

★ **GENDER** ★ ★ **JUSTICE** ★ ★ **LEAGUE** ★

CU BOULDER WOMEN & GENDER STUDIES

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The Gender Justice League is the Women and Gender Studies student leadership practicum. We are a small group of majors and minors committed to social justice not only in theory but in practice. Our goal is to spread awareness about and confront serious issues of inequality and oppression on campus and in the community.

This semester we hosted the 5th annual Denim Days on campus, a week of activism aimed at combating gender-based violence and the victim blaming that often accompanies it. We also hosted a Conversation at the Cottage on strategies to speak to social justice in a way that calls people in rather than calling them out.

In this issue of our semester newsletter, we address the political context of Colorado, look at the significance of how transgender identity is represented in popular culture, and respond to criticism levied by the former Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy. We also show our more artistic side, with a little poetry, photography, and paintings. We hope you enjoy!

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The members of the Gender Justice League (from left to right): Marley Jeranko, Chloe Evans, Amy Johnson, Emily Morgan, Katelyn Nagel, Jack Workman and Jayne Colorado-Caldwell.

Activism in a Purple State **By Amy Johnson**

The politics of social location is a term I read, write about, and discuss endlessly as a Women and Gender Studies major. But for the context of this article, I will be literally discussing the politics of location. The sentiment of government's gridlock within the last few years is one of the few things that individuals on both sides of the aisle can agree upon. I notice that much of this attention is paid to our federal government, often because it is deserved. However, I do not see the same interest, blame, or mobilization at the state level for similar gridlock and stagnation.

We, for the time we spend living in Colorado, are given the rare and important responsibility of voting in a swing state. The midterm election of 2014 solidified
(continued on next page)

Colorado's status as a "Purple State" despite our recent Democratic leanings. It seems that Colorado can serve as a microcosm of the government at the federal level. Much like the last few years in Washington, until 2014, our legislature in Denver has been split, Democrats with the House and Republicans with the Senate.

I had the privilege of working with the organization 9to5 Colorado this year, and through my time lobbying at the Capitol and sitting in Committee hearings, I realized that in purple states like ours, paying attention is very important. During the 2015 session, I saw proposed bills that would revoke the Colorado Civil Rights Legislation (SB 15-069), provide the Family and Medical Leave Insurance (HB 15-1258), allow business owners religious freedom to refuse service to certain sects of people (HB 15-1161 and HB 15-1171), and to raise the minimum wage to \$15 by 2020 (HB 15-1300). Fortunately, and unfortunately, all of these bills died besides HB 15-1258 and SB 15-069 which are awaiting a vote at the time of this publication.

Alas, this is a small example of the hundreds of bills that are introduced during a session. Yet, this pool of proposed laws illustrates the tug of war that is happening at the local level here in Colorado, the ropes being pulled from each side of the aisle. This is our plight in a swing state; we have very liberal and conservative forces opposing each other allowing for narrow victories or institutional gridlock. It does not sound all that different from the tales we hear from Washington. This is why it is so important to be politically active in a purple state.

As a millennial, I belong to a cohort where only 1 in 4 people makes it to the polls. As a Coloradan, I live in a state where personhood has made it onto the ballot three times in recent memory. As an activist, I got used to seeing the same faces attending rally after rally without many new ones mixing in. All of these experiences illustrate to me the importance of activism in a purple state. My time in the State Capitol was not all encompassing and I am by no means an expert, rather it was one of many learning experiences that I hope to continue to grow from both intellectually and as an activist.

When we focus on the macro, the federal government, we deprive our local government of attention that keeps them accountable and makes them aware of our needs. We as college students are granted many privileges like time, travel, and education. By mobilizing ourselves and others we can shape the issues that are taken on by legislators, lobby against those that threaten our state

and ourselves, and create a movement around laws that will prepare our state for the future.

The macro is important, Colorado will be a huge part of the 2016 election (election ads yay!) but the principles of local engagement are tools to participate at the federal level as well. Take our swing state status as an opportunity to change our state and our nation through engaging directly with those you disagree with and those who you support because we have copious amounts of collaborators and competitors. And for the love of Colorado, please make it to the polls in 2015 and 2016 and forever.

The Drag Dilemma

By Jack Workman

The popularity of drag queens is on the rise. The show, "RuPaul's Drag Race", can be given a lot of credit for this spark in fascination with drag. Though drag has existed for many decades in the gay and lesbian community, its recent popularity has helped it reach into mainstream culture. After the confirmation of its eighth season, "RuPaul's Drag Race" hit 1,000,000 likes on Facebook. The show has been nominated twice for A Critic's Choice Television Award, has won TV.com's Best of 2012 Award, and a TCA Award in 2014. The show is truly the first of its kind to gather such a huge fan base and catapult the performance of drag into the mainstream arena. (logotv.com)

Though this may be deemed an accomplishment and something to celebrate, the trans community may draw other conclusions. Drag queens have a very specific role in the gay community. They are often only understood and recognized as entertainment. As a consequence, transgender people are mistakenly also understood through the same frame of a drag queen, when in fact the two perform non-normative modes of gender for very different reasons. While drag queens actually attempt to be objects of entertainment, most transgender people do not. They perform a gender different from their assigned gender because the one they were prescribed at birth feels unnatural and foreign to them.

As drag queens become more and more popular in the international mainstream arena, deviant gender performance might transition towards a perception of "just entertainment." Simultaneously, issues of transgender and transsexual rights are coming to the forefront in the political forum. As a community, it is important that we draw a clear line between drag queens and transgender people. With Laverne Cox, a

transgender woman gracing the cover of *Time Magazine*'s May 2014 issue, it is crucial that the American community does not just see her as a piece of entertainment. Laverne and other trans spokespeople need to be perceived as multi-dimensional people so they can truly move forward the rights of gender-deviant peoples around the world and begin to dismantle the oppressive power structures that police gender performance in today's world.

The Impact of Transgender Bruce Jenner

By Chloe Evans

Bruce Jenner's very personal interview on *20/20* with Diane Sawyer on April 24 brought transgender issues into direct media spotlight in a way that has never been seen before. Jenner's extreme fame both as a superstar Olympian and a TV father personality have promoted his story about his gender identity in a way that other transgender women have largely not been able to do. His interview detailed a personal journey, one that pulled on mine and America's heartstrings, revealing my own emotions of pride at his brave outpouring about his tumultuous journey in a world that reacts so harshly and violently to the trans community. While I believe the interview succeeded as a whole, I, and other activists on trans issues, have some concerns with the way the interview was conducted and its possible impact on larger trans issues.

Jenner's unapologetic statement of who he is set the tone for an honest discussion about identity. He spoke about his own journey, but his position also caused him to act as a sort of "Transgender 101" teacher for not only the millions of viewers, but also Diane Sawyer. Very gracefully and to the point, Jenner noted that he is not a spokesperson for the whole trans community, and proceeded to shed light on important issues that are widely absent from popular media. He touched on preferred pronouns, the difference between gender identity and sexuality, cross-dressing, violence (especially against trans women of color), suicide rates, poverty, acceptance, and so much more. The interview was not the space for an in depth lesson on these huge complex issues in the trans community.

However, Sawyer's inability to grasp certain concepts and her apparent lack of research of basic terms before the interview provided some reactionary cringes and commented on the media's general ignorance of the issues. Another concerning moment of the interview

was the video clips depicting extreme violence against transgender people. While showing the clips acted as a way to shed light on the violent prejudice trans people face, it seemed exploitative of these individuals who suffered the violence. However, Sawyer's immediate clarification at the beginning to refer to Bruce by his preferred name/pronouns, and the relatively small amount of time spent asking about his genitals, broke away from previous interviews done with trans folk. *20/20*'s and Diane Sawyer's lack of spectaclization made this interview different. Diane Sawyer wrapped up the segment by saying of herself and *20/20*, "we think it is only a story that can be told by someone who lived it."

Bruce Jenner's popularity reaches across generations, making this interview a powerful tool to help an older generation understand today's current trans activism. However, the impact of such a large audience seeing Jenner, as trans writer Kay Ulanday Barrett suggests, is that "it creates a magical fantasy based on a very wealthy, able-bodied, American and white experience that isn't the case for many [trans people] who struggle for survival and justice as trans people color." Barrett's point that there is danger in only viewing trans people as the privileged majority sheds light on one of the larger issues of the interview. There needs to be a conversation about the activists in the trans community that have worked to pave the way for Jenner to come out. There also needs to be spotlight on those who are further pursuing the radical activism to gain equality for trans people.

But perhaps change comes one step at a time. The outpouring of love and acceptance from Jenner's family, friends, and other powerful celebrities possibly marks a turning point in the compassion toward and acceptance of trans identified people. Nick Adams, the director of programs for transgender media in the gay rights group GLAAD said, "every transgender person's journey is unique and by choosing to share this story, Bruce Jenner adds another layer to America's understanding of what it means to be transgender." Jenner's story has provided a very important and meaningful layer to the path of equality for transgender individuals.

(At the time of the interview Jenner requested that people refer to him by male pronouns and by Bruce Jenner until he reveals his new name. I will be respecting his wishes and refer to him by the male pronouns and his birth name in this piece.)

Uncritical Criticism

By Marley Jeranko

During the 2013-14 school year, Steven Hayward was appointed the first Visiting Scholar in Conservative Thought and Policy in an attempt to preserve diverse modes of thought on campus. Earlier this year, however, Hayward wrote in a *National Review* article, titled "Grievance School," about his experiences here in Boulder, mocking our town in a way that is hypocritical at best.

In this piece, he places the blame for the short-handedness in political science and environmental studies on the claim that there is an overrepresentation of leftist programs at CU, of which form an obsession with either the "holy trinity of race, class, and gender" or "'the Leftist Apocalypse' of patriarchy, colonialism, privilege, and Israel." To prove just how ridiculous and worthless these activist-oriented studies with "less rigorous intellectual content" truly are, Hayward points directly to the Women and Gender Studies program. While Hayward completely disregards the position of its activist-in-residence as a politicized non-academic appointment, he makes it abundantly clear that he is the one who is unqualified. It is no wonder that as someone who has a complete lack of sophisticated understanding of what feminism really is he is unable to comprehend the importance of having someone with the amount of experience, regardless of academic credentials, in a field that requires activist work and community organizing. Given the concept of praxis, when academia fails to integrate theory with practice, our understanding of the way the world works becomes misinformed and doesn't account for the full volume of experiences that that theory could be accounting for; but coming from someone who is clearly the recipient of day-to-day white, middle-class, male privilege, this isn't of his concern (Side note: yes, that is feminism you see, the thing that he deems an "intellectual rot," that is providing me the tools to critique his argument.)

What is most ironic about Hayward's article is that he claims that his intention as a professor is to consider the full range of views with hopes that students of every kind of opinion will feel welcome in the classroom. It is hard to believe this is actually his teaching policy given that his entire article is about shutting down liberal perspectives in academic settings. As a feminist, I agree with him when he says that there needs to be more conservative voices represented at our school. Though I can't say that I support his views, he has the right to uphold them and students have the right to have

access to both sides of the spectrum. Feminism is about equal representation, and it is unfortunate that Hayward feels comfortable belittling a movement of which he has only a surface level comprehension of when it has actually served him in being heard as a marginalized voice in this particular community.

At no point is there evidence of having ever made an attempt to engage with feminist ideologies, the purpose of his article is merely to mock them. It's hard to pick out the real point of his commentary among all the trash talk, so I'll provide a spoiler alert: providing just one conservative professor does not actually serve the original goal of doing so. That's a good point. What's not so helpful is that he leaves it at that and fails to provide any real solution to diversifying our school's education. The way I see it, we may be angry at Hayward's pretentious words, but unfortunately for him, his unintelligent views about his contrarians are not productive, and this "militant leftist" is unimpressed.

Campus Feminism (a few organization)

By Katelyn Nagel

The Gender Justice League

The GJL is a student-run, program-affiliated WGST practicum "committed to bringing positive social change to our community, on and beyond the CU campus." Members plan and host academic and philanthropic events, and write this newsletter! Membership is open to all majors and minors, and applications are accepted in the Fall and Spring.

Beta Sigma Triota Honor Society

Iota Iota Iota is a national WGST honor society which encourages and supports scholarship and excellence in Women and Gender Studies at the University of Colorado Boulder, and seeks applicants who exemplify a passion for academics and social justice. Membership is open to all majors and minors with a GPA 3.75 or higher, and applications are accepted in the Fall and Spring.

The Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance

Part of the world's largest pro-choice campus/student network, the FMLA strives to maintain a thriving feminist presence at CU Boulder. Open to all students.

The Women's Resource Center

The W houses its own library and extensive referral information, and acts as a woman-centered gathering place on campus. They host events and weekly peer groups. UMC 416, wrc@colorado.edu

RECAP OF EVENTS

Calling out Injustice, Calling into Community

In February, the Gender Justice League hosted a panel and conversation to discuss constructive ways to invite communities into social justice activism. The discussion was led by panelists: student Hibaq Warsan, student Alex Elisha, GSA president Caitlin Rowe, and GLBTQ resource center director Scarlett Bowen. The panelists' wide array of experience and knowledge led to a fruitful discussion on ways to address microaggressions, especially within activist spaces. Issues of self-care, ally-ship, activist stereotypes, and rhetorical techniques allowed for a comprehensive discussion. By focusing on ways to call people into community, the panel provided positive strategies to address misinformed statements about racial, gender, and class inequality.

Disclosure of Trauma Training with OVA:

The Office of Victim's Assistance (OVA) has been an important ally to the Gender Justice League over the years we have been organizing Denim Days. This year, in addition to our yearly Healthy Relationship Survey, we partnered with OVA to host a trauma response training. This training, which OVA gives in the community in various settings, gave detailed information on OVA's resources. They also provoked an interesting discussion on the personal outcomes of traumatic events and how to support a friend's healing process. One of the central points of the training was that everyone's experience and healing process is necessarily different, so one wishing to be a supportive friend should avoid passing judgments or taking up a role of authority. The presentation showed that the majority of labor of healing from a traumatic event is performed by one's friends and family. Even with closest friends, this kind of support can be physically and emotionally taxing. OVA offers a diverse range of resources not only for those who have experienced a traumatic event (however long ago), but also friends of those experiencing traumatic events. OVA is a particularly useful resource on campus as they are able to connect people to specific groups on campus and in the larger Boulder community. OVA is a vital campus resource in the high stress environment of academia. For more information on OVA visit their website <http://cuvictimassistance.com/>. If you or your community is interested in hosting a Trauma Response Training contact OVA at 303-492-8855 or assist@colorado.edu.

Healthy Masculinity

As a part of Denim Days, the Gender Justice League hosted a conversation at the cottage with a panel comprised of Sam Bullington, a professor of Women and Gender Studies, Jack Workman, a Women and Gender Studies undergraduate student, Camilo Casas, program coordinator for MESA's (Moving to End Sexual Assault) Men Standing Up, and George Williams, a graduate student in the Department of Sociology. The discussion focused on performances of healthy masculinity: what that might look like, how it has a place in feminism, and how it is integral to combating sexual violence.

Denim Displays

This year's annual CU Denim Days involved an array of interesting events and occasions for dialogue about sexual violence and victim blaming, especially the denim displays around campus. These displays included patches of denim and old pairs of jeans that conveyed anti-victim blaming, anti-sexual assault, and empowering messages. The display was hung on Norlin Quad, in the Engineering quad, and, finally, on the Hazel Gates Woodruff Cottage on CU's campus. Although not fully understood by everyone who walked by, the denim displays functioned as a conversation starter for many who felt curious about Denim Day's message. Throughout the time that the denim displays were up, volunteers and members of the Gender Justice League passed out hand-bills and stopped to talk with anyone who wanted to know more about Denim Days. There were some really excellent moments of dialogue about sexual assault on college campuses. While manning the displays not only did people ask questions, but some of them also shared their own experiences and stories with us. These moments were truly rewarding.

The Hunting Ground

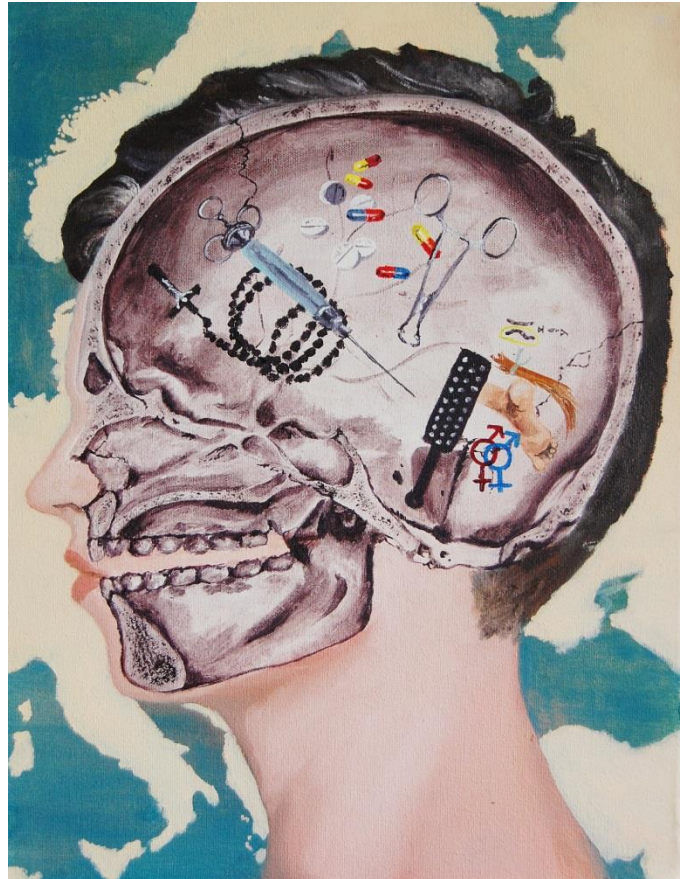
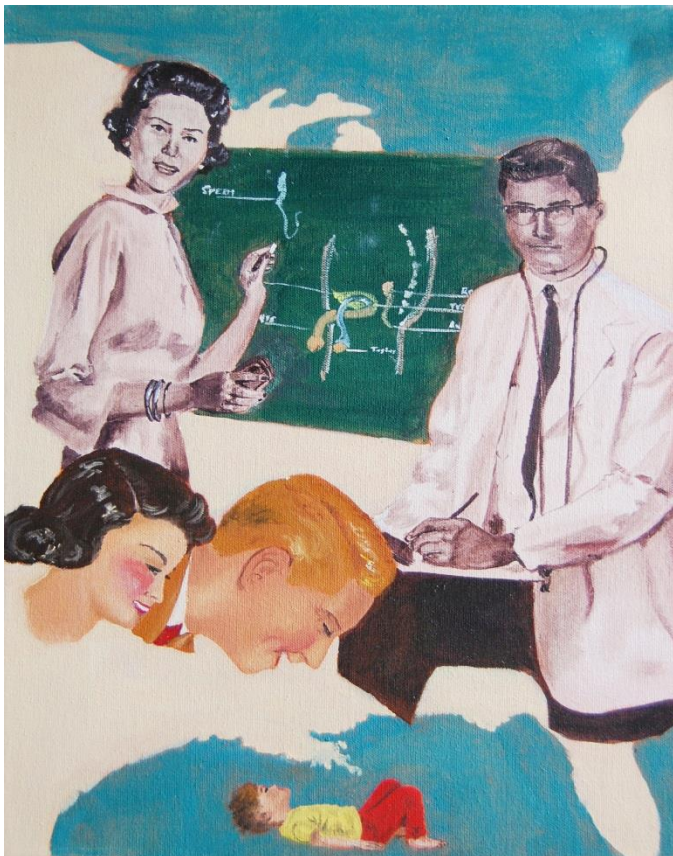
The Gender Justice League was lucky to work with Moving to End Sexual Assault (MESA), as well as Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS,) and the Office of Victim Assistance (OVA), to host a screening of *The Hunting Ground*. From the creators of *The Invisible War*, *The Hunting Ground* exposes endemic rates of on-campus sexual assault and the active role colleges and universities are playing in obscuring and suppressing the assaults and victims. Representatives of CAPS/OVA and MESA, CU's Title IX Coordinator, and the WGST Program's own professor Celeste Montoya were featured in a post-film panel discussion.

Notes on a False Liberation

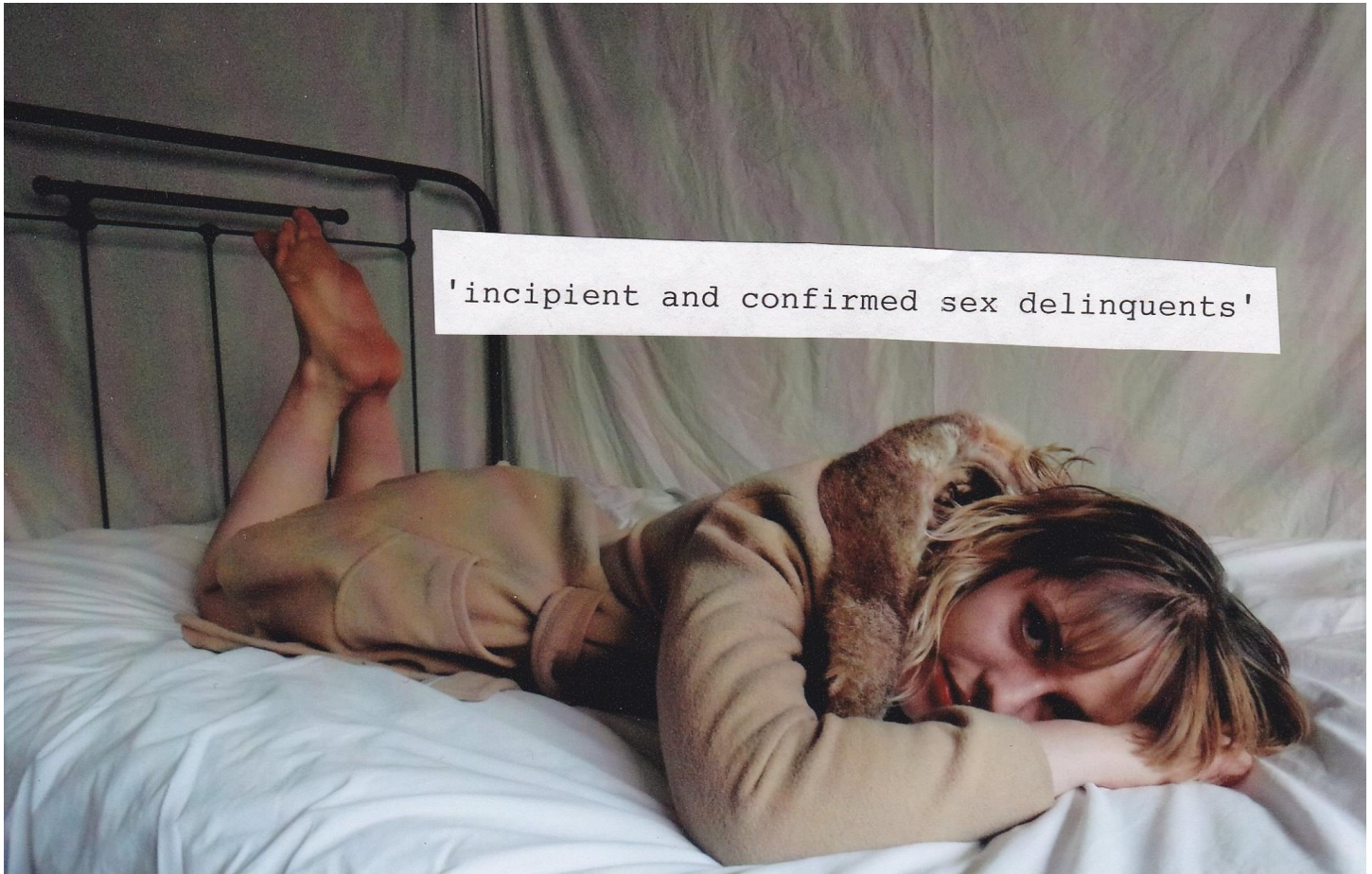
By Emily Morgan

Oil on Canvas 14" x 18"

Reading Foucault's *History of Sexuality* was revelatory for me personally. Coming into a theoretical relationship with feminism, I had a hard time reconciling the contradictory narratives of Judith Butler's ideas of non-essentialist performativity with mainstream LGBT "born this way" arguments, both of which resonated with my experiences. *History of Sexuality* provided the historical background to understand the foundations of contemporary discourses around sexuality. These paintings represent the "hysterization of women's bodies," the "pedagogization of children's sex," and the "psychiatrization of perverse pleasure," which helped define normative and otherized sexuality and brought about a notion of sex as liberation. Foucault is limited in his almost dogmatic exclusion of the ways colonized bodies served to produce oppositionally Western sexuality. Nonetheless, his ideas are useful in deconstructing the impulse many activists today have to bring Western definitions of liberation, centered strongly around sexuality, to parts of the world that are perceived as backwards.



By Katelyn Nagel



Little Fires

By Jayne Colorado-Caldwell

Burning paper

Little fires that we inhale deep into our lungs

We let the smoke fall
and rise
and fall

Not caring, but sharing the little fires that slowly kill us
and rise again

Yet they fill us
and fulfill us
and help us
and hurt us
and they save us
while they continue to kill us
and when what kills us doesn't make us stronger,
it might just make us feel a bit more alive
and they light up the rest of the space

Little fires, little fires
they burn and they spread
that fills the space around us

We light them, we burn them
they flicker and, sometimes, they burn us back

Whether or not it hurts doesn't matter,
for almost everything hurts
if you give it enough time

Except...

Time is supposed to heal wounds, right?

Well, if that's the case, he must fucking hate me

For time has burned me more than any friend or lover
or cigarette

WMST 3940 Student Leadership Practicum Application

The WGST Student Leadership Practicum (aka Gender Justice League) is a program-affiliated student group that is committed to bringing positive social change to our community, on and beyond the CU campus. The program has two parts: while anyone is invited to participate in Gender Justice League projects, there is also an accompanying leadership practicum with 1 credit hour per semester (WMST 3940) that is limited to undergraduate majors or minors in women and gender studies. To participate in the practicum students must apply. Students will be chosen based on academic performance and faculty recommendation. The practicum meets weekly as a group with the faculty advisor. Activities in the past have included: 1) planning **academic events** such as speakers or film viewings followed by critical discussions; 2) coordinating **activist and community outreach events**; 3) publishing a **newsletter** with student articles focusing on different feminist issues.

Name: _____ Student ID# _____

Address: _____ Phone # _____

The practicum will meet on **Tuesdays 2-3pm** for the Fall 2015 semester.

The practicum generally meets once a week.

The Leadership Practicum is pass/fail, but in order to receive credit for you must

1. Attend all meetings.
2. Contribute to the semester newsletter.
3. Attend and participate in the planning of a GJL sponsored academic event.
4. Participate actively in the planning and execution of a GJL sponsored community project.
5. Participate in the planning and execution of a GJL sponsored activist event.
6. If scheduling or other issues interfere with the above, the student must present an alternative activity to participate in or contribution to group efforts.
7. As with an independent study, students are expected to put in a minimum of 25 hours per credit hour a semester. This includes meetings as well as outside activities.

Students who do not meet the above requirements will receive a fail and/or will have to re-apply for the Leadership Practicum (most students may remain in the program for subsequent semesters).

Eligibility:

Year in school for upcoming semester: _____

Major or Minor of WMST: _____

of WMST Hours: _____

University GPA: _____

Major/Minor GPA: _____

Faculty Reference: _____

Please fill out this application and attach a paragraph or two about why you want to participate in Leadership Practicum for the Gender Justice League and what contributions you think you can make to the group (it should be no more than one page single spaced).

Applications for the fall semester are due to Professor Celeste Montoya by May 8th. Please email the completed application to montoyc@colorado.edu