



michigan tech's

TECHNOBABE TIMES

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"Feminism is the radical notion that women are human beings." —Cheris Kramerae

Writing Our Own Vagina Monologues

One by Ariana Jo Jeske

My vagina is progressive, very progressive. It makes me take on huge mountains of personal growth faster than my brain would ever want to.

I was 10 when my vagina decided I should become a woman in the physical sense. I had never really thought about my vagina 'til that day in 5th grade when it started to bleed. That blood made me stand alone; suddenly I was in possession of this awe-inspiring and maxi pad-seeking gift between my legs. It wasn't just skin anymore, it was something unto itself, an entire system. At age 10 I knew more about the universe and its planets than I did about what happened in the dark corners of my body. After the fear wore off and more of my girlfriends started to menstruate, I respected the process. It was cool; I had the power to create life.

I was 14 when my vagina decided I needed to become a strong woman. I would feel a sharp pain on my lower left side. It would freeze my mind until the pain had done its damage. I would ignore it, and bear it until my all-knowing mother rushed me to a hospital. It was there that my vagina grew up and so did I. That first pelvic exam in a cold emergency room behind a sterile white curtain changed something. My vagina wasn't my own anymore—my own special place. During that exam I detached. The flashlight, the probing, the cold metal made me feel like I was floating elsewhere. My vagina became a medical experiment—pelvic exams, ultra-

sounds, surgery.

Ultimately, my vagina became a symbol of enlightenment. Through it passed my salvation; surgery removed scar tissue that had formed in my body from endometriosis. The pain ended with the surgery. The experience changed my perspective of my vagina; for a long time it was this burden of misery. Pain was close to there. Knowing that my gift of life is a gamble is a daily pain when I take my birth control pill. Every day since the surgery I've taken a little blue or pink pill that reminds me. Each morning I wonder if one day I'll have children. I wonder if one day my vagina will create the beginning of a new life.

It took me a while to grow and wonder about and, most of all, respect my vagina. I enjoy its pleasure, its still awe-inspiring ability to produce, and its mysterious nature. My vagina has made me the woman I am. Some people say life will not give you what you cannot bear. Somehow I think of that phrase in terms of my vagina.

Another by Anna Cynar

Vaginas. The sacredness of vaginas, whose divine power gives passion, pleasure, and the miracles of creation among other things, significantly lacks appreciation in our society. Experiencing firsthand the defamation of my vagina by the uncompassionate and animalistic impulses of a male at the age of sixteen, I have discovered, surprisingly, that this is not an uncommon occurrence. Numerous times I have encountered women

with similar personal accounts and that is only those who openly and courageously share their stories.

Despite the endless incidents of rape, men's stereotypical label of sexually-driven crazed beasts with uncontrollable tools of rage and destruction are, for the most part, misguided and undeserved. While the media depicts women as provocative, scantily clad beings who seem confined to the lifestyle of Hollywood and disillusion, raunchy behavior unfortunately stretches to every extent of our society. Yet, never have I come across such disrespect for females and their sexuality until my recent submersion into the culture of college life.

Disturbing as it may seem, a large portion of degrading demeanor towards women, through my observations, sadly comes from women themselves. From "getting laid" parties to a large array of other distasteful social events, women consciously have chosen to subject themselves to the belittlement of themselves. To my dismay, I have even encountered groups of women who record in planners each time they have sex, trying to score more than the others, disappointed if they are ranked in last place.

My experiences in life cause me to have a different, perhaps more cautious outlook. I am appalled and saddened by the self-desecration of these women who have such little respect for themselves and their vaginas. The complex and intricate beauty of the female sex organs is not stressed enough in our culture and is, instead, defaced by both men and women alike. I hope it will not take rape and other sexual mutilations for our society to end such lack of pride for vaginas and fully realize their sacredness.

A pink star goes to the Black Student Association for coordinating "Keeping the Dream Alive," a week of celebration in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Thank you BSA for encouraging us to remember Dr. King.

To Whom It May Concern

While reading the *Technobabe Times*, I was rather surprised by Ms. Mongiat's article in which she states "... it makes me nervous walking through campus alone in the dark. It is a problem when I don't feel safe walking through campus after dark."

I have always felt safe on campus, no matter the hour, and could only wonder why Ms. Mongiat did not feel safe. Since her article offered no reason for her fear, I decided to see if Tech has a high crime rate. I found no murders or manslaughters, five sex offenses, and only one aggravated assault over the past three years combined (<http://www.sas.it.mtu.edu/psafe/annualcrimereport.pdf>).

With over six thousand students at Tech, this seems pretty safe. I found that Houghton is ranked the safest college town in Michigan, and the eighth in the nation (<http://www.doe.mtu.edu/>). So I am still left wondering about Ms. Mongiat's fear. Her article seemed to imply that an increase in the male-to-female ratio was the basis for her fear, which unfairly portrays the men at Michigan Tech as dangerous. I had always thought the **technobabe times** was trying to fight stereotypes. This article only worked to further stereotype men as mean, aggressive humans.

Sincerely,
Betsy George

1964: Let There Be Women

from Michigan Tech Lode Pictorial, Feb. 8, 1964, vol 2, #3

Although our coed population is increasing each year, Tech remains predominantly a man's school. Despite the offerings of Suomi, St. Joseph's, and the local high schools, the Techman who invites his girl from home is often the rule rather than the exception.

In order to accommodate this fact, the Student Council sponsors chartered busses from Detroit, Chicago, and New York. For a reduced fare, the girls arrive in Houghton Friday morning and leave Sunday.

This Carnival was no exception. Yesterday saw several bus-loads of girls arrive (just a little late) to be greeted by swarms of men who hadn't seen their girls since Christmas.

In addition to this importation, the campus itself comes alive as a social center as the many activities attract the attention of girls from the area. More men have more dates with more girls at Carnival than any other time of the year.

For a few short days the books and slide rules are forgotten—stag parties are set aside—and Tech looks almost like many imagine a liberal arts school might. It is good for the soul, this once-a-year transformation.

The cause of this transformation...women. The result...a welcome change. So, "Let there be women."



THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES

a play by Eve Ensler
performed by MTU students and staff



Friday, February 13
Saturday, February 14
8 pm
M&M U115
\$5

all proceeds go to
the Barbara Kettle Gundlach
Shelter Home
and the Baraga Women's Shelter



sponsored by the Technobabe Times

Black History Month & Voting

by Kristin L. Arola

February is Black History Month. While unfortunately lodged in the shortest month of the year, it does provide us time to reflect on the great contributions of African Americans to our society. From the writings of Zora Neale Hurston to the music of Billie Holiday to the leadership of Maggie Walker (this country's first African American female bank president) and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we encourage you to devote some time in February to learn more about black history.

Dr. King understood the importance of voting rights and spent much of his life fighting for the ability for all voices to be heard equally. If you are a Democrat, we urge you to take some time out of your day and vote in the Michigan Democratic Caucus. **The caucus will be open on Saturday, February 7, 2004, between 10am and 4pm at the Super 8 Motel in Houghton.** All voters must provide proof of residence in Houghton County (a student ID will work) and complete a ballot—including a public declaration that they are a Democrat and are, or will be, a registered voter before the November election. It's easy, it's quick, and it gives you a chance to take part in the democratic process.

Although voting is a great way to get involved, it's important to remember the words of **Dr. King, who said, "And so we shall have to do more than register and more than vote; we shall have to create leaders who embody virtues we can respect, who have moral and ethical principles we can applaud with enthusiasm."** We hope you take some time this month to reflect on how you can help create leaders who embody virtues we respect and who have principles we can applaud with enthusiasm.

Learn more about the candidates at <http://www.democrats.org/whitehouse/candidates.html>. Also, if you still need to register to vote, here's a mail-in voter registration form: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/voterreg-app_16084_7.pdf.

Interview with Azeda Tabazadeh, Atmospheric Scientist

by Michelle E. Jarvie

tbt interviewed Azeda Tabazadeh last fall when Dr. Tabazadeh was visiting MTU. She researches atmospheric science at NASA Ames Research Center.



tbt: I was reading about your childhood in Iran, and how you left. Can you tell us a bit about that story?

AT: I left after the Iranian Revolution, a couple of years after that. We decided to leave the country because there were basically no opportunities for me and my sister. So we left. The borders were closed so we had to escape across them and went to Spain. We were there for about four months before we could get a legal visa to come here. My brother and I went to stay with a friend in the San Francisco area, and my parents came six months later. Then, we moved to Los Angeles. Then, I started college.

tbt: How old were you when you left?

AT: Seventeen.

tbt: And women weren't allowed to go to school then in Iran?

AT: No, not at that time, because this was an Islamic revolution. So, things completely turned around. First, at the beginning of the revolution, they didn't care what you wore, but then they had all these dress codes that you had to follow, and I just couldn't do it. And also the opportunities for school are not there for women to study what they want to.

tbt: A lot of American-born women think they have the right to take education for granted.

AT: That's true. I think I appreciate it more because if I had stayed I wouldn't have had a chance of doing it. When you come here, I think you kind of work harder because you want to succeed. When I started school I wanted to work hard. I would get A's, you know. To prove to my parents that coming to America was the right thing to do, but I was really interested in science, too. That made it easier.

tbt: What sort of advice do you have for women in the sciences?

AT: Well, it's hard because when you get your PhD, if you are involved with someone, for most women, when you go to academics, then you are on that tenure track and you also want to have children. So, it's pretty tough. So, you just have to hang in there.

tbt: How did you do it?

AT: I work at a government lab. I wasn't on that tenure clock, which made things easier for me, but I know three colleagues that went on the tenure track, and they just quit science because it was too much to be pressured to prove yourself. It's just not possible. I think universities have to change the tenure track; they have to make exceptions, and allow you more time if you do start your academic career after your PhD.

tbt: That's not a bad idea. To make an al-

ternative path, where you can take time off for pregnancy.

AT: Even a couple of years, because you're pregnant, and then you know, the first year is just, you don't sleep at night. Its just you're not yourself.

tbt: Are there a lot of other women among your peers at NASA?

AT: NASA had a mandate to hire women. When I started at NASA Ames, there were 45 civil servants, and I think I was the second woman they hired. But since then they've hired 4 other women. They're moving up in the number of women. Out of 50-52 people, there are 6 women. So, it's pretty good. It could be worse. Still, I think it's dominated by males and it's intimidating. You want to have people who look like you. Not that there's anything wrong with guys, but it's not an equal environment, I think.

tbt: For the young female engineers about to graduate and enter the work force, you enter a lot of work situations where you're the only woman in the room. Is there any advice you can give to these young women?

AT: Even right now, when I go to a meeting, there could be 200 people and you can count the women in the audience. It is very intimidating.

When I was younger and had a question, I always hesitated to ask the question because I thought they were going to think, "Who is she with the big mouth?" But you have to get over that because **if you're not aggressive, and if you don't tell people what you know, and if you don't speak up, you're not going to succeed in science.** People have to know that you have a brain, and can think, and you can ask good questions.

In atmospheric science, environmental science is much better than other fields. When I was in physical chemistry there were hardly any women studying in that field. They've done studies, that right now in science you do have equal numbers of females, but still more males graduate, and as you go up the ladder of education it's like a leaky pipe losing numbers of women, and they're trying to figure out why.

tbt: Why do you think that is?

AT: Women tend to make more sacrifices because we have a family. We try to say, "It's okay, I want to keep my family together," which is not right or wrong, but I think women make more of those choices. We are smaller in numbers to begin with and then we have more passions.

I think some women have this maternal instinct and that's the best thing for them to do. I'm not saying that everyone should work outside the home but if you feel that you really like to succeed and that this is the right thing for you, then I don't think you should have to make all the sacrifice, I think it should be equal. That's what I think.

Book review: Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*. Vintage Books, New York, 1992. 100 pages.

by Mandie Danielski

"Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there."

If Jeanette Winterson came into this world with any purpose, then it was to wow us with her words, to challenge our ideas about what is a story, how to tell a story, how to love a story. How to love even.

Written on the Body, by this female writer from Lancashire (UK), has received praise from *Harper's Bazaar*, *Village Voice*, *The Los Angeles Times Book Review*... others. So why include another commentary in MTU's **tbt**? Because the women of this campus and community need Winterson, need this novel—a refreshing, enlightening change from the trashy romance novels we're tempted, myself included, to buy as an escape from the mundane.

No, it's not just a chick's book. When a novel starts with, "Why is the measure of love loss?" it's difficult for any reader not to engage with every line thereafter.

Love is universal; we don't need Winterson to teach us that, or so you'd think. But this novel challenges such universality across gender lines. Even before the narrator's greatest love, Louise, is introduced on page 28, Winterson shows us how love is so central to all our being that the narrator needs—has—no defined gender. No, the narrator is not missing the necessary sexual body parts that assign us "female" or "male." Instead, it is Winterson's genius that manages a novel whose narrator's gender can be arguably female or male—but stop arguing and just read! "She was brute with love, but so was I. We were patient enough to count the hairs on each other's heads, too impatient to get undressed."

From a literary point of view (I'm an English major snob), there is even more to love about this work. Naturally, there is the content. The descriptions of Louise will make all readers wonder about how you appreciate your body, your lover's body ... the human being. "If I were painting Louise I'd paint her hair as a swarm of butterflies. A million Red Admirals in a halo of movement and light."

"I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits." —Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his 1964 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech.

Resources

Barbara Kettle Gundlach Shelter	Legal Services of Northern Michigan
.....337-5623482-3908
<i>domestic violence shelter; 24-hour crisis line</i>	
Career Counseling487-2313	Office of Student Affairs
Counseling Services487-2538487-2212; 487-2465
Dial HELP482-4357	Office of Residence Life487-3404
<i>Crisis intervention: a gentle, helpful voice,</i>	On-campus emergencies123
<i>24 hours a day, 7 days a week</i>	Society of Intellectual Sisters (SIS)
Employee Assistance Program482-2299	http://www.sos.mtu.edu/sis/
Houghton Community Health Center	<i>Promoting sisterhood primarily amongst</i>
.....483-1860	<i>African-American women and scholarship</i>
Keweenaw Pride pride@mtu.edu	<i>among members</i>
<i>an MTU group for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual,</i>	Society of Women Engineers
<i>Transgendered or Questioning Students, Staff,</i>	mmsasucc@mtu.edu
<i>Faculty, Community Members, Friends, and</i>	Western UP District Health Department ...
<i>Allies</i>482-7382

WHAT IS tbt POLICY?

The TechnoBabe Times is dedicated to the empowerment of women in all aspects of technology.

We want **tbt** to be a place where voices not usually heard or seen on campus or in the community can be seen & heard. We want to be a publication that encourages new and different voices. And so: we solicit thoughtful, reflective, critical writings (or drawings or mixed media pieces or poems or...) that offer us all positive views and smart actions...

If you have any ideas, questions or comments—or wish to advertise in **tbt**—please contact our staff at tbt@mtu.edu. You may also write the list to submit a piece of work or to become part of the **tbt** staff (all girls and boys interested in the cause are welcome!).

THANK YOU to the CCLI for help on this issue.

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PROGRAMMING NOTE:

Phenomenal Voyage: Women Engineering the Future

Wednesday, February 25 at 11:30 p.m. on PBS

"Women engineers and scientists play important roles in many technical fields, but there are barriers that prevent young women from entering math and science fields. Meet women working to solve problems in exciting technologies like space and underwater exploration and find out what they did to overcome career obstacles."