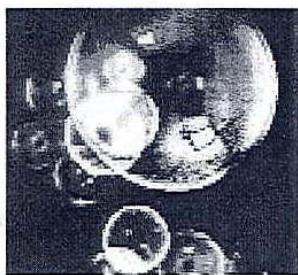


The Women's Center Newsletter

Gender News

November 13, 2001

Letter from the Director



Outside the Bubble by Laura Lockwood

Trinity has been likened to a bubble where many students find comfort and insulation from those who appear different from them. Those who live outside this bubble have a hard time being themselves, because they feel the majority does not accept them for who they are. I challenge you to look outside the bubble and get to know someone who is different than you - different in skin color, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, disability, religion, weight or political leaning. Many students who are "different" at Trinity feel left out of the Trinity scene, which can be exclusive and

elitist. I feel that this derives more from fear and ignorance than from cruel intentions. Making an effort to include someone in your circle or clique that is different from you is a first step in welcoming those who feel on the outside of the Camp Trin-Trin culture. Also, dare to express your individuality and break from the conformity of the Trinity culture, and reach out to others who do the same. College is a place to express yourself and expand your horizons - academically, politically, socially - take advantage of all this campus has to offer. Enrich yourself and learn more about others who are outside of the bubble, and maybe that bubble will pop and disappear.



Growing up Muslim by Shero Malik

Religion has always been an important part of my life, but for many years I never considered myself "religious". Yet the most basic elements of who I am have always been "religious"; I carry a Muslim name and grew up in a moderate Muslim household. My mother never veiled, I saw my parents pray every Sunday (not 5 times a day), and I also did the Sunday school gig for a few years. For the most part we were the typical suburban family. However, in many ways my Pakistani culture, which is heavily influenced by Islamic practice, distinguished me from my peers. For one, I was to always act with modesty and to never forget that my honor, and the honor of my family was on public display. Dating, staying out late, and wearing anything too revealing (like a tank-top) was out of the question. Go

figure--I rebelled. I did all of the above...just in secrecy. I was lucky that I did not get caught--otherwise I am sure I would have been shipped off to some obscure all girls school. Yet in other ways, I did not rebel. For example, to this day I have yet to take a sip of alcohol, which is prohibited by Islam. I think that is when I slowly began redefining Islam, and what it means to me but not necessarily according to what others' expectations might be.

Parallel to this, my parents were reconnecting with their faith. Both began praying five times a day and religion all of a sudden seemed so much more at the forefront of my everyday life. When I came to Trinity my freshman year, I helped institute the *jummah* prayer held on Fridays to stay linked to Islam. I needed to do something. Otherwise, I would be spending the majority of my time on campus with no connection to people who could understand my same inner struggles. I thought it was crazy back then because I was the only female Muslim student at Trinity. To further strengthen my ties to Islam, I decided to choose International Studies with a concentration in the Middle East as my major. Since then, my three years at Trinity have given me time to further contemplate the roles that spirituality, faith, and religion have in my life. Islam is

certainly a huge part of who I am today, and who I will be tomorrow. I have come to believe that I may not be America's poster child for the Muslim faith, but it is a part of who I am and I have tremendous pride in that.

Women and the Taliban

by Daniella Bonanno & Amara Westheimer

In 1996 the Taliban, an ultra-conservative Islamic military regime, seized political control in Afghanistan. It marked the beginning of a radical change in gender rights as the Orwellian Ministry for the Virtue and Suppression of Vice restricted and enforced the social behavior of men and women. Violence effectively enforced gender apartheid.

The policies of gender apartheid strip women of their basic human rights - the right to work, to receive an education, and to leave their homes unescorted by a male relation. The regime requires women to wear the burqa which covers the entire body except for a small screen over the eyes. The Taliban's restrictions on male-female medical treatment have a detrimental effect on women and children. Women and girls cannot see male physicians.

Simultaneously, very few female doctors and nurses are even allowed to practice anymore. Physicians for Human Rights reports that the gender discrimination adversely affects not only women and girls, but also male children. Sometimes the authorities refuse to allow male doctors access to children's wards, which may be located within the women's ward of a hospital, or do not allow male doctors to see children accompanied only by their mothers.

One of the most devastating human rights abuses is the exclusion of women from education. Prior to 1996, women in Afghanistan were equally represented in both the educational and the job sectors. Now, female literacy is a shocking 4 percent, compared with an overall literacy rate of 30 percent. As a result, women are systematically disempowered and more vulnerable than ever. The Taliban controls or strictly monitors the few existing opportunities of girls' education. However, in June, 1998, more than 100 non-



governmental organization (NGO) -funded girls' schools and home-based women's vocational projects were closed by the Taliban in Kabul. In 1998 the Taliban also stated that schools would not be allowed to teach girls over the age of 8, that schools teaching girls would be required to have a license, and that such schools would be required to limit their curriculums to the Koran.

In all of these cases, the Taliban employs violence to intimidate and enforce these horrifying policies. Under virtual house arrest, women who defy the social restrictions are subject to public brutality. For example, an elderly women was beaten with a metal cable until her leg broke because her ankle showed from underneath her burqa.

Despite the Taliban's rhetoric, these laws have no basis in Islam. The Koran allows women to receive an education, control her finances, and be active in public society. The Organization of Islamic Conference refuses to acknowledge the Taliban as the legitimate government in Afghanistan. Even the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has admonished the Taliban's practices.

**For more information
or to get involved, check
out www.feminist.org
www.rawa.org**

Sources: www.feminist.org & Women's
International Network (WIN News) 30
April, 2000. V.26; N.2 p. 31

Feature Woman: Laura Lockwood



If you haven't ventured to the Women's Center and spoken with Laura Lockwood, you have not met one of the most warm, caring administrators at Trinity. In her fourth year as director of the Trinity College Women's Center, Laura Lockwood dedicates herself to changing the Trinity culture to create a more welcoming and tolerant community through various projects of her own and in conjunction with other campus groups.

Laura discusses the divide on campus - a divide between students from public schools

and students from elite private schools and between students of different classes, backgrounds, and traditions. Many students feel marginalized on a campus where material wealth is highly regarded. For Laura, changing the culture means breaking down the elitist, "old boys" atmosphere on campus and erasing the stereotype of a homogenous student body.

In her undergraduate years, Laura developed an interest in human right's activism which evolved into a concern about feminism and women's issues in her late 20's. Before coming to Trinity, Laura worked for the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) for six years. She loves her job as director of the Women's Center because it

The center suffers from the stigma that its just for radical feminists and man-hating lesbians. This is the furthest from the truth.

allows her to interact with young, college-aged people and to work on programs of current concern at Trinity.

Three of her biggest projects are desegregating the women's community,

bridging the gap between different races on campus, and expanding the Safe Zone program. This program trains students, faculty, and administration to provide a more welcoming and safe space for the gay, bisexual, lesbian, and transgender community. Laura envisions a "less homophobic and more hospitable" environment and hopes Safe Zones will lead the campus in that direction. Thus far, Laura is pleased by the support the Women Center's receives from Trinity, however, she also comments that, "we (the Women's Center) haven't done anything too controversial yet".

In regard to the Women's Center, Laura says, "The center suffers from the stigma that its just for radical feminists and man-hating lesbians. This is the furthest from the truth". Laura tirelessly advocates the center as a space open to everyone. One of the most challenging aspects of her job is working to erase this stigma by changing the culture. While feminism is still a "dirty word" on campus, this onus will slowly disappear through Laura's wholehearted initiatives and with the help of dedicated students.

Being Black and Female at Trinity

by Andrea Thomas

The ratio of black women to black men is 76 to 59, and there are 76 black females as compared to 1,578 white students. These appalling numbers have a direct effect on the performance of black females, both academically as well as socially. The psychological impact of being a black female at Trinity is detrimental. Unless these numbers change, black females at Trinity College will continue to suffer.

In a recent survey of ten black women on campus, one respondent stated, "When we go to a party geared towards whites (speaking about the music), it is not a problem if minorities do not show up because we do not account for most of the population. But if minorities throw a party, we NEED other races to make our parties successful. Without them, there is no party. Because of the lack of social life on campus and the lack of transportation for events off campus, minorities are missing out on the social aspect of college which is just as important, in my opinion, as the academic aspect." The social setting is crucial to a student's success. For black women at Trinity, this aspect

of college life continues to suffer.

Many black students at Trinity look off-campus for a more comfortable social environment. Some students pledge predominantly black sororities and fraternities to enhance their social life and surround themselves with people that they can identify with. While these students may find comfort in their new fraternities and sororities, they leave the rest of the black population on campus even more outnumbered. It is a shame that Trinity students need to look outside of the college for this kind of nurturing and encouragement.

In general, when you are not completely comfortable in your social setting, it is harder to perform well academically. Many black females at Trinity may lag behind their white counterparts because of the added burden of race and ethnicity. In "Why We Can't Wait," Martin Luther King, Jr. explains that "the Negro's real problem has been that they have seldom had adequate choices" (King, 148). Unfortunately, 37 years after King wrote this piece, the condition at Trinity College for black females still remain too similar to the "inadequate choices" King discusses. If I felt strongly about dating within my race, I would have

a difficult time at Trinity College.

Black females have "inadequate choices" in terms of dating partners and social gatherings, but it does not stop there. These "inadequate choices" have a negative effect in general. While it is a privilege to attend Trinity College, as a black woman it is also a social and psychological setback. I hope that in the future the College will work to improve the experiences of black women by increasing the black female and male populations on campus.

Nutrition at Trinity: A Heathy Image?

By Daniella Bonanno
& Amara Westheimer

Meandering through Mather, are you overwhelmed by the food options or just confused about how to eat a balanced meal? One student blamed "Thursday, Friday, Saturday (i.e. late night partying)" as the main obstacles to heathy eating. Another student said, "Late night studying and unlimited food in Mather" make it more difficult to achieve a well balanced diet. For many students, a healthy, varied diet is simply not an

option on campus. Since arriving at Trinity, students are more disillusioned than ever about Chartwell's food service with complaints ranging from lack of options in the Cave to loss of special meal nights in the Bistro to stale bread in Mather.

Early in the semester, Joyce O'Dea, the resident nutritionist, led a group of students through the ins and outs of healthy eating at Trinity and deconstructed some myths about cafeteria food. For example, do you know that Chartwells uses low-fat meats in everything from meatloaf to spaghetti sauce? Also, they use healthy olive and canola oils in cooking. O'Dea points out the variety of vegetables and vegetarian/vegan options in Mather. She emphasizes portion control and incorporating whole grains, fruits, and vegetables into one's diet.

Many students are glad to learn about the healthy eating options and wish this information was public knowledge. One student comments that the options are there, "you just have to be creative". When asked whether or not the nutritionist's information was helpful, a freshman says, "its common sense, but sometimes its helpful for someone to tell you".

Over half of the people do fad diets...everyone's striving for the image.

O'Dea is particularly concerned about navigating through the flood of media information, sorting out the misinformation, and finding a balanced eating plan. The diet industry takes in \$40 million each year and is growing. A flood of fad diets and weight loss plans assault Americans, and it is increasingly difficult to navigate through the hordes of information we receive everyday. In this day and age, "A startling 61% of Americans weigh too much, and about 26% of them are obese — 30 pounds or more over a healthy weight". Although this national statistic hardly reflects the student body at Trinity where a slender to skinny figure is the norm, weight management is still a preoccupation for both men and women.

O'Dea attributes this preoccupation to misinformation and the media's influence. "The average female fashion-model is 23% thinner than the average American woman." In reference to students she sees in her office, O'Dea said,

"Over half of the people do fad diets...everyone's striving for the image." Nutrition for the sake of looking good in a pair of jeans overrides concerns about eating for health for many Trinity students. O'Dea points out the difference between dieting to lose weight and making changes to your diet to enhance your health. Dieting for weight loss can actually be quite detrimental to one's health. "Strict diets usually lower metabolism because they cause loss of lean body mass (muscle tissue) rather than loss of body fat." Dieting can also lead to vitamin and mineral deficiencies, loss of bone density, and weak muscles.

Sensationalized by the media and over-analyzed, eating disorders are a weary topic. However, the word, anorexia, still sparks gossip and concern on campus. Have you ever caught someone eyeballing your tray and wonder, "How obsessed are we?" Is the salad diet normal? How do you draw the line between your friend's abnormal eating patterns and a full-blown disorder? As Susan Bordo states in her book, Unbearable Weight, "we are constantly told that we can 'choose' our own bodies, the proper diet, the right amount of exercise, and you can have, pretty much, any body you desire." The truth is we can't choose;

most people who want to lose weight do not understand that they can do so healthily and without harming their bodies

O'Dea, herself, finds it difficult to distinguish between a healthy concern and a preoccupation. While she's not qualified to diagnose eating disorders, she works in conjunction with the counseling center, coaches, and trainers to provide support and resources for students. Trinity is fortunate to have a nutritionist on campus. Over her four years, the traffic to O'Dea's office has increased as more students seek out her confidential, comfortable conversation and her sound nutritional advice. If you would like to meet with Joyce O'Dea, call the health center to arrange an appointment.

Health Center x 2018

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Sleepy

by Gabriel Dark

Western drive &
Crisscrossing lives
With passing sighs
We travel on
Lacking truth
Wheels and tar
Escape to this
release, render
Your thoughts
Mindless.
Green, 1967
Prod and gone
We passed #1
Under the spilled remains
Of the liquid sun,

California seems so far
From me.
In my sleep, in my dreams.
We've searched the road.
And filled the miles.
For the dampened
Streaks of lamenting, gripping
Dosing mind.
I found the breeze,
Forgot
My thought
And chased a question.

No more fancy shirts,
Plastic boy.
Training bras and jumper cables
Skin and smoke
His only joy,
Arranged
Angelic and new.
Left alone to cry
in liquid pain.

Arriving in time.
Shaping, &
Clean.
We lost our minds
Until tomorrow, and try once more.

New Feeling

Anonymous

This is a role that I have not played,
and I am resisting it
with all the force that I should have
used in the first place.
Like a little girl I cried,
one night.
My bones felt tiny and my hands weak
and I clutched my teacup
as if it would give me the strength that
I knew I would have to find,
somewhere
if I didn't want to fall,
broken on the floor.
Empty and exhausted, I slept
and awoke whole-
all pieces accounted for.
I rose,
put both feet on the floor,
threw away the used tissues
in the living room,
glanced in to make sure that fear
and anger had not gotten out
during the night.
I washed the bitter tea down
the bathroom sink,
washed my face, my hands,
and stepped defiantly
into another day.

Untitled

by Nicole M.A. Brown

The face of Beauty cries
Beneath the veil of perfection
lies immeasurable sadness-
Longing.
And endless cycle of hoping and
waiting.
She stares;
That penetrating stare-
Perfect.
But not so.
The exterior signals promise,
Her gait signals confidence-
Concealing the soul's most wretched
fears,
Lying beneath the smooth complexion
Sunny smiles mask impenetrable
darkness,
The haunting darkness of her sad life,
Crying from the inside.
Suffering-
No one hears,
Just another pretty face;
What can she possibly know of pain?

Poetry Corner

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