Celebrating
THE
WOMEN’S
STUDIES
PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTS:

POETRY
ESSAYS
ARTISTS’ REVUES
BOOK REVIEWS
UPCOMING EVENTS

Woman in Squatter Settlement, San Salvador 1996
One of the Guys

PATRICIA VALESE

“Right now there’s only one young girl who is a true gang banger, the real thing, as high up or higher than the most important homeboys. Everyone calls her Shygirl. She’s the only female member in an all-guy clique.”

TJ (gang-leader) in Gini Sikes, 8 ball chicks

“You have to make them think you’re one of the guys. For a girl to be accepted, she has to be down and dirty. They have to see you not give a shit, not be a priss—be like a man, basically.”

Liz in “Sex and the High School Girl”
Nancy Jo Sales, New York, September 1997

“Right now girls are at the bottom of the totem pole. They’ve been reduced to nothing, except Shygirl. I could see her shoot somebody in a heartbeat.”

Muse (Counselor) in Gini Sikes, 8 ball chicks

Blood rushes to her face. Her smooth copper skin turns rosy in the evening light. Shygirl looks straight into her victim’s eyes, blankly staring at his frantic face. Pulling back the trigger on a .357 magnum, she blurs as she kills.

At 15 years old, Roxy knows the score. “Fame” is all there is in life (not her own, her boyfriend’s). Sex is what she’s good at, something she was born for, a woman’s way to repay the gang. As far as Roxy’s concerned, the toughest and most famous “crew” member could have her in a second, he’d be worth her reputation.

Shygirl is one of the very few female gang-members respected in our country. She belongs to a Latino gang from LA, named Lennox, the name of her neighborhood, the same name which is tattooed across her forehead. She “writes graffiti in enemy hood,” does drive-bys, steals cars, pulverizes, mutilates, and kills. She’s so tough she ranks higher than the men. To her homeboys, Shygirl is beyond gender—she doesn’t have to put on something she was born for, a woman’s way to repay the gang.

Roxy comes from Manhattan, a wannabe’s wannabe from the East Coast. Unlike Shygirl who rises from an urban wasteland, Roxy’s crowd emerges from NYC’s private schools. Imitating their ghetto idols, Roxy’s “crew” assimilates gang-creed. Drug dealing, fighting and mugging win the crewboys’ fame. Like their west coast brothers, they too have no use for the opposite sex.

Shygirl and Roxy demand attention. They come to us from separate perimeters of America, borderline reversals of the same role. The boys they empower, worship or want to be, are alarmingly out of control, wielding brutality as privilege, domination as right. The geographical boundaries of their world are crossing over into every neighborhood of our society, transcending culture, ethnicity and class.

This brings to mind another recent American teenage tragedy—one that comprises the same elements of gang-creed—which happened in a place where “most young men have a future.” A tragedy that occurred a few years ago in our very own backyard, a mile or two up the hill from Bloomfield College, in the neat, gas-lit, homogeneous town of Glen Ridge—

Reading Gini Sikes’ 8 ball chicks this past summer, I met Shygirl and the subculture of teenage gangs. Horrified, I scanned through the pages of this present-day wilderness with its senseless crime. I was mystified by the female acceptance of second-class citizenship, A voluntary debasement of womanhood in the hands of severely psychotic and infamous murderers.

After finishing the book, I almost convinced myself that Shygirl’s world wasn’t mine, that she sprang up in an American vacuum spawned by poverty, racism and neglect. To distance myself from the reading, I quickly labeled Shygirl as an oddity, a corporate casualty, a marginal misfit without a dream. I pretended California was miles from New York and hid behind my education classes and a list of psychological whys.

Then I happened upon the Sept. issue of NewYork magazine and read Nancy Jo Sales’ article “Sex and the High School Girl,” where I was introduced to Roxy and her white, tight, private-school mind. It brought the despair of America’s children, especially the plight of our next female generation, to the forefront. I instinctively knew Shygirl and Roxy were one and the same, that their alienation and loss of identity signified an intrinsic loss of self-love, evolving from a place far removed from our sociological, psychological or educational studies.

In a bizarre way, both girls seem to be in step with many so called ‘conventional’ women of the 90’s. Women who find a way to the top by emulating the very men who impede them. Women who think independence is achieved by cloning male-power, that autonomy means aggressivity and masculinity exemplifies self-rule.

You would think we’d be beyond this, that we could come to this space in time and honestly (historically) look back on the eternal mastery of men over women and realize the absurdity—for all their muscle, fanfare, bravado and frenzy, these “guys” we still adore just never got it right.

Shygirl and Roxy demand attention. They come to us from separate perimeters of America, borderline reversals of the same role. The boys they empower, worship or want to be, are alarmingly out of control, wielding brutality as privilege, domination as right. The geographical boundaries of their world are crossing over into every neighborhood of our society, transcending culture, ethnicity and class.

The Labor Room

The Labor Room is a publication of Bloomfield College's Women's Studies Program. This issue was produced by the following students:

Christine Boscone
Anna Cooper
Caroline Eason
Tami Fazio
Regine Gerard
Maribel Hernandez
Rose Sieruk
Jeanine Youngblut

Editor: Patricia Valese
Assistant Editor: Dena Silvestri

Faculty Advisors
Barbara Machtner
Erica Polakoff
Cover Photo
Erica Polakoff
Logo Design
Ray Ramdas

Printer
Stobb's Printing
Gayle Tunstead

The Women's Studies Program would also like to thank the following:

Dean Epps
Sandra VanDyk
Lisa Farese
Paul Genega
Priscilla Orr
A special thanks to The Schumann Fund for New Jersey.
Contact Girl

LAUREL BATTAGLIA

Outraged, Wanda said, “Contact girl! Do you believe that’s what they called me? Contact girl!” “Who...what,” Cheri and I asked. Wanda related that her directive was to deliver a folder into the “hands” of the Assistant Vice President (AVP), only Wanda was denied access to the AVP and told to leave the information with the secretary. Wanda refused, repeated her directions and took the folder back to her office, explaining the situation to her boss. A telephone conversation ensued between her boss and the AVP’s office, “And then they started referring to me as the contact girl,” Wanda said. “They know my name—what I am—where I work. Did you ever? Who do they think they are. I told my boss to use my real name,” she said. “That office calls me—gal,” I said, matter-of-factly, “Of course they know who we are and where we work. You didn’t cower to them Wanda, good for you,” I said. “Hmm. Gal, contact girl, I feel left out because they don’t have a name for me,” said Cheri, jokingly. Realizing its importance, Wanda, Cheri and I often reflect on this conversation “[using] a special jargon when conversing among [ourselves]” (Ruiz, Vicki L., Cannery Women, Cannery Lives, p. 37). Calling each other gal or contact girl became names of endearment and fun instead of the original intent which was to wield power and keep us in our place. These (in essence) name-calling incidents were the beginning of a self-strengthening bond among the three of us. Bombarded by a gamut of intimidation tactics from within and outside our own departments, we “fostered the development of us against them” mentality...” Instead of thwarting us as individuals, these tactics truly hastened and deepened our camaraderie, our friendship.

“My director tries to pit the workers against one another,” said Wanda. “She thinks if we’re fighting amongst ourselves, she can blame us for her mistakes.” Wanda’s insight helped me realize a similar situation in my own department. Often I would confer with Cheri on accounting, computers and personal matters. I was learning, growing and becoming acutely aware of office politics through our conversations. Including the assistant director, most of this office was computer illiterate; I was gaining knowledge, thanks to Cheri. The assistant director told me that I was acting “different” and had become “uncooperative” since Cheri and I started to share adjacent workspaces. “I thought we were friends,” she said. Unfettered by these seemingly idle comments, I continued to enjoy Cheri’s friendship and only improve in my position with my newly acquired computer knowledge. Apparently threatened, this was a warning, and ignoring this signal led both Cheri and I into the director’s office for a verbal reprimand. “It has come to my attention...,” began the director. We knew Raderie, our friendship.

If it were not for the camaraderie of Wanda and Cheri, I would have felt invisible under a wash of mediocrity and an atmosphere of oppression. Wanda says, “I understand the seriousness of the issues, but the oppression becomes more bearable when we support each other.” The day to day hassles of the workplace, the difficulties of a lifestyle oriented towards the bottom of the socioeconomic scale, the general harshness of life, were all softened by their friendship enabling me to see my situation with more clarity. Within this realm of unfairness, we developed our own environment of support and sincere helpfulness. Encouraged by this window of empowerment, I resolved to leave and find a better place of employment. I am grateful for having Wanda and Cheri as friends; their support is forever with me—without it, I would have remained.

Votive to My Mother

PATRICK ROSAL

This is why my Tita, your sister, cut the rosary, wrapped like barbed wire around your wrists. It breaks the circle, she told me, of dying.

That is why, Inang, she removed your shoes. So you won’t come to us divvying the mischief you promised, tickling as we sleep—the bottoms of our feet with your fingers like steam. That is also why Tita leaves you a bowl, your portion of vinegar and rice and pig tripe in its own black blood. And that is why we’ve burned a fire till dawn, when Tita’s sons and I, your son, we shouted our names to our souls who followed us. I want to leave behind some tremor of my words, like you, in death.
An Emotional Experience

Vera Porter

In June of 1949, my husband was in the United States Army. He was stationed in Fort Benning, Georgia. We decided I was to come and remain with him until he was discharged in May of 1950. We applied for housing on the base. Until it was available, I would live with a family off-base and commute to the base for entertainment and for my personal and household needs.

It was on one of my trips by bus to the base that I had an experience I shall never forget. "When in Rome, you do as the Romans do," I knew the buses were segregated and I acted accordingly. On one of my trips to the base, the bus was full and the only available space for a black person was on the very last seat in the back of the bus, the row that runs the width from one side of the bus to the other. I sat down next to someone of my own color. As we drove along, I sat gazing out of the window and as New Yorkers do, paid no attention to anyone else. I suddenly felt a head on my shoulder. It was the head of a white man who had been so involved in my own thoughts, I was not paying attention to what was happening around me on the bus. I was the only black person sitting and white people were standing. To make matters worse, I was touching a white man in public. I was petrified because I did not know the rules in this type of a situation. I did however, know that the number one rule was not to sit next to a white person on the bus. What to do? If I stand up he will fall and they could say I did it on purpose. If I stay seated, I am breaking the law. I looked up at the people who were standing. There was a variety of expressions on their faces, none of which helped my frame of mind. The blacks ignored me and my predicament. The white people including the bus driver were looking at me in an hostile manner. My head was in a turmoil and my stomach was threatening to bring up its contents. I looked out of the window and realized there were only two more stops to go before I reached my destination. Just seconds before I reached my stop, the young man jerked to an upright position. Needless to say, I was up and gone in a manner of seconds.

The frightening part of this entire episode is my not knowing how to handle the problem. It could have evolved into me being insulted and thrown off the bus or even worse. I could have been beaten and arrested for violating Georgia’s rules on segregation. It was the worst emotional experience I have ever suffered.

Words To Pierce The Heart & Mind

Brian Lawton

Have you ever just sat back and observed anyone besides yourself? Have you ever just seen a person for who they are and not the skin that binds them? Where has the sincerity of the soul gone? It seems it has become harder for many people just to say hello to one another than it is to curse the one who crosses your path on the highway. Nearing the end of the 21st century many humans have become very selfish about their own needs and tend to forget about others outside of their sphere. Of course we have to care for ourselves and our families first. That should always be a major priority but while doing this we often forget about the feelings of others. People are quick to judge others rather than be judged. I always hear "look at his clothes, he has no style" or "she is fat" or "he is ugly," "poor, nigger, white-trash, old, spic, chink" and the list goes on. Ignorance seems to thrive. Why? Because it has been instilled in us since birth that we are different. Society and the media blatantly show us everyday that we are not the same and we are not equal. I am not stating these FACTS to make anyone change the world but rather asking some people to change themselves and the way they look at life and others. When you wake up in the morning notice what God has created. Take notice that you have one life to live so try to do something positive everyday. It does not have to be something big—saying hello to a coworker, opening the door for an elder, or even helping someone up after they have fallen before you laugh—will create a positive environment. If you are at a party and someone accidentally bumps you, avoid violence, offer a smile and a pardon before a nasty exchange of words. Show that you are bigger. No doubt it is hard to do the positive thing, people, but why not give it a try, it won't kill you. We are living in strange and stressful times and now is not the time to cause more havoc, we don't need it. There is only one race and that is the human race. We were born human before we became a color. We learn to hate, judge and ridicule. God has not instilled that in our spirit. Leave ignorance behind and watch the gift of sunshine that will be shed upon you. I am not perfect, I still have a lot to learn in this life as we all do. This letter is an example of how simple creating the positive can be. If you do not remember anything of this article remember this "WAKE UP AND TAKE NOTICE OF THE WORLD, IT WILL CHANGE YOU" .......

Amiri Baraka and Patricia Smith

The Evening & Weekend Student Council is proud to announce two of the most influential literary figures of our time: Amiri Baraka and Patricia Smith will be at the Van Fossan Theatre, Bloomfield College for a night of poetry.
restless creativity are proof of the joy one can attain despite hardships.

Gordon Parks
DENA SILVESTRI

Thursday, October 10th, 1997 will go down in the College’s history as being one of the most inspirational days on campus. The Convocation guest speaker was Gordon Parks who invoked the emotions of all. With words, music, and incredible images he shared his life story and brought enthusiasm to our lives.

Gordon Parks was born in Kansas in 1912. He moved to Minnesota where he was forced to live on the streets and struggle to survive in an environment which was harsh and racist. Losing his mother at the age of sixteen was extremely hard. She was the pivotal figure in his life; a woman who taught him to rise above racism and bigotry by instilling a sense of self-worth suffused with religious conviction. His father, a man of a few words represented a hardworking and consistent role model. Before he died he told his son that everything would be all right as long as he remembered his mother’s teachings.

At convocation, Parks told us that this is exactly what he did. In every conflict, at every turning point in his life, his mother’s words were with him. It was the secret of his success and the weapons he employed.

Gordon Parks opened his speech by saying that Bloomfield College felt like home. He said he felt like he was at a town meeting and was tempted to throw away his speech. But after the immediate applause he shared his speech, and what a speech it was!

Throughout his life Gordon Parks accomplished many things. His talents include writing, composing, photography, painting and filmmaking. His hard work won him the Julius Rosenwald fellowship and the opportunity to work for the Farm Security Administration, and the OWI. He directed a number of films including Shaft, Leadbelly, and The Super Cops. In addition to the National Medal of the Arts, the Notable Book award for A Choice of Weapons, the International Film Festival’s silver medal, he has received over 50 honorary doctorates. He excelled at a time when African-American men were not allowed to succeed.

The life of Gordon Parks was remarkable and continues to be so. At 85 years old, his continued enthusiasm for life and

SHE’S HOME
PATRICK FOX

She’s managed to make much of it on silhouetted days

No child of hers will break the curve as all statistics say
A one horse job is all there is to keep the dreams in play and the silence only whispers "she’s home"

The barriers she pushes through like mountains on the moon
An ever changing battle in a storm for every room
Whatever she may witness, never bursting the balloon
Put the dinner on the table, she’s home

There’s a picture of the father on the sweet face of the child but the promise it once offered has gone screaming in the wild though resistance might be futile and struggle far from mild there’s a small voice she can turn to, she’s home

Put the work clothes in the hamper, put the dinner on the plate the time to be with someone even though it’s getting late
In the simple word of “mommy” is a task that cannot wait and it echoes in the passage, she’s home*

She is only one of many in a world that never fades and it happens in each city that is hidden by the shades
There is passion in its purpose, written on the tall façades
There is magic in the moment, she’s home

D’ Joule’ African Dance Company dazzles BC

On Nov. 3rd, BC hosted one of the most electrifying nights on campus. Over two hundred students, teachers, staff and guests were captivated by D’ Joule’ African. Sabryyah Job, a nursing student, is one of the troupe’s talented dancers. Dressed in colorful African ceremonial attire, the women mesmerized the audience with their infinite energy as the powerful drumming enveloped all. The stage pulsed with ancient African rhythms fused with the spirit of the night. No one in the audience stayed still. Foot-tapping, hand-clapping, body-rapping, the crowd fell in love with D’Joule’ African.

With the united effort and support of BC students we can have D’Joule’ back next spring. We hope to secure the gym for their return. We need your support. Please get in touch with Pat Valese, 743-8263 (or cc mail) or Dena Silvestri, 742-5392 (or cc mail). If we have enough people who respond, we can bring our proposal to the DSG. Happy chicken wings!
The Promise-Keeplers

PATRICIA VALESE

They rise in our eyes:
Kites of clay and debris,
Pockets of helium, virile dirigibles.

If the spittle in the sky fizzes into flies,
If flying blatherers into piggin-covenant,
Keep the girl-child and women home.

If the spittle in the sky fizzes into flies,
If flying blatherers into piggin-covenant,
By all means keep the girl-child and women home.

The Million Women March

SHAMIKA Y. WILLIAMS

On October 25, 1997, I participated in the historical Million Women March which was held in Philadelphia. The MWM was a call to women of all colors to get together and discuss the current problems which are affecting us as women in our families and in our communities. As soon as I heard about the event I knew I had to be there, no excuses. It was necessary for me to be there because there are so many things that are wrong and I want to be part of the solution.

At 6:00 a.m. we began to board the buses headed for Philadelphia. The group I went with consisted of three buses. On my bus, there were only three empty seats. This made me feel proud because it was raining heavily and these women did not let the rain dampen their spirits. We were on a mission to help ourselves.

When we were about to leave an elderly African American woman said a prayer to be sure God was with us on this day. The bus took us to Camden, where we took a shuttle to a train which took us to the heart of Philadelphia. When we first boarded the train, the women who were already on the train applauded. They said, “welcome sisters, this is what it’s all about.” We all cheered. There were shouts of “East Orange in the house!” “Newark is represented too!” Irvington, Bloomfield, Hilside, Elizabeth, Scotchplains, and the shouts went on.

We all began talking and laughing. When we got off the train, we realized we were joined by thousands of other women who were all walking the 6 or 7 blocks down to the center of the action. I laughed and talked with women I had never seen before as if they were family.

As we got closer to Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the site was awe-inspiring. From north, south, east and west, women joined together to start the march. I heard African drums being played, I saw African dancers, and drill teams performing. As we continued to march we realized the little crowd from New Jersey was now a mass of women. All with one mission. It was cold, it was drizzling, but I felt warm. The women with whom I marched were from California, Wisconsin, Maryland, Washington, D.C., North Carolina, New York, Connecticut just to name a few. I even ate a snack on the hood of a U-Haul truck with women from Virginia.

We listened to many speakers. Each had her own way of stirring the crowd. There were discussions on economic development, drugs, independence, sisterhood and self-respect. Each speaker was strong and passionate.

I now realize I went to the Million Women March to see if there was anyone else who cared about our futures and wanted to do something about it. I thought I was alone with my concerns. I now know I am not alone. There are a million plus women who are there to help me. And together we can help others.

Shayla Bernard

We arrived in Camden at 8:30 on a cold and rainy morning. At 10:30 we finally found a spot where we could both see (a little) and hear beautiful black women everywhere. By 11:00, we heard an announcement that there was an estimated 1.5 million people and still growing.

My favorite speaker of the day was Sister Souljah. She made several points. She told us that African-American women were a powerful force in the Universe; that we were the teachers of children. She told us we should be careful when carrying a child in our wombs. She demanded that as women we should not only be sexually alluring and beautiful but intellectually alluring and beautiful. She said, “Your body is your temple” and “I have to want for you the same that I want for myself.”

The second mistress of ceremony was Jade Pinkett. She told us that revelation was to be found inside books. She told us to read “Sisters of the the Yam,” “Talking Back,” and “Ain’t I a Woman,” by bell hooks.

At 2:30, we headed back toward the bus to make sure we did not get left behind. I saw so many beautiful women at the march. I really enjoyed myself and I am glad I could be a part of history.

DAMALI SIGNAL

It is the day of the Million Women March. I am so excited. The bus arrived in Philadelphia at around 8:00. As I marched passed thousands of women, I felt anxious. I could not wait to get to the platform where the speakers stood. I traveled in a tight group of ten friends. I also met new people. Most were very friendly and excited.

I was fortunate enough to have a wonderful seat near the speakers. As I looked behind me, I saw thousands of women. I saw women as far as the eye could see. I could not see the end of the crowd. There were about two million women at the march. I’m glad I was there. The speakers Sister Souljah, Winnie Mandela and Jade Pinkett were inspiring. They motivated and encouraged me to look closely at myself and strive for improvement.

SANDRA AGUILAR

It was a rainy morning! But this weather did not stop me and two million other women!

The Million Women March was a celebration of unity among women of African-American descent to uplift their communities. Our communities have lacked positive leadership for some time. This march helped me to realize the importance of giving something back to my community.

The atmosphere was full of love. At no time did I witness an act of violence or hate. We were all gathered to make history and restore our communities so that our youth would have a future to look forward to.
RESPONSE TO

"Poetry Is Not a Luxury"

"The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action"

ERIK SANDERS

Audre Lorde's, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," focuses on the individual self. She believes that as women, we need to think about our own lives. How do we see ourselves? Who are we? Through a greater understanding of poetry our eyes will open up to our actual reality. Poetry gives light to ideas, it makes them known, and it can make our feelings, thoughts, and our emotions tangible.

Poetry is not a luxury. It is a necessity for our existence. Poetry allows us to turn our hopes and dreams into a language, and furthermore into ideas. These ideas can be transformed into actions which give meaning to our lives. Once we learn that we can express our feelings towards others, we can cleanse ourselves. We can purify the human soul to pave the way for future dreams and visions.

In general, poetry emphasizes the need for human spirit, according to Lorde. It has nothing to do with race or color. Everyone possesses the spirit and can bring it to life through poetry. By understanding ourselves, knowing how to act, and stressing social change, we can discover the meaning of life.

"The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" is an extension of the first essay. Our ability to speak and interact with others is a power desired by all. Silence will never protect you let alone aid you in this world of differences. Every real word spoken attempts to make contact with another being. Through speech, one can gain the strength to overcome the tyrannies of silence.

The whole transformation of silence is an act of self-revelation. An individual can tell others about herself and everything that cannot be seen from the outside. There is always one little piece inside of everyone that wants to be spoken out. We have to define ourselves, name ourselves, and speak for ourselves, instead of allowing others to do so.

Each of us has to realize the power of language and must share the commitment to promoting action. We have to recognize our roles in the transformation of silence in order to achieve happiness. We should read each other's works, share their messages, and examine them in relation to our own lives. We cannot live a life of fear or silence, because eventually that silence will suffocate us.

Audre Lorde emphasizes the need to speak out in everyday life. We must learn to express our own individualities and live a life of fearlessness. Sharing with others through poetry, will help us to bridge our differences as human beings. We have the choice to maintain an oath of silence or to take part in a process of life that is creative and growing, that is, to express the self.

Double Consciousness

NICOLE HARBIN

Society has placed restrictions on my life. It has set up obstacles to prevent me from existing and created boundaries to limit my freedom. The boundaries are created by external forces which compel me to internalize them. The process of internalization builds a definition of self. This new definition of self conflicts with the self that has been defined for me through my culture, community and family.

The self begins to struggle with the images of me that are portrayed throughout society, particularly in the media, and those images portrayed by my heritage. Such struggles cause confusion. I begin to question who I am. I look for answers to this question, but come up with conflicting answers. I know how society views me and I know how I view myself based on my own values and beliefs.

The rest of society looks at me and sees a young black female which means that I'm in a lower-class level, supposedly uneducated, with a whole bunch of kids, on welfare and basically in trouble. I see myself as being a strong black woman who is educated, striving for success, independent and hardworking. With these two images inside me, I find myself with a double consciousness.

Double consciousness at times makes me exhibit the very same stereotypes that have been imposed upon me. This causes me to alter my actions, behaviors and attitudes. I'm pregnant right now. I'm engaged to the baby's father but we aren't married yet. Many people in society look down on this. I unconsciously submerge my thoughts into thinking that I should be ashamed of myself. In response, I sometimes try to hide my stomach from others. At times I avoid going out to socialize. But also I see myself as a proud mother-to-be. I see the pregnancy as one of God's blessings. I struggle between my beliefs and those of the rest of society.

Around "white people" I tend to feel less educated. I try to talk in a more educated way, without using any slang. My conscious effort to change the language I use, comes from the way many people in society view black people. We are seen as ignorant, not educated, and unintelligent. I want to make an impression on them, to prove to them that I'm smart, and to break their stereotypes of black people. If double consciousness weren't necessary or present, we wouldn't need to prove ourselves to others. We would have a solid definition of ourselves. Our self-definition would be based on internal forces such as spirituality, culture and family rather than on external forces such as the media, which are controlled by those in power who dictate what the self should be.

Double consciousness makes your mind play tricks on you. You have so many definitions of the self based on your own heritage and on the broader American heritage. This causes confusion. This confusion turns into a battle that a person must fight everyday of her life. This alters her perception of herself. Through this alteration, she changes her attitude, personality, beliefs and behaviors. Because of this, one may never be able to find the self in order to define the self, and truly know what or who the self is.
A Brave New World

Kristen R. Baer

Recent research at Cornell University reveals that twice as many women suffer depression as men. Approximately one in five in America are affected, and untold numbers of these women are seeking psychiatric care. Possibly up to 75% of those who are seeking psychiatric care are "treated" with psychotropic drugs. This is not a problem that only women in the U.S. face. Ten other countries were studied, each with similar results.

Many psychologists believe a predisposition to depression may be in our biology. Positron Emission Tomograph's of men's and women's brains during bouts of "sadness," show that the limbic system of women is up to eight times more metabolically active. Essentially, that means a big red spot appears in women's brains, when sadness is experienced. Psychiatrists claim to have pills that will fix us — i.e., women — to make our brains scan like a man's. Consider instead what these prescriptions ignore: the conflicts and complexities of women's lives. Analysis of historical changes and the increasing complexity in all of our lives, are keys to understanding and truly helping women overcome these high rates of depression.

The answer to this problem may lie in between the Nature/Nurture argument. From the dawn of humanity, women have been the childbearers, the continuers of lines. Necessity forged in us a strong connection to the earth and life. We have traditionally filled the role of caretakers. Therefore, women have an "extra" sensitivity. The nature of nurturing women has also, until recently, been very private. From ancient Greece to the Victorian Age, women and men essentially led separate lives.

If we compare those thousands of years of tradition with the past 100 years, we most likely get to the root of the cause of women's high depression rates all over the world. This past century has seen unprecedented change for women. We have truly entered "the man's world". Political, social, and economic power have broken down barriers between the genders. Although women's opportunities have been expanding, we've also been overwhelmed with responsibilities. Of the 10 nations studied, a higher the rate of depression has been found in the more economically advanced countries. Also, it was found that since 1945, depression has been increasingly prevalent among young people. The past 50 years have brought a permanent war economic, a "baby" boom, technological advances, and the women's movement. Women now face a more complex reality.

Women of this transformative century have plenty to be proud of. Our new relationship with the world is so young in relative terms. We can't expect to immediately assimilate and succeed in an evolutionarily foreign environment. How can thousands of years of nurturing be expected to metamorphose into something new in a mere 100 years? Perhaps we should be a little easier on ourselves. And, like all other groups that have had to breakdown stereotypes and barriers, we too, still have a long road before us.

The fact that women are suffering depression twice as much as men cannot be ignored. Seeking psychological counseling is not to be taken lightly. Psychotropic drug therapy can be dangerous. Some common side effects are: dizziness, blurry vision, extreme nausea, hand and body tremors, and sexual impotence.

Depression involves mood changes and emotions. The sadness that occurs is a natural indicator that something is amiss. It reminds us that we are human and fallible. To dull our senses, is to strip us of our humanity. We don't yet know the long-term effects of these drugs. Psychology should be based on self-analysis, not self-delusion.

After The Glass

Elana Sanchez

I saw her only once after the glass.
I didn't recognize her at first.
I barely said a word before she began:

"The birds fly upside down here,
Airplanes without wings hang
from the dark sky by
invisible strings.
Tempting fruit turns to ashes in your mouth,
And a sea of water cannot quench the thirst."

"Why are you there?" I asked her.
Before answering, her eyes moved past mine
And fixed on something behind me.
I followed her gaze to the coffee table
Where a half full bottle of vodka stood.
Next to it, an empty glass.

I turned back to the mirror as she whispered,
"It's where we go after the glass."

Sisters In Support

Caroline Eason

Sisters in Support is off to a great start this Fall semester. We have come together as a group of women, to gain a better understanding of ourselves and of each other. We are in the process of learning the necessary skills that will enable us to cope with everyday problems.

Our first workshop was on "Self-esteem." Ms. Elorna "Phiny" Williams, a graduate of Kean College was the facilitator. The workshop helped us to identify many of the problems that cause low self-esteem. Everyone left feeling more confident, and determined to improve.

Our next workshop will be on "Women and Violence." If you are looking for real friendship, a supportive environment, discussion of relevant women's issues, then come and join Sisters in Support. It's for women, it's about women and it's about time!

Thursday evenings - 12 Austin Place (3rd Floor) - (973) 748-9000 ext. 250"