

# Perspectives

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## Sexism exists on our campus

By Louisa Normington  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I realized that I am a woman when a professor made a comment regarding leg hair and inherent differences regarding a paper I wrote.

I went to his office with the intent of having a stimulating conversation about a research paper when the conversation took a nasty turn and my professor jokingly said, "You know why we'll never agree? Because I can see you haven't shaved your legs in over a year."

Apparently, I have chosen to not engage in the socially expected act of shaving my leg hairs. Despite the reasons for my actions, I have been placed into a category where women become even less than they already are.

My professor went on to say that if I were to go to a job interview, I should consider shaving.

Can hair on one's legs speak about one's potential, intelligence or inherent value?

Close-minded thinkers, no matter what they really believe, show me with their actions that in order for a female to be respected and successful, she must abide by a set of conventional rules.

This conversation took place at UNC Asheville in 2007. Gender roles are everywhere.

Gender roles were laid out the day we were born, and we were labeled either male or female. Men are pressured by their fathers, the media, their peers and our country's patriarchal leaders to be assertive, strong-willed and bold.

Women are expected to be submissive, delicate and caretaker. You can see how a male could take these social pressures to the extreme.

Likewise, women can easily get stuck in the idea that they are weak and ineffective.

Gender roles are reinforced by all aspects of society, as seen in the work force. There are still laws in place that keep women from being able to keep their jobs if they decide to have children. And even though Congress passed the Equal Work, Equal Pay Act over 40 years ago, women still receive less money than men for doing the same jobs.

Women make only 80 percent of the salaries their male peers do one year after college and after 10 years in the work force, the gap between their pay widens further, according to a study by the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation.

Women need to realize that to some men they are less and therefore, they need to take this into account when dealing with men in every aspect of life. The time has come for us to regain our power. We have the potential to be assertive in our emotions, confident in our sensitivity and resolute in our need to be our own people, no longer having to live up to gender ideals.

How have men forgotten the power of nurturing? How has our society forgotten the need for empathy? The time has come for women to show the world that sensitivity, compassion and intuition are powerful in their own respect. It will take courage and strength, and courage and strength we have, even when society tells us otherwise.

We cannot deny that we are still living in a sexist and unequal world, even with all the advancements that have been made. The incident with my professor is one small example of many. Even though his comments about my legs were entirely inappropriate and demeaning, I'm glad that he chose to voice his opinions. That conversation empowered me to write this article.

My professor helped me see that sexism has no bounds. Women everyday in all walks of life unknowingly give their power away. By becoming aware of the stereotypes and inequalities, and by finding our inner-strength, we will take back our power.

We can show the world that we will not be reduced to some limiting, outdated idea of what it is to be a woman. We alone have the power to define who we are and what we are capable of accomplishing. We can redefine what "woman" means, one person at a time.

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## Travelogue France

By Ben Duffey  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I boarded my plane in Raleigh, ready for whatever my adventure in France would bring. My plane pulled onto the runway and stopped for three hours. This started a chain reaction which caused me to be three hours late at JFK, Heathrow and finally De Gaulle airport.

This was particularly disconcerting because my friend, Joseph Ramauger, was picking me up in Paris and would not know that I would be arriving on a different flight at a different time.

Joseph was a French exchange student at UNC Asheville the semester before. We had agreed to live together a few months earlier, because I needed an apartment and he needed a roommate. The rendezvous was planned by e-mail during Christmas break.

Arriving in Paris, my bags were lost and I was four hours late. My plan did not cover that. Having not slept for the previous 24 hours, I worried Joseph had already given up, leaving me trapped in Paris' airport for all eternity with only one pair of clothes.

Despite my predictions of disaster, however, I soon spotted Joseph. I was filled with relief. So much relief, in fact, that I yelled and startled all of the unexpected bystanders.

After giving Joseph a big hug and thanking him much more than his French modesty could tolerate, we went and located my bags, which would arrive by the end of the day. So, for the time being, we drove into Paris.

As Joseph drove the car along, I remember becoming overwhelmed with excitement as I saw the tip of the Eiffel Tower appear over the horizon. Seeing the Tower was a kind of threshold, which, to me, confirmed my arrival in Paris. I remember thinking to myself, "I've finally made it."

Driving farther in, we came to l'Arc De Triumphe, a monument I had only seen in pictures and was 10 times bigger than I imagined. I was in so much awe that I almost did not realize Joseph had driven onto the road around the Arc, which is essentially a nine-lane rotary without a speed limit and without lanes. Thanks to Joseph's skillful maneuvering, we came out alive and onto the Champs-Elysees.

It was there, on that big, beautiful, historic road where we parked and began to walk. As we made our way on foot, I noticed that Paris, despite being a major world city, lacked the mumbling, shuffling businessmen and general busy, bustling atmosphere that Americans know in D.C., Boston or New York City. Rather, the atmosphere seemed more fitting for a park on a Sunday afternoon. It was quite refreshing.

But we didn't have much time to relax, because we had a date with Alix du Tertre, another former French exchange student and a friend from the previous semester.

After a bit more walking, we met Alix next to Napoleon's Ecole Militaire (France's Westpoint) and stopped at a local cafe for an apero. However, as I was already exhausted and famished,



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BEN DUFFEY



Top left, Duffey outside Vatican City in Italy. Left, Duffey stays with former student Joseph Ramauger and his parents in southern France. Top, Duffey at the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Below, Pope Benedict XVI in Vatican City.



the drink left me a bit dizzy and in a dream-like state, Paris seemed unbelievable, it seemed impossible that Joseph and Alix were really even sitting there. It was as if as if I was living in a poem by Apollinaire.

Lovely as it was, the evening had to end. Joseph and I retrieved my bag, and I passed out until we reached his house in Dollon, about an hour southwest of Paris.

When I woke up, I stepped out of the car, grabbed my bags and walked with Joseph down a quiet, dimly lit street toward his house. As we walked up to the door, I noticed an old cathedral a little farther up.

I asked Joseph about it, and he explained to me that it was built around the 14th century, and behind it there was a monument to all the young men that Dollon had lost in the two great wars.

As I entered the house, Joseph's parents, Philippe and Elizabeth, showered me with warm welcomes. With them was a neighbor whom Joseph called "truly French" with a mustache, rosy cheeks and an obvious affinity for good wine.

We talked for a few minutes, making jokes and letting them try out their English, and then I headed up to bed.

As I got out of bed the next morning and made my way downstairs, I noticed that the house was fundamentally different from the average American house. Manually cut beams, which made up the skeleton of the structure, were visible along the ceilings, showing the house was constructed long before the time of Bob Vila. The house was beautiful and had an old country feel, something that the urban sprawl which I've come to know seems to lack.

I sat down next to Joseph at the table, where the family was gathered around a roasted duck. Pierre, Joseph's brother, Philippe and Elizabeth began to speak to me, putting my French skills to the test.

I passed with a C, but what I really took away from that conversation was Joseph and his family were, despite American myths about the French, some of the warmest, most welcoming people I have met, and it was good to know them.

As the day went on, we visited Joseph's grandparents. We sat down in the house, and his grandmother brought out some aperos, but this time I just took water. As I sat there, Joseph's grandfather told me about his childhood in Paris under the occupation. He stood up and marched to imitate the big, mus-

cular American troops for whom he cheered as they marched into Paris.

After that, Joseph, Pierre and I drove to visit their grandmother, Andre, and her friend, Guy. Andre had been cooking all day long, and the air was filled with the aroma of traditional French dishes. Around the house were many paintings, mostly of scenes in France, all done in warm colors.

After inquiring, I learned Guy was the artist, and he had been traveling around Europe to paint for many years. We sat down and had an apero of Pastis, a drink from southern France. Although I would come to appreciate it, that night I could barely stomach it. We nevertheless had a great dinner, some good wine, and we talked about Guy's paintings, France, the French and America.

The evening ended and it was time to drive to Angers, the city where Joseph and I would be studying. As we drove, I recounted my arrival in France and realized I had already had an adventure before even arriving in my home city.

Now, in retrospect, I see most of my time in Europe was an adventure and I still had a lot to anticipate. However, I will never forget my arrival in France, the sense of adventure it brought and how it set the tone for an amazing semester abroad.

## Letters to the Editor

### Pot not a problem in the Czech

I'm writing about Caroline Fry's thoughtful story: "Drug policy hurts more than it helps, students say" (11-5-07).

If tough-on-drugs policies worked, the idealistic goal of a drug-free America would have been reached a long time ago.

And if tolerant marijuana policies caused more hard drug use and crime, the Czech Republic would have much higher rates of hard drug use and crime. They do not.

The Czech Republic is the only country in the world where adult citizens can legally use, purchase, possess and grow small quantities of marijuana. In the Netherlands, marijuana is quasi-legal, not officially legal.

The Czech overall drug arrest rate is one per 100,000 population. The United States' overall drug arrest rate is 585 per 100,000 population.

The Czech robbery rate is two per 100,000 population. The United States' robbery rate is

160.2 per 100,000 population, according to the FBI.

According to our drug war cheerleaders, tolerant marijuana laws cause people to use other, much more dangerous drugs, like meth and heroin.

Obviously, this doesn't happen in the Czech Republic. Why not?

Could it be when people can legally obtain marijuana at an affordable price, they tend not to use or desire any other recreational drugs?

Could it be that marijuana legalization actually creates a roadblock to hard drug use — not a gateway?

Could it be that the vast majority of our so-called "drug-related crime" is caused by our marijuana prohibition policies?

Kirk Muse  
Mesa, AZ

### What on Earth is a hippie?

In response to William Mattison's letter on dreadlocks, why, in an editorial stressing open-mindedness, are you outright attacking your peers? Why do you hone in and attack a fellow student over the vague detail that her grandma cried about her dreads? Why on Earth do you jump at the opportunity to include an attack on Herman Hesse, a German, who wrote novels over 50 years ago?

All young people, no matter how self-assured they appear, are locked in the process of discovering the person they are to become. All young people do things that later make them cringe.

This "hippie" image that is arousing complaints could amount to nothing more than a fad, people trying on some new images and ideas. It's important to note the labels of "hippie" and "counterculture" are so diluted they can refer to anything from a

rainforest conservation league to a sweatshop-sewn pair of flare jeans at the mall.

What we are painting as the "wannabe hippie" culture includes a lot of different people with a lot of different ideas beneath their dreads. It's not possible to link an individual with some community preoccupied with live music, drug experimentation and general hedonism on the premise of hairstyle.

What about people who are genuinely concerned, educated and active when it comes to environmental and political? What about people who just like the look of dreads? Most of us recognize that categorizing others is a very slippery slope.

I am not criticizing Mattison's passion. There's nothing wrong with hot blood; anger helps us recognize and solve problems, define personal boundaries and occasionally incite social and political change.

Further, Mattison brings to light some definite flaws in the ideology of some students, but mistakes can be learning tools and we are all going to make plenty. Just as another student may one day feel silly for fighting with poor granny about Rastafarian culture, Mattison might also feel silly for bashing his peers.

A lot of people annoy me, too, but since I can make my own choices without being bombarded with insults, I guess they should be allowed the same.

So, when you spot your "fake hippie" foes at a concert, downtown or in the next desk over in poetry class, take a deep breath, remind yourself you're not being violated and apply yourself to something constructive.

Ben Barrat  
sophomore psychology student