

THE HARVARD
independent
12.01.11 THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969

Inside: Kate Millett, SlutWalk, and fat.



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lights and brights and beacons..."

- Kate Millett

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**THIS IS
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LOOKS
LIKE**

The *Indy* is dismantling the
patriarchy.

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MIRANDA SHUGARS AND
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FEMINIST COMING OUT DAY.

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Indy Readers,

In the past two national elections we have had three woman candidates, a female history professor is president of the best university in the country, women make up 57% of college graduates, and people of all genders think Tina Fey is riotously funny. We hold international public demonstrations against rape and are moving away from the gender binary. Body acceptance is a movement, and female heads of state are increasingly common. Yet, only 20% of the U.S Congress is female, and as of 2009 only 31% of Harvard's faculty was female. 1.3 women are raped in the United States every minute. Women continue to make 80 cents for every dollar men do, and on the global scale women are educated at lower rates than men and have less access to economic and health resources than men do. The statistics go on. To make a long story of oppression and sexism short, feminism cannot be over. There is work to be done yet on the university, local, national, and global levels. If we accept that feminism is over, deride those who wave its banner, and pretend that everything is okay, we will never reach gender equality. Equality is not given. It must be fought for. At the Indy we believe that Harvard students have the resources and the opportunities to be that next generation of feminist activists. Women, men, whatever—we cannot rest until 50% of the population has 50% of the power. Does that sound radical? It shouldn't.

*Yours,
The Indy Editors*

Radcliffe: A Legacy

'Cliffe's history and its enduring influence at Harvard.

By MEGHAN BROOKS

WHEN HARVARD MEN SAY THEY HAVE graduated from Radcliffe, then we've made it."
- Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

On the grassy green lawn that stretches across the heart of the Quad, in the quiet sculpture courtyard beside the Byerly and Longfellow buildings, and in the always-empty reading room on the bottom floor of Hilles (SOCH), the lingering memory of Radcliffe College fades to a whiter shade of pale each year. The college where Gertrude Stein studied under William James, where Helen Keller wrote *The Story of My Life*, where Benazir Bhutto studied government, and where Jenny and Oliver fell in love is no longer a part of the collective student consciousness. Yet, remnants of what was once the best women's college in the world remain. The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Radcliffe Crew and Rugby, the Radcliffe Union of Students, the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, the Harvard-Radcliffe Christian Fellowship, and the Radcliffe Choral Society are only some of the institutions and organizations that bear the college's name. Radcliffe's legacy at Harvard is in more than names, however. Whether Harvard students recognize it or not, Radcliffe as an institution bears much of the responsibility for the place, study, and role of women at Harvard today.

First, a historical primer: by 1879, American academia had begun to come to the realization that perhaps, maybe, women deserved and could handle higher education. Thus, in the mid-nineteenth century, various women's colleges sprang up across the country, with the majority emerging in the northeast in partnership with elite men's universities. Harvard was a little late to the game, but in 1879 it established the Harvard Annex, a small, nearly experimental institution that allowed women to take classes from Harvard professors. In the first decade of the Annex's existence, less than thirty students lived and studied in one house on Applan Way, making do with a bathroom converted into a physics laboratory and little respect from Harvard's power structure. By the turn of the century, however, Radcliffe emerged as an independent and fully accredited women's college with only tenuous ties to Harvard.

In many ways the decades before WWII were Radcliffe's glory days. Financially independent and still at the vanguard of "feminism" in higher education, Radcliffe developed a reputation for excellence. Although its strict parietal rules would be insulting today, the college on Garden Street afforded women freedom of access to a Harvard education before they could even vote. As women's rights advanced with the events of the 20th century, however, discontent with the status quo

simmered.

In 1943, faculty complaints about dual teaching responsibilities finally grew into a push for total co-education. By 1947, all classes were co-ed, and starting in 1963, women undergraduates' diplomas bore the signatures of both Radcliffe and Harvard's presidents. As the sixties moved towards the seventies and Second Wave Feminism grew more and more vocal, female undergraduates began to push for greater and more equal privileges at Harvard. Financial worries necessitated that Radcliffe establish closer ties with Harvard, and against the opinions of many alumnae, alumni, and students at both schools, commencement exercises were combined in 1970, Harvard assumed responsibility for Radcliffe's daily management in 1971, co-residence was established in 1972, and restrictive quotas on female undergraduates were abolished in 1975. Radcliffe was quickly ceding its sovereignty, and yet, in the two decades after 1977's governance agreement establishing its financial and legal independence, nothing more happened.

Between 1975 and 1999, female undergraduates were members of a strange, somewhat unofficial entity called "Harvard-Radcliffe". Men were still simply at Harvard, but women, somehow, were admitted by the joint Harvard-Radcliffe Admissions office, were

technically students at both colleges, and graduated with two presidents' signatures on their diplomas. Day-to-day living, dining, and academics, however, happened at Harvard. Radcliffe was becoming more and more of an afterthought in the student consciousness.

And yet, many students and faculty—mostly female—were not ready to let Radcliffe go. In the past decades, the prevailing sentiment had been that full integration with Harvard would mean full equality for women in higher education. Segregation in the classroom and unequal access to resources was seen as simple sexism. Yet, when the athletic departments merged, the women's crew team voted to retain Radcliffe's name and colors, and the vocal umbrella feminist and woman's organization formed at the 1977 "non-merger merger" was founded as the Radcliffe Union of Students. Radcliffe had become an identity and a shared history in both positive and negative ways—it was a history of strong, intelligent women and the community they formed because Harvard would not let them in.

In 1999, after months of closed negotiations, Presidents Linda S. Wilson and Neil L. Rudenstine shook hands on the official and final merger of Radcliffe College into Harvard University. For female students on campus, little

changed besides their diplomas. However, Radcliffe's legacy remained. The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, the academic corpus that serves as a center for the broad study of woman, gender, and society and supports the Schlesinger Library, is one of the foremost institutions of its kind, and it remains a resource for undergraduates. Meanwhile, the Radcliffe Union of Students remained and remains a voice for women on campus, advocating for the establishment of a Woman's Center in the early 2000s and for the establishment of the WGS (Woman, Gender, and Sexuality) Department. As a matter of fact, without the backing of Radcliffe affiliates, the WGS Department might have never been founded.

Although today's Harvard is fully coeducational and Radcliffe College—apart from the institute—is little more than an echo, a relic of an "old boy" past, the college's history and influence are both complex and powerful. We, the women of Harvard, are no longer 'Cliffies, but no matter how we feel about Radcliffe's past, it is inextricably tied to our very presence at Harvard. The least we can do is remember it.

Meghan Brooks '14 (meghanbrooks@college) salutes the generations of Radcliffe alumnae who came before her.



photo courtesy of wikicommons

Byerly Hall, Radcliffe Quadrangle

Three Women, Three Struggles, One Vision

Women's rights and feminism
in the Muslim world.

By CARLOS SCHMIDT

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT THE GREATER Middle East, we either think about the vast oil wealth or the countless infractions against basic human rights. However, we fail to see past that representation: the media's one-sided reports generalize our view of the region. Without realizing it, we have become ignorant of the rich social and political transformations taking place in the Greater Middle East. These transformations are led by determined women, who seek not only greater political rights but also a more just and developed region. These women are the leaders of modern, Middle Eastern, Islamic feminism. Their struggles against common social and political ills establish the grassroots movements for future generations. They establish opportunity and, more importantly, an example—role models girls whom girls can admire and work to become.

Meet Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned, Tawakel Karman, and Sima Samar, three Muslim women resolved to make themselves heard in a part of the world where, depending on the country, the government does not even allow them to drive or vote. "Here [in the United States], feminism is broken down too much; everything is seen as a major issue, whereas there [in the Middle East] they are fighting for basic rights and the right to vote and for equal pay," commented an undisclosed freshman member of the Harvard Islamic Society. The trajectories of the Sheikha, Karman, and Samar combine both goals, accomplishing equality by addressing social and political concerns.

Indeed, there is a day-to-day struggle for equality by women in the highly chauvinistic Middle

East. Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned, wife of the Emir of Qatar, wants to prevent that struggle through education. Stating how "Qatar's most valuable natural resource is its people," the Sheikha wants to ensure that every Qatari, female or male, has equal access to education. With this aim, she assumed the presidency of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. As the leader of the organization, she has attracted numerous universities to Qatar, paving the way for an education revolution. In a region where it is difficult for women to enter politics, she is demonstrating the potential and willpower of females, dispelling the long-held beliefs by males and social conservatives that women are not capable of being public figures.

When no one would dare become the public face of the Yemeni uprising due to potential government repercussion,

Tawakel Karman—a Yemeni journalist—decided to take on the challenge and attempt to democratize the flawed Yemeni government. Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, Karman has organized countless protests in the capital, Sana'a. Her valiant efforts paved the way for the eventual resignation of the Yemeni president. Moreover, the transitional council promised it would soon enact political reforms. Without her, the Yemeni Revolution would not have succeeded. For her efforts, the Nobel committee awarded her the Nobel Peace Prize this past November.

If leading an organization or revolution were not difficult enough, Sima Samar has taken on the responsibility of spearheading the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, an investigative organization that reports on the countless human right infractions in her country. Her job involves going to

remote places in which she is constantly risking her life. Her willingness and sense of duty are admirable. Commenting on her many near-death experiences, she stated, "I've always been in danger, but I don't mind. I believe we will die one day so I said let's take the risk and help somebody else." Many international organizations and the U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, have praised her work as a model of transparency and justice for the region.

In my interview with an undisclosed member of the Harvard Islamic Society, she commented, "I met this girl studying at Harvard law school, which is like the best law school in the country, but when she goes back to Saudi Arabia she won't be allowed to work as a lawyer. Therefore, we [Middle Eastern women] are fighting for basic rights. There have been a few revolutions. Many women have taken a higher role [but there is more to be done]." However different these women might seem in their approaches to politics and society, they share the ultimate desire to help everyone in their region acquire equal opportunities. They want all opportunities to be available to everyone, despite gender. They are assuming the dangerous positions that all others, including men, have refused; by doing so, they know that they are opening the doors for future generations of women. These women are a testament to resilience and a thirst for equality. They are the faces of modern, Middle Eastern, and Islamic feminism, a force that is transforming a region.

Carlos Schmidt '15 (cschmidt@college) is inspired by any person who chooses to go beyond herself for the benefit of her people.



"Day of Rage" protest organized by Tawakel Karman

Weighed and Found Wanting

Taking on the constant pressure to be thin.

By FAITH ZHANG

OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS, I'VE LOST ten pounds.

This is not an article about how I did it and how you can do it too, if you just eat these three foods and avoid those other five. This is also not an article about the obesity epidemic, which deserves much more ink than I can give it here and is, not coincidentally, a lot more complicated than just "Americans eat too much". This is an article about the way we as women think about our bodies; it is an article about the following two statements: I want to lose weight. I don't want to want to lose weight.

There's something strange about losing weight — about reducing oneself. There's less of me than there was before. It's faintly disorienting to feel my body taking up just a little less space than I expect. I'm discovering the shape of the outer edges of my collarbones, the new hollows around my knees, the sharper peaks of my hipbones, the spaces between my ribs that are still invisible but that my fingers can now find.

Listen: I am a feminist. I believe that the media promotes unhealthy and unrealistic standards for beauty; I believe that my mind and my abilities are worth more than my dress size. But I'm also a product of my culture, and some kinds of conditioning are hard to shake. I like to think of myself as independent, self-sufficient, indifferent to what others think, comfortable in my own skin — and yet I feel better about myself when I'm thinner. I can't think of a time since I was twelve when I haven't wanted to lose weight.

Let me be clear: this is not about health. The "healthy" range for BMI is 18.5 to 24.9; at 23.8 I was comfortably within the upper bound even before I started to lose weight; at this point, my BMI is down to 21.9. (Yes, BMI is a flawed metric that fails to take into account all kinds of relevant factors, but it works as a starting point for this particular conversation.) My blood pressure has consistently been on the low side, hovering somewhere around 100/60. My blood triglyceride level is not only healthy but low enough to be considered optimal. By every possible measure, my weight was not a health problem.

"You look so much more fit," my dad said to me, not too long ago. He's wrong; what he means is that I look thinner.

Let me be clear: I am much less fit now than before I started losing weight, not more, after six months during which I have exercised sporadically at best. I've never been much of a runner, but not so long ago I could go for three or four miles; now, I can't even do one without stopping and walking. I've lost the muscle definition in my forearms that I gained from hours spent rock climbing.

I'm happy about losing weight, and that knowledge irritates me. There is something about losing weight and being happy about it that feels like giving in to the tyranny of a media that seems to promote only one narrow definition of beauty, to my dad's unsubtle prodding, to the constant pressure external and even internal pressure to be thinner regardless of health. I hate giving in, and yet I constantly do.

My roommate through three and a half years was always unhappy with her own body. "Bulgy stomach," she'd say, standing in front of the mirror and poking herself with the corners of her mouth pulled down unhappily. "I have fat legs."

My stomach is considerably less flat than hers; I am an inch taller and weighed between fifteen and thirty pounds more than she did at any given time. (This is not a guess; I know exactly how much she weighed because we shared the same bathroom scale and sometimes commiserated.) When she said this, I would think to myself, If she thinks she's fat, then I must be grotesquely obese.

I don't, for the record, at all believe that she meant to deliver an oblique insult or that she actually thought that I was a fat cow. As a close friend, I trust that she intended no insult to me; more to the point, we know that people with anorexia are unable to see themselves accurately — but there is a certain subtler distortion that keeps us from being able to see ourselves clearly, too. Just a few weeks ago I was getting dressed to go out in the same room as another friend, and she looked at me and said, "Wow, your thighs are so slender...mine are so fat."

"That's funny," I said, "I was just thinking exactly the opposite."

Both of us could not have been right at the same time; I suspect that both of us were wrong about ourselves. I've had a three-way argument in the dining hall about which one of us ate more (the implication being, of course,

that whoever ate the most was the fattest), each of us arguing for herself as the most gluttonous. The three of us knew each other well and ate together often enough that had the subject been anything else, I think we should have been able to come to a rational consensus; of course, we didn't.

(I still think I eat the most, and it's disturbing to me to think that either my two friends are unable to assess this objectively, or I am.)

All of these are manifestations of a certain discussion that recurs over and over again. Women, if one of you has managed to escape this conversation altogether, you are lucky indeed; men, I can't speak for you, but if you've read this far you might have an idea of what I'm talking about. It's the one where we sit around in a circle and talk about everything that's wrong with our appearances but most of all how fat we are, tearing ourselves down and convincing ourselves that we're ugly, uglier, the ugliest of all. I want to push back against it; but I've had these conversations too. I perpetuate it just as much as everyone else.

There's something compulsive about what results from this kind of distortion. I step on the scale every time I'm in my bathroom, even though there is no possible meaning to a fluctuation of half a pound over three hours other than that I drank a couple of glasses of water and put on a sweatshirt. When I do eat something "fattening" — and I hate thinking about food in those terms — there's an edge of defiance to it, as though I'm simultaneously rebelling against the pressure to be thin and worried that people will think I'm a pig, guilty of the crime of eating while not-thin.

(I know: food is good. It's okay to enjoy eating. Thinness is not the holy grail. No one else is even paying attention to what you're eating, and no one cares. I've made all of these arguments to other people, but it doesn't stop me from fretting to myself.)

I don't want to make it sound like weight is the only thing women think or talk about. The women I've known at Harvard have been fantastically bright, ambitious, and involved, interested in everything from astronomy to foreign policy to modern art — and of course, they're often too busy to think about anything but what needs to be done.

But I think it's fair to say that for many — if not all — of us, weight is something lurking in the back of the mind, waiting to rear its ugly head at moments of insecurity, a small thing that keeps us from ever being quite at peace with ourselves.

I'm tired of it.

I have used fat as a synonym for ugly throughout this piece, and for that I am deeply sorry; but that unfair connection is at the heart of this complex, wherein fatness is both an aesthetic and a moral failing and being sufficiently thin — that impossible, unachievable ideal — represents happiness, success, attractiveness, everything you could possibly want. It might seem obvious that being thin cannot actually solve all your problems; and yet at least one person has said to me, "I think being thinner would just make everything in my life a little better." Being fat is not the worst thing that could happen, but it is the worst thing that is likely to happen.

Just telling women to love their own bodies isn't a real solution, not when every other part of our culture is telling us to be thin. Here's the thing: I feel more confident when I'm thinner. I feel like I'm taken more seriously, and I don't think I'm just imagining it.

Here's one example: I was eating lunch in Annenberg with a couple of people I didn't know well when the subject turned to feminism.

"Feminists are just fat girls," said the guy sitting across from me; I don't remember if the addendum "who can't get a boyfriend" came from him or just from every other piece of popular commentary on the subject. The implication, of course, is that the easiest way to dismiss a vast body of work and ideas is to call its proponents are fat; and there was something of contempt in the way he said it, as if nothing fat girls have to say could possibly be of worth.

How thin do I have to be to have my ideology taken seriously? Isn't requiring a woman to be thin before you take her ideas seriously the very essence of what feminism is fighting against? How can we focus on what's important—on being healthy, on doing the things we want to do to make better lives and a better world — when we're constantly distracted by having the supposed inadequacy of our bodies shoved in our faces? We've already wasted too much time and (*cont. on page 6*)

(cont. from page 5) unhappiness on a useless, pointless, impossible goal.

Listen: I like having a body. I like the cold air sharp in my lungs, I like the sun warm on my shoulders. I like to close my eyes and turn my face into the wind. I like the moment when every muscle strains in unison toward a single goal. I like my hands — their long fingers, stronger than you'd expect; I like my feet, small and dainty unless I'm wearing my stompin' boots. I like the deep inward

curve at the small of my back and I like the breadth of my shoulders, even though I also like to complain about how both things make buying clothes difficult. I want to be grateful that I have this body, healthy and whole.

I want to be able to say that I like my body without feeling like I have to follow it up with the disclaimer that no, I don't think it's perfect, for fear that others are thinking that I'm somehow delusional, that I can't see the soft little bulge of fat

on my stomach or the place where my thighs touch. I can. Believe me, I can.

I've come to think of my body like a house I've lived in for a long time: yes, some parts of it are creaky or oddly shaped and if I were to build it over again from the ground up I could probably come up with some improvements, and yes, sometimes I complain about it, but in truth I love it anyway because it's been with me through so many things,

all its little foibles and imperfections comforting in their familiarity — because it belongs to me, because it's mine to take care of, because it's the one thing no one can take away. It's been good to me. I want to be good to it too.

Faith Zhang '11 (fhzhang@fas) made an epic amount of food for Thanksgiving. Then she ate it.

Gender Inequality in the Workplace

Education does not equal success.

By CINDY HSU

SINCE 1980, THERE HAVE BEEN MORE women enrolled in institutions of higher education than men. Today in the U.S., men constitute only 42% of college students. Additionally, women receive a greater number of the honors degrees at many universities. For the Harvard Class of 2006, 55% of the women graduated with honors while barely half of the men did so. In 2009, once again roughly 55% of women were awarded honors degrees compared with 51% of men. At Florida Atlantic University, not only did women make up 64% of the graduating class in 2006, they also received 75% of the honors degrees and 79% of the highest honors. According to census figures released in April 2011, among the population age 25 to 29, 36% of women had a bachelor degree or more, compared with 28% of men. Women are clearly trouncing men when it comes to academics. It's great. Until you graduate, that is.

Gender equality goes downhill once you enter the job market. A woman earns only 80 cents for every dollar a man earns. Women are performing better in school than men are, and women definitely have equal qualifications, if not higher. Yet, in our supposedly merit-based, capitalist society, women still lag behind men in wages. Despite the huge advances women have made within the education system, women are still at a disadvantage in the workplace. The modern American workplace simply does not reflect the fact that women are equally qualified for the same jobs as men are, and thus due the same pay. So why doesn't a woman's success in school translate into success in the real world?

This disconnect can only be attributed to gender differences and the different treatment each gender receives. The lack of wage parity despite the fact that more women than men hold a bachelor's degree or higher demonstrates that it is not the difference in qualifications that creates

the gap in earnings, but rather gender. Indeed, blatant gender discrimination is mostly nonexistent; however, the workplace itself is inherently biased against women through the stereotypes and expectations of women's roles and their accordant actions.

During my time at Harvard, I hear again and again from multiple sources that women are disadvantaged right from the job interview. Because both the interviewer and the interviewee have been brought up in a society that expects women to be demure, not

aggressive, women are not expected to ask for a higher starting pay (or more of anything in general). Even so, one would expect that women would work harder than men on the job as they did in academia, and thus reach wage parity at some point in the middle of their career. This doesn't seem to happen, and one of the most commonly reasons given to explain this disparity is pregnancy.

People say because women get pregnant in the middle of their career, they have to take time off and go on maternity leave. In addition, as mothers,

women who are working just simply can't work as many hours as men do. And because women can't work overtime or travel frequently because you know, they're mothers, women often get passed up for promotions. This is seen as fair because women are putting in fewer hours for work. However, it is not the lower work hours that prevent women from reaching work equality—it is because the workplace is structured in such a way that it forces women to take up a larger share of responsibility in the household.

Because the U.S. does not require paid parental leave, parents are often forced to divide domestic duties in such way that one person must continue working to support the family while the other becomes responsible for most of the household obligations. This contributes to the perpetuation of the problem because people often end up falling back on the societal assumption that women are the primary caregivers of the household. Lack of paid parental leave takes away the couple's choice of equally dividing household duties, because both parents risk their jobs in taking lower hours to split domestic responsibilities.

Yes, women have come a long way in probably almost every aspect; however, now is not the time to be complacent. Yes, girls are doing great in school — better than the boys, in fact — but unfortunately, that doesn't mean that women have broken the glass ceiling. Men still dominate the math and sciences, earn more money, and wield more power. Nevertheless, the progress women have made in academics in the past few decades serves as proof that such progress is also achievable in the workplace.

Cindy Hsu '14 (cindyhsu@college) will make absolutely sure she gets paid just as much as every man, and probably more. I mean, she does go to Harvard...



photo courtesy of wikicommons

Anatomy of a Senior Thesis

By SANYEE YUAN

Part VII: "I am Woman-Writer, Hear Me Roar"

AFTER A SEVEN-HOUR FLIGHT FROM Boston, I felt happy to finally stretch my legs once I reached my home in California. Taking over my family's red plush couch in the living room with the television remote in one hand and my favorite Snuggie-esque orange-and-brown blanket draped over my legs, I turned the channel to VH1. Excited to have arrived at home a few days before the Thanksgiving break officially started and in time for the Kelly Clarkson Live Soundstage episode, I told my mom to join me in the Kelly sing-a-long. We turned on the closed captioning and I commenced singing at the top of my lungs.

"What doesn't kill you makes you stronger / Stand a little taller..."

I personally thought she looked gorgeous in her curve-hugging shimmering red dress and proclaimed to my mom how proud I was of the pop rock crooner with the powerful pipes who I'd voted for nine years ago on American Idol.

"She does have a really unique voice," my mom agreed. "But the media has just been so harsh on her about... you know..."

"What?" I asked, eyes still glued to the screen.

"Doesn't mean I'm lonely when I'm alone..."

My mom gestured to the TV. "Her weight."

Sure, Kelly definitely didn't look as skin-and-bones as her fellow female Idol alumni did. The ones who'd lost loads of pounds upon finding themselves thrust into the limelight: country star Carrie Underwood, Oscar-winner Jennifer Hudson, new NBC primetime darling-to-be Katharine McPhee.

The mention of her weight echoed back words from articles that I'd read in magazines, insulting Kelly for her image; vicious remarks about how she needed to cut down on the catered food that came with her new celebrity status. Outrage that I'd felt then at the critics came roaring back to me as I watched her sing to a packed room of grinning fans.

"What doesn't kill you makes a fighter / Footsteps even lighter..."

Just because she doesn't have skeletal arms or razor-sharp cheekbones doesn't mean that she deserves less respect for her profession as a singer. Perhaps the blow of the critical words on Kelly hit me because I'm also a woman who's planning to go into the

media industry. Whether I work as a broadcaster or actress—or ideally, both—I know that I'm setting myself up for a world of constant scrutiny over my appearance.

The black-and-white words on the screen to Kelly's song blurred as thoughts of my recent arts-infused undertaking—my thesis—entered my head.

In writing my senior thesis, an autoethnography that reflects on my values and stories from my life so far, and preparing for a performance to accompany the piece, I've needed to engage in a lot of self-exploration. One integral part of autoethnography involves digging deep into the mine of memories and uncovering the difficult

parts of my life that I haven't wanted to relive.

With eyes still on Kelly, I saw my own struggle with appearance and skinniness. Some of the moments in my past that still make me shudder today.

The time in fifth grade when my mom's friend came to visit and in all seriousness called me thunder thighs, asking me if I had cellulite at ten years old. Lunches in seventh grade, when I refused to eat anything around my friends except for a chocolate milk or yogurt every day, only to have them call me out on it and attempt to force-feed me rice. One day in eighth grade science class when my teacher began her lecture on anorexia and a classmate, sitting two seats away from

me, coughed my name loudly enough for everyone to hear. High school gym class when I would take extreme care to suck in my stomach if I was changing around others in the locker room. All the way up to college when one of my blockmates told me I would have to lose a lot of weight if I really wanted to make it in the movie business.

Nothing hurts more when someone you consider your close friend jabs at your jugular. He knew how much I wanted to make it as an actress and he also knew how sensitive I'd been about my weight for all my past years.

"Doesn't mean I'm over cuz you're gone..."

Why couldn't I be respected for my craft? For my ability to write, produce, and report on news pieces? Or for my attempts to act out different characters onstage and on-screen? Didn't the content of the story matter anymore?

More importantly, when did looking like a mannequin become equivalent to "looking great" for women?

This challenge of staying skinny just to appear attractive plagues women to an unhealthy extent. When we lose weight, we're met with positive feedback and praise. When we gain weight, we encounter subtle and some not-so-subtle pokes at our self-esteem, even from our loved ones. I remember returning home for winter break three years ago only to have family friends tell me they thought I'd gained the famous freshman 15.

It's actually women like Kelly who we should praise—ones who don't feel pressured to conform to the opinions of others, ones who don't let the sticks and stones turn them to skin and bones.

At the time of this writing, I do still allow worries of my weight's correlation with my future career to occupy my thoughts and feel concerned about calories. However, I realize that at the end of the day, if I'm happy with myself, I shouldn't let anyone else convince me otherwise. And no woman should either.

"What doesn't kill you makes you stronger, stronger / Just me, myself, and I."

Sanyee Yuan '12 (syuan@fas) thinks we should break away from reducing women to their appearances.

photo courtesy of wikicommons



Conversations with Kate Millett

Discussing feminism, art, Spanish, and Harvard.

Interview By W. J. SIMMONS



Kate Millett, the author of Sexual Politics, graciously agreed to speak to me by phone from her farm in Poughkeepsie. Considered by many to be one of the most important figures of the Second Wave Feminism movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Ms. Millett changed the way people thought about patriarchy and the arts. Sexual Politics, a foundation of feminist art criticism, began originally as Ms. Millett's Ph.D. dissertation at Columbia University. Beginning with the historical construction of the patriarchy as we know it today, Ms. Millett goes on to indentify the traces of patriarchal and heteronormative thinking in literature. When her book hit the shelves in 1970, it drew both praise and controversy. For instance, Norman Mailer, whose work Ms. Millett criticizes for its sexual violence and hyper-masculinity, wrote a rebuttal to Sexual Politics entitled The Prisoner of Sex. In any case, Sexual Politics opened the eyes of a nation to the discriminatory structures that organize society, a phenomenon that is not relegated to literature. Indeed, Ms. Millett exposes an entire cultural sensibility that subjugates women through language and imagery. By utilizing the tools of the discipline she hopes to revise, Ms. Millett has created an effective study of the patriarchy's nefarious influence. Soon after the publishing of Sexual Politics, she appeared on the cover of TIME Magazine.

Additionally, Ms. Millett works tirelessly in support of LGBTQ issues, even in the face of opposition from prominent members of the women's liberation movement. She famously confronted Betty Friedan about the reluctance to include gay liberation in the rhetoric of Second Wave Feminism. In doing so, she played an integral role in building a more inclusive movement that draws from a multitude of voices.

Moreover, Ms. Millett's activism has been manifest in her dedication to the visual arts. Through art, Ms. Millett has critiqued the status quo, most notably with her controversial sculpture, "The American Dream Goes to Pot," a piece that features a toilet containing an American flag.

In an effort to help others express themselves through the arts, Ms. Millett runs an artist colony on her farm. Women from all over the world are invited to spend a summer with Ms. Millett and hone their skills alongside other passionate artists.

She continues to write prolifically, and has authored many celebrated works, such as Sita, Flying, Mother Millett, The Prostitution Papers, and A.D.: A Memoir.

Feminism and Gender Activism at Harvard

WS: So, I'm going to go ahead and start with a couple questions that pertain specifically to Harvard and higher education. My first one is, what role do Harvard and other universities play in keeping what you fought for alive?

KM: Well, what role do they play? Well, it's a very exclusive club, Harvard.

WS: Do you believe that Harvard students can take, take a good role in social justice issues, for instance?

KM: Sure they can, but do they?

WS: [Laughter] Well, that's a, that's a good question. We have a lot of active student groups on campus, but you're right, universities like Harvard are exclusive.

KM: Any role in women's rights at all?

WS: Well, um, [Laughter] I don't know exactly. A friend of mine —

KM: Kind of important, women's rights. You know, women are 53% of the population. We should have some rights.

WS: You're...correct. I don't, I don't know exactly. I know that we have a lot of —

KM: What about gay rights?

WS: I know that we have a lot of female fraternal organizations, and our, our —

KM: I said, do you have gay rights at Harvard?

WS: Well, our Queer Students Association is very active on campus, and we actually just had a, um —

KM: [Speaks softly]

WS: I'm sorry?

KM: For men, not for women.

WS: [Laughter] I don't, I, the last I heard their board is fairly mixed in terms of sexual orientations and genders. But —

KM: That's nice.

WS: Well, um, let me move —

KM: [Speaks softly]

WS: I'm sorry?

KM: Radcliffe?

WS: Um, well, the Institute still has the fellows every year who do work in women's —

KM: They do? They still have fellows? That's very interesting.

WS: And they, and they still focus on women's issues and issues of sexuality. And there are a lot of really interesting ones this term, like Whitney Chadwick, who wrote *Women, Art, and Society*. I talked to her a little bit. She's a very great woman, who is

doing a lot of wonderful work. Why don't – let me ask you this question: Do you, do you see the same patriarchal discourse in academia that you –

KM: Sure. Of course. The patriarchy, everything revolves around the rights of the father.

WS: And, are you, are you still teaching?

KM: Every time I can.

WS: Great, great. So do you see, you see higher education as playing what role in feminism today?

KM: No role at all.

WS: No role at all? And what do you think could change that, especially at Harvard?

KM: Well, how many years have you had Republican rule?

WS: Well, [Laughter] a lot of people would say that we've been changing over the years, especially with our new president.

KM: Who's your new president?

WS: Drew Gilpin Faust.

KM: Who?

WS: Drew, Drew Faust? She's a historian who did a lot of work on the civil war. And she's been doing a lot of work to expand the arts on campus.

KM: [Speaks softly]

WS: I'm sorry?

KM: Remember your old president?

WS: [Laughter] Larry Summers?

KM: He's an idiot, wherever he's gone.

WS: [Laughter] A lot of people on campus would, would agree heartily! He's actually, he's back, and he's teaching currently at the Kennedy School.

KM: The Kennedy School. That's a good enough job for him, I guess.

Women in the Arts

WS: [Laughter] So why don't we move on to some questions about the arts, because that's really the focus of what I want to talk to you about today, considering that *Sexual Politics* was among the first, if not the first, piece of feminist literary criticism.

KM: Well, Simone de Beauvoir wrote the first piece. Simone de Beauvoir, remember her?

WS: What was that called?

KM: *The Second Sex*, it was called.

WS: Oh! [Laughter] That's right, that's right. But in either case, what you did was quite extraordinary, in literature, and more generally, the arts. So, the first question that I want to ask you is: Is there still a reflection of this patriarchy that

you unearthed in the arts?

KM: Of course there's still a reflection.

WS: Where do you see it most manifest –

KM: At the land-grant colleges, you see, which were formed by Abraham Lincoln. Like the University of Minnesota, where I went to school.

WS: Can you expand on that a bit?

KM: I studied a lot of French. Because in the Mississippi Valley, we value French.

WS: Right, right.

KM: It's the language of diplomacy now. I wonder what is the language of diplomacy, probably Spanish.

WS: And did you encounter patriarchy

KM: [Speaks softly]

WS: I'm sorry?

KM: Take a catch-up class. In Spanish, German, and French. Then you'd be all ready to be an art historian.

WS: [Laughter] That's a great idea! Maybe I'll, maybe I'll try that. And going off –

KM: What are you studying now, sir?

WS: I, right now I'm working on modern and contemporary art, and this term, I'm focusing on, I'm focusing on photography a lot this term. I'm going to do my final projects, I'm very interested in the intersection between gender issues and photography, especially in the 1970s with the

WS: Yeah, she's done a lot of great things. Although people might say that her art has become a lot more commercial of late.

KM: Of course it has. That's what happens when you succeed.

WS: [Laughter] Yeah. She's done some fantastic things. I really like Laurie Simmons too, with all her domestic scenes. I think they're, they're very interesting. So, what, what - how can the arts be utilized in an effort to form a collective identity or to empower the disenfranchised?

KM: We can subvert. We can subvert the enfranchised by being the disenfranchised. If you understand that, you understand everything. But you're so enfranchised by Harvard, you don't even understand [Speaks softly].

WS: Well, um, I think that Harvard, I think Harvard only changes you if you let it. And I, I didn't come from a privileged background, so I like to, I like to think of myself as someone that Harvard didn't change, so to speak. [Laughter] So I, I, that's very interesting. So -

KM: You're a scholarship man?

WS: [Laughter] Quite a bit! Quite a bit! I am. Yes, I am. And I'm, I'm working to support myself. And... yeah. [Laughter] I am by no means one of those Harvard students.

KM: Dead white men, you mean?

WS: [Laughter] And I believe, I believe there's a lot of room for Harvard students to really utilize the arts to make a difference in social justice –

KM: [Speaks softly]

WS: What was that?

KM: You have any vacations from Harvard?

WS: I go for Christmas. [Laughter] And the summer, of course.

KM: How about the summer?



Photo courtesy of WikiCommons.

in the arts while you were there?

KM: Do you read Spanish?

WS: Do I read Spanish?

KM: Yeah.

WS: Um, not well [Laughter]. But I, I have taken a lot of Spanish. But I wouldn't call myself good at it.

KM: That's too bad.

WS: Maybe I'll, maybe I'll take some more courses. I've been thinking of trying to learn French, since I do art history. I thought it would be a good thing to try.

KM: Well, you have to know German too for art history.

WS: That's very true [Laughter]. I'm a little too scared, though. Let me see –

rise of Laurie Simmons and Cindy Sherman and Sherrie Levine, and all those figures.

KM: That's a good idea. That's what we do over here (at Millett farm).

WS: Yeah, I think there are a lot of really wonderful, a lot of really wonderful things that can be garnered from the arts when looked at through the lenses of sexuality or gender, and that's what I'm very interested in this term. So, going off of my previous question, how can art break down structures such as patriarchy or heteronormativity?

KM: Well, Cindy Sherman's a good example.

WS: Well, this past summer, I'm only a sophomore. So this past summer, I was in New York City doing curriculum development for the Points of Light Institute, and so I did a lot of work in schools in the Bronx with our curriculum, and some of the things that I wrote were published, so it was pretty exciting.

KM: Got any time to come up to Poughkeepsie? By the train, it's about an hour and a half.

WS: Oh! Um, yeah. [Laughter] That would be wonderful.

KM: I can show you pictures of some sculptures that I've made.

WS: That would be, that would be

really fantastic. I secretly, I secretly wanted to see your farm because I grew up on a farm. And I saw some of the pictures of it once your website, and it looks gorgeous [Laughter].

KM: Well, I'll be home all next summer. Be sure to call before you come.

WS: Oh, well, thank you so much! That is, that is fantastic! I would absolutely love to do that. I would absolutely love to do that. I've heard such great things about the work that you've been doing there, and the artists that you've been helping. So, that's really quite amazing. Now, how do you think your artists' colony functions in a feminist mindset? How, how are the arts empowering the women that you work with?

KM: Quite a lot. But we could use a few boys around here!

WS: [Laughter] Do, do women come out changed, and invigorated and –

KM: They sure do.

Ms. Millet's Work

WS: That's wonderful. That's really wonderful. Um, so why don't I move on to my next question? What drove you to take on the subjugation of women in the arts, especially literature?

KM: Well, I write a book every couple of years, you know. Sometimes I write a book that takes 14 years to discover. It's called *The Politics of Cruelty*. Have you ever heard of it?

WS: Yes, yes I have.

KM: Have you read it?

WS: I, I haven't read it yet. But I'd like to. It's on my list. So what was that process like, of discovering the way women are treated in literature and deciding that it was time to bring it to light?

KM: Well, why don't you read my book, *The Politics of Cruelty*? Have you got an old copy of *Sexual Politics* lying around?

WS: Yes! Yes, I do, right here. [Laughter]

KM: How much did you pay for it?

WS: How much did I pay for it? I think I got it, I think I got it at Amazon for twelve dollars-ish.

KM: Oh, my God. I'd hold onto it.

WS: [Laughter] Oh, I definitely will! It's all covered in highlights and earmarks and all that.

KM: Good.

WS: Um, let's see. So, how does your artistic –

KM: Have you ever read *Mother Millett*?

WS: I, I didn't.

KM: That's a good book about how to save an old lady.

WS: Now that's about, that's about

your mother, correct?

KM: Mhm.

WS: I, um –

KM: We called her General Motors. GM, for fun.

WS: [Laughter] Where did that nickname come from?

KM: She's say, "What's good for General Motors is good for the rest of the country!" And we always quoted that when we addressed her. GM for Grandmother, but actually for General Motors.

WS: [Laughter] That's wonderful. Now, that makes me think, what was the, how did utilizing, how did utilizing the arts through writing, what was that - what was that like?

was what's known as an Irish-American. I am too.

WS: Oh, you are? I didn't know that.

KM: My name sounds French, doesn't it?

WS: Mhm. [Laughter]

KM: Well, we were the Normans.

WS: Hm, hm, do you see that, does that Irish-American identity turn up in your expressions of art?

KM: All the time.

WS: How so?

KM: I write poetry when I'm in Ireland.

WS: Oh, did you?

KM: All the time.

WS: Oh, did you publish any of that poetry?

KM: No.

KM: Remember your old president?

WS: [Laughter] Larry Summers?

KM: He's an idiot.

KM: She encouraged me very much to finish the book I'd been paid for. Which was *The Politics of Cruelty*. I tried to finish it while she was alive. I didn't finish it when she was alive. But I ran home and wrote about my Aunt Dorothy. Which was my happy life in St. Paul, Minnesota.

WS: And –

KM: I called it *A.D. – A Memoir*. Have you read that yet?

WS: I, I - [Laughter]. All of your books are on my list! I looked through *Sita* and I looked through *Flying*. Both of which look incredible.

KM: *Flying* is about the recovery of a child. From, he had water in his head. So we patterned him. With everyone we'd find who was gay, or bisexual, or something, or - other. You have to pattern a child. Before it can walk, he has to crawl. Got that idea? So we patterned him day and night. I got everyone in England to pattern this kid. His father had given up on him. His mother knew we were patterning him. She just let us pattern him. And finally he could walk. He could crawl, even. And then he could walk. And then he confronted his father. His father wouldn't have anything to do with him, so he died.

WS: Hm. And, and, how, how –

KM: By the way, he had divorced his mother by that time.

WS: Oh. And, how –

KM: She found a lot of work in America. She was also American, even though she was Irish. She

WS: Oh. And what, how does expressing yourself through the arts, what does that mean to you?

KM: Everything. Except I don't sing.

WS: [Laughter]

KM: At least not in public.

WS: Me neither, me neither. [Laughter] So, um, let me -

KM: [Speaks softly]

WS: What was that?

KM: Do you have a bathtub, or a shower?

WS: Do I have a bathtub? [Laughter]

KM: Mhm.

WS: Oh, yeah. I sing in the shower, all the time. [Laughter] When my roommate's not home. So, let me ask you this next question: Are there any artists today, or were there, during the time of second wave feminism, who inspired your activism?

KM: Inspired my what?

WS: Your activism.

KM: Oh, Ono Yoko did.

WS: Who?

KM: Ono Yoko.

WS: Oh! Wonderful.

KM: Yoko Ono, or however you want to say it.

WS: Did you, did you know her personally?

KM: Yeah.

WS: That's very interesting.

KM: I knew John Lennon personally too.

WS: Wow! Tell me, tell me more about that. [Laughter]

KM: That was a time when you could make money off records.

WS: That's true, that's true. Wow, that's so interesting that you

knew them. What were, what were they like?

KM: Quite a couple!

WS: [Laughter] Wow!

KM: He was shot by a fan when he came home. Shot in the back by a fan.

WS: And how about artists today? Are there any who, who really speak to you?

KM: Everybody speaks to me, in music at least.

WS: And, what kind of music do you listen to?

KM: Every kind there is, including classical.

WS: Great, great.

KM: Folk, rock, and all the rest of it.

WS: Are there, are there any visual artists that you particularly like?

KM: I love Calder. And Joseph Cornell. Kandinsky.

WS: Oh, Kandinsky. Very interesting. Kandinsky is one of my favorites too. I'm doing some work on him this term because I'm in a class about the emergence of the avant-garde in the early 20th century. So, we're learning a lot about him. So, let me see, here's my final question on the arts specifically: What makes something a feminist work of art? And does a work by a woman inherently make it a feminist piece of art?

KM: Well, have you every heard of the dipping of the American flag in the toilet?

WS: Yes, yes I have heard of that.

KM: That got everyone excited, including Newt Gingrich. He was gonna destroy me, he said.

WS: Oh. [Laughter] When, when was that?

KM: Oh, a long time ago.

WS: A long time ago?

KM: Part of the protests against the war in Vietnam.

WS: That's right, that's right. So, so, how is feminism, specifically, manifest in the arts, in your view?

KM: In what?

WS: In the arts.

KM: Well, we aren't very representational, you know. Ever heard of the Gorilla Girls?

WS: Yes, yes. I, I saw one of their posters in the MoMA, I think, this summer.

KM: They've got quite collection there. You should look at the books in the MoMA. They've got a big display of books in the MoMA.

WS: So, so by representation, do you mean as opposed to abstraction? Or do you mean representational, as in there aren't many women artists represented in major galleries?

KM: Well, that's one point.

WS: Do you still see that problem?

KM: Oh, yeah.
WS: How do you think women artists can change that?
KM: Well we keep trying, but with a Republican government every time we turn around, we can't make much progress.
WS: Right, are there any –
KM: [Speaks softly]
WS: What was that?
KM: We're representative all over the world, but not in America.
WS: And where do you see that –
KM: Now it's just a bar in the road.
WS: Interesting.
KM: Mhm.
WS: And where do you see that problem most manifest in American society?
KM: From the top on down.

The State of Feminism in America

WS: Now, now going off of this discussion, I just have a few questions about Second Wave Feminism and the status of feminism. So I guess my first question is: Do you, you were such a prominent figure throughout this time period and today, and um, I'm wondering, do you believe that Second Wave Feminism, or Third Wave Feminism, if you believe there is or was one, do you believe that those movements have succeeded, or, at least in some way, made a difference?
KM: Well, we make progress slowly. We've got to shift the whole society's lights and brights and beacons another way. We could end war in a minute. Ono Yoko spent millions preventing war. The war is over if you want it to be, and all that stuff.
WS: So, looking back –
KM: [Speaks softly] was part of that movement.
WS: Who?
KM: Joan Baez.
WS: The musician, right?
KM: Mhm. Singer.
WS: My parents used to make me watch those folk music specials

on PBS [Laughter]. So, I –
KM: What's wrong with that?
WS: [Laughter] When I was a kid, I would always complain, but looking back, you know, the music back then was, quite a bit more, quite a bit better, I'd say.
KM: Mhm. Joan, leading the cry, was quite a bit better. But Bob Dylan had his moment of fame, you know? Do you like Bob Dylan?
WS: I do!
KM: He's from the university I went to – The University of Minnesota. He's the one who taught them to sing on key!
WS: Wow, wow that's interesting. I've been into Peter, Paul and Mary.
[Laughter]
KM: Pardon me?
WS: I've been really into Peter, Paul and Mary lately.
KM: Oh! Peter, Paul, and Mary. They were a good group.
WS: Did you know them too?
[Laughter]
KM: No. [Laughter]
WS: They were, they were pretty fantastic. I don't think that music really has the same social relevance and engagement

WS: Hm. So looking back, where do you think the successes and failures of Second Wave Feminism were?
KM: If you're an actress or a singer, they're pretty good. If you're a sculptor or a drawer, they're pretty bad.
WS: What do you mean by that?
KM: We're underrepresented in these mediums. We're underrepresented everywhere in the fine arts.
WS: Right, right, right.
KM: But if you're an actress or a singer, you've got a long life ahead of you.

LGBTQ Rights

WS: That's, that's interesting. I hadn't thought about it that way. And, do you have time for maybe two, two more questions?
KM: Sure.
...
WS: How do you think the arts have factored into the growth of the gay rights movement?
KM: [Laughter] Pretty good, I think.
WS: And, what would you say, there's been a lot of talk about the status

KM: Wait until the Supreme Court decides about it.
WS: And what do you think it will take for that to happen?
KM: [Laughter] Someone ought to retire. Get Clarence Thomas out of here. What I can't stand about him – he should retire.
WS: [Laughter] Alrighty, so let me, going off of that, I read in *Flying* about how you talked to Betty Friedan about incorporating Gay Liberation into the grander feminist narrative.
KM: Finally, she gave in.
WS: And what gave you the courage to do that? What, what inspired you to take that step?
KM: [Laughter] Well, when everyone else gave in, she gave in!
WS: That was a very interesting passage. It was, uh –
KM: [Speaks softly]
WS: And, so, I think, oh, we're almost out of time. Let me ask you my final question, which is just something that I've been wondering about personally. I'm in Postwar Feminist Thought with Professor Alice Jardine, which I think I told you, and we're reading *The Women's Room* by Marilyn French.
KM: Oh, that's a good book.
WS: [Laughter] It was not exactly, um, uplifting.
KM: Oh, really? Too bad.
WS: Certainly a good book. So what I'm wondering is –
KM: Marilyn French [Speaks softly]. Now she's dead.
WS: What I'm wondering.
KM: But I have to go to New York now.
WS: OK, OK, well thank you so much for talking to me. I'll send you the article as soon as it's published.
KM: Good.
WS: Thank you very much, and have a wonderful trip.
KM: You too.
WS: Alrighty, goodbye.
KM: Goodbye until next year.

"We can subvert the enfranchised by being the disenfranchised. If you understand that, you understand everything. But you're so enfranchised by Harvard, you don't even understand."

any more that there used to be.
KM: You don't think so? Go out and listen to something.
WS: Hm, um –
KM: Joan Baez is still singing, you know.
WS: Is she? I, I didn't know that. I'll check out some of her stuff.
KM: Yeah! She sings about Bob Dylan.
WS: Really?
KM: And Jane Fonda.

of LGBTQ youth in America. What, what would you say to that problem?
KM: Pardon me?
WS: What would you say to the, the growing realization that LGBTQ youth face a difficult way forward in America? There's been a lot of discussion about it lately.
KM: [Speaks softly]
WS: I'm sorry? I can't quite hear you.

Ms. Millett's call to action is clear. No tradition is safe from the influence of patriarchy; even the arts face a difficult way forward. This being the case, it is the responsibility of Harvard students to utilize their talents to open up their disciplines to analysis and revision. In the arts specifically, we must challenge structures of power with innovative, controversial, personal, and fearless discussion. We must follow Ms. Millett's example and use the arts and artistic discourse as tools for liberation. It is clear that the arts have immense power, and, in this time of uncertainty, it is imperative that we amplify the cry for justice, equality, and compassion with the help of our creativity.

Will Simmons '14 (wsimmons@college) appreciates Ms. Millett's time and hopes her example will inspire our generation of feminist artists, and the generations after that.

The Young Feminist

The *Indy* interviews Jamie Keiles, co-organizer of Slutwalk Chicago.

By YUQI HOU

DURING SENIOR YEAR OF HIGH school, Jamie Keiles started the Seventeen Magazine Project. For 30 days, she lived her life strictly according the advice doled out by Seventeen Magazine and blogged about it. Her blog sparked questions about the information fed to girls by the media. Now just two years later, Jamie is a sophomore at the University of Chicago and still a force within the feminist community. In January 2011, a Toronto Police Service representative suggested that “Women should avoid dressing like sluts in order to not be victimized.” In response to this victim-blaming mindset, Toronto organized the first SlutWalk to take back the word ‘slut’ and put the focus back on rapists, rather than the rape victims. Jamie Keiles, inspired by the protest in Toronto, co-organized SlutWalk Chicago to take place June 4th that same year. Here, Keilis talks to the *Indy* about the direction of modern feminism, her personal involvement with feminism, and the role of media in bringing about awareness.

The big issues with modern feminism...

I think a lot of people are still looking for a singular definition of feminism that will represent everyone and meet everyone’s needs. I don’t think this exists. Sometimes I’ll read critiques of events like SlutWalk or people like Naomi Wolf and the complaints will be that not everyone’s viewpoint or understanding is being represented. Well, duh. Womanhood (whatever that is) is a diverse experience. To try to encompass it in a single comment would be grossly reductive. I think we need to move away from feminism as a platform and start thinking of it as a discourse. More than one person can be right. What feminism means is highly contingent on personal experience.

The next big issue that feminism should tackle in the next decade...

The so-called “feminist agenda” needs to focus more on the shared roots of oppression. The subjugation of women is not happening in a

vacuum. I think we as a movement have a lot to learn from the struggles of gay/trans/black/immigrant/ALL movements. I am not saying that we should lump these struggles together. Obviously, being a feminist or being queer or being a queer feminist is a unique existence with its own set of experiences. I think that it’d be worthwhile to really explore just our most basic commonalities with other oppressed groups, and to learn from them.

Personal transformation since the Seventeen Magazine Project, in terms of thinking about future projects on and your views about the way media socializes girls...

At the time I started the project I put a lot of stock in theory. I went into school thinking that I wanted to study sociology, and then maybe do stuff in the academy about adolescence. Since then, I’ve become sort of bored with that line of thinking. Right now, I’m really excited about creative work that explores/advocates for themes of social justice. I am pretty confident that the future of social justice will come when there is a shift in who is producing media. Independent thinkers need to be creating content and effectively disseminating it. I’m not sure exactly what I want to do after college, but I think it will be more expressive than theoretical.

The takeaways from the Seventeen Magazine Project...

At the outset, I thought it was a project about body image. What it really ended up being was a discussion of media ownership. I never really thought about that as an issue that affected my own wellbeing. The project was the first time that was really introduced into my consciousness.

Getting involved with SlutWalk Chicago...

I got involved with SlutWalk Chicago through Tumblr. I was following the events as they worked their way through Canada, and I thought it was interesting to see how things were unfolding. I noticed that

there wasn’t a Chicago branch, so I felt inexplicably obligated to get one together. I’m not sure that I was the best person to do it, but I was the first person and I guess that’s why it was me.

The road to SlutWalk Chicago, and its success...

I never expected organizing to be such a political thing. That sounds stupid to say in hindsight, but when I started with SlutWalk, I thought that people who endorsed feminism would automatically be on board. Making SlutWalk a success involved a lot of concessions to various local organizations. People from all over the city raised a lot of valid critiques about language, about the entertainment we wanted to book, about our organizational team... really about everything. SlutWalk couldn’t have become the community event that it was if we hadn’t been willing to form coalitions and really listen to criticisms. My knee jerk reaction when the criticisms started coming in was to defend my initial stance. The event was a lot more meaningful, at least to me, once I learned how to learn from others.

Involvement with other feminist groups...

I’m not involved in anything that is explicitly feminist, but I’m involved in a lot of other stuff that feels feminist, at least to me. At school, I’m a member of WYSE, a group of women that mentors middle schoolers. I don’t think our bylaws say anything overt about feminism, but the outlook is definitely feminist. I also write for *Rookie*, Tavi Gevinson’s new teen magazine. Again, this isn’t like “The Feminist Magazine for Teens,” but we don’t treat feminism as a dirty word, which I think is important.

Inspiring feminist works...

I saw writer Joan Morgan speak on a panel the other day and I just thought she was the most brilliant, level-headed person I’ve ever seen talk about feminism. I just started her book *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*. I’m hoping it will be as inspiring as her words were. Also, “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and the whole history surrounding it. I come back to that story all the time.

Yuqi Hou ’15 (hough@college) wishes Sassy Magazine still existed.



Photo courtesy of WikiCommons.

Second Wave Feminism in the Media

Analyzing *The Feminine Mystique*, *Coming Home*, and *Hairspray*.

By SAYANTAN DEB

A DISCUSSION ON FEMINISM, and especially on Second Wave Feminism, remains incomplete without talking about Betty Freidan and the book that started it all, *The Feminine Mystique*. Published in 1963, the book embodied exactly the kind of mentality that the sixties and the long sixties¹ would come to represent. The book essentially started the Second Wave Feminist movement. Although Freidan herself voiced her opposition to associating the book and the feminist cause with other social movements of the time, there is considerable evidence that the feminism championed by Freidan would eventually at least indirectly trigger or garner support for the civil rights movement, and to this day, the fight against homophobia.²

The effect of *The Feminine Mystique* is perhaps best embodied in the Hal Ashby film *Coming Home*. From the perspective of the plot itself, the link between the book and the film is obvious. Jane Fonda plays Sally, a military wife

whose husband goes to war. A conservative at heart, she suddenly feels liberated, buys herself a house by the beach and a sports car. She also feels the need to do something more meaningful with her life than to just be part of the regular teas of the army wives. A particular scene that sticks in the mind is her meeting with the

women as happily embodying the role of the postwar consensus³ housewife, who did not involve herself with the politics of the country.

After her husband leaves for war, though, Sally can't be distant.

become a part of the war in a more direct way. The hospital exposes her to the cruel realities of the war even further as she meets the mentally disturbed brother of her friend Vi, and Luke Martin, an old high school acquaintance who has become paraplegic because of war injuries.

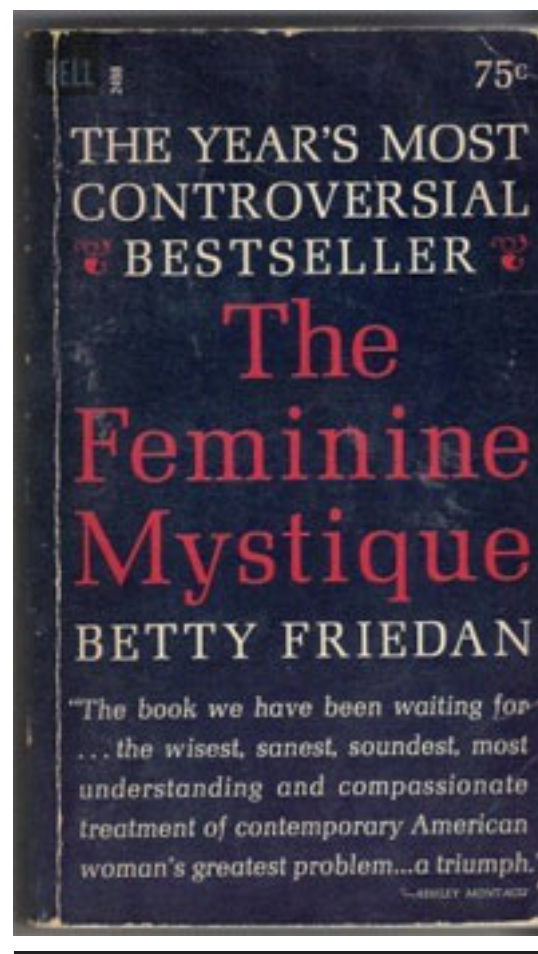
Although *Coming Home* has a strong political statement to make about the Vietnam War, it goes beyond the antiwar movement. Jane Fonda, inspired by her involvement in the feminist movement, conceived the original idea for the movie. In fact, she also recruited Nancy Dowd, a friend from the days of her involvement in the feminist movement to pen the original screenplay of the movie. The studio later heavily tailored the script to give it a more mass appeal, but some of these feminist ideas still run through the movie.

To begin with, Sally doesn't live like the rest of her counterparts in the base. She moves off the base and buys herself a house, and a car. She is moving towards a more independent living. She is also heavily

influenced by her friend Vi, who doesn't succumb to the allures of a stable family life with a husband, as she prioritizes her brother's well being over her boyfriend. Sally also joins the Veteran's hospital, much to the contempt of her husband who just wants her to stay home. Her affair with Luke is also largely practical. They both realize that it is transient, and neither is looking for a permanent relationship. Sally treats the affair as it is—a



Photos courtesy of WikiCommons



The political suddenly becomes personal for her. It's no longer a news story or a matter of discussion and debate for her. It is a reality. This is what drives her to join a veteran's hospital to work closely with the soldiers and attempt to

³ Postwar consensus here refers to the ideal "American"- suburban, heterosexual, and conservative.

Furthermore, part of the consensus also included the segregation of African Americans.

¹ The Long Sixties here is used to describe the time period when the US saw major uprisings and social changes that was a reaction to the post World War II consensus, of what it means to be "American." Usually this period is loosely defined from the late 1950's well into the Vietnam War era, and to some, up the Reagan era.

² Freidan herself was very vociferous about her opposition to include homosexuals in the sphere of a feminist cause and in fact believed that this would dilute the movement that she wanted to spearhead.

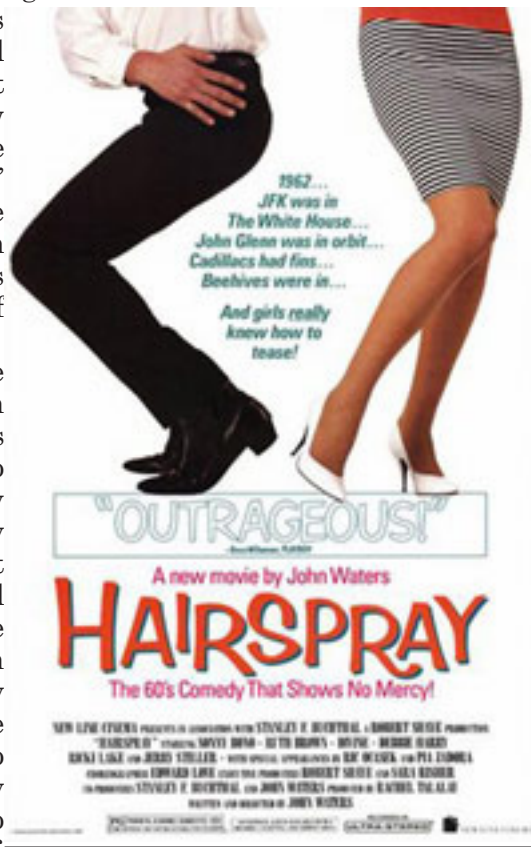
space filler, sort of a way for her to achieve the intimacy and sexual satisfaction she needs while her husband is away. This is very much a reflection of the feminist movement, where a woman comes into her own, doesn't necessarily aspire to be the homemaker, and finds her own voice and a way to meet her own needs.

The feminist movement itself also was responsible for gathering support for more social uprisings throughout the sixties such as the civil rights movement, and much later the fight against homophobia. Although new in approach, it did help the American "mainstream" identify with these more "radical" elements and even support them. *Hairspray* works on this connection in both of these levels.

In the plot itself, the movie is a reflection of the nineteen sixties. The basic story is of an overweight girl who never belonged in the Corny Collins Show. She didn't only become a part of the show, but ruled the hearts of many and later went on to become the fulcrum behind the integration of the show, no small victory in sixties Baltimore. The fact that she is a girl who works to integrate this very postwar consensus show also underscores the importance of the "mainstream" understanding the plea of the outsiders, by their own identification as the outsider.

Being an outsider, she understands the plea of those on the outside, specifically the African American community. In many ways, she has been ostracized out of the "mainstream" because of her weight. This makes her relate to the African American community, segregated because of their skin color. She understands the superficiality of the community, embodied in the movie by the Von Tussles. Throughout school, she has faced segregation in a different way. She was never "in" with the "in" crowd, namely those who were usually part of the Corny Collins Show, an extension of the postwar consensus. She is not accepted because of her weight by her peers and by her teachers because of

her risqué hairstyle. At home, her mother doesn't approve of the dance show. All of this causes her to live in the fringes of her world. That is why it is easy for her to relate to Seaweed and the other African Americans in the special education classes. Tracy understands the injustice of the system because she has felt it herself, driving her to champion the cause using her fame as leverage. It also important to note that she is a woman who



feels empowered enough that she does decide to champion the cause for others, and it is a theme that resonates through the sixties, where an empowered group who has felt alienation at some point champions the cause of the others.

On another level, the film reflects how the feminist movement would help garner support for the homosexual cause. This is perhaps the most controversial connection between the two movements: Freidan was clearly against the association of the two movements, while later leaders would find similarities between the two movements and also underline that they are not mutually exclusive, but in fact, very intertwined.

The director of the movie, John Waters, grew up in the post-war consensus where homosexuality was considered very much a crime,

spearheaded by, among others J. Edgar Hoover. Waters didn't deal with his own homosexuality until much later in his adult life. In the late eighties, when *Hairspray* was released, homosexuality (and more prominently, homophobia) had made a reemergence in the American psyche with the discovery of HIV (then called, reflective of the nation's mentality, GRID—gay related immunodeficiency). So, *Hairspray* became very much a political statement for Waters, who had had faced prejudice and insecurities in his adolescence.



Perhaps to bring the issue out of the closet and to make the US mainstream more accepting of homosexuality, Waters used *Hairspray* as his political statement.

Most prominently, Waters cast Divine as Edna Turnblad. Divine was a self-identified man (not transsexual), who had constantly been a part of Waters' previous movies, often as a woman. Divine's casting gave the mother's character a sexual ambiguity that challenged the people's perception of the mother figure. Edna Turnblad was compassionate, kind, controlling of her daughter's exposure to risqué pop culture—in other words, the typical suburban, postwar, mom, except portrayed by a man.

This particular irony was an obvious reflection of Waters' sixties influence in the movies. Divine was also cast to perform the role of the racist manager of the TV channel, who was staunchly against the integration of the *Corny Collins Show*. Again, by casting such a countercultural icon as Divine as a typically postwar consensus figure, Waters made the subtle yet clear statement about the hypocrisy of American attitude. Waters also used the brief appearance of *Beats* followers to throw out some lines from Ginsberg's *Howl*,

a controversial poem about the homosexual counterculture of the fifties. The fact that a girl discovers the *Beats* followers, or that Edna Turnblad later comes to accept her role as the mother with a larger cause—managing her daughter's fame—all hint how the feminist movement is intertwined with the homosexual one. Edna Turnblad is used as an icon to represent both of these movements, and thus again becomes a reflection of the nature in which the movements are connected.

The long sixties and Second Wave Feminism were practically synonymous, and so feminism's influence in the media and popular culture of the time are not surprising. Reflective of changing times and attitudes, *Coming Home* and *Hairspray* relate more to *The Feminine Mystique* and the period's emergent feminist theory than one would think. Consequently, everything from *Sex and the City* to Lady Gaga owe their acceptance in popular culture to this groundbreaking movement. Despite popular conceptions about the media and women, there is more feminism in film, music, and pop culture than meets the eye. It's time to turn your television on and look for it.

Sayantan Deb '14 (sayantandeb@college) will return to his general rants without any academic argument in his next article.

Battle Royale

Harvard takes Battle 4 Atlantis.

By MICHAEL ALTMAN

Despite facing off against one of the best defensive teams in the league, the Harvard Crimson managed to score during its initial drive. Just after the first quarter of the game, Harvard gained a strong 7-0 lead. The Crimson defense let some points get away, however, and entered the second half tied at 14-14. At this point it could be anyone's game. Could Harvard pull off an upset or would Florida State's superior statistics pull through?

To clarify: we're talking about basketball, not football. Last Friday, the Harvard Crimson played against the Florida State Seminoles (ranked at No. 22) in the semifinal round of the Battle 4 Atlantis tournament, a preseason collegiate basketball tournament held in the Bahamas. In a reversal of Harvard football's

trend of high scoring victories (not to mention the 45-7 blowout that was The Game), this game was characterized by a battle of defenses and low scoring on both sides. The score was close for most of the game, with Harvard pulling off a narrow upset by winning 46-41.

Given FSU's higher ranking and better statistics (especially in terms of defense), Harvard's own defense was key to the victory. This was the first time Harvard has won against a Top-25 team since beating Boston College (No. 17) in 2009.

Harvard maintained its momentum the next day in the final round of Battle 4 Atlantis, beating Central Florida 59-49. This marks Harvard's first Battle 4 Atlantis championship, an outcome no one could

have expected.

Although this championship is part of the preseason schedule, it legitimizes Crimson basketball. Harvard has proven it can overcome nationally ranked opponents and stands to continue the trend into the rest of the season. In terms of defense, the team has performed exceptionally well. This is key for Harvard if the team is to keep up the winning streak. A strong defense means the Crimson can hold back teams with better scoring statistics and prevent opponents from gaining large leads.

Last year, Harvard basketball won its first Ivy League Championship and its current track record means it will likely pull off another one. But why stop there? If Harvard

can continue to compete with highly competitive teams (i.e. FSU) it stands to get an NCAA bid, something that has not happened to Harvard since 1946. Should Harvard get a chance to participate in the NCAA tournament, Crimson basketball will establish itself as a team to be reckoned with. A strong start (and hopefully, end) to the Harvard basketball season, combined with Harvard's Ivy League Championship win for football will make this a memorable year for Crimson athletics.

Michael Altman '14 (maltman@college) wishes he had been there—and not just because it was in the Bahamas.



Photo courtesy of Wikicommons

captured & shot

By INDY ARCHIVES

