



# The Women's Word

Volume 3, Issue 1

...for women's voices to be heard

February 2006

## New Semester, New Faces!

By Marjan Maghbouleh, Sarah Jefferson, and Jessica Wren

### Editors of *The Women's Word*

Welcome back to Lehigh! Spring semester at the Women's Center is proving to be a busy one so far. With upcoming events such as **Healthy Body Image Week** and **Sexual Assault Awareness Month**, everyone is going from meeting to meeting, preparing and advertising for what could be our biggest semester yet. **Speakers** this semester

include journalist **Joan Morgan** on **hip-hop and feminism** (see article below) and sociologist **Victoria Pitts** on **cosmetic surgery TV**.

*The Women's Word* is also experiencing some exciting changes! Sarah Jefferson and Jessica Wren, our two new editors, have replaced Ajita Rajan, who finished her graduate studies at Lehigh in December.

Finally, *The Women's Word* is always looking for contributions: **email mam204**.

## Hip-Hop Feminist Joan Morgan Breaks It Down

By Marjan Maghbouleh, editor of *The Women's Word*

Award-winning journalist Joan Morgan met with the Women's Center staff Monday, Feb. 6, for a question and answer session. The meeting, held before her public lecture, "**At the Intersection of Feminism and Hip-Hop**," in Sinclair Hall that night, was an opportunity for students and staff to have an informal conversation with Morgan.

Morgan, author of *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down*, is passionately committed both to feminism and to documenting, celebrating and criticizing hip-hop. Her work for *Vibe*, *Spin*, *Essence*, *Ms.*, *The Village Voice* and other magazines has placed her at the forefront of music journalism.

Morgan spoke frankly with students about the repercussions of hip-hop videos and rap culture.

What our society should worry about, Morgan said, is not that women in hip-hop videos are expressing their sexuality, but that women don't have a voice. They are tools for someone else's ideas of sex and what sexiness is.

Morgan also addressed the increase in violent sexual acts among teenagers and young adults, which she feels can in part be attributed to the violent nature of current mainstream rap. While such acts were once viewed

negatively, these days, Morgan said, young women are taking an "I'm strong enough to take it" attitude.

Who is responsible for the social degeneration of hip-hop?

"It is easy to scapegoat rappers and directors," Morgan said, "but the distributors also have a responsibility."

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Joan Morgan (right) speaks with Sarah Jefferson at the Women's Center staff meeting

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### Meet the staff

**Kristin Handler**, Director

**Heather Sterner**, Administrative Coordinator

**Steve McAllister**, Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator

**Marisa Enrico '07**—(Studying Abroad) Body Empowerment Alliance (BEA) Co-Coordinator, Break the Silence

**Chelsea Erdmanis '06**—BEA Co-Coordinator

**Sarah Jefferson '06**—Co-editor of *The Women's Word*, Diversity Event Cooperation Coordinator

**Leigh Dugan '07** — Origyns, BEA, *The Vagina Monologues*

**Marjan Maghbouleh '08**—Co-Editor of *The Women's Word*, Co-Coordinator of Gender & Violence Group

**Alex Milspaw '07** — Break the Silence

**Nayla Raad '07**—Diversity Event Cooperation Coordinator, *The Vagina Monologues*, Break the Silence

**Annie Rapson '06**—Publicity Coordinator, Co-Coordinator of Gender & Violence Group

**Rachel Sansanelli '07**—BEA member

**Renee Simons '06**—Graphic Designer, Origyns

**Hailey Witt '07**—(Studying Abroad) BEA member

**Jessica Wren '08**—BEA member/web designer, Co-editor of *Women's Word*, Origyns

## Passing Time with the Pink Ladies

By Sarah Jefferson, editor of *The Women's Word*

Lehigh's women are sure to build a strong bond together, thanks to Director of Alumni Development **Colleen Griggs '99**.

As a past political science major at Lehigh, as well as the previous Director to Lehigh's Alumni Admissions Outreach Program, Griggs hopes to break down barriers and increase support and unity among Lehigh women. Her brainchild, **Ladies' Night Out** a.k.a. the "**Pink Ladies**," involves bringing together women from all different groups around campus, such as sororities, athletics, business, engineering, and the arts, to encourage and promote the contributions of Lehigh women.

The first event to kick off Griggs's Ladies' Night Out program occurred Saturday, January 28, at the **Lehigh-Holy Cross women's basketball game**. An impressive 234 Lehigh women attended the event where they received free Pink Ladies shirts and a free dinner. Though the food was quickly devoured, women continued to arrive and stay to watch the game and socialize. It was a huge success, both in terms of the support it offered to women's basketball, and the interactions it facilitated between women from all groups across campus.

Future Ladies' Night Out events include a special **dessert reception** after Lehigh's performance of ***The Vagina Monologues*** (see **page 4** for more info on the performance). All women with Pink Ladies shirts are invited to attend the reception. If you don't have a shirt already, additional shirts will be on sale at *The Vagina Monologues* for \$5, with all proceeds going to Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley, a domestic violence shelter. Griggs hopes to turn women out for future women's athletic events, Women's Center events, and events by groups such as Lehigh's female a capella group, **Echoes**. Ladies' Night Out has had significant financial support from outside sources, including President Farington, Residential Life and the Athletics Department.

There is a natural tendency for people, especially women, to divide themselves into factions along the lines of interests or hobbies. Instead of competing, women can use the strength in their numbers to support each other's interests, goals, and ambitions. For Lehigh women, who represent one minority on campus, Ladies Night Out is an opportunity to get out, be vocal and demonstrate the great talents each woman brings to Lehigh.

## Adventures in India

By Farhana Kassamali,  
Women's Center staff alumna

Shortly after graduating from Lehigh in December '05, I made my maiden voyage to India. Despite ethnically *being* Indian, I had never gone; nobody in my family, despite being avid travelers, ever found a real need to go see the home country.

With all the stereotypes of India being dirty, unsanitary and full of poverty (e.g. the Seinfeld episode when they travel to India and George refuses to use the bathroom the entire time), I prepared myself for the worst but hoped for the best. Arriving at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi was a definite shock; nothing seemed organized and there was a flood of people. With my baggage in tow, my parents and I went to go find the tour guide. Outside, people were waiting to help you, whether you asked for help or not, because they wanted money. With some harsh Urdu language, my mom waived them off.

We got in the car and headed straight for the city of Agra (where the Taj Mahal is located). The trip started on an interesting note. On the drive there, we had to stop to pay a tax, and what did I see on the side of the road but a man with a little bear on a leash, and a



**Farhana (center) with her parents in India**

monkey on another leash. If the man saw a tourist pointing or taking a picture, he had the bear stand, and then proceeded to make the monkey stand on the bear.

We arrived safely in Agra (the road there was a BUMPY one), and checked into the hotel, which had an amazing view of the Taj. The next morning, we went to see the magnificent structure, and the only words I have to explain what I saw, are that no picture does it justice. It is by far one of the most amazing creations in the world. Everything is absolutely, perfectly symmetrical.

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## Joan Morgan Breaks It Down con't from p. 1

And the distributors in many cases, according to Morgan, are black women.

"There is no gun being held to women's heads [to do this]," Morgan said, referring to female roles in rap videos.

Morgan's lecture was attended by over 70 people. It was presented by the Women's Center and co-sponsored by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Visiting Lecturers Committee.



Joan Morgan (right) talks with: (back, l-r) Whitney Pryor, LeAnn Austin, Callie Roberts, Calvin John Smiley, Chris Kim, Ben Gucciardi; (front, l-r): Racine Henry, Sonya James

## Adventures in India con't from p. 2

The Emperor Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal in homage to his wife, and the only part that isn't symmetrical is the tomb inside. His wife's tomb is perfectly in the middle, but he has a larger tomb on one side. This was done on purpose so that people would realize that there is one perfect being: God.



A picture of the Taj Mahal taken by Farhana

Other stops to India included Jaipur, New Delhi, and Mumbai. There was more poverty there than I care to remember. There were people living in huts along the sides of the roads, and children were constantly begging at the window of our car. The tour guides cautioned us not to give money because many of these kids were hired by an agency that recruits kids with food as a reward and has them beg. There were many, many, many mothers who begged with their own (or a borrowed) infant, but again, we were warned not to give money because these mothers were often on drugs. There is nobody looking out for the large, poor social class there, because India still seems to follow the caste system, where the "untouchables" exist, and there is so much corruption in the ruling government; monetary aid just doesn't seem to get where it needs to go.

While I was walking in a popular shopping area in Delhi, there were so many people begging and so many people who were disabled, and nobody cared. It seemed that if you could provide no worth to another person, you were simply ignored, and that to me seems like one of the worst things you can do to a person.

One of the more confusing aspects of my trip was that although I am ethnically Indian, I am first a Muslim, and I was in a country where the Hindu religion dominates. It was interesting to see the interaction between the two groups, which have been in conflict for so long. The Gandhi museum was an interesting look at a simple man who wanted nothing more than for the British to leave his country and peace; however, with the partition of India and Pakistan, peace did not happen. There are still clashes between Hindus and Muslims to this day, and according to our tour guide, there are very few marriages between the two faiths. But even within the Hindu religion, there are subgroups that do not interact due to caste or other social status differences. In my mind there is little hope for the Indian subcontinent as a whole to interact peacefully (we read in the papers about one brother murdering his sister as an "honor killing" because she was in love with a person from another tribe).

All in all, I saw quite a bit in India, good and bad. I saw a few ostentatious weddings, did some (read: A LOT) of shopping, ate good food, and saw where my grandparents came from. I'm glad I went because I saw more of the troubles in the world and can share a few stories with people. If you can't make it to India, you can always read *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri or *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, and as far as movies go, definitely rent *Bend It Like Beckham* for a look at a modern Indian girl's conflict between her life and her Indian family.

Interested in Women's Issues, Journalism, Design,  
or do you just want to have fun? Get involved with  
**THE WOMEN'S WORD**  
Contact Marjan Maghbouleh at [mam204@lehigh.edu](mailto:mam204@lehigh.edu)

## Vaginas Unite! *The Vagina Monologues* Comes to LU

By Jessica Wren, *The Women's Word* co-editor

On February 26, Lehigh University will be producing **V-Week** and ***The Vagina Monologues***, the Obie-Award winning play by Eve Ensler. This marks the sixth year that the show will be produced at Lehigh. *The Vagina Monologues* is performed around the world in February to raise awareness and end the epidemic of violence against women.

**V-Day** ([www.vday.org](http://www.vday.org)) is the non-profit corporation that authorizes local volunteers and college students to produce annual benefit performances of *The Vagina Monologues*. Each performance raises money and donates it to a local organization that is working toward ending violence against women. V-Day itself is traditionally celebrated on February 14. The 'V' in V-Day stands for Victory, Valentine and Vagina. Once violence against women stops, V-Day will be known as Victory over Violence Day. **This year, proceeds from the Lehigh University production will be donated to Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley, a domestic violence shelter.**

The V-Day organization also chooses a global issue to spotlight every year. This year V-Day has teamed up with organizations in East and Southeast Asia to bring justice to "comfort women." During World War II many women were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military to "comfort" soldiers. The Japanese government coerced young women into thinking they were being hired for factory work. Instead, they were forced into prostitution in an effort to provide men with sex so that they would no longer commit random acts of sexual violence toward women in occupied territories.

The Japanese government has never issued an apology to the approximately 200,000 "comfort women," nor has it recognized these actions as a violation of these women's constitutional rights. In times of war, sexual violence against women increases drastically. It is important to recognize the atrocity of comfort women so that there are no unnecessary victims in hostile areas.

This year, Lehigh's benefit performance of *The Vagina Monologues* will be co-produced by **Nayla Raad, Fang Xu, and Elizabeth Lubber**.

Last year Raad performed the monologue "My Vagina was my Village" and said it is one of her favorites. She also really loves "My Angry Vagina" because she says she is angry "that [she is] constantly being sold products to mask or change [her] face and body."

When asked what she would like the audience to get out of the show, Raad said she has many hopes.

"I want women and men who have experienced violence to know that they are not alone, and for women to feel comfortable in their bodies and comfortable with saying the word vagina," she said. Lastly, Raad wants women to be empowered to make a



***The Vagina Monologues* 2006 co-producers:  
Elizabeth Lubber, Fang Xu and Nayla Raad**

difference in their community and their own lives.

Lubber was also in *The Vagina Monologues* last year, performing, "My Short Skirt." She loved the skit because she believes the message rings true.

"Women can wear whatever they want and should not feel that because of what they wear they deserve to be harassed or raped," Lubber said.

Lubber decided to help produce the show this year because she wanted to get more involved in production and support the cause.

"I hope the audience hears the words of the monologues and leaves feeling empowered and hopefully more aware of the violence against women in today's society," Lubber said.

**Tickets are on sale now and are \$6 for Lehigh students, \$12 for non-Lehigh students and \$25 for Vagina-Loving Patrons, who will receive front row seats and a goody bag. The show will be held at 8pm, February 26, 2006 in Baker Hall, Zoellner Arts Center.**

**CELEBRATE V-WEEK!**

**February 20-26**

**(See next page for details)**

# Are You Ready To Make a Difference?

By Sarah Jefferson, Editor of *The Women's Word*

The **Body Empowerment Alliance** (BEA) and **Gender and Violence Working Group** (G&V) at the Women's Center have some exciting events coming up on Lehigh's campus during Healthy Body Image Week and Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

In the past, **Healthy Body Image Week** has been organized primarily by the staff of the Counseling Center, in collaboration with the Women's Center, and the Health Center. This year, the BEA is in charge of Healthy Body Image Week, which will be March 13 to 21. In addition to the usual information and activities tables outside the UC Food Court, there will be a number of discussions including a Brown Bag Lunch titled *My Body: Why Do I Care What Others Think?*, a Health and Wellness Center presentation on "Real Food for Healthy Bodies," and a special topic for the Women's Center's monthly Graduate Women's Luncheon. Another repeat from last year's Healthy Body Image Week is the Open Mic to celebrate the *positive body*.

Some new events occurring this year consist of a display created by Lehigh students that documents the stages of an eating disorder through multimedia. The idea comes from an exhibit titled "A Room with a View: A Walk through the Evolution of an Eating Disorder" that is on display at the University of Nebraska. The four stages displayed in the rooms are "Images," "Distortion," "Despair," and "Hope."

If you would like to be involved in the creation of the display, please contact **Renee Simons**, res9@lehigh.edu. An opening ceremony during Healthy Body Image Week will introduce the exhibit.

**Victoria Pitts**, Associate Professor of Sociology at Queens College and the author of *Surgery Junkies* (forthcoming) and *In*

*the Flesh: The Cultural Politics of Body Modification*, will be speaking at Lehigh in honor of Healthy Body Image Week.

Pitts will address the debate between psychiatrists, cosmetic surgeons and feminists over the addictive nature of cosmetic surgery. She will also discuss the rise of Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) as a diagnosis and the role of cosmetic surgeons, psychiatrists, and the media in identifying BDD as a social problem.

**Chelsea Erdmanis**, coordinator of the BEA, encourages everyone to participate in Healthy Body Image Week events. The slogan for the upcoming Healthy Body Image Week is "Be Comfortable in Your Genes." Erdmanis and the BEA group believe that is especially important for Lehigh students to follow this advice. In a college where there is a lot of pressure to conform and look a certain way, Healthy Body Image Week is especially pertinent to Lehigh's students.

April is **Sexual Assault Awareness Month**. This month is also extremely important on the Lehigh campus. This is the third year that Lehigh has had a Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator, Steve McAllister, and the second year that the Women's Center's Break the Silence sexual violence prevention group has been in existence. This is the second semester that the **24-Hour Sexual Violence Peer Hotline** has been up and running (**610-974-HOPE**).

The Gender & Violence group is leading planning efforts, but many other student clubs and organizations are involved. To honor Sexual Assault Awareness Month, there will be a **Take Back the Night** march across campus, and a display of the **Clothesline Project** in the Upper UC.

Specific times and locations for all events can be found at <http://www.lehigh.edu/womenscenter>

## Coming up at Lehigh

### THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES EVENTS (V-WEEK)

"Plastic Perfection: A Discussion on Body Image"  
**Monday, Feb. 20**, 12-1pm, Women's Center

"Who We Are, What We Do" by Crimes Victims Council  
**Tuesday, Feb. 21**, 6-7pm, Women's Center

"Campus Rape Culture: Does it Exist Here?"  
**Wednesday Feb. 22**, 12-1pm, Women's Center

"What Is a Healthy Relationship?"  
**Wednesday, Feb. 22**, 7-8pm, Women's Center

Movie: "Until the Violence Stops"  
**Thursday, Feb. 23**, 7:30pm, Packard Auditorium 101

Hip Hop Show  
**Friday, Feb. 24**, 8pm, Location TBA

Comedian: Rob O'Reilly  
**Saturday, Feb. 25**, 8pm, Packard Auditorium 101

## In the Community

### TOUCHSTONE THEATRE WOMEN'S SERIES

**321 E 4th Street, Bethlehem, PA 18015. 610-867-1689**  
<http://www.touchstone.org/>

All evening shows at 8pm, Matinees at 2pm  
For details contact Touchstone Theatre

### February 8 through 12

#### Me, Myself and I...WON'T STOP

**Created and performed by Camille (a STOMP performer)**

Physical virtuosity of rhythm and voice — An explosive, electrifying play of vocal performance and body percussion about a feisty, outspoken, ethnic girl who always knew — regardless of what anyone said — she had something special to share with the world.

### February 15 through 19

#### In the Spirit – for Real

**Written and Performed by Peggy Pettitt with Musician Harry Mann. Directed by Remy Tissier**

Peggy Pettitt 'takes a look under the hood' in a hilarious thriller. It's a sign of the times when a street smart, hip hop artist and his wildly urban granny join forces to rescue the hood's youth from the snares of risky behavior.

### February 22 through 26

#### Foreigner

**Created and Performed by Anisa George**  
**Directed by Jennie Gilrain**

Dance and theatre create a spellbinding journey of belief. Faith, identity, and culture clash as George reenacts her religious upbringing and a solo journey to the Islamic Republic of Iran to find the roots of her faith.

The Women's Center is now accepting submissions for its annual literary magazine

# ORIGYNS

A publication for the voices of feminists- undergraduates, graduate students, alumnae, faculty, staff and professors emeriti.

Contact Leigh Dugan at [Imd2@lehigh.edu](mailto:Imd2@lehigh.edu)



February 2006						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31 Diversity Strategy Session 8:30pm Women's Center	1	2 Rev. Irene Monroe "Racism, Sexism, and Homophobia" 7pm Whitaker 303	3	4
5	6 Joan Morgan "At the Intersection of Feminism and Hip Hop" 7:30pm Sinclair Auditorium	7 Diversity Strategy Session 8:30pm UC 303	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 Sexual Assault Awareness Month Planning Session 12-1 p.m. Women's Center Diversity Strategy Session TBA	15	16	17	18
19	V-WEEK 20 "Plastic Perfection: A Discussion on Body Image"	21 "Who We Are, What We Do" by Crimes Victims Council  S E E P A G E 5 F O R D E T A I L S	22 "Campus Rape Culture: Does it Exist Here?"	23 Movie: "Until the Violence Stops"	24 Hip Hop Show	25/26 The Vagina Monologues Feb 26 at 8pm Zoellner Arts Center



## Contact info

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