

WAGON

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WAGON Editorial

WAGON is the women and gender studies student organization. We are a small group of majors and minors committed to taking what we learn in the classroom out into the world. We are committed to social justice not only in theory but in practice. Our goal is not only to spread awareness, but also to confront serious issues on campus and in the community. In this issue, you will find examples of the ways that oppression is manifested, sometimes in seemingly small ways, but with significant effects. For example, Sophia Surage (pgs. 1-2) and Meg Staires (pg. 5) address issues on campus, such as misogynist t-shirts, discriminatory funding practices, and traumatizing visual displays. Gabrielle Friesen (pg. 3) shows ways that stereotypes and dominant societal norms are rescripted into pop culture, in particular video games. Jenny Koenig (pg. 2), Chelsea Mullen (pg. 3), and Adriana Barsan (pg. 7), address serious community issues pertaining to the challenges facing local LGBT youth, such as bullying, discrimination, and homelessness. At the same time we draw attention to problems facing our society, we also want to highlight some of the action being done to combat oppression. Sarah McCullar (pg. 6) draws attention to the feminist potential of the Occupy Together Movement and Christine Nakwa (pg. 4) provides examples of global efforts. We hope you find this issue informative and maybe even inspiring.



WAGON member (clockwise from top left): Chelsea Mullen, Christine Nakwa, Sophia Surage, Jenny Koenig, Adriana Barsan, Meg Staires, Sarah McCullar. Not pictured: Gabrielle Friesen.

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Penalty Flag on CU T-Shirts

By Sophia Surage

Most CU students have probably witnessed people either selling or wearing CU/CSU rival T-shirts on campus and at football games. Some of the CU/CSU rivalry shirts are troubling, due to the fact that they put forth extremely explicit, violent, genderized components of sportsmanship and dominance.

Some shirts simply display the CU icon and state "Fuck CSU" or CSU shirts that say "I ram CSU girls." Others go so far as depicting the buffalo mascot sexually dominating CSU's ram mascot, "Ram this." The most disturbing "Fuck CSU" shirt displays a silhouette image of a woman on her hands and knees with a buffalo mounting her from behind and a caption saying, "Ralphie did your mom." By displaying an animal sexually dominating a woman in order to send a message of sports rivalry, the t-shirt establishes sex as a dominating force, which is inherently intertwined with rape.

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Because the CU mascot is a buffalo, it is assumed that fans who look at the shirt will automatically identify with the buffalo figure instead of the hyper-sexualized silhouette of a female body. The fact that we are meant to favor the buffalo and ridicule the woman on the shirt, takes the dehumanization of women a step beyond inferiority in reference to males and degrades female identity on a profound level. Historically women's bodies have been used as a battle ground in conflicts between men. Rape and sexual dominance are perpetrated against female bodies in order to send a destructive message to other men and to violate one's enemy psychologically through physically violating and "ruining" women.

The images and messages used to demonstrate CSU rivalry are verbally, psychologically, spiritually, and culturally violent towards women. The shirts objectify and ridicule female identity, and serve as a tool of intimidation and alienation. The t-shirts reinforce notions that men are entitled to the female body, which ultimately contributes to sexual assault and other forms of violence against women. One does not have to be a CSU student, or even a woman, to be offended by the graphic depictions of these shirts, because they are in no way acceptable.



"Why do we have to wait?"
A closer look at the "It Gets Better" project
By Jenny Koenig

Logging onto Facebook just the other day, I had noticed that my friend had updated her status to Neil Patrick Harris' addition to the "It Gets Better" (IGB) viral video project. Initially created by Dan Savage, the project has become a veritable campaign in response to Tyler Clementi's and the other suicides of young gay men. This post prompted me to watch several other responses including Dan Savage's video. Though I was touched by the videos I saw, I am critical of the "pull yourself up by the boot straps" motto reiterated in the videos. Savage, himself, embodies the "It gets better" success story because he is able-bodied, wealthy, has a partner and bears no shame for who he is. His video's message translates to: "Come out, move to the city, travel to Paris, adopt a kid," etc. However, this message is only useful to a small portion of youth that is continually bullied.

Though these videos have fostered a space for the expression and discussion of queer bullying, they efface the intersectionality of sexuality, instead focusing on inspiring white gay male liberals. Those excluded from the campaign's message include queer people of color, transgender, gender queer and gender nonconforming youth and lesbians. Feminist bloggers critique IGB's lack of intersectional representation. For instance, Quiet Riot Girl writes: "Basically the YouTube project suggests support for queer youth has to stay 'on message' and 'upbeat'. Dissent and diversity does not seem to be encouraged. This is borne out by the vast numbers of videos being uploaded by white university-educated gay men, in comparison to those from women, transgender people, and working-class people, and people from diverse ethnic backgrounds." Furthermore the solution to "it getting better" seems to be "find a partner, move to the city and fight for the right to get married" as if same-sex marriage is the bandage to queer bullying.

While this viral campaign seems to be a fair response to the issues of queer suicides, it is important that this conversation bridges intersectionality in terms of race, class and gender. Without these conversations, projects like Savage's potentially risk creating narrow versions of what it means to be queer identified and what it means to be bullied.

The Right to a Restroom

By Chelsea Mullen

Keeping up with the news is difficult; between national and international news surrounding Occupy Wall Street and police brutality, the upcoming presidential election season, and protests in Egypt, there is quite a lot to keep up with. However, it is important that we do not lose sight of our local communities and the issues that are coming up. A few weeks ago at Fort Collins High School, a student was suspended from school for 3 days for daring to use the restroom. The rationale given by the administration was that as a transgender student, the women's restroom could not be considered appropriate for her use, despite the fact that she identified herself as a woman.

Schools are responsible for much more than their students' education, they are also responsible for their safety and well-being. In this situation, the administration violated her rights as a student, denied her capacity to obtain a consistent education by forcing her to leave school, denied the legitimacy of her identity as a young woman, and demonstrated that her safety and psychological well-being is considered less of a priority than avoiding discomfort. While all of this is not only deeply unethical, it is also illegal in the state of Colorado. With the passage of SB 200 in 2008, it became illegal to deny a person access to public accommodations based on gender identity or perceived gender identity. Last time I checked, public restrooms at a public high school are considered public accommodations. When school administrations engage in this sort of behavior that indicates they are no longer supporting the well-being of their students, it is important for people to take note. Many people attending the University of Colorado are alumni from Fort Collins High School, and as alumni their voices carry weight with the administration. I would encourage people, if they are able, to contact the administration and continue to play an active role in supporting education for all people.

Game Over?

By Gabrielle Friesen

I am a feminist gamer, and this is almost a contradiction in terms. It is incredibly difficult for me to find games to play, as I am often ignored as a consumer and gamer; the videogame industry is a boys club, rife with sexism, heterosexism, ableism, racism, cissexism, and just about every other -ism there is. Every once in a while, there will be a game, that at

least tries, and sometimes manages to get some things right. One of these games has been Bioware's Mass Effect series. Not only did the first game contain a riveting story line and good gameplay, but also non-stereotypical portrayals of people of color, queer people, women, and people with disabilities. Games rarely manage to include more than one minority group in a non-offensive way. The player character Commander Shepard was customizable, meaning that the player was not regulated to playing yet another straight, white dude, but could play as whomever they wanted. However, the "default" Shepard has always been portrayed as a straight white dude in all the advertisements and on all the box art, positing him as the correct, canon Shepard, and everything else as a derivative, incorrect version.

The third game in the Mass Effect series is slated to come out next year, and Bioware has finally decided to grace its followers with a "default" lady Shepard. After letter and email campaigns, several "default" women Shepards were put up for a vote on the Bioware facebook group. The conventionally pretty white portrayal won to comments on how hot she was. Shepard, as a man, was never put to a vote, and was not picked based on how hot the fan base thought he was. While some people likely voted on which female version looked just as badass as the man version of Shepard, many of the votes were informed by the male gaze (still pandering to the boys' club and ignoring women consumers and gamers). Additionally, both Shepards will only be featured on the deluxe, more expensive version of Mass Effect 3. Man Shepard is then still the default, normal, "correct" Shepard. Women must pay more for representation, while men can buy the cheaper (but exact same quality) version and still be represented and acknowledged.

As a feminist gamer and consumer, I've reached an impasse in regards to my favorite videogame series. Do I purchase the more expensive copy of the game that features a lady Commander Shepard alongside the man Shepard, supporting women characters in videogames, even though the marketing may only be a crass grab at women's money, ignoring and acknowledging us as consumers all at once? Or do I buy the version with only man Shepard in protest to the way her character has been ignored? It may even be to the point that I drop the series. Shepard as a woman had the potential to be every bit as iconic to the sci-fi genre as Ellen Ripley of Aliens was, but she has turned into a gimmick to placate women gamers, and simultaneously yet another object of the male gaze.

Feminism Across the World

By Christine Nakwa

There are many forms of feminism across the globe. The purpose of this column is to bring awareness to global feminism. It is important that we celebrate big and small changes that occur in each community. We need to understand that women across the globe feel experience and view life differently. The following are taken from recent news stories.

Rwanda: Groups Want Abortion Decriminalized

Civil society groups are calling lawmakers and parliament to change the Penal Code. The Civil society is demanding that parliament lessen the punishment women experience when they are caught in the act of abortion. Under the penal code, women who are guilty of abortion would experience 10-15 years of jail time.

Senegal: Movement to end female genital cutting

More than 5000 Senegalese villages have promised to abandon the practice of female cutting. It is estimated that 92 million girls around the globe have undergone some form of female circumcision.

Egypt: The First Female Presidential Candidate

Buthayna Kamel is making history by being the first woman to run for president. She announced her candidacy in April 2011. Elections, the first to be held since Mubarak was ousted, are expected to be held in spring 2012.

South Africa: Transgender Woman Wins Right to ID

In October 2011, the Department of Home Affairs in South Africa finally agreed to grant a transgender woman the ability to officially change her gender and names on her driving license. For years she lived in fear of showing her ID that pictured a heavier man with a beard.

Nigeria: Women Organize March against Rape

In September, Nigerian women announced plans to march in protest against rape and sexual violence. The march is planned for November 25, the International Day Against Violence Against Women. Rape is seen as rare because of a low reporting rate, partially due to the allegations of the police participating in incidents of sexual assault.

United States: Bishop Makes Deal

A Roman Catholic bishop in Kansas City was indicted by a grand jury in October for failure to report abuse.

He has made a deal to avoid another round of criminal charges. The deal includes monthly meetings with a county prosecutor for the next five years to discuss suspicious situations.

Yemen: The "Iron Woman" Wins Nobel Peace Prize

Tawakkol Karman, a Yemeni journalist, politician and human rights activist, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011. She is the first Arab woman to win. She has been viewed as a major figure in leading the Yemen version of the Arab Spring, something she calls the Jasmine Revolution.

Afghanistan: Afghan Women in "Peace Unveiled"

The efforts of Afghani women are represented in "Peace Unveiled," an episode of the new PBS series "Women, War & Peace." This documentary follows three female activists working to make sure women's rights in Afghanistan are not bargained away during the tense peace negotiations.

Israel: Ex-Israeli President to Serve 7 Years for Rape

On November 10, 2011, the Israel's Supreme Court upheld the rape conviction of former President Moshe Katsav, ordering him to begin serving the seven year sentence in December. It has been seen as a victory for women's rights and equality under the law.

Iran: Campaign Against Death By Stoning

Amnesty International is petitioning the supreme leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran to remove stoning from the Iranian penal code. Transnational efforts have proved successful in the past, most notably in achieving the suspension of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani's stoning sentence in 2010.

International Days of Activism

- February 20th World Day of Social Justice
- March 8th International Women's Day
- March 21st International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- October 15th International Day of Rural Women
- October 17th International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- November 16th International Day for Tolerance
- November 25th International Day against violence against Women
- December 1st World AIDS Day
- December 2nd International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- December 3rd International Day for Persons with Disabilities
- December 10th International Human Rights Day

Neighborhood Watch:



Free Speech—What is it Good For?

By Meg Staires

This semester, I've been inspired and alarmed by exhibitions of free speech on campus, and this has me curious about what free speech actually looks like at CU. It also has me thinking about what it should look like. I'm grateful for the right to freedom of speech, and I firmly believe free speech is important in a campus environment, where a lot of different views and backgrounds converge. But, am I going mad, or does anyone else think some people's free speech seems "freer" than others? And, is it possible that some people's free speech might cross lines that make it harmful to others?

To you, Dear Readers, I submit the following rundown of things seen on the CU-Boulder campus—I'll let you judge whether everything is ship-shape and above board, or whether there are some issues that need addressing:

You Can't Hurt Me With A T-Shirt...Right?

I don't know if everyone has had the...pleasure (ahem) of seeing certain t-shirts involving our mascot, Ralphie engaging in some very questionable activities. Do we really need to assert our dominance as a school or team by portraying Ralphie as sexually violating other school's mascots? CU doesn't make these particular shirts, but am I wrong to think that CU should be made aware that they exist, and given a chance to distance themselves from the offensive T-shirts? (For more information on these particular shirts, see Sophia's article). And what about the T-shirts CU *does* sell? Bad form, CU, for producing T-shirts that enjoin readers to "Get Some", and, in the case of a CU men's soccer team tank top, "Get It In!" Now, I'm sure that the CU administration does not have a meeting about t-shirts every year where they personally decide what is okay and what's not. What I'm asking is, *should* they? After all, these t-shirts bear the CU logo and/or mascot...

Justice for All—Responsible Activism?

Ah, Autumn; chilly air, leaves changing color, enormous displays along campus thoroughfares featuring graphic

images of abortions...Don't get me wrong, I love the debate that the Justice For All display sparks on our campus, and I appreciate their right to freedom of speech, but I do wonder if there is an issue of responsible activism to address here. Sure, I disagree with the opinions of Justice for All, and I have some questions about the images and data they use as "proof" of certain "facts", but my problem with the display is that the images can actually be triggering for some people. In addition, many students I've talked to feel harassed by some of the people who bring the display. Does CU need to protect its students from possibly triggering images and harassment? I wouldn't want CU to bar Justice for All from coming to campus, but perhaps there is another way they could present their images, so that people can choose whether or not to view them.

CUSG—Equal Opportunity Funding? With this country's current economic...situation, we all have to tighten our belts, but I don't believe this should be taken as an opportunity to cut funding to diversity programs and events that raise awareness about current issues around the world. My friend, Moe Alkhawaja, is the president of a student group called Students for Peace and Justice. He told me that he asked CUSG for funding for a talk about the Palestine/Israel conflict, and was told he could not get any funding because the topic was "too controversial." Now, it seems to me that there are a number of controversial topics being explored on campus every day (see discussion about abortion above!), and part of the job of CUSG and is to provide forums (and funding!) for these controversial topics to be discussed in a safe and respectful way. Furthermore, the talk about the Palestine/Israel, given by Dr. Norman Finkelstein was entitled "Solving the Israel/Palestine conflict: Lessons we can learn from Gandhi." GANDHI, people! By Moe's account, the event was well-attended, and people on all sides of this important issue engaged in respectful discussion with the speaker. I would like to give CUSG the benefit of the doubt, but I've also heard that the Muslim Student Association has a lot of trouble getting their events funded. Something smells fishy...

So I ask you, readers, what do you think? Do I need a reality check? Is everyone's freedom of speech protected and encouraged on campus, or do we have some work to do? I truly hope you will weigh in on this issue; please feel free to contact me at megstaires@gmail.com and let me know what you think! I would love to hear about your love/hate relationship with the things you see on campus.

Remember CU, I've got my eye on you.

A Feminist's Perspective on the Occupy Together Movement

By Sarah McCullar

In an effort to understand the growing Occupy Together movement, it is important to engage with it on a personal level; for me, that is on a feminist level. Feminists across the United States and around the world are beginning to interact with the movement. This is exactly what needs to happen not only in order to bolster the many feminist projects resisting oppression, but also to make the Occupy Together protests more effective in their advocacy of a new system of power.

For me and my feminist friends and colleagues, this is our chance to learn from the lessons of our foremothers and make our own impact on the social movement of our generation. The past movements of the 1960s and 1970s for social justice did not always adequately address the ways that people of color, people in the LBGTQ community, people who experienced poverty, and people who were differently abled experienced oppression. While we may not be able to rewrite history, this is our chance to take an active role in shaping an equitable movement which can bring about tangible benefits to ourselves and future generations. Using the lessons about how intersectionality was ignored in the past, we have the chance to incorporate it into these resistance efforts. Let us use the critiques and knowledge of past movements and use those to shape our own. This is our time. Instead of sitting back and letting it take its course, we ought to be a part of shaping where it goes and how it is executed.

While no movement is perfect, the events that have occurred since September 17th demonstrate these activists' commitment to true social justice. While many disparage the movement as disorganized and unfocused, these critics fail to take into account the broad range of issues that are encompassed under massive inequalities of power in our current system. While it is true that corporate power is one of the main targets of the protesters, it is important to recognize their conscious effort to highlight the struggles for gender (identity), sexual orientation, racial, and economic equality. A wonderful example of this happened in the Occupy Denver gathering. It is the first of the Occupy Together locations to partner with a sister movement called "Decolonize Denver." The supporters of Decolonize Denver want to highlight that First Nation lands have been occupied for centuries and the voices of those killed and displaced from their stolen lands have long been marginalized. Occupy Denver issued an official statement recognizing that there needs to be a more

equitable approach to the Occupy Together protests. The future of the movement should model this thinking and turn it into action.

Isn't this the moment we've been waiting for? We've waited for a time when a great number of people were ready to see change, waiting for a space where the principles of equitable distribution of power, reclamation of democratic norms, and social justice were at the forefront of the American consciousness. That time has arrived. That place is here.

We can follow the lead of our feminist friends and sisters of WOW (Women Occupying Wall Street) and use their suggestions about how to help. This group of protesters offers suggestions for how to help, some of which include showing up to protest in any place that an Occupy protest is occurring, proving food, shower, and laundry facilities, and tweeting to spread the word about what the Occupiers need. They acknowledge the ways that identity is a crucial factor in this movement, and want to find ways to help improve the experience of those on the ground. Another way we can become critically engaged with the Occupy movement is to adopt new language wherein we "unoccupy" the places we live and work. The movement in Arizona decided to adopt the name "Unoccupy Arizona" in order to acknowledge the colonial legacy that the word "occupy" suggests. As feminists, we can urge the general assemblies in each locality to adopt this language. The possibilities for conscientious feminists are endless in this movement which is what make this time so wonderful and crucial for our future.

This is a call to action: whether it is marching with the protesters, providing support to those on the streets, working to publicize events, or organizing public displays of solidarity, you have a part to play in the evolution of Occupy Together. What an excellent opportunity to take part in one of the most impactful social movements of this generation! Let's stand together and make some changes happen and in the end "we shall overcome."



Occupy
Patriarchy

Highlights for the Semester

By Sarah McCullar

Cookie Social

WAGON members started the semester off with a Cookie Social that was intended to welcome back students and staff and build stronger community ties with CU's Women's Resource Center. The event was quite the success and everyone left feeling more connected and ready to jump into the fall semester. We will be having Cocoa at the Cottage on Thursday, December 8th, 3:30-5pm.

Conversations at the Cottage

One of the most successful events that WAGON hosted this semester was an examination of the Occupy Movement in our first ever "Conversations at the Cottage." We invited Professors Celeste Montoya and Rob Buffington from Women and Gender Studies, Professor Danika Medak-Saltzman from Ethnic Studies, and Professor Michael Ferguson from Political Science. The panelists, along with other audience members, provided an informative and lively discussion of the ways that feminists view the Occupy movement and what the next steps might be. We are excited to host more conversations like this in future, so make sure to keep watch for upcoming Conversations at the Cottage.

Counter-Protest

Some WAGON members participated in a student demonstration in October to show their dissatisfaction with a group called Justice for All. Despite the laudable name, Justice for All is an anti-choice group that travels across the country with giant billboard-sized displays of graphic images that are supposedly aborted fetuses. Many students felt that their shock methods and misinformation were harmful to the students on our campus and took action by making signs and demonstrating beside the displays. Around 50 people were part of the counter-demonstration at its peak and many students felt empowered by participating and received additional encouragement from many students who passed by the display.

Cold Care Supply Drive

We are currently working on collecting supplies for "cold care kits" for our friends at the Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley in Longmont. Many women who are experiencing abusive situations find that their health suffers after taking care of their children and trying to make ends meet. These problems are compounded during cold season when many illnesses flourish. We hope that by reaching out to our partners across campus that we can collect enough supplies to help women who make become sick this cold season. We want to acknowledge the generous donation of twenty cold care

kits that CU's Community Health provided; what a great way to kick off this drive!

Stand Up for Kids

By Adriana Barsan

Imagine having a secret inside of you for your entire life as a child. Imagine feeling different in a way that you know that your family and friends simply will not accept. Imagine telling your parents that you love someone of the same gender and being told that you must leave your home.

This is the pathway into homelessness for many LGBTQ teenagers. It is a hard choice between being yourself or being homeless. What many youth may not realize is the terrible dangers they may face on the street.

We all understand that street life is dangerous, but when you are different in this way, you are beaten and raped regularly and you often must trade sex for a place to stay. The bigotry is constant and compassion is hard to find. Too many times of trading sex for a place to stay and the path into prostitution becomes less unthinkable.

Stand Up for Kids is a street outreach program that offers a safe place to be, food, clothing, showers and adults that will not exploit you. It is a national program, but Boulder has a chapter. There, LGBTQ youth can experience safety and acceptance.

CU students have been taking an increasingly active role in the community in addressing homelessness. There are a lot of ways to get involved. You can volunteer at the Bridge House (formerly known as Carriage House) Community Table, an organization that provides food, clothing, internet access and other services to help homeless individuals and families get back on their feet. You might work on the Vulnerability Index, a tool for identifying and prioritizing the street homeless population for housing. There is Boulder Outreach for Homeless Overflow, and Friends Encouraging Eating Daily, as well as collecting food for distribution to Boulder's various feeding programs.

Homelessness can happen to anyone at any stage of life for various reasons. Despite what others might think, it is rarely a choice. Reach out to those in your community. You can never be sure what someone might be going through. A smile or kind words can go a long way to those who rarely receive compassion while living in the streets.

If you are looking to help homeless people your own age, think about Stand Up for Kids. If you are too busy to volunteer, also know that you can make a difference each time you stand up against bigotry. You are fighting the stigma that continues to create homelessness.

WAGON Application

The Women and Gender Studies Organization, or WAGON, is a program-affiliated student group that is committed to bringing positive social change to our community, on and beyond the CU campus. Members are undergraduate majors or minors in women and gender studies, self-nominated or nominated by faculty for their strong academic performance and leadership potential. Students meet weekly as a group with the faculty advisor, working together in three main areas. They plan **academic events** such as speakers or film viewings followed by critical discussions. The group also coordinates **activist and community outreach events** each semester. In addition, the WAGON members publish their own **newsletter**, with student articles focusing on different feminist issues.

Name: _____ Student ID# _____
Email Address: _____ Phone # _____
WMST 3940 for 1 credit during: Fall / Spring semester _____ (year)
WAGON will meet weekly on _____ at _____ .

WAGON is pass/fail, but in order to receive credit for WAGON you must

1. Attend all meetings.
2. Contribute to the semester newsletter.
3. Attend and participate in the planning of a WAGON sponsored academic event.
4. Participate actively in the planning and execution of a WAGON sponsored community project.
5. Participate in the planning and execution of a WAGON sponsored activist event.
6. If scheduling or other issues interfere with the above, the student must present an alternative activity to participate in or contribution to group efforts.
7. As with an independent study, students are expected to put in a minimum of 25 hours per credit hour a semester. This includes meetings as well as outside activities.

Students who do not meet the above requirements will receive a fail and may not be re-nominated or apply for WAGON the following semester (although they may the following year).

Eligibility:

Major or Minor of WMST: _____
of WMST Hours: _____
University GPA: _____
Major/Minor GPA: _____
Faculty Reference: _____

Please fill out this application and attach a paragraph or two about why you want to participate in WAGON and what contributions you think you can make to the group (it should be no more than one page single spaced).

We have a few openings for the spring. Applications for the spring semester are due to Professor Celeste Montoya by December 31st. Applications for Fall 2012 are due April 30th