is the opinion that aligns with ones own beliefs not even giving other opinions a chance. Our society is a mess and while more and more groups are coming together it seems that people are spreading further and further apart, we are no longer coming together as a community or country full of individuals that cared about one another regardless of ones ideas or beliefs but instead a community that has begun to segregate ourselves to only those who think like us. We are brainwashed by Social Media and the News and are no longer capable of thinking critically and doing our own research, and instead follow the motto of if it was on the

News it must be real. The priorities of today's society are completely backwards how is it that a girl being sent home from school for wearing what was deemed inappropriate by her teacher making headlines in every major news source meanwhile an Indigenous female miscarries her baby due to poor treatment at her local hospital hardly makes the news. How did basically a whole Province become outraged over a youth being sent home from school for wearing something that was deemed inappropriate meanwhile barely anyone knew about this poor mother who was refused treatment and told to go to the next closest hospital causing her to lose her child. How were protests organized for a teen who wore something deemed inappropriate but nothing for this poor grieving mother? Is it because this poor grieving mother was not a "hot" enough topic? We can be "woke" for the teen wearing "inappropriate" clothing but we can't be woke for the

#### Indigenous grieving mother



The room prepared for an unborn baby in Kitimat, B.C. The infant was stillborn in hospital this week and the death is now the subject of a review. (Supplied by Dutin Gaucher)

We don't even think to question if the outcome would have been different if she was any other race? Where is the anger, where is the rage for this poor grieving mother? Where are all these "woke" feminists who claim they are out there fighting for all women and all causes regarding women. Why didn't the hospital in Kitimat get cancelled or the Doctors, Nurses, or Paramedics who were involved? Don't get me wrong I AM NOT saying that the youth being

sent home for wearing what was deemed inappropriate clothing isn't important and wasn't wrong, but I am saying it should not have blown up to the extent that it did when Women are losing their children due to a lack of care all because of their race.



Kamloops, B.C. resident Christopher Wilson says his daughter, Karis, was sent home from high school for wearing a black knee-length dress over a turtleneck. (Christopher Wilson/Facebook)

Today's priories are backwards and its frightening. People are now afraid to have the hard conversations as they are afraid of those woke warriors who will inevitably come after them and cancel them if they say the wrong thing. If we want to move forward at all as a society, we need to lose this "woke" attitude and cancel the cancelling. We need to show compassion and empathy and be willing to learn and teach, we need to start having those hard conversations and bring the community and country back together as a whole. I believe and repercussions for ones actions but I also believe that no one should be shamed and blasted all over the internet, and I believe that a mother losing her child due to mistreatment should cause a

bigger outrage among individuals than a teen being sent home for wearing something that is deemed inappropriate. If we want to grow and actually have equality, we need to help those who are suffering from bigger problems then their clothing being inappropriate. Let's do better and let's be better, let's remember that all women's rights are important and relevant but some just deserve a little more time and energy than others. The privileged pretty white teenage girl posing with her thumb up while wearing her "inappropriate" outfit is most likely going to be just fine in life, but the young Indigenous mother who lost her child will most likely not be so lucky.



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### ARTWORK BY EMMA ARMSTRONG

1. (133000 is)

# The Treasured Scapegoat

	They woke up one morning	1 *
	Stretched out all the soreness in their muscles	How could they value themselves?
	From being tied up in their messy thoughts	When no one seems to value them
	Every day they are reminded	Voices constantly yelling
	"you're going to hell"	"it's wrong to be different, just conform"
	"you're a freak"	Who knew silence could be so deafening?
	"stop acting like a girl"	And finally escaping their labyrinth of a mind
	they slowly disregard their own worth t	hey broke into the reality that the patriarchy claims to protect
	No longer felt like they were treasured	And with the forgotten memory of their worth
-	The treat	sure, disquised as society's scapegoat, was finally buried.

## BODY DOUBLE

2000s heroin chic mixed with 2020's Kardashian ideals. idolization of bodies that are not ours, idolization of bodies we know will appease horny men, on instagram

scrolling through, jealous of the size of one girls boobs, ridicule her lack of thigh gap in the same breath. she's burning green envy for the lack of inches on another's waist. calls her flat in the same breath.

> fighting with each other fighting with our minds. craving "Barbie" bodies "Bratz" bodies, bodies never meant to exist.

LIFEGUARD

praying for double d's while also being able to count my ribs. starving myself the whole day to get drunker, to look smaller, when i go out.

(terrified no matter our body size, at least our terror unites us)

body positivity on social media but only one body type good enough for hollywood. everyone's body positive but only for the girls that look like them.

> and yet somehow we still hate our own bodies.

meant to carry us sustain us, provide for us. the only home we carry with us our whole life.

but almost every woman i know hates her home, hates her body from the deepest crevice of her soul.

almost every woman i know has an eating disorder. not the hollywood version, no it's not always going to be a Beautifully Sad White Girl.

but oh god how our own fucked up expectations have damaged our relationship with the thing meant to nourish us. almost every fucking woman i know.

skipping meals, fad diets, fillers, constantly fucking with the way we look to get to the 'perfect' body.

Artwork by Alisa Atchison

Poem by

Rhia Nagra

# "IT'S OKAY TO GO TO THE POOL ON YOUR

PERIOD

### <u>I Wish Feminism Was More Apparent</u> <u>in Dance: Opinion</u> Kennedy Ross

Throughout my dancing career, I have heard every backhanded compliment in the book. Whether it had to do with my body, my performances or how dance would influence all the parts of my life, it always seemed to come back to how lucky I was to be a woman in dance and I did not always feel that way. It is definitely a privilege to be a straight, fit, cis-gendered young white woman, but it really bothered me that people were afforded different opportunities based on these privileges and other unattainable standards. In an industry that claims to empower women, it is becoming harder and harder to find even the slightest aspects of feminism in dance, which is deeply affecting a younger generation of dancers beyond our comprehension.

I started dancing when I was 3 years old, and I never stopped. For the last four years of my career, I easily spent 20 hours a week at the studio dancing, not including the extra hours in the week that I was practicing outside of class time and the time I spend teaching little ones. Even though I missed a lot of the experiences that most teenagers get, like going to a basketball game or participating in clubs at school, I would not have changed it for anything. Most adults in my life were extremely supportive of me, but every single one of them, including my parents, slipped out one of my most dreaded comments: "No time for you young ladies to get in trouble when you spend all your time dancing!" Although this is somewhat true, it implies that I am somehow just troublesome in nature, and if young women are not kept busy, they will automatically find themselves getting into mischief and are not wise enough to not participate in these so-called 'troublesome' activities. I have been hearing this comment for as long as I can remember, and I hate the thought that

young girls are hearing it as well, and possibly associating their good behaviour with just being busy.

As I got older, it became so clear to me how deeply my feminism was entrenched in my love of dance. I did not know how to separate me being an awesome woman, from me as a dancer. For example, I would feel so incredibly powerful after a dance performance, but I would never get that feeling from presenting my spoken word in front of a much smaller audience. Because I had trained so hard and been looked at under a microscope for so many years, I did not understand how I could feel powerful without being perfect. Not only was how I felt about myself and my body affected, how I saw myself and my body was affected too. As a competition dancer, I trained in several different disciplines, such as ballet and jazz, where we would typically prepare a dance for shows but also have technique classes that cater solely towards

bettering overall skill. In these technique classes, the dress code consisted of skin-tight clothing, sometimes only allowing certain colours or cuts. These often-unflattering items mixed with staring at your body in a mirror for hours on end, topped off with the constant reminding that no one wants to see your lunch, absolutely tanked my self-esteem. Anytime I would receive a compliment outside of dance, my instinct was to suck in my stomach and to press my shoulders down, because that is what I was trained to equate with being pretty. Looking back on my relationship with my body, I realize how much it depended on the view of others and what was expected of me, not actually what I thought or how it physically looked. My relationship with my body was further destroyed when I started birth control, a big taboo in the community. I was warned that I would gain weight and grow bigger breasts than I already had (which was the way of

telling me that my B cups were already too big). It did not matter that I started birth control to stop the dizzy spells I would get on my period, the fever I would run or the vomiting I would get from the pain, the way I fit into my clothes mattered more than my pain. The dance industry could not care less if you are in shape or if you have lifelong body image issues, they care about your body fitting into a concrete mould consisting of tiny yet strong muscles and limbs, and making ridiculous amounts of money, with very little people are willing to change that idea because it is all we know.

Not only did my career in dance make me question my body, but also my gender performance. Because I was able to sing lower notes and I was tall, I was often cast as one of the male roles in a dance if there were any. Apart from always having to wear annoying wigs and ugly work pants from Value Village, there was always the talk. I call it the talk because it always seemed to be a really serious and important discussion, yet it was completely avoidable and not needed, but it still happened every time we had males in a dance. It typically started with something to do with our makeup looking not as nice for this particular dance, then moved on to how we were supposed to do our hair, and then finished off with how we were supposed to act. This may seem harmless, but telling a young girl that she has to dance and act stronger and less beautiful can be very damaging. Implying that men cannot be beautiful dancers or that women are weaker, not only sets up negative stereotypes but raises lots of questions about men and their portrayal in dance. If the dance community truly wants to empower men in dance and encourage more to join, why do they feed into toxic masculinity? Also, why can't a young woman just play a male without having to change the way she dances? Although my gender identity and

performance did not change because of these dances, I struggled with the fact that I felt inauthentic on stage, and that several others who may actually be struggling with gender are being put into these stereotypes.

As bad as dance may be in some respects, I firmly believe it helped me become the feminist I am today by experiencing a culture that both loves and hates women. I am more aware of society's expectations of a women's body and how it harms women, and how men play an important role in a women's gender performance. I also had plenty of mentors who are incredible women who really helped me through my struggles as a young woman, and I hope the younger generation of dancers find good mentors who help them too. Finally, I hope the dance community realizes the good they do is not enough to balance out the harm that dancers are taught from a young age, and that it is going to take a lot of education and reconciliation within the community to fix what is broken.



COLLAGE BY JUSTINE GEBOERS

### IF EQUALITY WERE A PERSON MEGAN DAMPIER

Artwork by Amy Adham

ETHNOCENTRISM Rd

ABLEISM Rd

TRANSPHOBIA Rd

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HOMOPHOBIA R

CLASSISM Rd

SEXISM Rd

TRANSPHOBIA Rd

If women were degraded for eternity? Pieces We'd be in pieces I'd be in pieces Not knowing whether to put them back together like a puzzle Or to mask the terrible reality of the world with a void Perhaps a hole to pretend were not broken

You.

It's you.

Your presence as radiant as the the full moon The howling of the wolves as I would scream to be in your world In your life In your presence

In your arms

A thought I've dreamt about A dream I've hoped would become reality for far too long

Your intelligence So mesmerizing I could listen to you for days A spark Brighter than the comet I saw the first night I saw you Talked to you Loved you. It's you, Equality.

4

A smile One so seldom its unknown to me A feeling Never felt prior An urge To be in the arms of the one magnifying A fear That everything will come crashing down That I'll feel hopeless Inferior, Forever.

Life before equality; a frightful thought Life without equality; reality As if the sun and the moon didn't exist As if justice for women didn't exist Please exist

Not just in the world, but in our lives A life without toxic masculinity? A triumph. A life where we aren't conditioned to assume everyone is straight? A victory. A life where we're paid equally? A trophy. AGEISM RO

ARTWORK BY TESS TIMSON

INTERSECTIONALIT

AFTEROSEXISM Rd



## My Experience being in a "Woman Loving Woman" Relationship in 2021

Our heteronormative society made it very difficult for me to realize I was attracted to women. I grew up watching heterosexual couples on the big screen and in TV shows. The only exposure I had was when I was younger while watching Grey's Anatomy with my mother. In elementary school when a lot of my female friends were talking about their crushes, I remember having to "choose" a boy to crush on. I had no attraction to them at all, but I convinced myself that I did. I thought my friends would think it was strange that I did not feel the same about our male peers as they did. I remember feeling this uneasiness towards boys my age, especially towards those who expressed their liking to me. I thought the uneasiness I felt was what I was supposed to be feeling and was what every girl felt. The more uneasiness I felt, the more attracted to men I thought I was. Any attraction I thought I felt for women, I took as friendship or "appreciation for how they looked." That is, until I met my current girlfriend, where I was finally able to see the difference between attraction and friendship.

I remember coming out of the closet to my parents on October 26, 2018. It was incredibly scary because I did not know how they would react and at the time I was about 16 years old. Some people in my life were supportive, but others reacted negatively and would say things like, "how do you even know you're a lesbian if you have never been with a man?", "you are too young to even know what you want", "you just haven't been with the right guy yet", "its just a phase", and my personal favourite, "I can turn you straight." Every time I heard these comments, I felt like I had to prove my sexuality and attraction towards women.

I have been with my girlfriend for over two years now. We met in high school in the 11th grade, and we were the only "out" relationship at the time. Our school was always open to the LGBTQ+ students, but some of our peers frowned upon us. I can remember very clearly a friend of mine at the time finding out I liked women and she asked me, "have you been going to church?" I thought she was joking, but in fact, she was dead serious. Over the time we have been together, we have both noticed some things about how people outside of our relationship view it. I have kept it a secret from my family the whole time except to those who were supportive. I remember a little while after we got together, my girlfriend's family thought it was a phase and that she would "realize she is actually straight" or say that we weren't in a "real relationship." In spite of her coming out, her family tried to keep her away from me for the first three months of our relationship in hopes that she would realize that us being together was a mistake. Her friend group at the time did not make it easy for her to come out to them. Even though her friends said they were part of the LGBT+ community, that is not truly how they felt and being part of the community was seen as more of a trend. Her friends tried to fit the stereotypes of queer people; therefore, she did not feel comfortable coming out since she was worried others would not take her seriously and would automatically be stereotyped for her sexuality.

She identifies as bisexual and the amount of biphobia she has experienced from both heterosexual people and the LGBTQ+ community has astonished me. She has been asked by both parties, "why you can't just pick one?" It is thought that bisexual people are more likely to cheat because they like both genders. Something else that is said about bisexuality in the queer community is that it does not really exist. That it is merely just a placeholder until the person is actually ready to come out as something else. If bisexual women have a sexual preference for men, they are invalidated in the LGBTQ+ community. Outside of that, they are just seen as "straight." The stereotypes towards bisexual people are incredibly harmful.

In public, we never try to show too much affection, especially if there are men around. We have noticed that men tend to stare, and the staring makes it feel as if our affection towards each other is now a free show for them. What was a wholesome display of love now feels "dirty" and has turned into something to sexualize. Something we have been asked

over and over by men is "wanna have a threesome?" they say it's just a joke, but it always feels like there is so much more behind it. Under the male gaze, woman loving woman relationships are seen to be a source of pleasure for them. Pornography depicting lesbian sex is usually between two heterosexual women and are directed by men for men to enjoy. My relationship has been over sexualized and fetishized because of the pornography available, which makes it seem like we are only in said relationship for male pleasure.

My male friend at the time (who I am thankfully no longer friends with) used to act like he was okay with my sexuality, then say things about my sexuality and how "hot" he thought it was. He thought my sexuality was for him and his pleasure. I thought that behaviour was normal to me until my girlfriend stepped in and told me the exact opposite. Thankfully, because of her I am now able to point out that type of behaviour. It is very crucial to separate the genuine acceptance of queer women from fetishization. A lot of the time, our sexuality is not truly accepted, and we are seen as objects to put on a show rather an actual people.



I am more masculine compared to my girlfriend, although we do not really stick to certain roles. We dress in whatever clothing we want. Sometimes she will dress in more masculine clothing and I in more feminine clothing, and vice versa. We have heard comments like "who's the man between you two?" we would usually just laugh it off, but it made me feel as if I had to behave and dress a certain way to be taken seriously as a couple. Sometimes when we are walking through a busy place, I'm holding her hand and people can see my long hair, I notice these little side glares. Stares from across the way, judging what we are doing although no one has said anything to us. In order to make myself feel better and more invisible, I put my hair in a ponytail, shove all of it in my hood, and try to make myself look bigger. Look more masculine. The stares begin to cease as I hide the more feminine parts of me. It's more acceptable now. And I feel like I'm playing a role. I noticed as well when we are both wearing more feminine clothing and being more affectionate to each other, we are seen more as "really close friends," or people don't like how the traditional masculine and feminine roles are not being filled and the staring intensifies.

Society has come a long way in the acceptance of woman loving woman relationships. In the media today, you can see the LGBTQ+ community in movies, television shows, on social media, nearly everywhere now. For example, it is much more common to see a homosexual couple adopting and raising a child in the media. Now the community is able to speak out. They can educate others on how to be allies and how to help. It is heart-warming because this openness around queer people would not be seen a decade ago. Even with having to go through all the comments, the staring, the "jokes," and sometimes blatant homophobia, I would not have changed a single thing and I am incredibly happy to be with her.



- Daniella Pazos

### One Life, Two Experiences An Immigrant Child's Story By Danielle Bae

I often ponder what it would feel like to leave everything to move to a different country. I often ponder what it would feel like to say goodbye to my family and close friends, to pursue a life somewhere that I know nothing about. I often ponder what it would feel like to learn a new language, to build a home from ground zero. I often ponder this because in 1999, my immigrant parents did just that. My immigrant parents left their home in Korea to create a new one here for my sister and me. I am eternally grateful for the hardships my parents went through, as they put their blood sweat and tears to build a sustainable life for our family. However, I look at my immigrant parents and I am pained. I am pained because of the injustices happening toward the Asian community. I am pained by what my people are going through and I am pained that countless other families, who shared the same dream as my parents, have had theirs stripped away. This journal will address what it means to be an Asian living in North America, my own experiences with race and gender, as well as resources to help and support the Asian community in light of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Growing up, my family resided in predominantly white neighbourhoods. As a child, I could only detect that I was a visible minority in objective ways, but I rarely *saw* myself as such. My mother told me a story of when I was kindergarten, I had innocently asked her why my hair was black, instead of brown or blonde like the kids in my class. I asked her why I didn't have blue or green eyes or why my skin tone was different. I was confused as to why new teachers could never pronounce my name correctly.

However, I looked at myself internally in the same way I looked at the other kids; smart, educated, determined. It wasn't until I reached high school where I could feel a primary difference between myself and my peers. Perhaps because high school is already such a challenging time with trying to find yourself and a place in this world. It was when I first began to grow an interest in boys and was really searching for who I was as a person. High school suddenly became a focal point, in my perceptions of being an immigrant child and being Asian. I constantly had xenophobic remarks thrown my way, which was difficult for me to comprehend because I hadn't experienced anything like it. In the tenth grade, when I had built enough courage to tell a boy that I liked him, he rejected my feelings by saying "I just wouldn't date an Asian." After that, a foundation was built within myself that I wasn't just a person, but an Asian person.

#### "I just wouldn't date an Asian"

Throughout my teenage years, I lived subconsciously with that mindset. I embodied my Asian-ness in negative ways, very differently than how I embody it now. In my early twenties, during a time when I had reached a certain point in my womanhood, I craved male validation. I allowed them to fetishize me, they claimed that "Asians are exotic, shy, and submissive" which is supposedly what made me sexy. I wanted to fit the packaged picture of cultures, their criteria of the male gaze. With that, I acted accordingly with what the perception of an Asian girl meant. I tried so hard to erase a big part of who I was. I constantly belittled myself and my culture in order to feel wanted. I lost sight of my true self.

In 2018, I went back to Korea for the first time with my family. While I consider it one of the most rewarding experiences of my life now, I didn't think it at the time. I was unwilling to go back to a place that I felt no connection to and was ashamed of. However, throughout the trip I slowly began to regain a sense of self and love for my culture. I learned about Korea's history, walked the grounds and breathed the air of my home country. I met family members who I hadn't met before and visited the graves of my grandparents and great-grandparents. Not only did that trip allow me to gain insight on my culture and family, but it also allowed me to fall in love with myself again.



HanSyah1296. Taken from Pinterest.com

#### "You deserve more than one experience"

On one evening, I went on a walk with my mother and father through Han River, one of Korea's sightseeing focal points. Cherry blossoms were blooming all around us and I was feeling prosperous. As we were walking along the river, I observed everything around me- the blue skies, the sounds of laughter, the cherry blossom petals being blown away so beautifully by the cool breeze. I asked my parents why they would leave a place they knew and loved, why they would move to a place where their futures were not guaranteed. With that, my father said "you deserve to have more than one place to call your home. You deserve more than that one experience." Hearing those words, I realized I hadn't once thought about how out of place my parents must have felt in Canada. I had never asked them about their own experience with feeling "othered." After about two hours of walking down Han River and looking at cherry blossoms, I gained a whole new perspective of my parents and felt the most peace I had felt in a long time.

#### "Cherry blossoms represent the fragility and transience of life. They resemble new beginnings and the upcoming year- which should be promising and bright"

The Coronavirus pandemic has completely altered the way we live our lives. I, as well as many others, have lived and experienced prejudice, acts of racism and xenophobia. In the past, I have taken it with a grain of salt, and although it was hurtful, I learned to move past it. I cannot and will not do that anymore. In light of the pandemic, racism has skyrocketed toward the Asian community. I fear for the safety of my parents and other Asians in the community. Hate crimes against Asians in Vancouver rose by 717 percent in the span of one year, from twelve incidents in 2019 to 98 in 2020 (Singh, 2021). On March 16, 2021, a series of mass shootings occurred in Atlanta where eight people were killed, six of whom were Asian women. Hyun-Jung Grant, a Korean immigrant, was among the eight who lost their lives. She was 51 at the time of her death, which means she would have been the same age as my mother. Hyun-Jung left behind her two boys, two boys whom she loved and worked tirelessly to provide for. Upon hearing the news, I couldn't help but put myself in her boys' shoes. I couldn't help but think that that could have been my parents. Referencing back to Week 9 of class, learning about Gender and the Pandemic, women are and continue to be targeted more than men. In the US alone, nearly 3,800 incidents were reported over

the course of roughly a year during the pandemic. Women made up a far higher share of the reports at 68 percent, compared to men who made up 29 percent of respondents. We must recognize not only the racial injustices happening to Asian people, but the racial injustices that are specifically targeted to Asian women.

"There is an intersectional dynamic going on that others may perceive both Asians and women and Asian women as easier targets"



March 26, 2021. Taken from Editorialist.com

Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality is about recognizing the social categories of race, class and gender, and considering them as overlapping factors of discrimination and oppression. Crenshaw explains intersectionality in her experience of being a black woman, but that it "cannot be understood in terms of being black and of being a woman considered independently, but must include the interactions between the two, which frequently reinforce each other." The Asian women who lost their lives in the Atlanta shooting were business owners and/or employees. They were middle to lower-class workers who were doing their best to provide for themselves and their families. Understanding intersectionality means to acknowledge that these unique forms of oppression exist.

### We must recognize that Anti-Asian discrimination did not start with the pandemic.

I've thought long and hard about how I can empower the Asian community without stripping away the lives that were lost. I believe there is power in words, because words create movement and movement creates change. Communities in both the US and Canada have shown their support for the Asian community through the hashtags #StopAsianHate as well as with active protesting. As I mentioned, there is power in words. There is power in saying the names of the victims, remembering them for the powerful, hardworking and strong human beings that they were.

(more resources on how to take action toward Asian hate crimes on pg. 4)



Michael M. Santiago. Taken from Chatelaine.com

This past year, I've had to have incredibly hard conversations with friends and family about the hate crimes against Asians. Speaking about them verbally, hearing the words come out of my mouth put an aching pain in my stomach that I cannot fully describe. But I also have hope- I have hope in the country that my parents and so many others, put their faith in. I am proud of who I am as an Asian woman and immigrant child, and I am proud of the place I have in this world.



### PAINTINGS BY KIARA MILES ARTICLE BY SANYAM BAGGA A VIEW OF SOCIETY ON WOMEN

The real issue: "Eagles we are not, but we can still fly." This is the quote possibly most of us have heard. But what does that really mean? Does it literally mean flying? Of course not. What this really means that is to gain or achieve something by our abilities and hard work. Some people are aware of their capabilities, some are not, while some are shy, or some are suppressed by others. Talking about these "others". We usually think that what others will say or think, and some decisions of our life depends on "others". The "others" also have another name and that is called the societya place where me and you live and work. The effects of the ideas of the society as a whole, can either be tremendously good, or the worse. Talking more precisely, the humans who suffer the most, both mentally and physically, just because of the society is women.

M/Y Bold/Y M/Y Capite

To be Precise: Women are the ones who, on one side, are worshipped as a goddess in some countries, and on the other side, degraded and suppressed. What disturbs me the most is that both of these things are done in the same society. A research showed that just because of their gender position, women suffer mentally, physically and even financially more than men (Papreen Nahar & Annemiek Richters, 2011). Even in today's world, a lot of people still think that women are below men in many ways, and they should hear what her so called "well-wishers" say her to do. Furthermore, they are just labelled as a machine wo produces kids and stay and work in the kitchen. Even in today's so called modern world, a woman who has sex before her marriage is even labelled as a slut by the society. In a developing country like India, about half of married women are victims of domestic violence and this rate is even more shocking in undeveloped countries. (Malhotra, S., & Shah, R., 2015).

The problem, explained: "You are a girl, you should not do it, what will people think", "Do not wear short clothes, people will label you", "Do not roam outside at night, you are a girl and good girls don't do so". These are the words of the society when they suppress women. One thing that I need to ask these people is that who are you to judge her? The problem lies within you if a girl cannot wear whatever she wants or go wherever she wants or cannot follow her dreams. It is not the mistake of her if she is not safe alone outside, it means that we have failed as a society to create a safe environment for our own people. I myself have even heard people say that she was raped because she was wearing a revealing dress. Does that even make sense? She has a full right what to wear and what not and we should teach men to respect every woman rather than teaching women what to wear. Furthermore, the society has even given the men and women the "gender roles" that they need to perform their whole life

The Affects: After facing so many abuses, both physically and mentally, does anyone think what are the affects on a woman? Once a girl is labelled as a slut by the society, she has to suffer a lot in her mind which she may not share with anyone. This discriminating and judgmental world thinks that a woman should be in a perfect shape and size and if she is not, she is usually called fat, skinny, dark, ugly or similar words. Talking about the physical violence, there are many women in this world who have faced sexual violence at some point of their life, but they cannot say anything about that just because of the labels and name tags she will receive by the society after sharing so.

Such happenings even affect their academic or professional lives too. A recent study showed that women in Canada who faced sexual violence were seen more likely to achieve lower grades, failure in courses or even drop out of colleges. (Stermac, L., Cripps, J., Amiri, T., & Badali, V., 2020). We can see how much a woman suffers because of the words and judgements of the society, though she has many capabilities and aspirations within her. It even shows the responsibilities thrown on her face by the society just because of her gender and the discrimination she faces. Her body type is also depicted as "judgmental" as she is not seen as perfect in the eyes of the world. Her dreams and goals are all just left to die even though she is completely innocent.

The Discrimination: The expectations and viewpoints of the society on men are completely the opposite on that of women. If a man has sex with 5 girls even by cheating and ditching, he is termed as a "macho man" or "stud", but on the other hand, if a girl does the same even by consent, she is labelled as a slut or a sinful human. Moreover, a man of today wants to sleep with as many girls as he wants before marriage, but he will demand a virgin girl for marriage. These are the viewpoints which disturb me a lot and the way society discriminates like this needs to change as soon as possible. As read even in the text, Indigenous women faced a lot of discrimination just because of the Indian Act. Furthermore, I think a Woman's health status is usually ignored. This discrimination is not acceptable as women have so many responsibilities than a man, but they are usually ignored.

Sexualities: The people of today need to know that supporting sexuality is alright until it is respectful. This is the thing that today's society ignores but, it is the need of the hour.

"Her" Capabilities: I think that women have way more potential to grow than men, but they are not allowed to do so. Even after having so much pain in their hearts due to this world, if given a little support, women can excel in almost any field, be it academics, sports, or professions. What they really need is some emotional support and motivation and they will soar high and touch the sky. I would like to share my experience here. In my high school, there was a girl who was very shy and introverted and she rarely spoke to anyone in school. No one used to talk to her assuming that she is not interested in the same. I once approached her and asked her that why she remains so silent, to which she replied that she was mugged 6 months ago during night and she was still suffering with that trauma. At first, I silently listened to her and started talking to her on a regular basis to boost her confidence again. Currently, she is studying criminology in England and she is very confident and happy with her life. All I did was to listen to her and gave her the motivation and confidence that was hidden in her.

At the End: The empowerment of women is much needed. Though a lot of moments take place around the globe for it, it still requires to be flourished even more (Sharma, S., 2015). That is where the youth can help. There is a very important place for young men and women in feminism today as they are the face and voice of the youth. Their decisions and choices as a whole will represent the future of the nation they are living in. I think that we can make the future and the current generations more and more aware about the need of gender equality in today's world as nowadays there is no need of a conservative approach to the aspects of society. Overall, I think that feminism is a concept that everyone should be aware of, regardless of age or sex as it is the need of the hour. We just cannot blame, degrade or poke someone just on the basis of their gender. Each and every human being has the right to be loved and live on their own terms. Men are not at all aware of what a woman faces in her lifetime and he just objectify her. A man is born through a woman and I think that it is enough reason for him to treat her with respect and love. Every Woman is a queen, all she needs is the right people around her to believe in her she is. Every day is woman's day if you are mature enough. Just let them fly the way they want, and you will see a better world for yourself too.

## DEAR MASCULINITY,

Quit making men feel bad for being who they are. Stop feeling threatened by women for everything they do. If someone has higher achievements than you, accept it. Celebrate it. Don't let people's successes bring out the worst in you. If you feel so fragile that you feel the need to prove yourself to others, you're the problem. You're the toxic one. The jealousy you feel when others succeed needs to end. You can't win at everything. The toxicity you exert when you are less than the best is something you need to manage and control yourself. Masculinity, you have made everyone around you grow tired of your wicked games, you are showing us your true colours when you feel threatened. Your power shouldn't come from tearing someone else down.

Why do you force men to suppress emotions? Why do you enforce the idea that feeling emotions equals weakness? Expressing emotion is human, it's natural, it's real. Why do you feel that acting aggressively is the answer to your problems? Acting tough will only get you so far. Masculinity, you have a way of taking over in the worst way. You degrade men for being human. If they act "out of character," you take over and tell them they are in the wrong for being who they are. It's not your concern.

Why do you feel the need to make women ashamed of their achievements? Why must you always one-up them as if their achievements are less than amazing? You tearing them down says a lot more about you than it does about them. Why do you feel the need to embarrass people into fitting into a box built by society? Everyone can't fit in one spot. Your torturous behaviour causes frustration to those around you.

My advice to you, Masculinity, is to accept what you have, not become jealous because others have what you lack. Let others prevail. Let others thrive. You can't always be the best—it wouldn't be life if you were the best at everything. Focus on your own successes, not others. Nobody can prevail if you tear them down from their successes because you don't possess the same capabilities. You make everyone around you



feel less than you, Masculinity. Why not celebrate with the rest of us? Why must you bring us down? My achievements are not for you to take away from me.

You can't get me anymore; you can't affect me because I won't let you. You've torn me down time and time again, it is my turn to be victorious.

### SINCERELY, KRISTEN

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