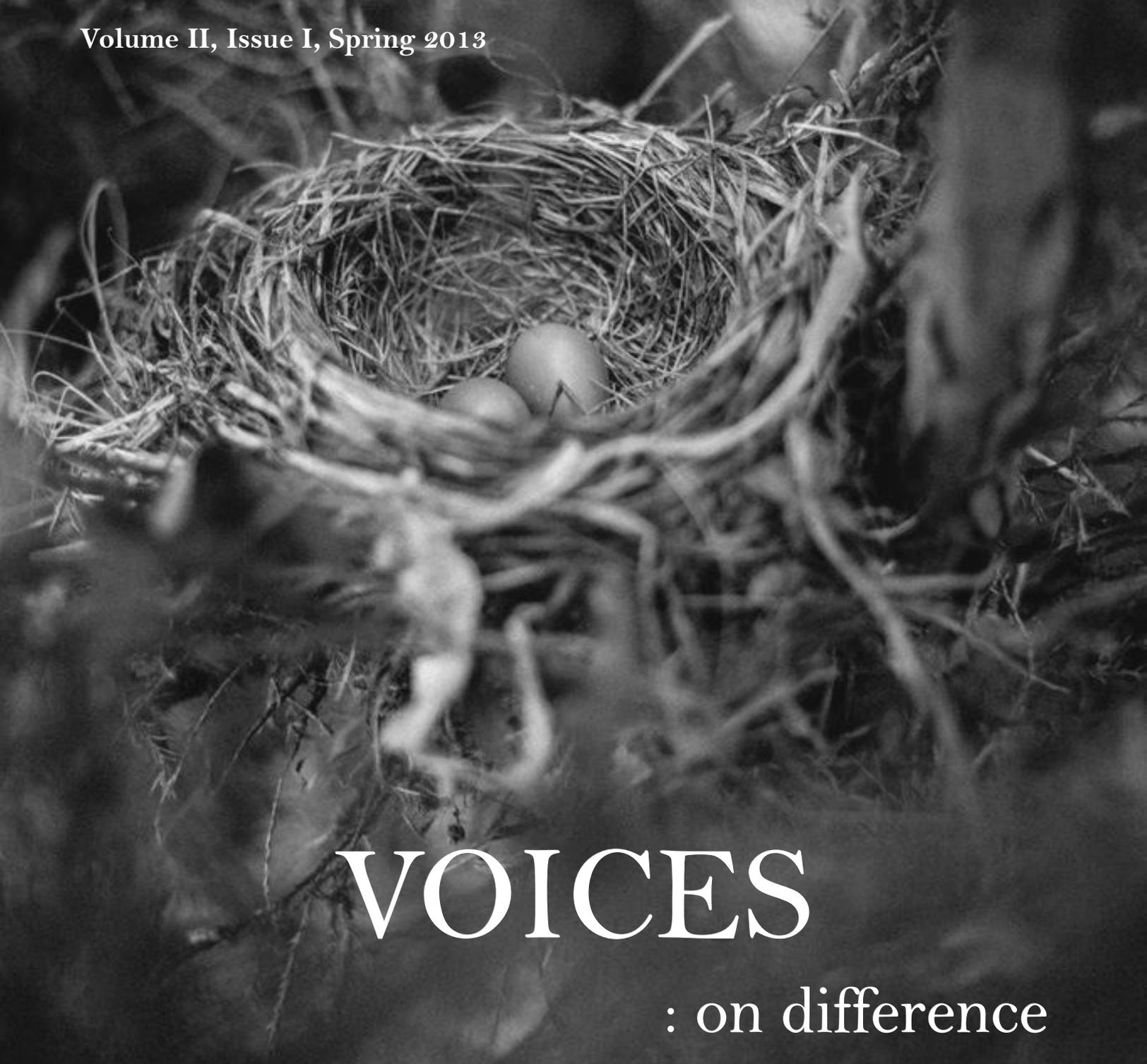


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VOICES

: on difference

A student-led journal focusing on issues of social justice

Graduate Social Work Department **WCU**
West Chester University **WEST CHESTER**
UNIVERSITY

Editors' Note

If you have ever watched a mother bird build her nest, then you know that they do so with great care, determination and perseverance. The mother bird carefully gathers any materials that she may weave together to build a home for her babies, and then she meticulously constructs the nest piece by piece to make it strong and resilient. Although the basic construction of most nests is similar, each bird constructs their nest with creativity - gathering whatever materials they may find, whether they be pieces of yarn, fabric, or even trash. Although each nest serves the same basic purpose, each nest is unique and different.

Just as the mother bird builds her nest with great care, determination and perseverance, we, as social workers, steadfastly and adamantly work to build up our clients. We also come alongside our clients to assist them in securing safety, to cheer them on as they grow into their strengths, and to help them tap into their resiliency amidst difficult life circumstances. Although this aspect of social work and the client-centered relationship is foundational for all of us, each of us possess a unique practice that is influenced by our personal experiences, perspectives and creative touch. We each bring something different to the profession of social work.

Our hope is that this journal can provide a forum for sharing our views on social justice. In sticking with the theme of "difference," we wanted to gather a collection of stories that would display our wide array of unique experiences and perspectives as an MSW student body. Our contributors have shared personal narratives, poems, and social-justice oriented pieces that have enriched our perspectives. We hope that you enjoy these essays as much as we have. If you are a student in the West Chester University Master's of Social Work program, please consider contributing to the next issue of VOICES.

Editorial Board 2013

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Shades of the Rainbow

~ Dawna Jones

As a person of color who completed two levels of higher education at predominantly white institutions, I know all too well the challenges students may face as they navigate the college experience while trying to find their voice and identity. I remember the insecurities I felt being a first generation college student from a low-income, single parent family, when my friends all had parents and grandparents who went to college. I felt isolated and embarrassed because I was not used to asking for help, but I knew that I was in dire need of it, financially, academically, and psychologically. I also recall the nagging sense of responsibility I felt, often being the only African American student in a classroom and having to answer for my race. I frequently felt the pressure that I had to perform to the best of my ability because others of my race would be judged by my achievements, or lack thereof. I was fortunate enough to have close friends and administrators who understood my struggle and supported me as I found my way. The support that I received from certain administrators is what motivated me to pursue a career in student affairs, and later social work.

Years ago an LGBTQ student group came to one of my classes to do a “speak out.” The students spoke about the challenges of coming out to friends, family, and classmates, along with the added torment of having to continually reveal their sexuality as new people entered into their lives. They related how people have abandoned them since coming out and the way passersby have looked at them with disgust when holding hands with a partner in public. I remember feeling outraged at the idea that someone would be discriminated against based on whom he or she loved. However, I was also disappointed in myself for never having considered what that may feel like and for remaining indifferent for so long. I could not imagine what my college experience would have been like if I had the added pressure of questioning my sexuality and considering whether or not I would have lost my support system because of it. I knew immediately that I wanted to advocate for, work with, and learn from this group of people.

After being an ALLY and student affairs professional for several years, I also began to consider the additional challenge students of color face when they identify as a member of the LGBTQ community. However, I noticed that there were not very many students of color at the LGBTQA student group sessions. So, when I began my second field placement with LGBTQA services at West Chester University, I knew exactly what I wanted to accomplish.

The Shades of the Rainbow project is a discussion series and outreach program focused on LGBTQ stu-

dents of color at West Chester University. Through this program, students who identify as both racial and sexual minorities have a unique space to discuss their experiences in a safe group setting. The group explores the challenges that can occur at the intersections of race, sexuality, religion, and gender. Hot button issues include the realities of being “out” on campus and closeted at home, the role religion plays in their cultural communities and their overall oppression, and the experiences they share on campus. The program was designed by me and Aneesah Smith, Assistant to the Vice President for LGBTQA Services and Special Projects, who shares a similar interest in outreach for LGBT students of color. Providing this medium for LGBTQ students of color, together with Aneesah, has been an even more eye-opening experience than I could have expected. Learning about the students’ tribulations and empowering them to share their experiences has been a phenomenal opportunity. It has been impactful for me as an administrator to learn that some students find safety and solace

in the campus community that do not seem to get the support to express who they are at home. It is a heart-breaking revelation that reminds me of the importance of my role on campus to ensure an inclusive community in residence halls for all students, especially those who are unable to find emotional support at home. It

angers me to hear about the students’ challenges of feeling ostracized when professors and other students make homophobic comments and reminds me of my obligation to advocate for them and empower them to advocate for themselves.

It is my hope that these outreach efforts continue to motivate others to advocate for this population and others that often go unnoticed. In my opinion, not enough administrators have taken the time to consider the needs of students at their intersections, taking into account the multiple identities that our students struggle to maintain. LGBT students of color are a unique group with unique needs and a perspective that needs to be heard, and there are many other groups who are in need of support. For so many people, the opportunity to come together and share their stories is cathartic and empowering. As a social worker who advocates for social justice, it is important to me to continue to provide these opportunities to those who need them the most.

“It is my hope that these outreach efforts continue to motivate others to advocate”

In the Box

~ Kristin Ramsdell

In the early 1990s, a film entitled *Boxing Helena* details the obsession one man has with a beautiful, sexually self-possessed woman. The man, a mad doctor, kidnaps Helena and amputates her legs and arms, thereby creating the ideal, lover-in-a-box: a woman who cannot leave. More importantly, the woman's sexuality has been defined, controlled, and she remains chaste only for him. With its release, the film was categorized as an artistic piece depicting the perils of obsession. Perhaps the project's unintended value is the commentary on the literal and symbolic subjugation of female sexuality.

Sex. A seemingly natural act fraught with complexity. In this second year of field practicum studying sexual and reproductive health, I have researched, reflected upon, and encountered a myriad of issues relating to sexual health. I bear witness to the extraordinary lives of the young men and women I counsel at an outpatient health clinic. As expected, their burgeoning sexuality can elicit intense emotional responses: curiosity, desire, and pleasure. Yet these newfound joys are not always associated with their initial sexual experiences. Betrayal and anger can emerge with a positive STD test: Did my partner lie to me? Uncertainty with a positive pregnancy result: What do I do? Relief/grief following an abortion: Will I be okay? Despite the potential challenges, these clients are counseled in accordance with one crucial tenet - self-determination.

The body can be a vessel to immense sexual pleasure, a gateway to physical and emotional connection. However, bodies are also exploited through rape, molestation, and sex trafficking. Too often, the body is a commodity. Bodies are traded, regulated, mutilated. Why are these atrocities tolerated by society? During the most recent election cycle, oddly familiar debates about women's access to basic healthcare, including contraception and abortion, have been recycled in this 21st century era. Inherent in this war on sexual and reproductive freedom is the essentialism of female physicality necessary to reinforce these injustices. Women's bodies, and therefore their lives, are not their own. Self-determination is a not a war that's been hard-fought and won. Women are losing.

One in three American women will have an abortion in her lifetime. Ladies, look to your left. Look to your right. One in this trio has likely terminated or will terminate a pregnancy through an abortion. With each passing year more laws regulating abortion, and therefore women's bodies, are enacted by state legislatures. In 2011, 24 states limited access to abortion with a record-breaking 92 laws. Legal restrictions include forced, medically-unnecessary ultrasounds, mandatory waiting periods, and specific legislation designed to defund Planned Parenthood. Perhaps the most troubling piece of legislation is H.R. 358, passed in 2011 by the overwhelmingly anti-choice U.S. House of Representatives, allowing hospitals and all staff to refuse to "participate" in the provision of an abortion. Fittingly renamed the "Let Women Die Act," a hospital could be ex-

empt from performing an abortion for a pregnant woman seeking care, even in the event of a life-threatening emergency.

As a lawyer, it is mindboggling to consider the restrictions placed upon the constitutional right to a legal abortion afforded women in the 1973 landmark case of *Roe vs. Wade*. As a social worker, it is unspeakable to behold the blaming and shaming that routinely accompany women in sexual and reproductive health decisions. Ignorance abounds and is acceptable to flaunt. During the 2012 election Senatorial candidate U.S. Rep. Todd Akin (R-MO) declared unnecessary the abortion exception in cases of rape, as "[i]f it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down" (emphasis added, Eligon & Schwirtz, 2012). Also in 2012, activist and attorney Sandra Fluke testified before a House committee on insurance coverage for contraceptives and was publicly flogged as a "slut" for her views on reproductive justice. The layman, too, is not immune from engaging in the blame game. Recently, a Facebook friend and member of the counseling profession blithely posted as his status that women who seek abortions do so out of "convenience."

I have sat with women, women in possession of the power, however tenuous, to make their own decisions. Mostly, these decisions do not come easily. I have listened to a woman in her 40s, already a mother and afraid of her husband's reaction to her pregnancy. I have held a young woman's hand, separated from her family by an ocean and

"I honor them all, and I trust in the wisdom of their choices."

deeply fearful of being ostracized by her community in this new homeland. I have witnessed women moving through the experience, perhaps numbly and without fully processing the event. I honor them all, and I trust in the wisdom of their choices. It is not within my purview to characterize any woman's decision. It is distinctly her own.

The line, once crossed, is irrevocable. Once the other imposes on a woman's sexuality, her body, her life, she is stripped of the fundamental right to self-determination. For 'She' is plural, "indefinitely other in herself" (Irigaray, 1977). Moreover, values, biases, and beliefs: these shall bear no weight in her reproductive health decisions. If her decision is to end an unintended pregnancy as the result of rape, failed contraception, or human error, her reproductive choices must also firmly remain her own. This is the universal truth society must recognize for her to live fully, freely, and independently. Until then, the war on women wages on.

Eligon, J., & Schwirtz, M. (August 19, 2012). Senate candidate provokes ire with 'legitimate rape' comment. *The New York Times*.

Irigaray, L. (1977). *The sex which is not one*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

SJ
~ Victoria McDonald

I can hear, but do I listen?
I can see, but through what lens?
When I talk, do I speak and is my soul reaching out?
Social justice – does it start with many, or with one?

Honesty check: am I authentic?
Do I walk the talk
or merely talk in the dark so I can bring light to myself?
Why do we do that?

SJ is not about me, or us.
It is about what is right
and fair
and what we dare
to do
not think, but do.

SJ – what I've learned:
Start with a whisper in the ear of one, not a shout to a deaf crowd
and shine the light on the choking injustice.

Ponder:
If we all whisper at one time...

Impact of Oppression

~ Jesse Glenn

Oppression diminishes us all. As it diminishes the oppressed; it also diminishes the oppressor (Freire, 2000). Although more obvious, the price paid by the oppressed is the degradation, lack of opportunity, and a diminished view of one's "self" and one's group. Far less obvious is the price paid by the oppressor. Any time a person or group is fit into an expectation, the person or group is restricted in their ability to grow and reach their full potential. The oppressed often enable their oppression by holding attitudes or behaving in ways that support the assumptions of their oppression. The oppressors, on the other hand, limit themselves to the role of the oppressor. The oppressor must maintain his/her image or social place; therefore other alternative positions are closed. As the oppressor maintains that role, they are trapped. They need not actually do anything. For the oppressor, even the role of passive acceptance, is consent to be oppressed.

Oppression is about restriction and confinement, often within stereotypical roles. Therefore, limiting oneself within the role of oppressor is a form of self-oppression. When the oppressed act in ways that support the oppressor, in that instance, they become the oppressor. Using the premise of seeing oppression as restriction and confinement, it is possible for the person traditionally viewed as oppressed to act in the role of oppressor. Those traditionally considered the oppressors become oppressed in that role when the oppressed treat them in ways that refuse to acknowledge other role possibilities for the oppressor. Speaking personally, as a large Caucasian man, I have experienced both the illusion of privilege and the illusion of oppression. Both states are illusions because they are a matter of perception combined with expectation. Some of this illusion arises from societal expectation; the expectation that as a large man I have certain attributes, such as the assumption that heavy people are happy. At times, the illusion arises from within me. I may at times assume that my size is unattractive, when in truth there are people who are attracted to me because of it. These illusions are not what I am, what I believe, what I dream, or who I am.

Having been either freed from or condemned to the dual role of oppressor and oppressed, I have been able to break many of the rules and roles. Yes, I have deliberately used the illusion of privilege to explore some avenues and the illusion of being oppressed to explore others. Having been denied exclusive privilege, I have at times used my position as either the oppressed of the oppressor to do "what is good and morally right." And in truth, I have at other times used both positions to selfishly get what I want because I can. So, as do we all, I exist as both oppressor and oppressed. In the end, both experiences result in my being lessened as a person.

What has emerged from this perspicacity is an understanding that we need to redefine ourselves in radically new terms. Oppressed or oppressor, we must stop

indulging in the illusion of who and what we are. We must stop defining ourselves personally and in groups, be they racial, sexual or other minority/majority, in terms of others. It is not sufficient for African-Americans to see the world in terms of the dominant Caucasian values or for gays to see themselves through the lens of the straights. It is not even beneficial for the oppressor to define him/herself in terms of that group. Each of us must continually define and redefine ourselves in terms of what we believe and what we see as our inner truth. No group can ever fully express the fullness and completeness of what it is to be a unique individual. Therefore, the individual can never fully exist as part of the group, no matter how many similar values may exist.

Each of us must embrace the responsibility of discerning who we are as individuals. This a lifelong task to which we are called. We might decide how to identify as part of a group; however, it is important that we understand that each of us possesses our own separate identity. Keeping this in mind, we endeavor to mold ourselves in ways that acknowledge the "group norm.", always accepting that we will never fully fit the "group norm." Yet simultaneously, we grasp the idea that fully fitting in to any group is a denial of ourselves. Yes, we can embrace the ideas of a group and even support it, but we must be clear about where the group ends and where we begin. Liberation for any of us, especially the oppressors, only occurs when we can we identify who we are as individuals, apart from any group. This process includes identifying our values, passions, and interests. By engaging in this process, we allow the core of our being to dictate our actions. We enable ourselves to live authentically. It is only in giving up the illusion of whom and what we are, as defined by others that we can become the embodiment of our true selves.

It is true that the aforementioned statements, while possibly laudable, expose the illusion of perfection. Sometimes we fail at being authentic. Sometimes being authentic is dangerous, literally life threatening. For instance, Gandhi, a steadfast pacifist, was murdered for not supporting aggression. Another example is the martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero, who chose to authentically live his Catholic beliefs and support the disenfranchised. We all compromise our authentic selves at some point. The important thing is to understand that the compromise comes at a price. The price is the diminishment of one's self, one's group, and the opposite group – be they oppressors or oppressed.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (30th ed.). Bloomsbury, New York: New York.

What does my short hair say about me?

~ Kimberly Beam

In November 2010, I was still weak and recovering from chemotherapy; on November 1st, I went back to teaching after four months of treatment. A couple of weeks later, at Thanksgiving, my sister and I drove north from her in-law's house in Bethany Beach, Delaware, to Rehoboth Beach to hit the outlets on Black Friday. I was in the passenger seat, attempting to read the Tanger map, locating which strip mall held which clothing and shoe stores. My sister was driving. She said to me, "You know, Kim, your hair is coming in nicely. You only have to worry about women hitting on you for another couple of months." To which I responded, "Thank you," but I wondered if it was a compliment.

As I look back at this conversation, I realize I never was hit on by a woman, that I know of, during this time of my life. In fact, the only people hitting on me were the people I worked with who were my friends; their pickup lines were funny and their hugs sweet. There was one dirty old man in earnest, but his leers were repulsive. Other than that, there was no hitting on me.

A little over a year and half later, I was sitting in my sister's kitchen. She said that one of her colleagues was suffering from alopecia, the condition of losing one's hair due to stress or other complications. Hearing of another woman suffering from hair loss – whatever the reason – made me well up and ask how she was faring. My sister said, "How do you think?" and then she said, "I told her about you and how you looked good by wearing all that heavy eye makeup to draw the attention away from your head." I looked at her sideways, again wondering if it was a compliment.

The root of my makeup, if I were to be bluntly honest, is fear that people will think I'm a lesbian because I've been wearing my hair short. If my hair were longer, as it has been in the past, I'm pretty sure my obsession with makeup, hair care products and facial treatments would wane. When my hair was long, I didn't wear makeup regularly and would just throw my hair in a hair-band. I would then shove my pen into my bun while teaching. I would walk around, grading work accomplished; helping students with their phrasing, turning from desk to desk and in the process lose my pen. It got to the point where I would say, "Has anyone seen my pen?" and my students would reply, "Did you check your hair?" More often than not, their guess would be correct. I wore cropped canvas pants and black patent-leather Doc Marten boots. I wore sweaters that were only sleeves that met in a turtleneck. Once, I taught in overalls and a flannel, but my principal had something to say about that. I rarely wore skirts, eye shadow, eyeliner, mascara; now, with my short hair, I do all these things.

My hair is short because I'm in this new place; I'm finding that my style is not what it used to be. Because of cancer, I don't trust my body. Before cancer, my insides were known. My frame secure. I knew what I could and couldn't do. I tree climbed. I went swimming off the coast of Massachusetts in early May when the water froze my bones. Before cancer, I was so certain because I was God's girl nothing really rough would happen to me. He had my back. He was my rear-guard and my stalwart protector. Now, I'm not certain that is true. With my wavering faith as a follower of Christ and my redefining self-image as a survivor, my hair is a symbol of all that has and continues to change about me.

Since I'm in this questioning spot, fear of what people think of me is what keeps me trapped to LUSH's facial products and eyeliner, Urban Decay's sparkly eyeshadow and Bare Minerals' foundation. Instead of just being able to get up and wander about, not caring what people think of me without makeup and my hair sticking out in any given direction, I put on a hat and slather on moisturizer and makeup on a Saturday morning when my whole plan is to sit around the house, knitting and reading.

My fear of how people view my sexuality is actually rooted in the fact that I have been extremely picky these past ten years, when I told God that I wasn't going to date anyone but the person He had for me. I chose to set myself in apart, which in essence, means that I wasn't going to let my heart get broken. I hid behind the labels of "God" and "faith" to prevent rejection and risk. I wanted to stand on something secure before opening my heart to anyone. On the other side of cancer, I have realized I've been in hiding. Not that these single years were wasted years. I learned about me, who I was, what mattered and how to be comfortable in my own skin; but now, I cover my skin with product and sparkly eyeshadow, because my hair is short.

I like my short hair, but it comes at a price - my freedom to be me and look how I want. When I first got done with treatment, people told me how cute my hair was and how amazing I looked. They complimented my hair, the way I spiked it out and the sparkly doo-dads that I stuck in it. However, as time passed, I learned something based on what people said. My cute short hair wasn't "cute" anymore. Society accepts and encourages in some areas, like a person who has just survived chemotherapy and is getting back to living. But society is also quick to judge. By making the decision to leave my hair short, I have opened myself up to that judgment. Short hair is fine on a survivor; it is not fine on a 36 year old single woman. Short hair on a woman like me comes with the label "lesbian".

There's this expectation that I have to look a certain feminine way and my hair doesn't scream, "Survivor!" like it once did. So now, in the summers, I wear tank tops with shawls I knitted for fun and am accused of looking "datey" every day. I would rather be labeled "datey" than the other labels my short hair could evoke. But it doesn't matter the label, there is shame under the makeup, hair gunk, eyeshadow and the scarf wrapped tight around my neck too.

At times, I feel shame for just being me. I feel shame for the fact that I am still single – that I haven't gone online to find a person who fits the qualities that I am looking for in a partner. I feel shame that after chemotherapy my hair has grown in thick and dark in numerous places where society says women should not have hair. I feel shame for being back in graduate school at 36, for living at home with my mother while studying, for keeping my hair short and wearing so much makeup. I feel shame for racking up more debt, for not being able to attend church as much as I want, for not being able to see more of my closest friends, and for falling deeply in love with Mindfulness – a Buddhist practice when I'm supposed to be this strong follower of Christ.

I know the word "shame" is a strong word, a word that one should use sparingly, and I normally do. But, here, where I'm being bluntly honest, I do feel shame for these things: singleness, fear of how I'm perceived, my make-up use, my spending on such products, how I've lacked compassion and judged on impossible standards. I also feel shame for noticing other people's looks as we pass each other on sidewalks and then wondering, "Do they think I'm gay because my hair is short?" Don't get me wrong; it's not every day and sometimes it's weeks apart, but there are times of weakness when I wonder these things. Mostly, I would like to think that my short hair says the truth about me: I'm spunky, a little goofy and a survivor.

Tears

~ Scott Strubinger

Twenty Six Tears fell,
for each Soul in a Sandy Hook hell.

Another cause, another case,
the latest tragic human waste.

My swirling world of ups and downs,
I see, I feel, I hear their sounds.

My breath arrested,
And my limits tested.

Who will pay,
for that inglorious day?

A code of ethics, a constitution,
Are these the yardsticks for my solution?

The last leaves in fall at the height of falling.
I can't make them stay, but will answer their calling.

I can help people with heart, for their needs,
When subjugated knowledge won't answer their pleas.

My task is to answer to a Higher calling.
No more of a choice, than those tears still falling.

Swept under the Racial Rug ~ Rebecca Hazelton

"In America, if you're not white, you are black" (Sethi, 2007, p. 143). The American society has created a racial paradigm to categorize and classify races within society: one either holds superiority as being white or falls into the minority group of black, resulting in the formation of white America. Ask yourself, what happens when prejudice is directed at a racial group that does not self-classify as either white or black, nor do they fit into the neat, stereotypical view of European American or African American? The result is a spiral of racial brutality and spirited sibling rivalry that is misinterpreted and swept under the racial rug of society, which has become painstakingly evident in the portrayal of Asian Americans within white America.

Rita Chaudhry Sethi (2007) uses her article *Smells like Racism* to present the idea of Asian American discrimination within white America. According to Sethi, most Asian Americans do not ascribe racist motivation to an act of prejudice aimed at their community; this racism is simply a response to white America's refusal to acknowledge this discrimination and is swept beneath the rewarded economic success of Asian Americans. One must consider past attacks on Asian housing projects and businesses in California, in which the Housing Authority ignored clear signs of racial bias and quickly blamed their attacks on a lack of support structure with Asian American communities and language barriers on their attacks. Not only were prosecutors in white America reluctant to assign racial motives to these crimes, Asian Americans are also refusing to accept that these crimes are racially motivated, using their economic success as a justifiable motive.

Internalized racism, or the internalization of racial attitudes toward one's own ethnic group, is a huge factor contributing to the blindness of Asian American discrimination. A friend of mine, of Vietnamese heritage born and raised in white America, will self-identify as white, telling people that "My skin is light. I am practically white." A person cannot even embrace their own ethnicity, due to a lack of approval and acceptance within white America. The self-rejection of her Asian American heritage is not perceived as racism within white America; it is simply an attempt to fit smoothly into this notion that "if you are not white, you are black". Rather than embracing her ethnicity, she is forced to choose between the domineeringly perceived "white" group and the negated "black" identity in white America.

Consider the effect that this racial paradigm has on other minority groups within white America, specifically African Americans who further reject and deny Asian Americans as members of their ethnic group. I appreciate Rita Chaudhry Sethi (2007) in her ability to bring this idea of "sibling rivalry" to life. Simply put, it is the competition amongst minority groups in the quest

for equity and acceptance to finally break through the confines of this "if you're not white, you are black" mentality. If white America gives the slightest bit of power and esteem to one minority over the others, a battle is waged. Just as siblings fight for parental approval, most racial minorities are blindly competing amongst one another for white America's approval, equality and economic success. Consequently, European Americans hoist Asian Americans to a more favorable standing than they do most other minority groups; thus pinning minority groups against one another.

By granting approval and prestige to Asian Americans, jealousy quickly begins to ransack all other minority groups, thus eliminating the possibility of Asian Americans making connections to other victimized groups, which blocks any attempts for a union of all minority groups to break through this "If you are not white, you are black" philosophy. This system helps maintain social control, racial divisions and a hierarchy within white America.

Social control, power and racial boundaries in white America are upheld by the stereotypes created to simplify and dehumanize people that do not fit flawlessly into the "black and white" racial model. Asian and Indian Americans are stigmatized and judged upon their accents, religion, costume, and scent by all other races. White America is able to downplay the attributes of being Indian, as media portrays and labels them towel heads, dot heads, greedy, and smelly yet Indian Americans are still working for acceptance and distinction from the "black" identity within white America, rather than collaborating with other vulnerable groups to end this racial injustice. It is ludicrous that white America can advertise the Hindu words with ridicule and humility, yet this is not seen as prejudice by any racial affiliation.

Media is a contributing factor to the racial barriers of white America. The most powerful depiction of media's quick ability to unfairly target an ethnic group and maintain control was highlighted in Sethi's *Smells like Racism* (2007) article through her discussion of the "Face of Hate" after the Persian Gulf War and bombings of the World Trade Center. After subjecting myself to media images and countless news broadcasts, my perception of the Muslim community had been altered and it pains me to admit that. The first time I flew on a plane after this tragic incident at the World Trade Center, I had a sense of overwhelming anxiety as I watched members of the Muslim community board the plane with me. The media was able to collectively categorize this group, thus further pinning racial groups against one another and instilling fear, rather than hope for a union of racial minorities.

When media images are not portraying Indian Americans as terrorists, as is seen in movies and news broadcasts, discrimination still exists. Asian Americans and Indian Americans do not fit into the overly stigmatized African American employment sham of white America. In fact, "Indian doctors are routinely required to pay higher penalties" (Sethi, 2007, p. 147). In many movies and TV shows, such as the store clerk at the Kiwk-E-Mart in the Fox series, *The Simpsons* who is Apu Nahasapeemapetilon, Indian Americans are portrayed as store clerks that are greedy and cheap or even as physicians that are performing unethical procedures and operations. Social thinking relies heavily on media images and portrayal of race, so using media to maintain stereotypes is a logical way of maintaining social order.

I am able to analyze and reflect on the combating strive for social and racial acceptance by white America in response to the invisible broom sweeping Asian American prejudice under the racial rug. Just as the Housing Authority in California did not allocate racial motivation to the crimes committed against Asian Americans, there has been unresponsiveness to the racial motivation behind the Dot busters, an oppressive group that once targeted Asian Indian Americans in New Jersey. These crimes are overwhelmingly viewed as crimes of opportunity, rather than crimes of racial bias. European Americans maintain their racial superiority accepting that Asian and Indian Americans do not recognize themselves as people of color, therefore will not act in solidarity with other people of color to end racism (Sethi, 2007, p. 146).

Far too often I have overheard African Americans, as well as European and Hispanic Americans, making racially derogatory statements towards Asian Americans akin to the remarks that Sethi uses in her article, "I've been in this country all my life and they come here and flop down \$200,000 for a house" or even "Well I suppose if I have 15 people living in my apartment, I'd be able to save money too" (Sethi, 2007, p. 153). Some African Americans and Hispanic Americans may have difficulty accepting Asian and Indian Americans within the constructs of their minority group simply because white America has granted Asian Americans a glimpse of the American Dream that all minorities are striving for, just as European Americans will not allow Asian Americans to become a dominating threat to their superiority in white America. One can only begin to hope that together we can pull the rug out from underneath the racially divided white America and expose the racial ambiguities that confine it so that justice can be served.

Sethi, R.C (2007). Smells like racism. In Rothenberg, P. S. (Ed.) *Race, Class and gender in the United States 7th ed.* (pp.143-154). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Contributors

Dawna Jones, MSW candidate '13, is in her final semester as a part-time MSW student at West Chester University. Dawna currently works as a Resident Director in the Department of Residence Life at West Chester University. She looks forward to using her degree to assist college students in distress by providing case management and counseling services in higher education setting. Her research/professional interests include: hunger and homelessness, college students in distress, youth in foster care, and LGBTQ populations.

Kristin Ramsdell, JD, MSW Candidate '13, is in her final year at West Chester University. A career changer with a passion for social justice, Kristin hopes to utilize her research knowledge on sexuality education in direct service, in an administrative capacity, or a combination of the two. She is currently a counselor at the Adolescent Resource Center, a sexual and reproductive health clinic.

Victoria McDonald, CVA, MSA, MSW Candidate '15, is entering her third year as a part-time MSW student. She has received her BS (Management) and MSA (Human Resources) from WCU. As the Director of Social Services at The Salvation Army in West Chester, she works with a diverse population who are homeless or near-homeless. Victoria looks forward to expanding her experiences by working with older adults and terminal patients, and continues to be interested in governmental policy advocacy.

Jesse Glenn, MSW Candidate '14, is a full time student with over 25 years experience as a pulmonary rehab therapist. He is currently working with hospice patients. His long-term goal is to work as a psychosocial therapist with patients who have chronic physical illness.

Kimberly Beam, MSW Candidate '14, has just completed her first year of West Chester University's full-time MSW program. She earned an MFA in Creative Writing from Goddard College in 2002. She comes with 12 years experience teaching English, both at the middle and high school levels. Her long-term goal is to counsel teenagers and young adults, along with their families, as they process the trauma that is cancer.

Scott Strubinger, MSW Candidate '16, is a 1st-year, part-time, career changer. Registered Dietitian. Bachelor of Science, East Carolina University. Return Peace Corps Volunteer: Papua New Guinea, '90-'92. Board Certified Specialist: Gerontological Nutrition. Associates of Culinary Arts, Philadelphia Restaurant School. Twenty-Five years healthcare experience in areas of public health, clinical dietetics and organizational management. Areas of interest: Clinical Social Work and Healthcare Leadership.

Rebecca Hazelton, MSW Candidate '16, has just completed her first year as a part-time MSW student at West Chester University. She has experience working with children with autism, as well as many behavioral disorders in an inclusive school district in Massachusetts and residential settings within many hospitals and homes. She currently works for an agency aimed to facilitate community integration and rehabilitation services to adults with intellectual disabilities in Delaware County.

Sage Windemaker, MSW Candidate '13, is in her final semester as a full-time MSW student at West Chester University. She recently accepted the position of Therapeutic Foster Care Coordinator & Counselor at Child and Family Focus. She looks forward to using her degree to continue her work in advocating for the rights of children involved in the child welfare system and implementing creative therapeutic interventions with child survivors of trauma, abuse and neglect. She hopes to begin pursuing doctoral education within the next two years.

Calling all Social Justice Advocates!

Please join us in raising our individual and collective voices in the 4th issue of *VOICES*, the West Chester University MSW Program's student-led, peer-reviewed journal.

We are currently seeking personal perspectives on issues of social justice in written format, original art work, photography, and poetry for our Spring 2014 issue. All current and former WCU MSW students are invited to submit. Written submissions should be 1,000 words or less, double-spaced, 12-pt font with 1 inch margins, APA style and include a cover page with contact information.

All submissions are "blind" reviewed by the Student Editors – your name is not attached in any way during the review process. If accepted for publication, you will be notified by the Faculty Advisor and then contacted by one of the Student Editors. All submissions are due (electronically) to the Faculty Advisor by a date TDB in Fall 2013/Winter 2014.

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