

Trinity College Women's Center Newsletter

Volume 8, Issue 1 Fall 1998

Fraternity Parties

by: **Sara Getman**

The initial question painted a positive picture. Just over 2/3 of the women surveyed said they hadn't felt degraded at Fraternity Parties. Unfortunately, these same women made some very disturbing comments when they were asked to share any personal thoughts they had about Fraternity Parties. One woman said, "I have felt uncomfortable at fraternity parties when men that I don't know are drunk and groping me." Another woman bluntly stated that at a Fraternity Party, "a drunk guy felt me up." Many women had problems with the "meat market" atmosphere they felt subjected to at Fraternity Parties. Even with all of the negative opinions and responses revealed in these surveys, many women said they look forward to attending Fraternity Parties

on a regular basis.

This survey was sent to the Trinity College female student body in September. The aim of the survey was to ascertain how women feel about Fraternity Parties at Trinity.

The survey asked if women attended fraternity parties and, if they did, if they ever felt degraded at these parties. The survey asked for comments about both the positive and negative aspects of Fraternity Parties. It asked about women's personal experiences concerning demeaning incidents that had occurred at Fraternity Parties on the Trinity College Campus. It asked for ideas about what could be done to make Fraternity Parties more positive environments for women. Finally, it left room for women to comment openly about any other issues they wanted to address.

The responses to the survey revealed that
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Letter from the Director

Hello! As the new Director of the Women's Center, I would enjoy meeting as many of you as possible and hearing what you need from the Center. One of my goals for the Center is to bridge communication gaps on campus within the women's community, between men and women, and between diverse groups on campus. It is important to understand that the Center is run and staffed by women open to all views and perspectives, and intent on addressing issues of inequity. We encourage men to participate in the Center's activities, and feel that men need to be an integral part of the women's movement on campus. We also encourage all women to look beyond the "F" word (feminist!) when viewing the Center, and ask themselves if they believe fair and equal treatment for women is a good thing. If

you find that you answer yes to this, consider checking out the Center and it's events and groups- you may be pleasantly surprised.

Also, in light of the brutal murder of Matthew Shepard, I believe that it is important for all of us to fight back against the growing tide of anti-gay rhetoric from politicians and the Christian Right. Straight or gay, this is a fight that includes all of us who care about human dignity. It is also important that we in the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender community come out and speak out- we need to be visible and heard! All diverse communities at Trinity must come together and decry injustice against any of us- we must bond to end heterosexism, sexism, racism, anti-semitism and classism here on campus and in the world.

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Letters To The Editor

We welcome your opinions, thoughts or ideas.
Please submit them to The Women's Center Newsletter
via, The Women's Center mailbox #702584.

SISTERHOOD IS GLOBAL

News From Around the World

Let them Starve

Since the Taliban assumed power in Afghanistan, women and girls have been ejected from jobs and schools. "In a city where women entered professions and rose to the top of the civil service, they may no longer do paid work. Where 70% of school teachers were women, girls may no longer attend school. They cannot leave their homes without the accompaniment of a close male relative, drive a car, or ride on public buses. If a woman does venture out into the streets, she must cover every inch of her body with a hot, uncomfortable burkha."

The Taliban also inflicts restrictions that endanger women's lives. "No woman may seek medical treatment from a male physician. The international human rights organizations' classes on unexploded landmines and artillery shell identification are forbidden to women and girls, and they are the ones who perform the most of the physical labor in the countryside and therefore the most exposed to these mines. The male-accompaniment rule confines an estimated 17,000 Kabuli widows to their homes. When approached regarding their plight, a Talib official responded, 'Let them starve.'" Widows may not venture out for food, without being beaten by any offended male, unless unaccompanied by a male relative.

-Lara Paul, **Peace Magazine**, women3rdworld.miningco.com/

To protest, contact: Ms. Sadako Ogata, Director, UNCHR at swige@unhcr.ch

Mrs. Mary Robinson UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, webadmin.hchn@unog.ch

Gay Men Tortured and Killed by Taliban

The Taliban also terrorizes Gay men. "... Zohra Raseekh, a researcher for the group Physicians for Human Life, reported that Shiite Muslim Afghans, known as Hazara, were 'gang raped and killed and left at the doorstep of their homes.'" Raseekh added that homosexual men in the cities of Kandahar, Orezgan and Heart are 'lined up against walls, bulldozed and buried alive.' Norr Ullah Zadran, a Taliban representative, said that this practice is '100 percent correct,' and also that 'homosexuality, which is considered adultery, is punished by burying that person into a wall.' -**The Washington Post**, August 14, 1998

Sexual Slavery Inflicted in the East and Sought by the West

"Hundreds of thousands of women and children are employed in Indian brothels-many of them lured or kidnapped from Nepal and sold into conditions of virtual slavery. The victims of this international trafficking network routinely suffer serious physical abuse, including rape, beatings, arbitrary imprisonment and exposure to AIDS. Held in bondage for years at a time, these women and girls work under constant surveillance. Escape is virtually impossible." The same "businesses" thrive in Thailand and the Philippines.

American customers are largely responsible for making international flesh peddling a thriving business. Big Apple Oriental Tours based in New York has been successfully banned from operating in the Philippines as a direct result of the group "Women's Action, Inc." "Some countries from which sex tourism originates, including Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States, have passed legislation which criminalizes sex tourism, but such laws apply only to travel for the purpose in engaging in sex with minors."

-**"Rape for Profit: Trafficking in Nepali Girls and Women in India's Brothels"**

-**Equality Now 1996-1997 Report**

For more information: women3rdworld.miningco.com/

(cont'd from page 1)

women have a lot to say about Fraternity Parties and that there are a lot of different opinions about Fraternities here at Trinity.

The things that women found positive about Fraternity Parties were that they provide a place to meet new people, a place to have fun with friends, and a place to interact in a smaller setting that often seems more personal than some Trinity parties. One woman commented that "you are always welcome because the guys want you there." Fraternities are serving an excellent function if the guys "want you there" because they want to get to know you and possibly develop a relationship with you. If this is the case, Fraternities are fostering a social environment that should be encouraged. However, one woman commented that "meeting people at Fraternity Parties doesn't usually lead to lasting relationships."

On the same topic, another woman commented that although the Fraternity members welcomed her to their house, she often felt degraded by the looks she received from "drunken brothers who think they can do whatever they want because it is their house." Another woman stated that at Fraternity Parties she felt that "the guys are only there to choose who to go home with."

Other negative aspects of Fraternity Parties that women recognized revolved around alcohol. One woman stated that she never even had the desire to attend a Fraternity Parties because of the "reputation for drinking and vulgarity that so many Fraternities carry." Many women referred to the extreme abuse of alcohol that occurs at Fraternity Parties and the lack of control that exists in the Fraternity Party environment because of it. In an article published in "The New York Times" in May of 1996, a study by Harvard and Columbia Universities found that 95 percent of all violent crime on campuses around the country were alcohol related. These crimes include sexual assault directed at women.

To make Fraternity Parties more positive many women suggested taking the focus off the alcohol. One woman stated that the entire environment was "sleazy, dark and slimy," and that Fraternities could make their parties more positive by simply changing this atmosphere. Many responses to the status of co-ed fraternities involved the statement that they are co-ed by name but not in reality. This led to another suggestion that Fraternities and Sororities should have more of their parties together so that women would not be confined to a "male dominated space."

Sadly, many replies from women showed a lack of hope. One woman stated, "I don't

know of any way which could stop adult men from doing this sort of thing (the objectification of women)." Another woman stated that "boys will be boys." Maybe boys will be boys. However, it seems that by the time we enter college, it is expected that we are at least making the transition from girls to women and boys to men. This transition means acting as men and women. Acting as men and women means respecting each other and acting responsibly. Though the issue of degrading and demeaning women shouldn't exist, it does. In everyday life, we seem to make a good attempt at overcoming this. These efforts need to continue in all situations. From the responses the survey generated, it seems that a concentrated effort to respect women's rights needs to be made at Fraternity Parties.

"Remember, no
one can make
you feel inferior
without your
consent."
Eleanor Roosevelt

Trinity College Needs Therapeutic Diversity

By Beth Miller-Lee

You know someone who struggles at Trinity. It might be you. Help is available. The Trinity Counseling Center is staffed by Drs. Randy Lee and George Higgins, visiting psychiatrist Adele Martel and four female trainees. The counselling center offers professional help for issues including anxiety, stress, sexual abuse, bulimia, compulsive exercising and depression and is visited by administration, staff and students.

The Women's Center, R.A.'s, professors, mentors and peers, according to Dr. Higgins, provide a diverse family of non-professional counselors who support students. Men and women, however, who want to develop a consistent relationship with a professional female psychologist, or with a person of color, cannot. As a result, the Women's Center requests the administration to reflect Trinity's commitment to supporting gender and racial diversity by hiring a full-time professional, female therapist of color.

Expanding the staff at the Counseling Center has been curtailed, according to Trinity administration, by lack of funds. According to an August 28, 1998 memorandum from Evan Dobelle, however, Trinity College is in the black. "The endowment had reached an all-

time high, standing at \$318 million. The college is in sound financial health." Hiring an additional therapist and expanding office space is now financially possible.

Lee cites other barriers to hiring a professional woman counselor; the law. Lee contends hiring a therapist primarily by gender or race violates Equal Opportunity Laws. He shared an anecdote about an applicant who refused to be considered for a position, that almost became available a few years ago, on the grounds of race. "This kind of issue has come up with regard, especially, to blacks. One that we spoke with, a very skilled, black, clinical psychologist said: 'If you think I'm coming up there to be the guy who sees the blacks, you're crazy. I'm a professional therapist. I'm capable of seeing men, women, Whites, Blacks, Hispanics. . .'"

Drs. Lee and Higgins also caution that hiring a woman specifically for women clients can become troublesome in other ways. " . . . [W]hat we discover is that you come in to see a woman counselor and you might discover you don't like her . . . [T]he trouble is that you get the person in who is the only black or the only woman who feels then that she has to be wonderful with every woman, and a woman comes in and she feels betrayed. What we say is that no one here has the right to feel irritated because one moves from one to the other. It's just chemistry."

If the counseling staff scheduled new clients according to the availability of every therapist or according to the therapist's professional expertise, race or gender exclusivity could be avoided. If, however, a client requested a woman or African-American therapist, for example, they would have the choice to do so. Students and staff should have that therapeutic choice.

To illustrate gender inequity in other services at Trinity, Lee suggested that a male student needing treatment for a venereal disease might be uncomfortable with the wholly female staff at the Trinity Medical Center. The employees at the Medical Center are all nurses, a predominantly female occupation. This gender inequity represents societal gender divisions between low paying support/service jobs (predominantly female) and high paying professional careers (predominantly male). This argument supports the Women Center's commitment to rectifying gender imbalances at *all levels* of Trinity's services. The male students at Trinity should have the opportunity to see a male nurse if they want to, but that's another article.

"The Faculty Manual of Trinity College," connects the need for merit and diversity. "Decisions relative to appointment, employment and promotion will be made on the basis of individual qualification and merit. The College is committed to building a representative

and diverse Faculty, staff, administration and student body and will undertake positive efforts to ensure that this end is achieved."

The daunting task of implementing diversity on campus from students to professors is achievable. Hiring a qualified professional female therapist of color, and thereby expanding the counseling staff, will offer more choices for women and men and will support the college's commitment to fostering diversity.

The Counselling Center is located at 76 Vernon Street above Campus Safety.

Call 297-2482 for an appointment or go to "Administrative Resources" on the Trinity Home page to email the Center.

Men & The Women's Center

by: Sara Getman

"People who care," was one man's response to the question that asked him to describe the Women's Center and Women's Studies in three words. This question was part of the survey that was sent out to male students on campus about their views of the Trinity College Women's Center, women's issues, and Women's Studies. Unfortunately, this response was one of the few that recognized anything the Women's Center is actually about. Thus, it is necessary to dispel a few of the myths that are present regarding the Women's Center, while answering some very significant questions that were

raised in the surveys.

The Women's Center mission statement says: "The Women's Center is a place of advocacy, support, and welcome for all women in the Trinity College Community. Through educational, social, and cultural programming, it seeks to promote self-determination; awareness of women's rights and issues; redress gender inequities and encourage understanding among women of different economic classes, cultures, ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations."

Just over half of the men surveyed had never been to the Women's Center. Only two of the men that had been to the Women's Center stated that they had been to the Women's



Center more than once. Only one-eighth had ever taken a Women's Studies course. Perhaps this lack of understanding led the majority of men to respond so negatively in describing the Women's Center in three words. Some of the most common three-word descriptions that the men gave included the following terms and phrases: "sexist," "male hating organization," "male-oppression," "exclusive," "liberal" and "ineffective." Only a few men recognized the Women's Center as what it seeks to be; supportive, comfortable, and cooperative.

The Women's Center seeks to foster an environment where men and women can work together to overcome gender barriers and promote women's rights. As mentioned in the mission statement, the women's center seeks to encourage understanding. The Trinity College Women's Center is open to all men and women on the Trinity College Campus as a resource, a place for socialization, and a place for discussion. If individuals have specific concerns about the Women's Center or ideas for the Women's Center, the staff would be enthusiastic to work with them.

When men were asked to rank the importance of the involvement of men in women's issues on a scale of one to five, five being most important, the average of their responses was a four. One man stated that men's involvement was important because "men constitute the majority of opinions and roles in determining women's roles in American Society." Many men felt that men aren't more involved in women's issues because they are unaware of exactly what women's issues are, or that they simply don't care. On a more positive note many men recognized that perhaps it was just insecurity that led men to avoid women's issues and that through learning and awareness more men could realize that "women's issues are human issues."

One man's opinion of the Women's Center was that it is "a group of women that get

together against men." This it is not. Instead, the Women's Center is a group of people who get together to promote both self-determination among women, and awareness about issues pertaining to women. The Women's Center seeks to overcome obstacles which prevent positive, equal relationships between men and women. The Trinity College Women's Center would love to have more involvement from men in their programs and activities. Both men and women are always encouraged to stop by and really see what the Women's Center is all about. An increased male presence would be a positive step towards increasing awareness about women's issues on the Trinity Campus, and in promoting the Women's Center as the important place it is.

The Women's Center Staff

Davina Coard
Sexual Assault Task Force

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Beth Miller-Lee
Newsletter
Feminist Scholarship Review

Marjorie Smith
Redefining Ideal Beauty Standards
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Collective Voices
Feminist Scholarship Review

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"Q: What's the difference between Jon Bon Jovi and Kate Moss?"

A: Genitalia & Johnny Depp's affections.**

By Beth Miller-Lee

This past September an anonymous student posted a diatribe on the bulletin board at the Women's Center. The author accused women of committing sexism against men for imposing unrealistic expectations of male physical beauty. He illustrated his comments with five clippings from a newsprint ad featuring Jon Bon Jovi's sculpted physique in Versace Jeans. Though the sex of the author is unknown, for the purposes of this article I will assume it was a less than perfect male student here at Trinity.

"There are plenty of Trinity women with "perfect" bodies--does this mean that the others should just "stop whining?" Of course not. So don't dare think that men have it easier. When it comes to this. Media perfection is not a reality!!!"

I was overjoyed. As a Women's Studies major, I have spent time brainstorming with women concerned with interesting men in Women's Studies courses and trying to dispel stereotypes about feminists and the Women's Studies programs. Deconstructing damaging gender stereotypes is a primary goal of the Women's Studies program and the Women's Center. Gender

unfairly defines both men and women. I will take this opportunity to assure male students that your gender issues are just as important to us as ours.

My brother subscribes to ESPN magazine which I frequently read. ESPN magazine targets male sports enthusiasts. Nude or nearly nude advertisements of sweaty, well-muscled athletes pose seductively in every issue. Traditionally, objectified female models advertise products to women in magazines like Vogue. The implied message being, "If you wear our clothes, use our products, etc., you will be beautiful, sexy and desired by men." Now, many contemporary magazines are objectifying men using physique as a tool, seductively, to sell a product to same sex consumers. The message is the same: "Use this product and you can look like this."

I brought an example of these ESPN advertisements to Feminist Theory last spring semester. Dr. Joan Hedrick asked me if I thought advertisements objectifying men was a good or a bad thing. The obvious answer to me at the time was, "They are as bad for men now as they continue to be bad for women." The mysterious author would have agreed with me in class that day had he been there.

"You'd be surprised how many men, especially these days, hate and agonize over their bodies. They just can't admit to it, due to fear of

ridicule by both men and women. It's a double standard. Just because women have historically suffered longer, does not delegitimize the fact that men also kill themselves for not being perfect."

I do believe, however, that empathy is the most effective way to unite against injustice. This author suffers like women continue to suffer. His anger, like ours, inspired him to speak.

In order to understand the masked assault of objectifying advertisements demanding impossible slimness, hairlessness and attractiveness from women, a man cannot just listen to us complain about it: he has to feel it. I am happy to hear that some men are angry at the super buff male models portrayed in magazine advertisements. It is necessary for them to feel horrible about it for themselves before they can understand how damaging unrealistic physical perfection is to all of us.

We know how depressing it is to be ten, twenty, thirty, etc. pounds "overweight" according to the media. We know how it feels to have too much hair in the wrong places. We know we are in this together.

** If the author would like to apply his name to the information he posted at the Women's Center, we would enjoy hearing his opinions on gender issues in the future.*

The Teen Endangerment Act

"Becky Bell was the first teenage victim of an abortion law that required her to get her parents consent for an abortion, or ask permission from a judge in the state of Indiana. Unwilling to disappoint her parents by telling them and aware that judges in Indiana were not giving permission, Becky sought an illegal abortion and died as a result of a massive infection on September 16, 1988." -NOW

The "Child Custody Protection Act" is the latest assault on women's right to abortion. This bill would make it a crime for any adult, other than a parent - including grandparents, aunts or uncles - to drive a teen from a state that requires parental involvement for teenager's abortion decisions to a state that does not require parental involvement.

In the shadow of President Clinton's philandering, this bill has been put aside, for now. "A bill making it a crime to avoid parental involvement laws by taking a minor to another state for an abortion stalled Tuesday in the Senate, and its Republican sponsor conceded that the issue is probably dead for a year." It is likely the bill will reappear next session when Republicans have time to rally against it.

Abortion rights continue to be attacked by Pro-life politicians inventing barriers to women's access to abortion. Restrictions on abortion can be used as a precedent to restrict all access to abortion. Restrictions on abortion killed 17 year old Becky Bell. Call your Senators. Tell them to vote "no" on the "Child Custody Protection Act." Bill number: S.1645 if it returns to the floor in January.

-St. Petersburg Times, 9/23/98

Thanks to Professor Adrienne Fulco for this information.

Email: <http://www.visi.com/juan/congress> for congressional fax, phone and email addresses in your home state.

CT Senators' Email:

Christopher J. Dodd, sen_dodd@senate.gov

Joseph I. Lieberman, lieberman@lieberman.senate.gov

*"Men, their rights and nothing
more; women, their rights and
nothing less." - Susan B. Anthony*