

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

CU BOULDER WOMEN & GENDER STUDIES

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The Gender Justice League is a Women and Gender Studies student organization. We are a small group of majors and minors committed to social justice not only in theory but in practice. Our goal is not only to spread awareness, but also to confront serious issues on campus and in the community. This semester, our events included:

Breaking Silence

In October in commemoration of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the Gender Justice League partnered with Breaking Silence to bring an engaging exhibit to campus called “Stories of Survival”. This exhibit helped spread awareness and understanding of interpersonal violence. Participants heard survivors’ firsthand accounts and were guided through the recreated environments of their abuse, the struggles they faced, and their continued journey toward healing.

Conversations at the Cottage: Beyoncé Breakdown

In October the Gender Justice League started the semester with a Beyoncé sized bang with the Beyoncé Breakdown Conversation at the Cottage. This event sought to deconstruct and explore the mainstreaming of feminism that has become increasingly popular with celebrity women like Beyoncé. Our expert panelists included Hillary Potter and Bianca Williams from the Ethnic Studies Department, Tamara Williams van Horn from the Sociology Department, and CU alumnus Sophia Surage. The Cottage library was overflowing with attendees as we watched four different music videos spanning Beyoncé’s career and analyzed the feminist messages. We discussed intersections of race, gender, class and the tendency to homogenize what it means to be a feminist.



Gender Justice League Fall 2014: (left to right) Chloe Evans, Emily Morgan, Roshanne Ebrahimian, Claire Garand, Amy Johnson, Alexis Olson

Conversations at the Cottage: The NFL and Domestic Violence

The second Gender Justice League hosted conversation at the cottage was a panel comprised of Joanne Belknap, professor of Sociology and president of the American Society of Criminology; Anne Tapp, executive director of Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence; and Chris Bader, CU’s director of Counseling and Sports Psychology. The discussion analyzed the politics of representing domestic violence in the media, the evolution of hazing culture in football programs, and the intersections of race, class, and sex oppressions in the context of the NFL.

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**Join the Gender
Justice League!
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Top Ten Reasons to Be a Women and Gender Studies Student at CU-Boulder

by Roshanne Ebrahimian

1. We've Got Class(es)

One of my favorite parts of WGST is the wide array of subject matter that can be viewed through a feminist lens. This translates into some of the coolest classes this campus has to offer. A few of my favorites have been: "Disney's Women and Girls," "Gender Politics and Global Activism," and "Gender, Genocide, and Mass Trauma." WGST curriculum includes a variety of engaging courses with topics covering many different intersecting oppressions. You can find the schedule for the upcoming semester here:
<http://wgst.colorado.edu/courses/spring2015>

2. Good Things Come in Small Packages

Even though CU is an enormous university, WGST allows for a more intimate experience like that of a liberal arts college. Smaller classes facilitate great discussion and the professors truly get to know their students. It can be hard to feel like you're a part of a community on this campus, and WGST makes that possible.

3. Double Your Major, Double Your Fun

Double majoring is an encouraged option for every student because WGST is an interdisciplinary field and it's likely your other interests somehow align with gender studies. There are tons of cross-listed courses that can make double-majoring an easier process. WGST provides alternative frameworks for viewing the world that will help you stand out in the classroom and your future workplace.

4. You'll be Surrounded by Geniuses

I'm talking about the core faculty and instructors. Not only are the professors extremely intelligent, they are great teachers and they care about the success of their students. This makes for a comfortable and supportive academic environment that will make you feel welcomed and inspired.

5. The Hidden Gem of Campus

The Hazel Gates Woodruff Cottage is the most amazing building on campus. If you haven't been, you absolutely need to. It's basically an adorable little building with a small library open to studying students all week long. It's filled with nice people and a quiet, cozy atmosphere. And during finals there's usually hot cocoa and tea for FREE! Check it out!
(Map: <http://www.colorado.edu/campusmap/map.html?bldg=COTT>)

6. Academic Opportunity Awaits You

If you're looking to spice up your academic credentials, WGST is a great place to do that. Since my time here I have graded for two professors, earned a research assistantship, and I am a part of the Women's Studies Honors Society (Iota Iota Iota). There are so many opportunities available if you are looking for ways to acquire useful skills that make you competitive when applying to graduate schools or when starting your career.

7. Do Good

WGST is one path to getting involved to make another, better world. Along with several volunteer opportunities, each major is required to take a Feminist Colloquium, which requires an individual and group activist project of some kind. By thinking globally and acting locally, you can be a part of a community striving to make our campus, our little piece of this world, a more inclusive and safe space for everyone.

8. Play in the Big League

The Gender Justice League is a leadership practicum offered through the WGST program. We are a close-knit group that engages in social justice work through both intellectual and activist means. We plan and host events of all kinds and actively work to make a difference on and beyond our campus. Although we certainly take the work we do seriously, we have a ton of fun in the process. Check us out here:
<http://wgst.colorado.edu/gjl>

9. Become a Genius Yourself

The WGST curriculum is challenging in the most constructive way possible. The professors are always pushing us to take our analysis further and nuance our claims. My education here went beyond simply giving me new knowledge by shaping how I approach and understand the world and giving me the tools to express my critical observations.

10. You'll Never be Bored

We live in a world where some people are treated better than others based on socially constructed characteristics rooted in hierarchy. If this upsets you, WGST is likely for you. If this makes you angry, WGST is definitely for you. Join the fight!

Internalized Misogyny **by Chloe Evans**

When girls adopt the idea that they have to be unlike “typical girls” in order to be unique or to be respected, there is a notion that something is fundamentally wrong with or bad about all of the “other girls.” This also relies on the false notion that there even is a “typical girl” to begin with. Each woman’s intersecting identities and experiences and likes and dislikes makes her unique. The desire to proclaim difference by stating abhorrence for makeup, pink, mainstream pop stars, and other typically feminine things does not usually stem from a desire to analyze the sexist, classist, and racist aspects of these products. Rather, this supposed hate for all things “girly” seems to act as a mean to separate oneself from and perpetuate a demonization of the femininity.

There is no question that there needs to be options and a general de-gendering of products on the market, but when campaigns and ads meant to empower girls and women completely devalue anything associated with femininity, they ignore the structures of gender in place that have a large influence in perpetuating classic notions of femininity. If pink and baby dolls have been marketed to young girls their entire lives, the capitalist consumerist culture they live in is bound to sink in to some extent. It is not the pink and dolls that are inherently wrong, it is the forced marketing that proclaims that this is the only option available for or worthy of girls and women.

When women have internalized the harmful and oppressive messages cultivated and spread by patriarchal structures, the battle of feminism becomes that much harder. When women are pitted against each other and police whether or not a woman is “too girly” or “too masculine” or “trying too hard,” the blinders have obscured what and who has created these negative connotations to begin with.

The battle to remove these blinders stretches beyond just supporting all women. Once these oppressive structures are realized, it becomes imperative to ally oneself with all sectors of marginalized identities. It means realizing that your trans sister has been denied the privileges of femininity and faces the very real threat of death by expressing her femininity. It means understanding that your Black sister has been fed messages about white supremacist notions of beauty, and it may have taken a decade for her to accept and love the way she prefers to wear her hair. It means that recognizing and celebrating differences is how women can stand together and fight not only internalized misogyny, but all other oppressive and damaging forms of structural violence.

Speaking Up in Feminist Circles **by Alexis Olson**

Over the course of my feminist journey I have realized that there is a starting point, but really no ending point. One constantly learns new things within this political movement, but also constantly endures criticism. When I was first gaining my feminist consciousness I endured heavy critique. I was realizing how many racist, classist, and even ableist things I was saying, doing and contributing. I took these critiques in stride knowing how much I was learning and how this was furthering my self-growth and path toward feminist consciousness. Every feminist strives to be all-inclusive, accepting and loving of difference, and ultimately one who fights for justice and equality in the social, political and economic realms of society. I have noticed however, that sometimes these critiques can be a bit autocratic and domineering.

This has been problematic throughout the history of feminism. The critiques that led to massive conflict, quarreling, and overall disorganization were a few of the reasons why the feminist activist group “The Furies” in the 1970s ended up disbanding. There were also issues regarding conflict and inclusivity within second wave feminism in general, where the focus was on establishing equality for heterosexual white women. This exclusive focus sparked the Lavender Menace movement as well as a great deal of outrage within the communities of women of color.

A great deal of these critiques were warranted in my opinion, especially when it came to lesbian women, women of color, and marginalized populations overall. However, I feel that it is more detrimental to the feminist movement overall to be hypercritical. I have personal experience in feminist circles where I felt like I not only did not want to share my opinion, but I ultimately feared sharing my opinion due to hypercriticism amongst other feminists. I have discussed this issue with other self-identifying feminists, and a great deal of them have expressed similar sentiments.

So what ultimately draws the line between necessary critiques and hypercriticism? Are some feminists hindering the greater good of the movement by being hypercritical of other feminists? What is the end all solution to this, if there is one? Conclusively, I feel that feminists should operate on the motto “pick and choose your battles.” Certain battles are worth fighting, whereas others just cause unnecessary conflict between those fighting for the same cause. This can help lead a more collective and cohesive movement amongst feminists, and perhaps bring about greater change in the struggle for equality of all.

Assorted poems
by Claire Garand

Ha(na)na

For Jean-Luc Godard and Léa Pool

the back of her head, her short hair obscuring
the blood of her mother

Anna Karina looks at you
and she cries one long single tear like the movie

with her dark purse, worn from overuse
in a bed shared by three, they leave and

a faceless man against the wall she can't
though she wants to say no he's paid five dollars

find a home, even though she's the portrait
so back to home, which isn't

shot, grey and dead in the street
in the street, saturated and shooting

The River

If the river stopped I could see the object clearly
but the river never stops
no amount of waiting will calm the pattern
folds among the rocks
shells made of water

dive in or walk away

Clean

Oh baby, you clean thing
scrubbed and red and raw
washed in steam and steaming
washed away and screaming
washed in this redeeming lather,
trying to get sober

Scrub yourself with fat and lye
and lye about the fat you wear
rub scented poison in your hair
burn away the things on skin
mass murder when the wash begins
no funeral when it's over

Slap on dollops of colored cream
to heal the skin hardened by steam
give your naked body pleasure
and bake your hair to this endeavor
don coffin ready toxic paint

Oh baby, you clean thing
with soaps that lies and lye that stings
behind a veil help up on rings
and scrub and scrape, to your body it clings
how can you ever be clean
if the soap you have is dirty



Kara Walker's A Subtlety and Not so Subtle Selfies
by Emily Morgan

This summer, internationally acclaimed African-American artist Kara Walker displayed her installation, "A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the Occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant" at the Brooklyn waterfront sugar factory. The exhibit was comprised of a 35-foot tall sphinx/mammy sculpture in white sugar, showing bare breasts and a 10-foot vagina, and 15 hardened molasses sculptures of children employed in refining sugar which slowly became disfigured as they melted. The piece put in conversation the sugar industry's links to American slavery, modern slavery, globalization, and marginalized representation.

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23 likes 4 comments

The free exhibit encouraged photographs and had the official hashtag #karawalkerdomino. The subsequent selfies elicited a barrage of online condemnation. Many, often white, people were cited taking touristic photographs with the art and mocking the piece's sexuality. Journalist and Professor Nicholas Powers felt that the frivolous air with which viewers treated the art was a transformation of "black pain into white laughter." He was moved to yell at a crowd objectifying the Sugar Baby, "You are recreating the very racism this art is supposed to critique." One of his main complaints was the lack of a guide for interpretation of the piece by viewers; that no one was explicitly told about the oppressions that this piece meant to address and how to react to it.

Certainly, the exhibit did not have the somber blanket of silence that is customary in works dealing with the holocaust, 9/11, or other events of mass suffering. However, Walker recently released that she knew full well the types of responses that the sculptures would provoke and even recorded viewer responses while the exhibit was still running, which she called "spying." Walker intentionally resisted forming an air of hallowed silence or guiding the viewer response for the purpose of showing quintessential "mucky and violent and messed-up and inappropriate" human behavior. This serves the purpose of maintaining the installation's contemporary relevance. Slavery, racism, child labor are not a moment frozen in time under the epitaph "never again;" rather, they are still playing out in globalized society today. The ignorant nipple pinching and vagina licking images incite a much more nuanced and contemporarily relevant conversation than quiet reverence might.

While the artist's contextualization of her work succeeded in producing a heated cultural debate, Powers's account of his experience with the art shows that this contextualization came at a cost. Powers describes his personal anger at the flippant way the historical and contemporary suffering of his people was made trivial by the viewers. He describes seeing his sentiment shared in other viewers as well. The tourist and sexualized images produced from the exhibit, though not always by white bodies, certainly harmed those who identify with the bodies being represented. The question is whether a conversation that engages the technology of today with systematic oppression is worth the cost of subjecting bodies of color to more racist/sexist representations in social media.

This question of the costs of representing oppression is always a hard one to answer. Nonetheless, Walker's art does seem to be informed in its confrontation. The art is not referential to specific people where many representations of suffering shame real individuals. The Sugar Baby seems to be given agency and power in her size and confident expression where others tend to remove the agency and particularity of victims for false universalization. It is hard to tell the amount of concrete benefits that "A Subtlety" made to the lived experience of the Two-Thirds World, but the exhibit successfully sparked a far reaching conversation in a postmodern form.

Wendy Davis and Abortion Stories by Amy Johnson

Wendy Davis became an overnight sensation in June 2013, after filibustering a Texas Senate bill with draconian effects on the reproductive freedom of Texas women. Her thirteen hour filibuster became the talk of the nation and launched Davis into the national spotlight. Fast forward a year, and Davis is launching a gubernatorial campaign with her hordes of pink tennis shoe wearing feminist supporters. Davis released a memoir two months before the election, including personal details that are all but unheard of in the political arena: she had undergone two abortion procedures. Davis's honesty about her reproductive history is something that we rarely hear in this era. Instead, it has become all too common for American politicians to dominate news circuits with ridiculous statements or complete denials regarding abortion, birth control, and sexual assault.

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Rather than following this trend, Davis' openness about something so incredibly personal is reminiscent of the 1971 "Manifeste des 343," in which 343 French women publicly declared that they had illegal abortions—and it sent shock waves. In the U.S. we are still waiting for our own "Manifeste des 343." The American reproductive movement has become a movement for our sisters, for our daughters, but never for us.

There are many pro-choice women who will scream their support for bodily autonomy from the rooftops, but women who have had abortions are often afraid to share their stories in even the most intimate settings. It takes immense courage for any woman to share something so personal and stigmatized, which is why Wendy Davis' declaration is so significant. For a woman, running in the notoriously red state of Texas, to divulge stories about abortion in the same election cycle that three states were voting on restrictions or personhood is remarkable. Yet, it is an anomaly in our political climate. Her stories of pain and hard choices also fall under our cultural understanding of unfortunate but acceptable abortions.

Davis' story is not unusual. She had an ectopic pregnancy, which she terminated, and a pregnancy with a severe brain abnormality, which she also terminated. These stories are heart wrenching and incredibly important to share. However, they are politically safe. It falls into the rhetoric of those who only approve of abortions in severe cases like rape, incest, or when the mother's life is at risk. These are stories and situations which our society grieves, yet legitimizes; something that is denied for the women who terminate pregnancies for other reasons. We need more women like Wendy Davis to share their stories. We need women with political clout, with cultural significance, with real life stories to share. We need regular women—our mothers, our neighbors, our friends—we need to share our stories of terminating pregnancies. Whether it was the wrong time, or unwanted, or we couldn't afford it, or we were in an abusive relationship, or it was the result of sexual assault, or if it was an unviable fetus, we need to share.

There are movements encouraging this very idea. The 1in3 campaign holds speak outs for women to tell their stories to large audiences. The popular social justice geared website Upworthy has shared stories with their 7.5 million fans on Facebook and other internet outlets allow women to divulge their "dirty little secrets" about their reproductive health choices. Listening to these narratives is something that we owe to each other. If we want to continue this movement for our sisters, daughters, and friends we need to include ourselves in it. Wendy Davis' remarkable disclosure about the real ways abortion affects women blazes a trail, but she needs followers. This cultural narrative needs loud, diverse, honest voices to lend their stories and their names to our own creation and ownership of the "Manifeste des 343" and help remove stigma and impersonal politics from the issue. When we have women like Wendy Davis taking up the spot light, we can push out men like Todd Akin or Paul Ryan and reclaim this story, our story, for ourselves.

"HILARIOUS, HEARTBREAKING AND TOTALLY GENIUS."
-MOVIEPHONE

"THE MOST WINNING ABORTION-THEMED ROM-COM EVER MADE."
-THE DISSOLVE

"A TRUE STAR-MAKING PERFORMANCE FOR JENNY SLATE."
-FILM THREAT

OFFICIAL SELECTION SXSW OFFICIAL SELECTION SUNDANCE OFFICIAL SELECTION NEW DIRECTORS NEW FILMS

OBVIOUS CHILD

THURSDAY
DECEMBER 11TH
3:30 - 5:00PM

HAZEL GATES WOODRUFF COTTAGE

R PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED
A24



 Women and Gender Studies
University of Colorado Boulder
303-492-8923
wgst@colorado.edu

WMST 3940 Student Leadership Practicum Application

The 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 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, working together in three main areas, they: 1) plan **academic events** such as speakers or film viewings followed by critical discussions; 2) coordinate **activist and community outreach events**; 3) publish a **newsletter** with student articles focusing on different feminist issues.

Name: _____ Student ID# _____

Address: _____ Phone # _____

WMST 3940 for 1 credit during: **Spring 2015**

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 may not be re-nominated or apply for the Leadership Practicum the following semester (although they may the following year).

Eligibility:

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 December 12th.
Applications may be turned in at the Hazel Gates Woodruff Cottage
or sent via email to montoyc@colorado.edu***