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Our Philosophy

Everything is political. Everything we do is implicated in, intertwined with, and swimming through spheres of politics. Whether it is the material politics of capitalism, where certain groups of people attain more wealth at the cost of others, or the black radical politics around the U.S., we are all participants in one way or another.

While it is true that everything is political, it is also equally a lie to say politics is everything for people. It is common to find high school students hating politics, either because of a deep resentment of a politician's subject-position or because of a perceived disconnect between politics and the student. It is an undeniable trend that high school students are gradually divesting from politics. Politics is seen as an external structure that denies the student any agency in changing politics.

However, though the downward trend is strong, we can do more to give students opportunities to garner agency. Whether the politics is engaged with the stability of American democracy or the progression of a feminist group, creating spaces for students to express their agency, their energy, their opinions can go a long way towards revealing their relation to the world.

We created Neo Politico to establish that space where any student, regardless of their prior experience, can voice their opinions on certain issues. Every opinion matters because everyone matters. We only hope that more students across the entire world can join us in increasing political engagement and producing a critical consciousness of the world.

The History of American Feminism: An Enduring Fight Against a Flawed Society

Author: Morgan Daniel from The Kinkaid Schools, Texas

According to both the Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Beyoncé in her feminist-empowering anthem *Flawless*,¹ feminism is the theory of the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes.² Coined in France in the 1880s (« féminisme » directly translating to “social movement” or “political ideology” of women), the term feminism entered North America in 1910.³ In a 21st century society, feminism has taken on a brand new face; feminism is no longer a mere discussion held at solemn conventions, but a ferocious fight held in all aspects of society including culture. Beyoncé and other successful artists who have pioneered “new feminism” not only disprove the anti-feminists’ ideal “cult of domesticity”, but also advertise feminism across the globe. With its prevalence in American society today, it is hard to believe that feminism was not always a prominent aspect of an active American’s agenda. Nonetheless, there was a time in America when activism for gender equality was not in the forefront of its citizens’ minds. In fact, the fight for feminism did not spark until the 1800s, a time of heavy reform including achievements and breakthroughs in the field of women’s rights known as the “women’s movement⁴”. Feminists throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries have vastly changed a woman’s position in a modern society compared to one in an antebellum America. Despite this progress, supporters of the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes will continue fighting until Beyoncé’s declaration and Merriam-Webster’s definition of feminism become reality.

Before the 19th century, women in America lived with very few legal rights and hardly any political power. Any little sway they did hold in society took place outside of establishments. For example, early feminist Abigail Adams urged husband John Adams to “remember the ladies” when participating as a delegate in the Constitutional Convention.⁵ Though Adams was unable to attend the Convention himself, he and his fellow delegates failed to heed Abigail’s warning when creating and agreeing upon a Constitution

that clearly excludes women in its explicit declaration that “all *men* are created equal.”⁶ The common American perception throughout the new republic was that women were best suited for domestic work. Ironically, for a period traditionally known for a rigid separation between men and women, colonial gender roles were occasionally blurred. For example, in the case of her husband’s absence, a rich white woman taking care of the family’s Southern land would carry out male tasks such as disciplining slaves, managing the plantation, and even temporarily holding legal powers to assist her husband in economic affairs⁷. Furthermore, poor women worked even if their husbands’ did, and single women ran households of their own⁸. Amidst these blurred lines, Southern women were still unable to attain a citizen’s right to vote or to own land (unless widowed). Few rights and opportunities impeded women in the north as well. Women in large, urban areas were limited only to jobs deemed “appropriate” for women: inn and tavern keepers, laundresses, nursemaids, prostitutes and more. The vast majority of African-American women at this time were enslaved, serving as nursemaids, domestic workers and cotton pickers on Southern plantations⁹. Despite race or class, a woman’s primary job in colonial society was to provide for and support men; the extent of a woman’s economic and political participation was through the concept of “republican motherhood”, or essentially the woman’s duty to prepare future male citizens to take part in the republic¹⁰. Although seemingly demeaning, the idea that American women’s primary purpose was training young male citizens in motherhood gave them a stronger economic and political hand over society’s future, which eventually allowed them a firm grip in propelling reform.

As labor opportunities broadened in northern American cities in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, women felt the beginnings of unrest. (The ramifications of gender inequality such as job limitations and unequal pay did not immediately bother women in the south since southern labor opportunities mostly remained the same). For example, in the 1830s, the women employed in newly industrial jobs in Northeastern factories were extremely exploited; they were barely paid pennies, lived in detrimental conditions, and had little time off. Women were also involved in the putting-out system, in which they would complete unfinished manufactured garments and return them to their manufacturers for

almost nothing in return.¹¹ Although the putting-out system allowed women to be somewhat active in the nation's economy, it also supported the cult of domesticity; it kept women where traditional values insisted they ought to stay: in their homes. At the close of the 19th century, job availabilities widened but were unofficially assigned to women according to class and ethnicity. Elite white women became doctors, lawyers, writers and essayists; though clearly given more opportunity than women of the middle and lower classes, elite women's rights were still very much distanced from those of men. In the 1890s, African-American women were largely employed as sharecroppers and domestic workers in the South while immigrant women were employed as unskilled laborers in the North. Middle and lower class American women had yet to work predominantly outside of their homes due to still-standing rigid culture values.¹²

At the turn of the 20th century, these assignments slightly shifted. African-American women migrated from to Northern cities like Chicago, New York and Detroit to take advantage of factory labor; white women took on new white-collar jobs as typists, telephone operators and department store clerks.¹³ Though these changes in job opportunity were certainly small steps in the right direction, they were hardly breakthroughs by the standard of feminism since these newly accessible jobs were essentially created to cater to the needs of working men. Thus, the cult of domesticity remained alive and kicking. However, America had yet to witness the victories of one of the greatest social fights that had already begun in the early 19th century.

When women of the 1800s gradually exposed themselves to the harsh reality of an unequal society under a prejudiced Constitution in the name of expanded job opportunity, a rude awakening was inevitable. Women were not happy with the way they were treated in comparison to men, and thus feminism was born. A flurry of reform movements passed through this decade including the rise of abolitionist organizations, education expansion, and an increase in feminist groups. Though with varied goals in mind, each one of these movements asserted the notion of individual dignity and equal rights that lay in the founders' rhetoric.¹⁴ Because of similar timing and values, individual and organized reformers

overlapped in causes; in particular, abolitionists and feminists. Sarah Grimke, Margaret Fuller, and Sojourner Truth are examples of women who became leading voices in the closely linked worlds of both feminism and abolition¹⁵. The women's movement that sparked in the 1830s and continued blazing onward was a period of accumulating strength and an increased following of women and men, feminists and abolitionists, known as "first-wave feminism".

"First-wave feminism" owes itself to the plethora of women's rights conventions organized by some of the most influential women of the 1800s. These conventions entertained a myriad of discussion topics including women's right to suffrage, women's right to serve in Congress and as president, women's right to an expanded education, the need for increased profession opportunity, and several other issues along the lines of civil and legal rights.¹⁶ Activists would gather from Northern, Eastern and Midwestern states with heightened passions in asserting women's intellectual equality with men, women's moral superiority and the need to enlarge the "women's sphere" beyond the realm of the home.¹⁷ These progressive conventions originated from the most famous women's convention in history: the Seneca Falls Convention held in New York in the summer of 1848. Unlike all other women's conventions, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott made sure to set Seneca Falls apart by creating of the Declaration of Sentiments. Closely following the pattern of the original Declaration of Independence, the Declaration of Sentiments used manipulated phrasing to embed the ideas directly addressing the issue of gender inequality.¹⁸ Where the original Declaration of Independence reads, "all *men* are created equal", the Declaration of Sentiments asserts, "all men *and women* are created equal."¹⁹ A combination of conventions and the feeling of under appreciation during Civil War efforts inspired feminists to redirect their goals putting suffrage in the forefront. However, since the nation was focused mainly on the emancipation of former slaves in the mid-19th century's Reconstruction period, it was not until after the Fifteenth Amendment in which black citizens were granted the right to vote did the issue of women's suffrage gained traction. Ultimately, the antebellum women's movement period succeeded in amassing a strong

following just in time for woman's fight for suffrage.

Only once the issue of African-American rights had been (temporarily) settled came the enduring struggle for feminists' foremost ambition: suffrage. The primary postbellum women's suffrage organization was the American Equal Rights Association formed by Stanton and Anthony in 1869. The group's goal was to secure a Sixteenth Amendment guaranteeing women's suffrage. The association's proposal was immediately shot down due to the popular belief that women's suffrage agitations should be postponed until black men's suffrage agitations were put to rest with the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment.²⁰ Anthony, Stanton, and other suffragists were enraged by this dismissal and believed that the Fifteenth Amendment was but a mere extension of man's right to vote; they requested that their male allies withdraw support of the amendment unless modified to include women. Stanton prepared a petition to set her plan into motion; however, most male abolitionists were shocked by female opposition to the amendment and refused to sign.²¹ Soon after in 1869, suffragists split on the issue of the Fifteenth Amendment and formed two groups: the "anti-Fifteenth Amendment" National Woman Suffrage Association led by radicals Stanton and Anthony and the "pro-Fifteenth Amendment" American Woman Suffrage Association led by a more conservative Lucy Stone. Alas, neither group held enough support on its own, so neither group held great influence. After setting all differences aside, the NWSA and AWSA eventually united in 1890 under the combined leadership of Stanton, Anthony and Stone. The National American Woman Suffrage Association recreated both groups' image and did whatever it took to gain states' support in the ratification of women's suffrage; the group's efforts included disassociating itself with radical causes and even using racist rhetoric in order to win Southern support. NAWSA later convinced President Wilson to favor the national suffrage amendment by supporting him and his efforts in World War I. Finally by the summer of 1920, the 36 states needed for ratification had ratified the amendment for women's suffrage, and the Nineteenth Amendment was added to the Constitution.²²

Simultaneous to this feat in the 1920s, American women began entering professions that had been closed to them in the past including airline pilot, editor and Congress member. American culture

transformations due to women's role in World War I, the growth of the middle-class, and technological developments of the car and radio lessened gender definition. Post World War I, women practiced these new social liberties as "flappers" who smoked, drove cars, and wore their hair in short bobs. This new image of liberated American women challenged the earlier one of the cult of domesticity, and did not falter even in the 1930s when New Deal programs forced some women out of work in response to the overwhelming unemployment of the Great Depression. World War II opened economic opportunity to women as they took on male roles such as welders, shipyard workers and heavy equipment operators for those in combat. However, those opportunistic doors closed as fast as they opened as soon as the war was over and veterans reclaimed their jobs. A booming post-war economy in the 1950s led to family formation and cultural homogeneity – thus, women were expected to reenter the traditional role as homemaker. The climate of complacency among men who retook jobs from talented women stirred frustration, pouring gasoline on the freshly lit the fire of second-wave feminism.

Center stage of the second wave of feminism was the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s. As the loosening cultural values and faltering economy of the 1960s propelled women into the workplace, more and more women continued to face massive discrimination; thus, more and more women embraced feminism and its focus on gender equality.²³ The women's liberation movement meant more than a continual fight for equal rights, but illustrated women's desire to break free of societal confines.²⁴ The same gender inequalities that plagued antebellum American women persisted into the 20th century: limited profession availability, minimized wages, and restriction from economic and political affairs. Feminists once again separated into two groups of differing beliefs similar to those in the struggle for suffrage: the moderate National Organization for Women who sought equal rights and wanted to integrate women into mainstream power positions, and the radical Redstockings who condemned men, patriarchy and capitalism and wanted liberation through a revolutionary movement. After a number of demonstrations by both groups and a seating of the Congress To Unite Women in 1969, various social and political demands such as nationwide, free child care centers, women's programs at colleges, and a greater representation of

women in all political bodies were made in addition to proposals for the mutually supported Equal Rights Amendment and abortion rights.²⁵ In the heat of proposals and protests, both moderate and radical feminists faced backlash from conservative men and women; most of this backlash was aimed toward the Equal Rights Amendment, which never actually reached the Constitution due to its failure in the ratification process.²⁶ Nevertheless, the assault against male domination continued through boycotts, lawsuits and protests. Eventually, feminists' persistence paid off when various victories in the remainder of the century cued each other like dominos: corporations and colleges began hiring more and more women as professionals, payment and promotion procedures were revised, more women ran for public offices, and the Supreme Court's 1973 case of Roe v. Wade overruled state antiabortion laws²⁷. The advancement in social, political and economic rights in the women's liberation movement brought women one step closer to living in an utterly equal society: a feminist's utopia.

Feminism is prone to challenge. Altering beliefs and ideas as traditional as those that an entire nation was founded upon is not an easy task. However tedious the bi-century fight for feminism may have been, the status of women from 1776 to 2015 has drastically changed in feminism's favor. Today in the 21st century, women in America have proven themselves capable of working virtually any job. That being said, gender parity in income and unequal opportunity to reach the uppermost echelons in many occupations still requires work²⁸. Feminism is a progressive theory supported by intelligent, ambitious women and men who truly believe in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes and will not accept a reality of anything less. Amidst the struggle against the "glass-ceiling" that keeps women from rising into power positions among numerous gender inequalities that exist in today's society, two questions come to mind. How will the feminists of the 21st century choose to make history? Will we ever reach a feminist's utopia? Beyoncé and other activists taking part in current "third-wave feminism" keep the idealistic vision ablaze, and the fire will not burn out until our flawed society attains ****Flawless* equality between men and women.

Pigtails and Prurience

Author: Monica Day from Memorial High School

It is unfortunate that sexual depiction of minors and infantilization of women is often too touchy a topic to be discussed in contemporary debates between anti-porn feminists and sex positive feminists/pro-porn activists. Even when these complex subjects are mentioned, little attention is given to incipient configurations of child pornography in the internet age. These new forms include realistic artistic renderings of underage women in compromising situations and the proliferation of illicit communities that purchase explicit, self-shot content from minors. Identifying a victim in these circumstances is now complicated by the possibilities that the child may have ostensibly consented or no minor may have been involved in production at all.

I call for an expansion of the definition of child pornography and a greater import provided to the psychological damage done to women who participate in these schemes. To clarify, this essay is not about the redemption of feminist pornography or its censorship - when I use the term “pornography,” it is in reference to a specific, inegalitarian form of content that degrades/harms a woman or child for the purposes of sexual pleasure.

I classify opponents of stricter regulation of pornography in 3 categories. The first group of sex-positive feminists believe women’s sexual liberation can be achieved through porn. The second maintain Foucault’s claim that transgression of sexual taboo is a form of resistance to authority.²⁹ The third category is composed of liberal fundamentalists in defense of abstract individual rights such as of freedom of expression.³⁰ While the first two pursue the common goal of personal liberty, the last category does not explicitly support deregulation for the purposes of subverting oppressive power structures. Though all of these positions champion liberal autonomy,³¹ it is imperative for feminists to ask for *whom* these stances serve to benefit.

A woman cannot emancipate herself from the bonds of sexual repression by partaking in the re-enactment of incest. And Foucault’s assertion that a minor may be “trusted to say whether or not [they

were] subjected to violence”³² does not hold when children have not had the formative experiences to determine the consequences of their consent. These and other untenable defenses of pornography inadvertently sustain collective policing of young women’s sexualities while attempting to dismantle legislative ascendancy of proper sexual ethics.

Young girls, by nature of being children, are impressionable and may internalize misogynistic demands of compulsory sexuality. While the exchange of self-created child pornography remains illegal, more often than not these cases are presented as extortion on the part of the offender instead of a set of coercive actions that function to normalize objectification in the mind of the victim.

While I agree with Hahn’s disavowal of Lombroso’s “born criminal,”³³ (rapist, pedophile, or otherwise) I run counter to his conclusion that the legal system concerns itself primarily in the medical constitution of the pervert.³⁴ This is a dangerous supposition: it dismisses the prurient social influences that go into the development of a violent sexuality, typified by the overwhelming number of male pedophiles. The mutually reinforcing construction of a sexual attraction to infantilized bodies and the extensive body of teen porn on the internet cannot be discounted in our analysis.

One need not venture far on mainstream porn sites and forums to encounter sadistic representations of school-aged girls’ “defloration.” these include depictions of inter-kin rape and bloodshed in tearing the hymen. It goes without saying that the women featured are almost exclusively white or east Asian, hairless, and thin. If federal statute prohibits simulated child pornography, then these gruesome performances of violence against infantilized women should not be distributed with impunity as they are. The current application of the law is insufficient in its interpretation of what comprises child porn and violence against women. Conceptual defenses of free speech fail to serve their purpose when they functionally disallow compassion to the denigrated.

With this in mind, McGlynn and Ward’s insistence that “it is here, at the point of systematic objectification and degradation, the the law must intervene, not as in the past in order to assuage a masculine fear of female sexuality, but because the failure to do so reinforces the species of ‘cultural

sadism”³⁵ most readily strike a chord in the heart of the feminist optimist.

Relationship Abuse Patterns Among Teens

Author: Grace Peters from Clear Lake High School

Introduction

The first glimpse of romantic attachment among teenagers can often be an exciting, euphoric, and nerve-wracking experience. Unfortunately for over 25% of the female population involved, the nerve-wracking feeling becomes much more prominent and often overwhelms the relationship.³⁶ Emotional, physical and digital abuse has become a normalized expectation in relationships. With teenage partner domestic abuse affecting a third of the young adolescents, this issue demands attention. While abuse is heeded in today's society as being primarily physical, this misconception does not begin to capture the full picture of what abuse is. Bringing the less prominent forms of abuse to the public's attention is imperative because if we learn to recognize and learn to prevent these kinds of violence we will be able to raise the consciousness towards these issues. Doing so will sanguinely erase the stigma of more ambiguous forms of abuse being seen as less "legitimate" forms of abuse and go on to address a greatly ignored issue in the lives of our young adults and teenagers. Specifically, addressing these issues of teenage dating abuse is necessary to securing a more informed, protected, and safer adult generation. Addressing this in adolescence stops the issue as it is just beginning because it goes to realign the way we develop our relationship ideas at a younger age. Prevention and rehabilitation is possible but only through allowing for spaces of conversation and actions taken for education.

Digital abuse, the new epidemic

Digital abuse is becoming a new and exponentially increasing issue among scholars and psychological institutions. With media becoming an integral part of our lives, it also brings about a new mechanism of control among abusers notably for the younger generations. With the help of technology, connection with victims is quicker and more accessible than ever. Victims of the technological era face a distinct situation from abuse in years previous. While victims were once able to escape the fears and

frustration of abuse, at least temporarily while the predator was away or distracted, technology has enabled constant contact and thus the presence of abuse even when the abuser is not physically present. Such an inexpiable form of abuse can lead to emotionally catastrophic consequences.

Digital abuse includes using information from social media to embarrass victims and coercing the victim for sexually explicit messages or photos, posting embarrassing photos of the victim. Digital abuse also includes threatening the victim for not responding to personal messages, and asking for or hacking the victim's text messages or social media. In fact, the most frequent form of harassment or abuse was tampering with a partner's social networking account without permission. Nearly 1 in 10 teens in relationships report having this happen to them in the past year.³⁷ Over 25 percent of dating teens report they've been digitally victimized by their partner.³⁸ Abusers do not often act alone in one form of control. Notably, 96% of teens who are digitally abused are also likely to be abused in other ways.³⁹ Specifically, 84% of teens who were digitally abused were also psychologically abused by their partners. Unsurprisingly, 52% of teens who are digitally abused are also physically abused, and teens that are digitally abused are 5 times more likely to be sexually coerced.⁴⁰ The motivation for digital abuse stems from the abuser's need for constant control. Often times we credit the abuser with wanting stability in relationships or a guarantee of affection, but in fact the motivations behind abuse are much more discomforting. Abusers need to feel like they are able to manage the things their partner do or say in a public media space. Digital abuse is meant to isolate the victim in our interconnected world. By demanding the partner's focuses on texting or calling or remaining in constant contact with the abuser, it distracts or prevents the victim from connecting with others or seeking support from a contrasting source.

The sad effects of digital abuse extend well beyond the public embarrassment or the fearful nature that second hand observers are able to notice. It often leads to the damaging effect of self censorship and internalized restraint which is often why the victim remains silent. When abusers are in this situation they may try to cut themselves from the public eye or reduce their social media appearance in order to not upset or cause problems with their abuser. Fears of upsetting the abuser will often change the behavior of the

victim in small scale and in large scale ways. A lack of sleep in the victim or an increase in fearful behavior may be noticed because of the pressure the abuser puts on the teen.⁴¹ Specifically for digital abuse, it is important to remember that any relationship where passwords to social networking sites are shared or given by one individual but not the other is a strong sign of disproportional power and is often an easy way to site digital abuse. Red flag signs may also include the victim being anxious or fearful when they are not able to be in contact with their cell phone or other digital sources out of fear that the abuser may try to contact them. Teens who suffer digital abuse are also more likely to develop eating disorders, binge drink, and abuse illegal substances. There is a higher rate of depression among digitally abused teens as well as a 73% chance of developing of an anxiety disorder.⁴² Often times the stereotype of the texting bratty teenage girl allows us to dismiss the importance or possible damage that can come through technology but this is only a boilerplate ideal reinforced by an abuse friendly culture. If we stopped and listened to the fears and concerns teenagers have rather than dismiss them as silly drama or oversensitivity and whining, we would be able to reduce the effect digital abuse has on adolescence.

Physiological abuse, the newly recognized wave

Emotional abuse is becoming a more commonly recognized as a “legitimate” form of abuse when in the past it was not as kindly recognized. There is a greater insurgence of studies depicting physical damaging effects of emotional abuse. While physical abuse and digital abuse are easily proved by concrete physical evidence often times it is hard to have the same validation or proof of emotional abuse. In many cases in order to seek help for emotional abuse a victim must recognize they are being abused. While simple in theory, abuse tactics such as gaslighting, crazymaking and lying all help to exacerbate the insidious nature of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is rooted in trying to make the victim feel as if they are dependent on the abuser; this makes the victim easier to control. This sort of abuse can lead to a vacillation of issues with short and long term effects. The ignorance and denial of this abuse is far to prevalent in our society.

Emotional abuse is complex to define as it often encompasses a miscellany of specific instances.

Emotional abuse may include things such as attempting to embarrass the teen in the proximity of peers in order to secure dominance or gain feelings of power, delegitimize the feelings or concerns of the victims, belittle the accomplishments or aspirations of the teen in order to make theirs seem more imperative and put themselves above the victim, abusers may require permission for certain actions as another way to ensure preeminence. Often times abusers engage in tactics such as gaslighting or, causing a victim to question their own feelings, instincts, and sanity, which gives the abusive partner a lot of power. These tactics are used to discredit the victim or make them doubt that the abuse that is happening to them. Emotional abuse covers a wide array of situations and is dejectedly more common than what may be perceived. Emotional abuse is the most common tactic of abuse among teens with 47.8% of teens who have dated in the last year has experienced emotional abuse.⁴³ 26% of female girls report enduring verbal abuse thought relationships.⁴⁴ 62% of young adolescents (12-14) know peers who have been verbally abused by an intimate partner.⁴⁵ About one in every three teenagers will experience emotional abuse in high school. Psychological abuse is able to reach all teenagers and is an overwhelming issue in many high schools and middle schools. While developing the first years of relationships, teens often learn how to behave in relationships from parents, peers, and media. Unfortunately emotional abuse is becoming a greater and greater phenomenon in pop culture. Through normalizing the behaviors of characters in book such as “Twilight” and “50 Shades of Gray” partners learn to behave in a way that is being indoctrinated as romantic, but in actuality is damaging. With our society continuing to romanticize the experiences of the abused, it is harder to determine characteristics of an emotionally healthy relationship. Such excuses still do not release an abuser from their harms. Any relationship rooted in mutual respect will be able to circumvent such circumstances. Ultimately, emotional abuse comes from the abuser gaining gratification from control and considering their lives to be more important than the victims. Often times they try to demonstrate to the victim they are smarter, have more friends, or are better than the victim in order to extinguish their own insecurities. This gratuitous behavior only leads to incomparable harm to the victim.

As teens develop emotionally, they are heavily influenced by experiences in their relationships. Thus,

the teenage victim of a bad relationship is more likely to experience depression and anxiety, 50% of emotionally abused victims have considered suicide, are 32% more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as drugs and alcohol and are 67% more likely to engage in anti social behaviors.⁴⁶ Emotional abuse is difficult to recognize because abusers are likely to appear charming or deceptive and often suffer from disorders such as borderline personality disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, and antisocial personality. Because of this deception recognizing red flags of abusive partners is much harder to detect but is all the more essential. Victims may display signs of disconnection in friends or disinterest in activates they used to enjoy, and victims may suffer from mood swings or appear unstable around friends, victims are likely to be highly anxious and defensive when on the topic of their partner so it is important to remain vigilant. Emotional abuse effect girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence — almost triple the national average.⁴⁷ This disproportionate amount is very discomforting. Often women, and especially young women, are perceived by society to be over emotional and irrational. This is a stigma that goes to perpetuate instances of abuse and discredits claims to abuse by young women so they are often ignored or deterred from reporting cases of psychological abuse. Addressing this falsehood and rejecting the popular perception of emotional young women would go along way to combat the discrepancies in emotional abuse statistics.

Conclusion

Domestic abuse happens on a verity of levels and through a variety of mediums. Often times our culture disparages abuse that more commonly affects adolescents, the effects of this abuse will go on to follow the generation into adulthood. Our romanization of abusive relationships in books and movies ultimately adds up to affirm the actions of the abuser a serves to clear them from any wrongdoing. Our largest impediment however, is our failure to simply take teenage girls seriously. Our ignorant society gains a lot from ignoring the concerns and problems teenage girls are facing. Common stereotypes, dichotomies, and stigmas all serve to discredit the voices of young girls and ultimately attempt to cover any serious harm

we are causing.

Abortion: Why Republicans are Fighting the Wrong Fight

Author: Fangwei Jin from Edgemont Junior-Senior High School

Unlike social issues such as gay marriage and illegal immigration, Americans are largely divided on the issue of abortion access. In fact, some polls indicate that Americans are shifting to the right on the issue⁴⁸. So why, then, are many establishment Republicans so uncomfortable talking about the issue? The answer is simple: the pro-life movement has dictated the issue for too long, infusing the abortion debate with social conservative and religious values that are mostly unpopular with the broader populace. It's why liberals love it when prominent Republicans justify staunch pro-life positions by claiming that rape is "God's will" and that the female body can just "shut down" in the event of rape; it feeds perfectly into the broader argument of the Republican "war on women" and the GOP's social intolerance. We saw the ludicrous of such a position in the January abortion debacle in the House, where a bill that sought to make abortion access more difficult for raped women was pulled by outraged female House Republicans. Yet the incident also pointed the potential of a shift in Republican tactics as younger, more secular Republicans gain more prominence over Tea Party extremists. Instead of demonizing women and limiting access to abortion services, Republicans should use their pro-life stance to support women by passing policies that could limit the abortion rate and make it easier for a woman to raise a child. This would not only eliminate liberal attacks of the Republican "war on women," but would also reveal the dynamism of the party without sacrificing cherished conservative values.

The pro-life movement's current strategies mirror those of the 1970s, lobbying for legislation that undermine the decision of Roe vs. Wade, which granted every woman the right to an abortion in the 1st trimester of her pregnancy. Targeted regulations of abortion providers (TRAP) are designed to shut abortion clinics down. These regulations, which include high fees for registering a clinic and arbitrary safety provisions such as increased hallway width, have severely limited the amount of available abortion clinics. Access to clinics is especially limited in the South; six states now have only one abortion clinic.⁴⁹ In fact,

North Dakota restricts abortion access to six weeks, only halfway into the first trimester of pregnancy, a clear violation of Roe v. Wade. While this aggressive rollback on abortion access has decreased the number of legal abortions, the tactic is still failing. The public demand for abortions continue to skyrocket, as conservative legislatures have coupled a decrease in abortion access with policies that cause women to seek an abortion in the first place. This is best seen in Mississippi, where women are denied comprehensive sex education and programs that support pregnant and potential parent teenagers. Cuts to entitlement programs like Medicare make it financially impossible to poor families to support new children; the poverty rate in Mississippi is a shocking 22.3%.⁵⁰ Right-wing “crisis pregnancy centers,” which seek to a “counsel” a woman out of getting an abortion, are failing as well, as women rarely change their minds about getting an abortion. In fact, stresses such as these sessions and waiting periods only add to a woman’s emotional trauma.⁵¹

The solution to the abortion debacle is simple, and it’s been proven in countless other countries-- create a society that is receptive to child-bearing. The reason for low abortion rates despite liberal abortion laws in countries like Germany and the Netherlands is that both have laws that reduce the burden placed upon mothers. In Germany, working women receive 14 weeks of maternity with pay from the state,⁵² and young children are guaranteed free child care.⁵³ Increased availability of contraceptives and better healthcare in general are also easy solutions to the exploding abortion problem in the US, yet conservatives are cutting access to both. Republicans, for too long, have been fighting a losing battle; coupling pro-life arguments with outdated, absolutist moral values that no longer resonate with the American people and provide ample ground for liberal criticism on feminist grounds. Shifting the pro-life position to one that supports women in improving the conditions that make abortions necessary in the first place will not only give Republicans the upper edge in the debate, but also bring political capital for their willingness to compromise and evolve. The moral conformism of the mid-20th century is long gone--it’s about time Republicans recognize this reality.

Talking About Hillary Without Saying Her Name

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“They only got into that college because they’re black”. “They didn’t pick me because I’m Muslim”. “They just wanted to have a woman on the council”. Discrimination exists all around us. Even if we like to think we are well informed and open minded, the majority of us are subconsciously influenced every day by social norms of race, religion and gender. Music, TV, magazines, even ads on the subway are all a part of this normative culture that promotes discrimination. For example, body types depicted in advertisements are often unrealistic and cause self-esteem issues for all genders. However, this new century has been marked by a new wave of social activists that have brought attention to the systemic discrimination against women in many fields, and my focus today is to focus on sexism in politics. Sexism takes many forms, and while I’m sure my fellow writers will definitely tackle the most disgusting forms, I am writing today with a plea to stop misguided sexism. Don’t vote for someone because she is a girl.

Voting for someone because of her gender is a form of sexism. One usually votes for a candidate because of their merits and ideas, so why should it be any different for female candidates? It shouldn’t. Voting for a woman just because of her sex is wrong. By evaluating female candidates in a different way from male candidates, you are implying that female candidates are different. Furthermore, consciously preferring to vote for one sex implies that they could not win on merit. Thus, don’t say “I voted for her because she is a woman”, because that immediately invalidated the idea that she was the better candidate. John Rawls explains this best with his Veil of Ignorance theory. He argues that the only fair decisions can be made when we know nothing about the person in question, their looks, their voice, and their identity. While it may be impossible in reality, the only correct choice that can be made is one where sex is not a factor. From a more philosophical point of view, voting with sex as a factor is a form of oppression, since the media confuses sex and gender. By voting based on sex, we fall into one of two lines of thought. First, we need more female representation. As previously stated, this is a subtle form of sexism which implies that women need help to gain representation, which is inherently untrue. Second, she is a better candidate

because she is a woman. This is still sexist, and actually quite destructive. This statement implies that men are incompetent, which totally clashes with feminism's advocacy of equality. Furthermore, thinking that someone is a better candidate because of her sex would imply that person had preconceived notions of what traits and talents members of each sex bring to the table. However, this is heteronormative and completely excludes any individuality within each sex. To associate certain qualities with each sex oppresses those who don't identify as a man or a woman, but who identify on the gender spectrum. There are women who possess stereotypically masculine traits, or who identify as something else on the gender spectrum that would not fit with this hypothetical employer's view of women.

To conclude, voting based on sex is inherently sexist. It's an unfortunate truth that many uninformed men (and women) only vote for men for whatever sexist reasons, but just as one can't fight fire with fire, we cannot fight sexism with sexism. As the internet and social media continue to gain power, I have hope that more and more people will become aware of discrimination in society, and how we can act in a moral way. Don't vote for her because she's a woman, vote for her because she's the best candidate.

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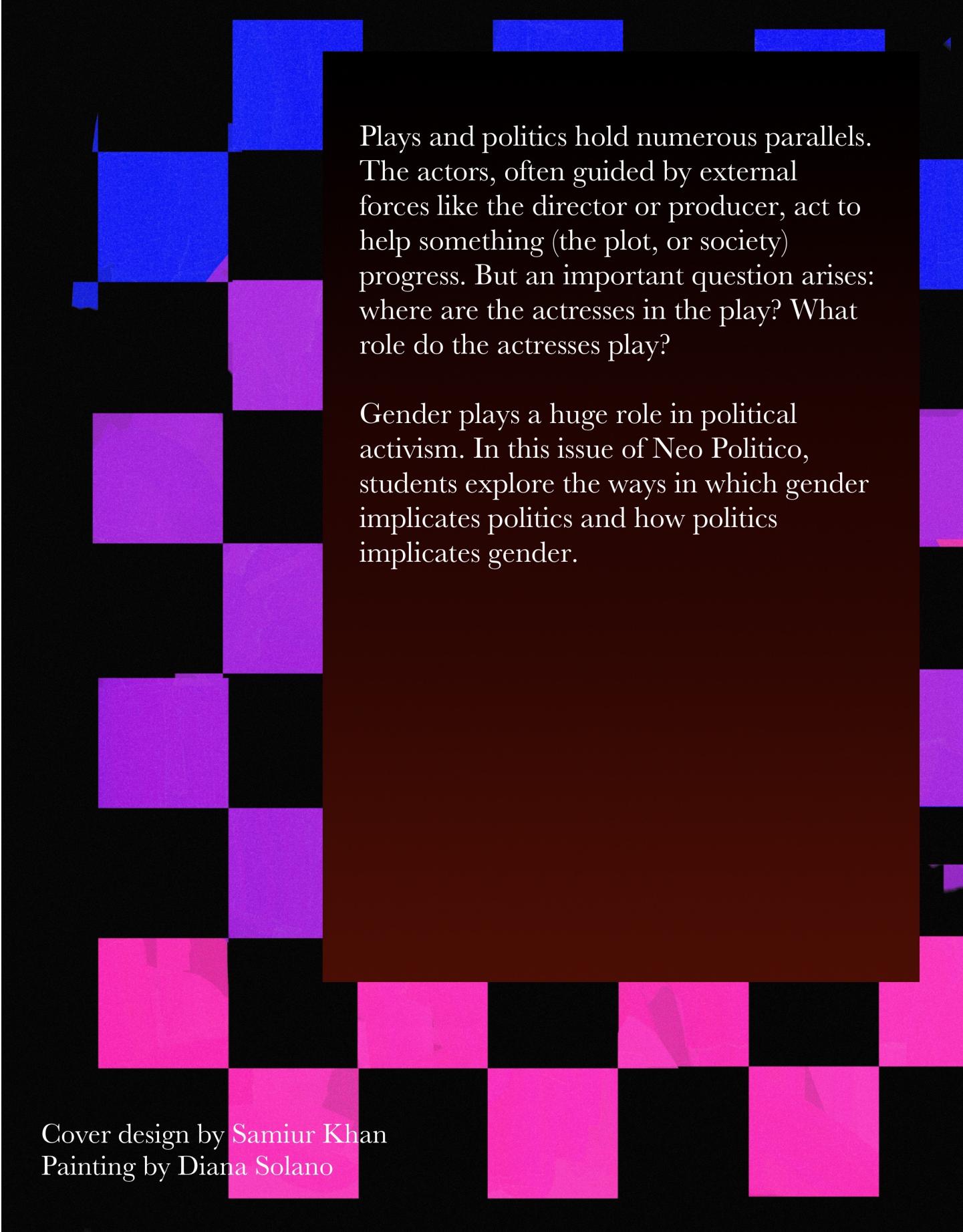
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Plays and politics hold numerous parallels. The actors, often guided by external forces like the director or producer, act to help something (the plot, or society) progress. But an important question arises: where are the actresses in the play? What role do the actresses play?

Gender plays a huge role in political activism. In this issue of Neo Politico, students explore the ways in which gender implicates politics and how politics implicates gender.

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