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CONTACT INFORMATION AND EDITORIAL POLICY
The Gender and Sexuality Center publishes this newsletter monthly for the campus community and friends. Information in the newsletter is based on the best available information at the time of publication. Items in the newsletter are provided for informational purposes only, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Gender and Sexuality Center or its employees, nor do they represent the views of the students, staff, faculty, or administration of Carleton College. Please submit articles, calendar entries, letters and news to the Gender and Sexuality Center or via e-mail to vendelld@carleton.edu. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and space.

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6th Week is... GREAT Sex Week

Men who Have Sex with Men (MSM): Becoming Sex Positive is a presentation by Weston M. Edwards, Ph. D., LP, geared toward men becoming more sex positive. It’s open to men only.
Nourse Lounge, Tuesday, May 1, 8pm.
For more information, check out: http://www.westonmedwards.com

Female Orgasm combines sex education and women’s empowerment with a hearty dose of laughter. Sex educators Dorian Solot and Marshall Miller bring a playful, honest approach to this topic. With warmth and humor, they illuminate the subject of female orgasm for women who aren’t having them, guys who want to make their girlfriends happy, and students who are debating the existence of the G-spot or “to fake or not to fake?” For orgasm aficionados and beginners, all genders and sexual orientations welcome. May 3rd, Great Hall, 7:30 pm.

By Lawrence Dykeman ’09
A complicated truth: Studying abroad in Namibia

By Elizabeth Nguyen '09

I studied abroad fall term for three months in Namibia. It was life amazing. There were eleven other American women on the trip and we didn’t talk about it. We complained, maybe, in the half joking of light of something you really wish weren’t true but it. We all made choices. We all tried to live our truths. And mine reflected a stubborn attempt to experience everything, regret nothing. So some girls stayed in, others talked loudly of big, strong, American boyfriends. But I had to be in the world. So I went out. I did not lie. I normalization it. I was different, very visibly different and the cat-calls and stares and invitations to lunch and to marriage were all just acknowledgments of the vast difference and the lack of opportunity for empowering interaction. It was an attempt to bridge the unbridgeable, between young and older, black and white, Namibian and American, traveler and resident, student and worker, privileged and not. And so I call this harassment but know the tension of this line between what I wanted and what you gave without asking.

And so I call this harassment but know the tension of this line between what I wanted and what you gave without asking.

So here’s to all of you, to the ones who licked my fingers and called me baby, to the ones who honked (always always always the honking), to the ones who asked how much and told fellow American student Tyler that he had very pretty girls and could please fuck one? To the ones who said “is that it?” when all I wanted to do was dance, to my host brother who drove the combi – showing me off at all the shebeens and bottle stores that Soweto Saturday, to the ones who touched and took without asking, to the ones whose prize I was, to Alex who lost his job and went to jail, to Carlos who must stop drinking, to the raft guides who got us drunk on that boat in the middle the Zambezi, to my American men who called me wife or grabbed my ass in an effort to protect, possess. And then to the sugar daddies and the school fees they pay, to Ruth, my tenth grade host sister and her 25-year-old boyfriend, to the free condoms that no one uses, and to Liz Frank and Elizabeth Khaxas who brave an... To the host fathers who loved me like a daughter, to the ones who called me sister as we worked side by side, to the men who asked first, who I wanted back, to the friends who worried for my safety, to the ones who love me always. And then to now, to letting this be my truth, to letting this be complicated.

Super-teenage girls: do you really have to do it all?

By Leahruth Jemilo '08

On April 1, the New York Times published an article entitled “For Girls, It's Be Yourself, and Be Perfect, Too.” The piece addressed the high standards that teenage girls face through the experience of one girl, Esther Mobley, a seventeen year old living in Newton, Massachusetts.

Esther was currently applying for college when she was interviewed by the Times and is quite accomplished for her age. She is “a standout in Advanced Placement Latin and honors philosophy/literature... as well as a writer whose junior thesis for Advanced Placement history won Newton North’s top prize.” She is also an actress in school theatrical productions and the president of her church youth group.

This is definitely not a shabby list of accomplishments, and yet today it’s not that uncommon for students applying to college to have a record similar to Esther’s. The Times article admits that, “being an amazing girl doesn’t feel like enough these days when you’re competing with all the other amazing girls around the country who are applying to the same elite colleges that you have been encouraged to aspire to practically all your life.” Think about your girlfriends and their high school records and accomplishments plus everything they’ve done here at Carleton. But the question still remains, “is that enough?”

Is it enough to be involved in a million and one extracurricular activities, work as a mentor at the local high school, be president of your class, complete the extra credit assignments in your classes? The list could go on forever. Here at Carleton it is humbling to be surrounded by so many talented, accomplished peers. But at the same time, it can feel discouraging when your own achievements don’t stand out among the crowd.

Usually, a large amount of the pressure that teenage girls feel today comes from their parents. Of course parents want their children to succeed, but how much pressure is too much? I have a younger sister, Stephanie, who is a junior in high school. When I was discussing the article with my mother, she told me that after having read it she thought about how she had encouraged both me and Stephanie to try our best through the years. But the article made her question whether her encouragement was at all similar to the “hyper” behavior exhibited by so many parents when their children are applying to college.

“I see Stephie being stressed out about school,” she said, “and I want to make sure that I am not adding to that.” My mother is the chair of the college committee at my sister’s high school and plans on distributing the article to parents in hopes of giving them a new perspective. When the pressure gets to be too much for a student, she will inevitably break down. One of Esther’s classmates was struggling with four AP classes and late night rehearsals in the school play. One late night she broke down in tears, saying, “I finally said to myself, ‘O.K. I am not Superwoman.’”

Striving for excellence is admirable, but we don’t want girls working so hard that they run out of steam in their early twenties. The bar is continually rising, and the expectations are becoming more and more impossible to achieve. It’s time to slow down and realize that the increasingly important message of “you must do it all” is detrimental to each new generation of teenage girls.

There will be more to follow on this topic in future newsletters. If you have any comments on this issue feel free to send an e-mail to jemilo@carleton.edu.

Let's Talk About SEX...

This advice column is produced by an alliance of SWAs and GSCAs in order to bring you the most up-to-date and comprehensive information about anything and everything you ever wanted to know about sex. Have sex questions of your own? Thought you'd never be able to have them anonymously—and thoroughly—answered? Well, place your questions in mailbox 1415 or 1143, and we’ll try to have them answered in the next newsletter.

How often is “too” often to use your vibrator? I hear rumors of becoming desensitized and losing the ability to orgasm without vibrator stimulation. True? Not true?

Good news. The rumor that using a vibrator will desensitize the clitoris is a myth. After extended use, a vibrator can temporarily cause mild discomfort, but using a sex toy, like masturbating will ultimately enhance the quality and likelihood of an orgasm. www.goaskalice.columbia.edu

Now that you know you can use vibrators without desensitizing your body, there are a few more issues to consider. Since sex toys are not regulated, it’s important to be an informed consumer and aware of what material your toy is made from. First, be sure your sex toy is made from non-porous, non-toxic material. Silicone toys are your best bet, though be wary of falsely advertised labels; make sure you check the ingredients of your product to ensure that it is made entirely from silicone. www.BadVibes.org

Some reputable sex toy distributors include Tantus Silicone, Vixen Creations, Fun Factory and Smitten Kitten. Check out www.smittenkittenonline.com for more information.

So, once you find a safe, comfortable vibrator or dildo, go ahead and use it as much as you want. It can’t hurt. And if you’re having trouble finding one on your own, here a couple that received very high ratings from the smitten kitten website, and are available to order online.

Jollies Polka Dot Dual Stimulation Dildo (created from an actual cast of a vagina)  
G-Force Dildo (especially designed to tilt towards the G-spot or prostate.)

On Friday, April 20, the Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC) hosted the largest Pride Banquet in Carleton history, with over 175 students, alums, faculty, and staff attending the event. The program included senior reflections, performances from Cindy Lys ’07, Derek Zimmerman ’07, and Mal Hoffman ’08, a keynote speech from alum Cory Calmes ’95, and a fabulous dinner of salmon and polenta. Visitors even walked away with hand-etched Pride glasses! Hopefully, the photos from the Banquet in this issue will encourage you to come to the event next year...

Conservative Jews Permit Gay Rabbis and Unions

By Em Harris ’08

In December 2006, The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, the highest legal body in Conservative Judaism, voted to allow the ordination of gay rabbis and the recognition of same-sex unions. Conservative Judaism is a specific movement within Judaism worldwide, which is not necessarily “conservative” as it is defined in politics. Politically, Conservative Judaism falls to the right of Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism, but to the left of Orthodox Judaism. In the North America, there are over 1.5 million Conservative Jews and 750 synagogues. In Conservative Judaism, a panel of twenty-five rabbis serve on a law committee which pass decisions on various issues. Many differing opinions on a single issue can be passed; in this case, one opinion was passed in favor of gay rabbis and unions, and two were passes against. It is up to individual synagogues to accept or reject these opinions.

The opinion passed in favor of gay rabbis and same-sex unions was in itself a compromise. It passed with the stipulation that sodomy between men is still forbidden. However, committee members recognized that this is a condition that cannot be enforced. Two different measures, both arguing for a complete lifting of prohibitions against homosexuality, were rejected by the legal committee.

The two seminaries which ordain Conservative rabbis, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City and the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in Los Angeles, have both decided to admit gay and lesbian students, effective immediately.
A Gay in the Life
By Derek Zimmerman ’07

As I near completion of my Carleton career, I am inclined to do a lot of things: inventory my successes and failures, synthesize my experiences into a coherent life lesson, and attempt to make peace with this place and the people it has brought into my life.

So I am going to share with you the one piece of wisdom, the “lesson” as I like to call it, that four years of general insanity, and dare I say, strife with the Carleton LGBTQ+ community has imparted to me. This lesson is the need for self-sufficiency, in every aspect of my life.

On reflection, so much of my mental and emotional energy in the last four years has been directed towards the pursuit of validation by others, especially through relationships and sex. But this goal has caused me to forfeit my own self-interest and pretty much all of my people. I have sought approval from nothing but harm, especially over the long term.

Some of you reading this know me as a humorously jaded person, and to a certain extent, my frustrations with my vain attempts at relationships have given me the gift of something to harp on in conversation, constantly and bitterly. But I’m learning to stop laughing at everything, to say, honestly and wholeheartedly, “I’m hurting,” and to have something to say to my friends that isn’t “I can’t believe so-and-so is screwing me over (etc.).” Living in bitterness has given all the power to unhappiness to control the emotional tenor of my life.

Thus my project in the next two months is to take responsibility for myself, to begin to discover the things in my life that bring me joy — outside of boys — and to pursue openness and emotional honesty in any and every way that I can. If any of you reading this article catch me indulging the bitchier side of my personality, through gossip, or complaint, or anything, I implore you to call me on it. Please remind me that there is much, much more to life than relationship drama, however ridiculous or interesting that drama might be. In a tragicomic fantasy world is dumb, and I’m tired of it.

I’m not purporting to tell anyone else about solutions for their lives, but I do hope that anyone reading this might be able to gain something from it. Happy Spring to all of you: may the rebirth of greenery help us to start our internal growth afresh.

More photos from Pride Banquet 2007

GSC Book Review

By Justin Smith ’09

David Leavitt, author of the short story compilation Family Dancing, is certainly successful in the literary circle: he currently teaches English at the University of Florida, has received the O. Henry Prize in storytelling, and was recently named a “Literary Lion” by the New York Times. Much more unique, though, is that David Leavitt is one of the few successful, contemporary gay authors consistently writing (good) fiction about gay people.

Leavitt’s collection is full of characters and plotlines that are directly talking about gay men. He does this to varying degrees of success — in his first short story of the book, “Territory,” Leavitt successfully creates a character, Neil, with realistic and effectual issues surrounding his sexuality: he returns home with a boyfriend to his overcompensating, PFLAG-card-carrying mother who is still struggling with his sexuality. Through a selfish narrator and a complicated structure, this story displays a real character and a real plot that does revolve around Neil’s sexual orientation.

The stories in Family Dancing are not always this successful, though, and often commoditize the sexualities of the characters. For example, in his “The Lost Cottage,” Mark’s parents are struggling through a divorce and pulling their children through it with them. Halfway through the story, though, we discover that Mark is in fact gay and that he grew up having sultry affairs with the neighboring redhead. Without this dropped information, Mark’s sexuality would not even be visible in any facet; with it, we get an unnecessary and out-of-place descriptor of an otherwise normal man.

Though often Leavitt’s characters seem to be gay for the sake of being gay, in many ways this is good for the writing community. As one of the first and most successful gay fiction writers, Leavitt artfully and insightfully challenges the heterosexism too often present in contemporary writing.

By Justin Smith ’09

Sister Mary Elizabeth

Episcopal Nun and Director of AEGiS. AEGiS is short for the Aids Education Global Information System, “the largest free-access virtual AIDS library on earth.

Currently an actor/comedian and working as a film producer with a company in Chicago. He has a one man show entitled LIVING INSIDE MYSELF, a humorous and yet touching look at his own life growing up as a woman.