

# Gender Justice League



## CU Women & Gender Studies Program

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

In this, the 5<sup>th</sup> year anniversary for our biannual newsletter, you will hear about a variety of issues that occupy our thoughts and inspire our action. We address topics such as women's activism in Saudi Arabia, societal viewpoints on homosexuality, fat shaming in Boulder, students and sex work, the new show "Orange is the New Black," and pop culture inspired discussion of female sexuality, and a *reflection* on our obsession with body image.



Back row: Brigid Igoe, Ann Price, Sophia Surage, Shannie Ebrahiman, Arlene Pace, Betsey Yadon  
Front Row: Cameron Elder, Lindsay Heckman, Alexis Park

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### No Woman, No Drive By Shannie Ebrahiman

The vast technological advances in telecommunications throughout the globe allow for ever-increasing relations between individuals, organizations, and networks. In regards to social movements, social media platforms play a critical role in bolstering present day activism in both local and global spheres. Resources such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc., provide organizers and individuals with their own voices, while simultaneously providing the general public with a more accessible and genuine presence of the movement than was once possible. These outlets award agency to the mobilization and capacity building of activists and allow for more inclusivity in direct action. The current campaign to lift the ban on driving for women led by Saudi women activists is a perfect example of how vital social media

has become for activists, and how the promise of being noticed and listened to relies heavily on capitalizing on the current state of our globalized world.

The active defiance of the driving ban in Saudi Arabia by women, both individually and in groups, has been occurring for over two decades, but this past year Saudi women activists re-launched the ongoing campaign using innovative social media strategies with a predominant focus on Twitter and YouTube. One key leader of the campaign, Eman Al Nafjan, uses her twitter account (@SaudiWomen) as a main source of information and mobilization for the campaign and this technique proves to be working. With over 45,000 followers and nearly 20,000 tweets, the account is used to both gain support from the outside through awareness as well as instigate action on the inside.

Along with gathering signatures for petitions, the organizing of the recent drive-in protest on October 26 occurred through this platform. Specific hashtags such as #Women2drive and #Oct26driving, assisted in the documentation and coordination of the protest and allow for transnational commentary by individuals and activist networks. The transparency of the campaign's plan of action led to the Saudi government's attempt to intervene and smash the protest by threatening punishment and using intimidation tactics towards key organizers, but dozens of courageous women, with the additional support of some men in their communities, went through with the direct action. Not only did around 60 women take the wheel, almost two-dozen women video recorded their acts of civil disobedience and posted them on one specific YouTube for mass viewing. Since this day there have been many videos added to the account and they continue to receive at least a couple hundred views each, with one reaching almost 10,000 views. YouTube also became extremely significant for the campaign when a video of a song parody called "No Woman, Now Cry" went viral. The song features male Saudi comedians speaking out against the driving ban to the tune of Bob Marley's "No Woman, No Drive" and has an incredible 11 million views on YouTube.

The role that social media is playing in this campaign is undoubtedly imperative to the relative success of the campaign both locally and globally. The provocation of critical response by those in power, as well as the coverage by global mass media outlets, certainly evidences how this enriched social media heavy campaign has evolved into a more threatening and legitimate social movement.

## **The Weight of Boulder**

### **By Arlene Pace**

The anti-obesity rhetoric is dominating the western hemisphere in such an overwhelming way that it has been uncontested and widely accepted. The opposing rhetoric represents an entirely different narrative to "obesity" continuing to be unheard and widely cast aside. Though many health professionals and anti-obesity movements have set out to reduce the obesity epidemic and improve the health of children and adults alike, what is actually occurring is an epidemic of fat shaming similar to other forms of oppression within society. Statistics about the obesity problem in America are projected non-stop and yet there are rarely any statistics that show the other side of this so called "epidemic" that has thrown the population into a moral panic. This undisputed obesity narrative must be dissected and seen for what it truly is. When looking at the anti-obesity narrative and analyzing one of the healthiest cities in the nation, Boulder, I argue that the level of fat shaming and discrimination is higher than it would be in a less "fit" city.

Fat shaming is a form of oppression and discrimination cloaked in a modern day concern for health. It can be paralleled with other forms of "isms", but is unparalleled in that society has deemed people fat due to their own laziness and ill-discipline. The media, medical doctors, politicians, academia and society in general has perpetuated the stigmatization and discrimination of the obese population, causing more harm than can be imagined. No person has ever been shamed into losing weight and if society is really trying to help fat people lose weight they are going about it the wrong way. Medical professionals can be the worst perpetrators of this shame and discrimination. By focusing on health issues regarding diet, fat shaming is framed in such a way that it makes society believe they are helping the fat population through discriminatory comments. The fat community is marginalized to such an extent that it's affecting not only their emotional well-being, but their career success as well. As fat shaming continues without any sincere help from the social justice community, the issue will only continue to progress until the next generation of obese children face bullying and discrimination at record rates.

Boulder is a predominantly thin population that prides itself on being fit and healthy. The question becomes is this because we have so many outdoor activities or is this because our city discriminates against fat people? I encourage you as readers to investigate the answer to this question for yourselves.

## **Children's Voices, Acceptance Heard**

### **By Cameron Elder**

*Interviewer: "Why are human rights as a concept for all people so important?"*

*Derek (age 12): "Because human beings are human beings and they should all be treated the same."*

*Interviewer: "Some states won't let gay people get married, but they'll let you have some of the same rights as those that are married. Is that enough?"*

*Dash (age 9): "You can have your friend that's not gay and he'll be married, but then you'll be with your partner, but you won't be married... it doesn't make sense."*

These are just a couple of the many accepting and warm-hearted answers from children responding to the issue of gay marriage and public perceptions of homosexuality. What does this tell us about social perceptions of homosexuality and the changing political ideologies concerning equity and human rights issues?

In an internet video posted by Fine Brothers Productions, over a dozen children between the ages of 5 and 13 are asked questions regarding same sex marriage and the prevalence of homosexuality within society. The kids reveal nuanced views, which paint a picture of a hopeful future for America and its inclusion of lesbian and gay identified people.

Two different videos, featuring both a gay and lesbian couple, are shown of the two marriage proposals. A general sense of excitement and wonder light up the faces of these children as they identify whom is being asked the question by whom. The children act surprised to see members of the same sex express their loves for one another publically. The amount of effort put into each proposal leads the children to wish for the same kind of grandiose spectacle as they speculate what their own proposals will look like.

Only two children (Samirah and Lucas) come across as being a bit put off by these engagements. However, only Lucas (age 5) consistently presents an anti-gay viewpoint for the duration of the video. Samirah (age 7) is shocked simply because seeing two people of the same sex who want to get married is something that she has not seen or heard of before. Although Samirah is unsure of what to make of it, she does not seem to think that it is wrong because the couples appear to really care for one another. Lucas, on the other hand, makes comments like, "Gay is bad for you," or, "People that do not like gay... I'm in their group," but when confronted and asked to explain why he does not think that gay people should get married, he cannot find the words to articulate his opposition. Lucas's negative take on gay marriages calls attention to values that have probably been instilled in this young boy by parents or relatives who are opposed to equality for

homosexuals. A counter argument from this video includes Derek's (age 12) comment, stating, "Nobody really has a reason to hate gays. There is no really valid reason." This point helps to explain Lucas' failure to describe his own rationale in disliking gayness. I speculate that Samirah, on the other hand, has not been exposed to homosexuality before and has been sheltered from alternative forms of sexuality other than heterosexual interactions. It does not seem like she has heard negative things about queer people, it's that "this is all just new for [her]."

Despite having a small sample of children in this video, the discourse emulates how media representations and other exposure to queerness in society have benefitted perceptions of homosexuality. The kids make references to figures of popular culture like Lady Gaga and Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, who have both been outward allies for the gay rights movement. With songs like "Born This Way" and "Same Love," the songs demonstrate how homosexuality is not a chosen lifestyle, but a way that people are born. The shift from traditional beliefs concerning homosexuality as a disease, which should be feared and othered is blatant in these compiled reactions. It appears as though children are more likely to welcome alternative models for relationships, contrary to the heterosexist majority that has plagued society for so long. If two people appear to care enough about one another that they would like to get married, then why shouldn't they be allowed to?

When it comes to parenting (and I cannot speak from experience, but can make points from observation within my own family) adults need to recognize how kids are incredibly impressionable beings, so it is the legal guardians who ultimately have the last say in molding their children's minds, possibly resulting in the children reflecting their own biases. Therefore, sharing an open dialogue with your children is essential in order to normalize behavior that they may not see within the confines of their own home so that homosexual relationships are not demonized and rejected. However, as technology becomes more and more widespread amongst younger generations, kids are able to see representations of things on their own, allowing them to begin to form their own opinions regarding social issues and marginalized populations.

When pejorative comments and conservative viewpoints sometimes feel defeating, it is media examples like this one that make me smile and believe in a better future.

The outlooks represented in this video are admirable, mature, and intelligent—traits I wish I saw more frequently amongst some of the adults I have been exposed to. When ignorant assholes finally grow up, they should be more like these kids.

## Why I love *Orange is the New Black*

By Brigid Igoe

To begin I should make clear who I am, because I do believe it impacts my love for the Netflix show *Orange is the New Black*. I am a white, cisgendered, middle class female who majors in Film and has a minor in Women and Gender Studies. I devoured the first season of the show in two days when it was released, loving the complex characters and intriguing plotline(s) that Jenji Kohan created. Soon Facebook was flooded by my Ethnic Studies and Women and Gender Studies friends critiquing every line from the show. I began to realize all the things that I had overlooked due to the snappy dialogue and great personalities. But after reading the critiques and revisiting the show, I am still a fan of *Orange is the New Black*.

I know it has problems. Only the Latina characters are pregnant, and a lot of them seem to be. One critique said, "leave it to a Latina character to get pregnant while in prison." The character Taystee, who is African American, decides to commit a crime to return back to prison after she is released. The reporter and author, Allison Samuels, says she will never watch the show because she is fed up with characters of color only being on television when it is a prison show. Although the show delves into complex subject matter and is sometimes problematic in its approaches, I choose to support and enjoy the show as a positive shift in hegemonic media representations.

If I went to jail I would be Piper Chapman. White, blonde, middle class, and never really expected to end up there. The show uses the white, privileged Piper Chapman as the means for viewers to relate to the show. Piper's character is relatable to many and serves as a window into prison culture for people who may otherwise have no exposure to prisons. However, many critical prison studies scholars, engaged consumers, and feminists have noted that the show is sometimes misrepresentative of prison realities. Some appreciate the show for its inclusion of characters who are women of color and trans who are played by people of those identity categories in real life. While visibility of certain groups is celebrated in some respects, some of these representations are misleading. For instance, according to *Women & Criminal Justice*, in 2008 45.5% of women incarcerated were white, 32.6% were African American, and 16% were Latina. The show follows each of these groups with different story lines. This allows for many women of color to be on screen, however some of the characters reproduce racial, ethnic, and sexuality stereotypes. Often times,

television shows have a few token characters of color, and incredibly limited engagement of race and ethnicity. If anything, *Orange is The New Black* does not gloss over racialized lived experiences, but tells stories through characters and their experiences with race and race relations within the prison system.

*Orange is the New Black* includes back-stories of these women-identified characters to reveal how they ended up there. Most of the time it shows a softer side, a more relatable side, of its characters that expands upon what we may assume about them due to their criminal status. The women's prison population increased by 832% from 1977 to 2007, while the male population grew 416% according to the Institute on *Women & Criminal Justice*. Two thirds of women in prison are there for non-violent offenses. As we find from these characters, their crimes arise more often from bad situations and sometimes larger systems of oppression, than them being coldhearted criminals.

The US is one of two countries in the world that allows guards in Women's prisons to be men. Leave it to a TV show to have a romance bloom between a guard and inmate, but the show also shows how problematic this is. For example, the character Pornstashe is constantly violating prisoners' personal boundaries and rights to consent. He sells drugs in exchange for money and sexual favors. The show illustrates the lack of power these women have, he is allowed to sexually harass and assault them without any real repercussions.

*Orange is the New Black* is making television history. Men heavily dominate the film industry, which explains the sexist content we are forced to endure. All but one of the writing staff for OITNB is female, including actress Jodie Foster. The cast is mainly women, with a high proportion of women of color.

OITNB is one of the most hilarious and cleverly written shows of all time. It has great character development that is both accurate and non stereotypical. The show's success and critical acclaim will spawn studio copycats, giving more opportunity to women, and maybe even women of color, to act, write, and direct. I understand Samuels' decision to not watch *Orange is the New Black*. It isn't fair that Olivia Pope is the only lead African American actress on TV. But Danielle Brooks (Taystee) is going to be on the new season of *Girls*, Michelle Hurst (Miss Claudette) is going to be in a film with Kristin Chenoweth, and Dascha Polanco is going to be in a film with Vanessa Hudgens. Perhaps *Orange is the New Black* provides some promise in increasing the presence and proper representation of characters of color on screen.

## **The Ambiguous Power of Celebrities**

**By Betsey Yadon**

The increasing influence of technology and social networking has had a large impact on the way that social movements function. It is now possible to log into one's Facebook account and see which celebrities are supporting which causes. One specific actor who has recently become visible as a women's rights activist is Patrick Stewart (Star Trek). He has become a highly visible advocate of ending violence against women and girls through a series of advertisements and public appearances. While Patrick Stewart seems to be a relatively harmless celebrity activist, there are other examples of more negative impacts by celebrities. The recent music video *Blurred Lines* by Robin Thicke was defended as empowering women in the video while ignoring the highly controversial lyrics which propagate rape culture. Robin Thicke dismissed the numerous negative critiques of his song, refusing to acknowledge the impact it could have.

I always feel conflicted when I see celebrities speaking up about social issues or representing social movements. Celebrities have the power to influence these movements in a way that is different from others largely due to their widespread visibility and influence. While this can be beneficial in some scenarios, it can also have negative side effects. The potential benefits to including celebrities as actors in social movements range from increased visibility to popularizing the issue. Often when people are able to associate a recognizable and likeable face with a movement, it has the potential to increase interest in that movement. This can lead to more widespread knowledge and activism surrounding the issue. Yet, this can also have a negative impact on the movement. The potential for misinformation can increase (but does not necessarily always do so) when people are getting their information solely from these sources. Celebrity activists can also have the negative impact of drumming up short-term interest only. The interest they create is not always sustained and can fade as quickly as it appears.

I am not trying to suggest that these are the only problems with having celebrities as part of social movements, nor are they necessarily inevitable problems. Yet, I believe these are potential problems which can have overall negative side effects. As a result, it is hard to come to a definitive conclusion on this issue. Celebrities have the potential to be important actors in creating social change, but I am still unclear on exactly how this can be accomplished. As always, it is important for celebrities to remain self-reflexive and recognize the impact that their support and actions will have on a given movement.

## **The Costs of Paying for College**

**By Alexis Olson**

With the rising cost of college tuition, an increasing number of students have decided to leave the less economically viable types of employment, such as waiting tables or bartending. Instead, more students are venturing into a more

lucrative market where selling illicit substances, or sex work, are a standard alternative for a steady income. A sex worker is a person who works in an industry that sells a sexual act, or a sexual fantasy essentially. This can include a variety of sex-related facets: pornography, web cam, prostitution, exotic dancing, sugar daddy/sugar baby relationships, and peepshow booths. Research by Dr. Ron Roberts, of the University of Kingston, published in 2010 suggested that one in four students know someone who had worked in the sex industry to fund their studies – up from three per cent in 1990. Dr Roberts found 16 per cent would consider working in the industry while more than one in 10 were open to the idea of being an escort. Traditionally, students have chosen industry employment such as bartenders or waiters/waitresses in order to make minuscule dents in their colossal sized piles of student loan debt, and have engaged in infinitesimal tactics of barely making it by. Currently, an increasing number of students have decided to leave industry employment, and enter a whole new realm of independent and higher grossing income based economic exchanges of “sex.”

A more common facet of sex work chosen by female students in particular, is stripping or exotic dancing. Some student sex workers choose this facet of sex work because it is an informal form of sex work and does not necessarily involve physical contact or penetration. These moral boundaries are essentially created through a fictitious boundary, or line in place, to separate sexual fantasy work, versus physical sexual activity. These boundaries, however, are different for every student in all facets and types of sex work. Some are more willing to venture across the boundary to the physical side, and choose pornography or prostitution, while others are more reserved and remain on the side that does not include physical activity, such as web-camming, peep show booths, or exotic dancing. Some would, say, however, that exotic dancing does include physical contact with clients in the form of lap-dances, but others would beg to differ in that no actual sexual activity such as penile-vaginal-intercourse or oral sex occurs, and therefore it is not a physical facet of sex work.

With these students choosing sex work as a more economically viable way to pay off student debt quicker, or even have less student debt, work less hours, and not worry as much about bill pay, there is a cost at the expense of this lucrative market. Sex work is extremely stigmatized, and a lot of students who choose this work are not open about it, and if it is revealed, can face losing relationships, or other jobs outside of the sex work industry. One example of such an instance was when Sarah Tressler, a reporter with the Houston Chronicle, made headlines when it was discovered that she was earning extra money as a stripper outside of her day job. When she was subsequently fired, she filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission alleging she was fired for not disclosing that she worked as a stripper on her job application. This case demonstrates the potential lingering costs for students who chose to become workers in the sex trade.

**The Virgin Horcrux Complex: *Feminist Lessons from Harry Potter and the Magic of Human Sexuality.***  
**By Sophia Surage**

In the Harry Potter series, Lord Voldemort attempts to split and sever his soul into ever surviving splinters in order to avoid his own mortality. To destroy hope and humanity all around him, he must literally fraction off his soul so that it is never whole and vulnerable. Voldemort's use of horcruxes to preserve his vitality and terrorize the world is a disturbing and destructive process.

Just like wands and magic potions, theories, words, and ways of coping with vulnerability can perpetuate devastation and pain in the world. Torture, mass murder, and terrorism are not only in storybooks, but manifest historically and presently in the form of hunting, categorizing, hurting, shaming, and attacking female sexuality. One of the core methods and vehicles for splitting and categorizing female sexuality is the ever pervasive virgin-whore dichotomy, a theoretical framework that splits women into two categories, those that are pure and innocent on one side and those that are purely sexual and conniving on the other. Patriarchy allows many men to avoid their own vulnerability and fears by splitting the humanity of women into manageable slices. Similar to a horcrux, a virgin-whore dichotomy may appear in subtle and mysterious spaces, and may take on the form of something as mundane as a necklace, a household item, or a causal comment. At the same time, the dichotomy can manifest itself in the form of judgment, approval, violence, chivalry, and an entire way of understanding and relating to women and the world. In some cases one may realize that the horcrux eerily resides in one's own eyes, and can become the lens through which one may access other women as well as one's placement in the world. The virgin-whore dichotomy situates women in theoretical and literal spaces that determine whether they deserve respect, violence, a proposal, or a one-night-stand. A virgin-whore dichotomy carries out the imaginary process of separating "good" women from sex, sex from love, mothers from baby-mamas, and humanity from female sexuality; all for the purpose of granting a false sense of patriarchal control over intimacy and the complexity of human sexuality that exists in the world.

For those of us who have experienced a virgin-whore complex in their dating life, wardrobe dilemmas, career options etc, it is indeed a soul splitting experience. Realizing that someone can only love you separate from your sexual being or that they can only be sexually intimate with you once you are no longer respectable is as emotionally painful as getting splinched in apparition; and unfortunately there is no magic hospital ward to instantly repair your injuries. At its core the virgin-whore dichotomy disrupts the continuum of human sexuality in

which women can be sexual, smart, maternal, successful, moral, loving, and more, all simultaneously. The virgin-whore dichotomy also takes away women's self-determination in freely choosing how, when, and with whom to express and explore their own sexuality.

Often overlooked are the inevitable ways in which denying the humanity of women simultaneously splits the humanity of men until they can no longer access it themselves. Another valuable lesson from Harry Potter is that no matter how soul-shattering these experiences are, sometimes we must view a "villain" in the light of compassion. At the heart of the complex is also fear; fear of female sexuality, fear of self, and fear of losing control; however, fear is never an excuse for harming others or violating someone else's basic human rights. When people rely on the unchecked virgin-whore dichotomy to avoid their own fears of female sexuality and reality, they also give up their ability to experience their own self as whole, fluid, and free. While each of us is responsible for our own choices and actions, it is important to remember that we are all products of a system that socializes us to dichotomize female sexuality. Therefore, there is room for redemption on a large scale, if we are willing to radically re-adjust our consciousness and rearrange the meanings we attach to behaviors and bodies.

To the folks who continue to rely on the notion that women exist in categories of good and evil, your head aches and soul aches are not just nightmares, but are indeed the throbbing pieces of your shattered and scattered soul. Although some of this soul splintering is self-inflicted, it is no doubt a process of the patriarchal system and is a learned coping strategy. The many scars etched in human sexuality are alive and burning, but we can look to these scars for insight as to how to patch up the problems and predicaments that attempt to confine and tatter the soul of human sexuality. Dichotomies position characteristics in direct opposition to one another, and rigidly categorize groups of people and their experiences.

The magic potion for freeing and decolonizing human sexuality will never be simple, but we can begin to imagine a world more fluid and multifaceted to begin the process. This new outlook must welcome the mystic and mundane, sacred and profane, norm and deviating experiences. So reserve the rigidity once used to dichotomize individuals and their sexual and or non-sexual behavior, for erectile tissues and radical respect for one another's boundaries, desires, and limits. For the sake of whole and healthy souls, sex lives, and human decency, try to smooth rather than splinter when it comes to the topic of sexuality and particularly female sexuality. And always remember that a continuous, multi-dimensional, fluid, and flexible spectrum of human sexuality is both magical and real.

## **Mirror, Mirror**

**By Lindsay Heckmann**

“Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the fairest one of all?” It’s pretty safe to assume that we’ve all heard this phrase a time or two growing up, but what happens if the mirrors are broken? Is it really seven years of bad luck to distort a physical reflection so severely in a society with incredibly unrealistic beauty standards? What would it be like in a world without mirrors, and a world in which all reflections were forced inward?

Professor Bullington of CU Boulder’s campus recently challenged his students to a mirror fast. I know—terrifying, right? As a member of his class, I decided to take this challenge to heart and seriously try to abstain from mirrors the way one does from sodas, fast food, or any other unhealthy (but oh so comforting) vices. Thinking of mirrors as unhealthy became incredibly profound as the project went on, as I was forced to realize my incredible addiction to looking at my physical appearance. As my awareness of mirrors increased, I began to notice just how many reflective surfaces exist in my daily activities. Car windows, a blank computer screen, elevator doors, and even my microwave were all opportunities to catch a glimpse of myself. The positive new relationship I developed with myself by forcing my gaze within is an experience unlike any other. Sure it was frustrating at times, but the longer I went without critiquing my physical appearance and checking up on my outward flaws, the easier it got to just let the superficial things go.

I now challenge anyone reading this to a mirror fast. Who cares if you’re having a bad hair day, or your clothes aren’t falling in quite the perfect place? Trust that you are beautiful just the way you are (and that your true friends will let you know if you have something in your teeth). Learn to look within yourself rather than at yourself, and discover the confidence you never knew you had. Go on— I dare you.

## **Gender Justice League Events**

***Conversations at the Cottage— People as Props: The Blurred Lines of Oppression***

The Gender Justice League’s first Conversation at the Cottage was sparked by one of the most talked about media events of the year—Miley Cyrus at the VMAs. We also discussed the hit song “Blurred Lines” and the racist backlash against the newly crowned Miss America. Our group of panelists came prepared to discuss the ramifications of these media sensations, leading a great discussion on female sexuality in the media and the use of black bodies as props. The Gender Justice League was very fortunate to have professors Dr. Holmes, Dr. Williams, and Dr. Misri on the panel. They all brought very different perspectives and challenged the audience to rethink these events. One of the highlights of the conversation was Dr. Holmes explaining the history of twerking, as well as having so many students in attendance.

## ***Dinner and a TV Show: Orange is the New Black***

In collaboration with TRANS\*cend, the Gender Justice League, hosted Dinner and a TV Show with a screening of episode three (Lesbian Request Denied) of the famed Netflix TV show "Orange Is The New Black" and then an engaging discussion with an incredible panel. The discussion was led by Dr. Deepti Misri (Women and Gender Studies), Dr. Kwami Holmes (Ethnic Studies), and Amelia Menzel (TRANS\*cend), and focused on the provocative representation of incarceration as well as the portrayal of experiences of different social groups. This event was a huge success and we plan on hosting more "Dinner and a TV Show" events in the coming semester.

## ***Supplies Drive for the St. Vrain Safe Shelter***

Nearing the end of fall semester 2013 the GJL engaged in a collaborative effort with the Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley to collect supplies for underprivileged women and families who are impacted by domestic violence in our local area. For the past several years the Gender Justice League has followed the lead of the Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley in collecting supplies that meet the needs of community members depending on the given season. In the past the Gender Justice League has called upon the CU campus community in order to collect cold care supplies, formal clothing for women pursuing professional careers, and warm winter clothing for children. This winter we focused our efforts on gathering children’s books, office and school supplies, personal hygiene products, as well as warm socks and gloves. The Gender Justice League hopes to work with the CU campus community and St. Vrain in future semesters in order to make resources more available to folks in the Boulder and Longmont area.

## ***Denim Days 2014***

With the spring semester nearly underway, the Gender Justice League is preparing for its annual Denim Days campaign. A lot of exciting events are being planned for the final week of April. The Relationship Check-up Survey will take place once again, giving students, staff, faculty, and anyone else interested an opportunity to see how things are going in their relationships with friends or loved ones, all the while, enjoying some free Subway sandwiches and conversing with volunteers from CAPS and OVA. Also, a fashion show and art gallery is being planned promoting anti-victim blaming and alternative forms of masculinity. Be sure to come and check out one of the three denim displays that will be set up around campus. The first will be set up on Norlin Quad outside of Old Main. The second will be displayed outside of the engineering center and Koelbel building. Lastly, the third is going to be hung on and around the Hazel Gates Woodruff Cottage. Help from volunteers would be much appreciated and the Gender Justice League will hold an informational meeting for those that are interested. Denim Days is an exciting opportunity to get involved in social activism in an effort to take a stand against gender violence and rape culture.

## **Active Students on Campus: *Bathrooms are for Everyone***

**By Ann Price**

The University of Colorado Student Government (CUSG) has a big role in supporting the voices of students on campus. CUSG is in control of over \$24 million, which ranks it as highest among all other student governments in the US. This money is put into cost and advocacy centers and other resources on campus, including the UMC, WRC, SORCE, GLBTQRC, and VRC, as well as the Cultural Events Board and services like Night Ride. This money also goes to the largely autonomous student groups on campus, allowing them to put on their own events. Caitlin Pratt is a member of CUSG, working under the title of Director of Safety and Inclusion. Caitlin is currently putting on a number of incredibly important initiatives, and so I interviewed her to find out more.

### **1. How did you get involved with CUSG?**

*Even though I'm a senior, this is actually my first year in CUSG. I got involved with CUSG by applying—over the summer, an email was sent out to students looking for applicants for the CUSG executive staff. There are lots of opportunities to get involved in CUSG at any point in your college career.*

### **2. How was your position formed?**

*My position is the Director of Safety and Inclusion. Last year, CUSG had a Director of Diversity position—because that's a pretty monumental undertaking, this position was split up into two positions: the Director of Safety and Inclusion, and the Liaison to Underrepresented Students. A lot of folks seem confused that Safety and Inclusion are put together in one position, but it really makes a lot of sense. In order for students to feel safe on campus, they also need to feel like they go to a school where their various identities and experiences are supported and celebrated.*

### **3. What things do you do within CUSG?**

*"I do a number of things within CUSG—I run Bathroom Squad, co-direct the Diversity Commission, and help put on the Safety Forums. I'm also involved in committees that focus on pedestrian safety, respect in the workplace, accessibility on campus, and LGBTQIA issues on campus."*

### **4. Why is Bathroom Squad important, and how can students get involved?**

*We want public spaces and amenities that people can feel comfortable using, and public spaces and amenities that work for people. Bathrooms should be accessible for families and people with disabilities. Bathrooms should also be a place where people are affirmed and supported, rather than policed. This work is also important in starting a dialogue about in a number of areas on campus—administrative, amongst students, and in the classroom—about inclusion, accessibility, and gender. I believe that the act of having a productive and positive conversation about how inclusion and privilege relate to the way we build our physical environments can have a really powerful impact on campus climate. Bathroom Squad is an initiative where students involved take a checklist and a tape measure to bathrooms on main campus and measure them for a general overview of ADA accessibility and gender inclusivity. The goal is to get to every bathroom on main campus by the end of this school year. We want to be able to publish the data that we collect so people on campus can know what bathrooms are accessible and safe for them. This data is also being used to advocate for more gender inclusive and accessible spaces on campus. We'd love to have more people get involved with Bathroom Squad.*

### **5. What about your other initiatives?**

*We're also putting on a series of safety forums, and all students are invited to attend. Our focus is really centered on campus climate and inclusion. The forums are solution oriented--students are given a space to express the safety concerns they have on campus, and also formulate the solutions that they would like to see to these problems. One area that the Safety Forum is working on right now are the Clery Act email messages from CUPD--we've established a working relationship with CUPD and are now able to provide them feedback on how to make sure the Clery Act emails serve a positive role in promoting campus safety. Any input or suggestions that we could bring to CUPD about the Clery act messaging would be appreciated.*

People interested in getting involved with Bathroom Squad or Caitlin's other initiatives can reach her at [caitlin.pratt@colorado.edu](mailto:caitlin.pratt@colorado.edu). Bathroom Squad meets Tuesday at 5:00 in UMC 125, but times are subject to change. Regular updates and other information about Bathroom Squad can be found on the Facebook page for the CUSG Bathroom Accessibility Squad.

Another related but entirely separate campaign is Our People Pee, an independent visibility campaign that is unaffiliated with any organization on campus. According to Ace Eckstein: "Our People Pee was started as a social media visibility campaign in order to spread awareness about the need for gender inclusive bathrooms on campus. Specifically, we want to spread the message that lots of groups of people (including folks with disabilities, families, and trans/ gender non-conforming folks) benefit from gender inclusive bathrooms and that the people who benefit from these bathrooms are valuable members of our campus community who deserve safe and accessible places to use the bathroom. The facebook page posts relevant news stories, articles, photos etc. in order to expand our understanding of the need for these bathrooms and what that looks like." More information for the campaign can be found at the Facebook page for Our People Pee.