

# The Women's Center Newsletter

Winter 2002

## Letter From the Director

### Feeling Safe

Laura R. Lockwood

One of the founding principals of the Women's Center was to provide a place where women felt safe. Recently, safety has been on everyone's mind. Students have organized to raise awareness and demand action. Women have felt especially vulnerable given the recent release of the sex offender, John Urban, from prison into a

Hartford Halfway House. African-American and Latino male students are being profiled unjustly by Hartford police and fellow students. Some students want the campus closed. Keeping non-students out isn't our biggest problem, however. The people we need to really worry about are here on this campus. As reported at the Open Forum on Safety, most women who are sexually assaulted are assaulted by fellow students. This largely underreported crime will not cease if we close the campus. Over 80% of sexual assault victims know their attackers. They are your hall mates, class mates, acquaintances, and hook-ups.

Sometimes it's the last person you would suspect. This is not to say women should hide in their rooms! This is about awareness: knowledge is power. If initiating sex, you need to seek consent. Remember, a drunk woman/man cannot, by law, give consent. If you drink, remember that your judgment becomes impaired. Men should not initiate sex under the influence. Why? Because they may forget to wear a condom. Or, their sex partner may say "No" and is not heard, or is misunderstood. Having sex while drunk is illegal, for both men and women. For women, you need to watch your drinks (for date rape drugs), watch your friends, and trust

- Director's Letter
- Silent Epidemic
- Goddess Circles
- Michael Kimmel
- Prostitution
- Take Action!

your instincts. You need to communicate with your sex partner - tell him/her what you want and what you don't want. Don't assume s/he can read your mind. You can be responsible and still have great sex! Because drinking impairs judgment, don't chance a sexual encounter after drinking to excess. Waking up in the morning, not remembering who you were with or what happened, or whether a condom was used, is very scary. If the sex isn't consensual, it's sexual assault or rape. Found guilty, perpetrators get expelled or, if charges are pressed, go to jail. Trinity expels rapists. Two male students were expelled in Fall, '02 for a sexual misconduct misdemeanor. Students are currently being trained as Sexual Assault Peer Counselors. They, along with administrators listed on your SART (Sexual Assault Response Team) card, can help you, confidentially, through the ensuing emotions. We ask your permission to file an anonymous report, to maintain statistics. However, without names we can't prevent the alleged assaulter from acting again. Remember, an assault is not your fault. Please, talk to someone about it.

## The Silent Epidemic

Jillian Rutman

I know that I speak for the majority of women on campuses nationwide when I say that I have been told time and time again by my peers, parents, and professors to be careful when I go out to parties. I'm told that I need to watch my drink and keep track of my friends. We've all heard stories of women who have woken up in strange beds after a night of heavy partying, stories of date rape drugs, of pregnancies, and STDs. To many of us, these cautionary tales have been so drilled into us that we could recite the warnings in our sleep; to others, they are so overdramatized that they seem more like urban legends than real threats. The reality?

According to The National College Women Sexual Victimization Study of 1996 which surveyed 4,446 college students, 20-25% of college women survive either an

attempted rape or a completed rape in their college years. Of these rapes and assaults, 75% involve alcohol consumption on the part of the perpetrator, the victim or both. Participants in this study confirmed that in nine out of ten cases, the perpetrators knew the victims. They reported that the majority of rapes and attempted rapes occurred in the evening, with 51.8% happening between the hours of midnight and 6 am. Of these rapes, 60% occurred in the victims' residences while approximately 10.3% occurred in fraternity houses.

Research done by The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA, 2002) yields broader results. In America, an alarming 638,000 reported rapes occur every year to women over the age of 18. Of these rapes, 32,101 result in pregnancies, while 1,276 victims contract HIV.

What is the most frightening aspect of this? Rape isn't as easy to tally as other crimes. In fact, statistics show that only 28% of all of rapes in America are reported to police officers. Imagine the multitudes of women whose voices are silenced, women who feel like they can't report what has happened.

The bottom line? As women, we have to be careful. These horror stories aren't just urban legends. We have to remain aware of the circumstances around us, the people we associate with, and the amount of alcohol we consume. Women and men alike have to be responsible for their friends and themselves. Don't let yourself or someone you love become a victim.

Please contact Laura Lockwood at the Women's Center (x2408) if you've suffered sexual assault and need someone talk

to. You can also contact other members of SART (Sexual Assault Response Team): Campus Safety-x2222; Trinity College Emergency Response Team (TCERT)-x2222; Student Peer Counselors: Sana Khan -x3048, Carolyn Dorr -236-0766, Ben Johnson (check directory); Dean of Students-x2156; Counseling Center-x2415; Health Center-x2018; ORL-x2305; Chaplain-x2012; Office of Multicultural Affairs -x4251. All reports are confidential. It is your choice to report it formally, using names, or to report it anonymously. If you report it anonymously, the administration will not be able to prevent the alleged assaulter from assaulting again. If you need a rape kit, call Campus Safety. They will contact the nurse practitioner on call. You can also contact Hartford Sexual Assault Crisis Services, at 522-6666, or the Hartford Police, at 911. New Student Peer Counselors

will complete their training next semester. Please watch postings for their contact information.

Please, don't let your voice go unheard. Support is there if you seek it.

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#### JUST ONE VOTE!

For the first time since abortion became legal (Roe v Wade, 1973) the presidency and both houses of Congress are in anti-choice hands. Religious Right politicians and lobbyists now wield enormous power.

#### WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The right to choose was maintained by a 5-4 vote in the most recent Supreme Court decision on abortion. One or two justices are expected to retire soon, and President Bush has promised to nominate conservative justices. Just one more anti-choice justice would ensure the loss of reproductive rights for generations.

#### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Go to [www.ctnarl.org](http://www.ctnarl.org), and click on ACT Now! or call CT NARAL (Connecticut National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League) at (860) 524-1086. Take action today!

Sources: Ms. Magazine, Volume XII, Winter 2002; [www.ctnarl.org](http://www.ctnarl.org)

## **Feminist Spirituality: Goddess Circles**

Jillian Rutman

"We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been — a place half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free." -Starhawk

This Halloween, a group of students, faculty, and staff gathered in the Women's Center Lounge for a Lunch Series presentation on Goddess Circles. Presenter Beth Miller graduated from Trinity in 2000 with a degree in Women's Studies. A Development Writer and Visiting Lecturer, Beth is also a Trinity graduate student. She eagerly shared her personal experiences from the perspective of someone who had not only studied feminist spirituality, but had actively participated in several Goddess Circles.

Beth credited Marija Gimbutas, a female archeologist who unearthed small statues of women in sacred sites throughout Europe, as one of the major women responsible for the beginnings of women's spirituality. While her male colleagues hypothesized these figurines to be erotic models for men,

Gimbutas interpreted them as religious symbols dating back to religions existing in agricultural Europe around the time of the Bronze Age. These religions, based on a lunar calendar, were centered on goddess worship and had a goddess as a central figure of their worship. She was worshiped for the way she held the universe within her body, and how her body cycles matched the cycles of birth and death. Gimbutas theorized that this goddess figure was first suppressed, and then lost when Russian horsemen invaded and destroyed these civilizations.

Women today involved in Goddess Circles seek to reclaim this feminine connection of the body to the universe. These Circles often involve healing, and spiritual cleansing that many women find therapeutic. Goddess Circles actively attempt to reclaim and redefine the term *witch* so that it loses its negative connotations, dating back to the time of the Spanish Inquisition when the



*Mallus Malificarum*

(The Witch Hammer) was published. During this time period, often referred to as "the burning times," at least 900,000 people were accused of witchcraft. The majority of the accused were women unprotected by the laws of marriage; they were widows, herbalists, and healers. The fact that the term *witch* is still considered negative indicates that this global assault on women still taints our memories.

Goddess Circles emerged out of this need to redefine historically negative images of women and create a female space of spirituality. Beth defined *feminist spirituality* for the group as a combination of reclaiming and revising history and institutions through thoughts, words, and deeds that actively infringe on the minds, bodies and souls of

women. These Circles meet at a time convenient for the participants; the Circle that Beth was involved in met once a month, on the full moon. It is not uncommon for the participants to identify themselves as witches or goddesses. In Beth's experience, the women in the group are usually European-American, forty years or older.

They typically sit in a circle (an act that refutes linear thought) so there is no sense of hierarchy amongst the women. Even if one person is designated as the leader, all participants are treated as equals. At the beginning of each gathering, they state their purpose, ranging from prayer and healing to politics and daily life. This is intended to help keep their thoughts focused. Although there are no set rituals that span across all Circles, a common way to begin a session is to invoke the four directions. Each direction symbolizes

something different: East is the air, and is often represented by swords or eagles. South is fire, symbolized by passion or heat. West is the water, often symbolized by ocean creatures. North is the earth, and can be represented by a number of animals. Calling these four elements clears the minds of the participants and creates a sacred space. Other common rituals include drumming, talking singing and chanting and are often accompanied by candles, pictures of women or goddesses, flowers, and tarot cards.

Beth says that women circle for a variety of reasons. The most obvious is the spiritual aspect: to bring back the woman as a central figure in worship. However, other reasons involve finding a safe culture of women to identify with, learning about one's personal spirituality, teaching oneself to speak and make demands and expressing one's needs. The rituals are often

cathartic, and many women have claimed they are more helpful than therapy.

Interested in learning more? Check out *The Spiral Dance*, or *The Twelve Wild Swans* by Starhawk or e-mail Beth Miller at [Beth.Miller@mail.trincoll.edu](mailto:Beth.Miller@mail.trincoll.edu).



GODDESS, HOLDING CHILD, ON LION  
Bronze, Hittite, c. 1500 B.C.

## Michael Kimmel: His Words and Mine

Samantha Rose

Michael Kimmel is a Professor of Sociology at SUNY, Stony-Brook, New York. His work examines gender by focusing on men's lives from a pro-feminist perspective. Michael Kimmel spoke at Trinity College on October 8<sup>th</sup> at the invitation of President Hersh.

Michael Kimmel began his discussion by examining the success of the book "Men are From Mars and Women are From Venus." He believed the success of the book stemmed from its insight into the relationship between men and women. The book became an international bestseller, resulting in numerous translations.

Kimmel presented a talk on the historical advancements of gender equality and social reform. He named co-education as the most revolutionary and successful

advancement in this field, because it allows men and women to interact in a public and social environment that encourages gender equality.

He then highlighted the Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas sexual harassment debacle, which put sexual discrimination in the work place in the public eye. Kimmel described Hill's mistreatment by the media as a "chilling effect." Despite this, sexual harassers, and their employers, are finally being held accountable for their actions.

Other advancements in gender equality can be traced by looking at trends in female behavior, from the Kinsey Report in the 1950's to the present. Kimmel attributes shifting behaviors to women's changing perceptions and expectations of men. In general, women have become more self-reliant. Today women live more independently

and pro-actively than their counterparts in the 1950's. Yet there are stumbling blocks. In order to fit in and succeed in business, some women feel they need to adapt stereotypical "male" characteristics, i.e. aggression. Even female dress styles have changed to incorporate the more masculine dress style of business suits and trousers.

Men's role and its definition have not gone through the same radical change. In accordance with historical expectations, many men still feel that they are expected to be the sole provider and defender of their families. In adhering to this role, men sometimes resort to "gender policing" and ridicule their peers for not acting "male enough." Sometimes this results in blatant homophobia.

Similar to race inequality, gender inequality is often an

invisible entity, indiscernible by those not afflicted. An example is the "glass ceiling," which is experienced by female workers, but invisible to their male co-workers. Likewise, women's behavior in the workplace is closely scrutinized, while men's is not. Consequently, some men have developed a sense of entitlement and are often not held accountable for their behavior. For instance, in matters of violence, Kimmel commented that directing sexual assault education towards women actually dilutes the accountability of male rapist. Not holding men accountable ultimately limits the ideal of manhood. Many men view the struggle towards gender equality as a deviation from traditional roles; thus, a loss. Kimmel's response is "Feminism will make it possible for the first time for men to be free!"

## **Prostitution: Against the Battle for Legalization**

Jillian Rutman

The legalization of prostitution has been a hotly debated topic in the last decade. The pro-legalization platform argues that we should channel money into making special taxes for prostitutes, restricting prostitution to certain zones, issuing licenses, and performing health checks. The anti-legalization platform states that we should be investing money into getting these women out of prostitution and into better jobs, living situations, drug rehab, and psychological counseling.

However, by supporting the legalization of prostitution, we are ultimately supporting the dehumanization of women. When it comes down to it, prostitution is a practice that teaches men to objectify women, to treat them as objects rather than as people. It promotes male supremacy by allowing women to believe they are worth no more than the money they make from selling their bodies. It is a practice that infringes on basic human and civil rights.

Kathleen Barry describes prostitution in her book [The Prostitution of](#)



Sexuality as "male masturbation in a female body." She says that "men buy not a self, but a body that performs as a self. And it is a self that conforms to the most harmful, damaging racist and sexist concepts of women." Ex-prostitute Andrea Dworkin speaks from personal experience as she describes prostitution as "the mouth, the vagina, the rectum, penetrated by a penis, sometimes hands, sometimes objects, by one man, then another, then another, then another, and then another."

In a 1998 study done by Melissa Farley, PhD, of 475 prostitutes in five countries (South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, USA, and Zambia), 62% stated that they had been raped, 73% stated that they had experienced some form of physical assault, 72% stated that they were currently homeless, and 92% said that they wished to escape prostitution immediately but didn't have the means to do so.

Why would societies channel money into programs that encourage women to continue their lives as prostitutes? Although the government might be able to create laws that reduce these rape and abuse statistics, they cannot

buy these women their self-esteem or their dignity.

Prostitutes are also denied their right to privacy. Once in the presence of a client, they often have no right to set limits, so time after time they are perpetrated by prying hands and eyes. They have no right to privacy even within their own flesh.

They are also denied their freedom of speech. Their cries are often silenced if they seek help. On average, a prostitute is raped 8-10 times a year. This does not account for other forms of physical assault. Only 7% of these victims seek help and 4% report the rapes to the police. The reason? Studies like one done in Seattle in 1993 show us: 42% of prostitutes who reported rapes were arrested and fined on prostitution related charges. Only 8% of the men convicted were sentenced. With statistics like these, it quickly becomes clear why prostitutes feel forced to keep their mouths shut. Shouldn't we be encouraging them to ask for help rather than giving them more reasons to stay in the business?

Many prostitutes today argue that they stay in the field because it pays more than traditional female jobs. Some even work eight-hour shifts during the day

and work the streets at night to make ends meet, pay the bills, and feed their children. Although legalizing prostitution might make the practice safer for women (by providing them with routine exams, medications, and licenses), it would also enable them to continue the practice of prostitution instead of seeking ways to rehabilitate their lives.

Above all, prostitutes are entitled to the right to life. M.H. Silbert and A.M. Pines' research uncovers that globally, the average age of entry into prostitution is 13 years old. ("Victimization of Street Prostitutes, Victimology: An International Journal, 7: 122-133, 1982) These young girls are either recruited or coerced into prostitution by pimps or sold into the business by mothers already involved in the practice. The girls are never given a chance at life.

If we choose to legalize prostitution, we are encouraging the growth of an already \$14.5 billion dollar a year universal business. We are assisting the dehumanization of women and teaching young



girls that they are worthless. Instead, we should be embracing the individuals, the victims, and welcoming them back into a society where they will be respected and loved.

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***A Note to Our Readers:***

***We welcome letters to the editor. Please send your comments to Jillian.Rutman@trincoll.edu. Thank you!***

***If you would like to submit an article, poem or other creative material to the newsletter, please send it to the above email address, or to Box 702584.***

***Many thanks to Beth Miller for her final edits.***

***The Editors***



***This Newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Professor Lise Waxer.***

\* \* \*

**Do you want to take action on women's issues?  
Here are some ways:**

- \* Volunteer at the Women's Center or join a Women's Center sponsored organization! Call Laura at x2408.
- \* Volunteer in the Hartford community! Call Laura at x2408 or Joe Barber at x4256.
- \* Go to [feminist.org](http://feminist.org), and click on "Take Action."

Are you angry about the war mongering in Washington? Take action! Join TAWC (Trinity's Anti-War Coalition). TAWC meets Thursday nights, 7pm, McCook Library.

**WOMEN'S CENTER SPRING PROGRAMS**

February 14: Violence Against Women Day.  
"The Vagina Monologues," TBA

March 4: "Women and Power in the Birthplace," 7pm,  
Terrace Room B, Arlene Shannon, Student Midwife

March 8: International Women's Day!  
Watch the Trinity Exchange for events.

April 5: "Cedar Hill Cemetery Tour: 19th Century Female Social Reformers," 11am-12:30pm, lunch follows. Van will provide transportation to the cemetery, one mile from campus. Presented by the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame. Please RSVP at x2408.

April 10: "An Evening With Nikki Giovanni:  
A Meditation on Survival and Transcendence," 7pm,  
Washington Room

Third week of April: "Take Back the Night March," TBA

## **WOMEN'S CENTER STAFF**

Director: Laura R. Lockwood  
Anti-Violence Coordinator: Tracy Eames  
Collective Voices Coordinator: Christine Kim  
Newsletter/Feminist Scholarship Review Editors:  
Jillian Rutman and Inonge Nyumbu  
RIBS (Redefining Ideal Beauty Standards)  
Coordinator: Erin Kinney

Volunteer Staff:

TWO (Trinity Women's Organization) Coordinator:  
Rachel Gravel

The Women's Center office is located on the second floor of Mather Hall, behind the Washington Room. To make an appointment with the Director or to use the Library/Lounge, please call Laura Lockwood at x2408. All students and members of the Trinity and Greater Hartford communities are welcome!

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## **WOMEN'S CENTER MISSION STATEMENT**

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, races, ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations.

\* Many men use the Center - we welcome all students!

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***"FEMINISM IS THE RADICAL NOTION THAT WOMEN  
ARE HUMAN BEINGS." Cheris Kramerae :-)***

***"Feminism encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians."  
Reverend Pat Robertson, 1992 GOP Convention :-)***

Dear Trinity member,

Please take a few minutes to answer and return this short survey. It is geared towards students, but anyone wishing to complete it is welcome to do so. Your input is valued.

Thank you!



**WHAT PROGRAM TOPICS INTEREST YOU?? CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY...**

**Safety, Sex, Race and Building Community**

- a) Create dialogue between students of different races, ethnicities, classes, sexes, genders, and those of differing sexual orientations to help dispel stereotypes and build community
- b) Take action to improve race relations on campus, and to build a bigotry-free campus (this includes bigotry of all types)
- c) Learn definitions of sexual assault/rape/stalking/dating violence/sexual harassment...what is consent? Learn prevention methods...learn what to do if victimized
- d) Learn sex education...STDs, communication, Dr.Ruth-type information, etc.
- e) Learn laws about intoxication and sex...when is a hook-up illegal?
- f) Self-defense classes
- g) Learn the process the college uses to handle reports of sexual assault
- h) Support group for survivors of sexual assault
- i) Support/discussion/action group for men against rape
- j) Other ideas \_\_\_\_\_

**Race/Ethnicity/Sexual Orientation/Class/Religion/Gender/Size/Ability**

- a) Create dialogue about coping mechanisms for the racism/xenophobia/homophobia/classism/"thinness culture," anti-Semitism, and bias based on disabilities on campus...and later in the workplace
- b) Hear speakers who are role-models
- c) Other ideas \_\_\_\_\_

**Stress & Emotional Health**

- a) Learn how to relax, de-stress and manage your time
- b) Support group for people stressed by college life
- c) Other ideas \_\_\_\_\_

Continued on the back....

### **Eating Disorders/Body Image**

- a) Support group for people with eating disorders or issues with body image
- b) Learn how to help a friend with eating disorders
- c) Hear from parents of a woman who died from an eating disorder in college
- d) Hear from a celebrity with an eating disorder
- e) Hear a local therapist talk about eating disorders
- f) Hear a nutritionist explain how to eat healthily
- g) Other ideas \_\_\_\_\_

### **Relationships/ Hooking Up**

- a) Learn how to have a healthy relationship, gay/bi/trans or straight
- b) Learning how to communicate what you want/don't want in a hook-up or sexual encounter in a relationship
- c) Learn what resources are available to you should you become pregnant
- d) Take action to keep abortion legal
- e) Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Career/Family**

- a) For women and men: learn now to negotiate household/family responsibilities
- b) Learn about the option of having a mid wife, and a home birth
- c) Money management
- d) For women: how to survive the "glass ceiling"
- e) For women and men: how to recognize sexual harassment and how to handle it
- f) For students of color: how to survive racism/xenophobia in the workplace, and here at Trinity
- g) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Is there anything else that you would like to learn about, participate in, or take action to change on campus, or off?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Is there an issue(s) you would like to see the Women's Center address?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Are you a student? yes no If not, are you Staff? Faculty? Administration?**

**Optional: Name \_\_\_\_\_ Year/Dept. \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_**

**MANY THANKS!!! Please send this to Laura Lockwood, Box 702584.**