

It's crucial to understand your body

"... in these locker rooms, men shower together whether they are fat or skinny or bowlegged; they wrestle and snap towels, their bodies touch or not, they stand in front of adjoining urinals ... while they urinate and talk about sex. They may lie, but on the whole, they are easy with each other."

Nancy Friday
My Mother, Myself

This sexual ease among men is something that is generally absent among women. There are some among us who are comfortably willing to discuss female sexuality. There is also a majority of us who are ill at ease about the subject, and a number of that majority is here at Bennett. Here is a case in point.

I was recently sitting in a room with a few of my Bennett sisters doing the "same-old same-old"—talking and listening to music. I noticed that one of the girls looked upset so I asked her what was wrong. Her reply came slowly and hesitantly, but she finally told me, as she fumbled nervously with her keys, that she had been offended by a book she'd seen in a friend's room that "had all these pictures of naked men and women and dirty things" in it.

I asked more about the book and even later had the opportunity to talk to her friend about this "offensive" book. The book was entitled *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book By and For Women*; it is merely an educational tool to chisel away at the ignorance that exists among women about their own bodies. Perhaps the offended student would be quite shocked to know that the same book is in my own personal collection and has been since I was old enough to ask questions.

The conversation continued after she told us all why she was upset, and I discovered that she was not the only one in the room who was embarrassed. There were others who felt just as uneasy and thought that discussing our bodies was "nasty." I persisted in encouraging them to open up, so that I might find where the problem lay.

The problem is that of social conditioning. Society has deemed it a taboo to talk about sexuality openly, and so the majority of women feel quite uncomfortable with the subject for fear of being looked down on or called horrible names.

The negative social conditioning is clearly seen even in public bathrooms, as Nancy Friday points out in her book, *My Mother, Myself*. She draws attention to the fact that men's bathrooms have no doors on the individual stalls to hide them from themselves as do women's. It is practically drilled in our heads during childhood that our bodies are private affairs and should not even be discussed.

As young women, we can do something about this uneasiness among us. First of all, we must open our minds enough to educate ourselves. We must learn how and why our bodies operate and how we can enable them to continue to operate. With education will come ease, and with ease will come what we must do secondly. We have to ignore societal taboos to make sure that the men with whom we are involved know about our bodies as well.

Committing ourselves to sexual relationships gives men significant, even if only temporary, control of our bodies. Why relinquish control of a vessel for even a short time if a newly appointed captain has no knowledge of how it works? There is an equal urgency to educate men.

Rather than stay in the dark, we should want to shed educational light on the subject of sexuality. As a society, we have, through myths and taboos, not only created a realm of uneasiness about us, but we have also made ourselves ignorant. It's not too late to correct the wrong if we simply open our minds and allow a knowledge process to take place.

Sexuality should be a celebration of our bodies and not an inevitable evil. After all, we can't run away from ourselves forever. No matter where we go, our bodies are with us. (Cherryl Floyd)

Bias in schools

a column

by Crystal Sadler

Segregation is undoubtedly one of the most despicable things ever done in America. No, I would not want America to return to segregation. There is no way that America could be separate but equal. In no time, blacks would be getting a raw deal. Yet, in spite of the way I feel about segregation, it is ironic that today I am able to say that integration has hindered blacks in some aspects.

Integration of schools was intended to help blacks receive a better education and have better facilities to work with; however, I believe integration of the public school system has hindered black students. For example, black children are often placed in remedial classes based on tests like the IQ test, whose validity is still being debated, or other tests which have been found to be prejudicial because of the nature of the cultural background-based questions.

In the second grade I was bused to a white school and placed in a class composed of first and second graders. We spent much time doing what the first graders were doing and waiting for them to catch up. When I told this to my parents, they had me moved to a regular second grade class. In the class was one other black student. Much to the chagrin of the teachers, my reading level was above the second grade, so I was moved to a third grade reading class. I was not the only student this happened to. My brothers and their friends were put in classes that they should not have been in also. Those who were moved to where they belonged were lucky to have parents who saw what was happening. But how many more kids stayed in those classes who didn't belong there?

Another problem with integration in the schools is the ratio of white teachers to black teachers. There are more white teachers who are also older. Some of the white teachers have consciously or subconsciously made up their minds that black children are lazy and unintelligent. Hearing this constantly discourages most children. With the child-like belief that the teacher is all-knowing, they accept that they are dumb because the teacher says so.

One friend of mine, who attended Bennett, was student-teaching at an area school. One day she told me she was depressed and discouraged about remarks made by the teacher who was her supervisor. The teacher was a white woman who was somewhere in her late 50s. The teacher always said that the black boys were stupid and incapable of learning; therefore, it did not matter if they played around in the back of the classroom.

As far as higher education goes, studies show that a higher percentage of blacks graduate from traditionally black colleges and universities than from predominantly white colleges and universities. Studies also show that graduates from historically black colleges and universities are generally just as successful if not more than blacks who attended white schools. Perhaps this comes from the nurturing environment found on most traditionally black campuses.

Yes, integration is a wonderful thing. The world should not be separated into groups of people based on skin color, but when it comes to education, a different approach to integration should be taken. I don't have the answers, but if blacks are to truly make faster progress, the education of blacks must be changed.

Of two nerdy teachers, One man won respect

by Shawane Lassiter

We thought they were both nerds. They both wore glasses; they wore brightly colored clashing knit ties, and they were balding. Everytime either one of them would speak, we would all laugh. Just by looking at them you could tell they were both misfits. But they were a lot different.

Mr. Reitenger, my biology teacher, was a geek. I'm sure that when he was in high school he probably wasn't considered a geek; he could have even been considered hip at one time in his life. But I guess over the years he gradually changed into a middle-aged, balding, jerky bio teacher.

He wasn't mean or anything; I'm sure his intentions were good. His attempts to make cool jokes were pitiful. At one time or another when he would give me a good grade, I would think about his attempts to befriend us, which always turned out making us hate him more, and really feel sorry for him.

He was tall, of average weight, with maybe a slight potbelly from too many beers. He had a mustache. He smelled like the formaldehyde we used to preserve specimens. He was an average looking guy, except for his monstrous forehead, which was bigger than a football.

The French teacher, Mr. Lafferty, looked even worse. For starters, he wore a toupee, which would slip when he got excited. Some of us asked him in French was he wearing a toupee. He would always answer, "Non, Monsieur or Mademoiselle. Tu es un etudiant mauvais."

He was very thin, almost emaciated-looking, probably because he was a vegetable freak. When trying to explain a difficult subject, which called for an example, instead of using pencils, desks or erasers, he would use his beloved vegetables. We had to know the names of all the "legumes" in French so we could share something with him. He had a soft, feminine voice that was rarely ever raised.

He stood, talked and held his hands like a woman.

The difference between Reitenger and Lafferty was very apparent when you entered either one of their classrooms. Who would listen to a feminine man whose main source of life, theories and knowledge was centered around vegetables? Of course, it was Reitenger, the Forehead, who had the control. Not that he threatened to hit us with his forehead or anything. Lafferty's lack of control over his class became almost unbearable to those students who wanted to learn. But there weren't many of us in there that really wanted to learn. Instead we came for the entertainment, which was provided by Lafferty and a blond-haired, blue-eyed surfer from California with spiked hair. His name was Mike Barnes. Mr. Lafferty called him Monsieur Michel.

On one of the more entertaining days in French, Mike Barnes came in and took his usual seat at the back of the class with his desk backing the wall. Mr. Lafferty came in with his usual retarded expression and demanded we take out our "devoir" (homework). After yelling and cursing, we consented. On this rare day Mike decided to be prepared for class. Of course, Mr. Lafferty didn't think he was prepared; so, during the time we were checking the homework, he didn't call on Mike, who raised his hand and refused to put it down until Mr. Lafferty called on him. Everyone turned around periodically to see if Mike still had his hand raised. It was apparent that he was getting very restless and angry. Mr. Lafferty wouldn't pick him so Mike started to hit his head on the wall and chew strips of notebook paper, which by the end of the school year came to be known as his favorite delicacy, all while looking dead at Mr. Lafferty. Mr. Lafferty got a weird expression on his face, like "this is a sick, sick kid. Ignore him."

He continued to ignore Mike until finally Mike burst

out with a loud voice, "Yo, dude, you're not calling on me." Mr. Lafferty replied, "Monsieur Michel, I will continue to ignore you until your behavior changes." Mike called the teacher a four-letter metaphor for a man's sexual organ. He continued to bang his head against the wall and chew paper. Mr. Lafferty turned crimson as the whole class laughed uncontrollably. I had to be excused to the bathroom. Everyone was laughing except for Mike. I honestly believe to this day that he really meant what he said to Mr. Lafferty.

On a few other wild occasions in French, we would do things like come in and all put on pairs of shades and sing, "I wear my sunglasses at night." One day we refused to speak and to answer any questions in French because Mr. Lafferty denied us a French food day. We eventually harassed him into finally letting us have a food day. He brought in a "gourmet recipe" (actually baked chicken) that he made. We all took bites and spit it up at the same time. He also brought in some supposedly cool, updated French music and attempted to show us the latest French dances. What a laugh!

But Mr. Reitenger had plenty of control. There isn't much to say about a teacher who has control over his class because no fun events ever happen; all you do is learn. But one day when we attempted to play a prank, it didn't work because he got very angry and made us dissect two extra pigs and explain each part of the pig. On several other occasions we would attempt to rebel, but Mr. Reitenger always came out on top with an exclusive punishment that we couldn't get out of.

Although he would always succeed in punishing us and/or getting the last word, my lab partners and I decided that we really got the last word one day when we had to name our frog specimens. We named ours Forehead Frog.

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