



Photo by Beth Ellen - Staff Photographer

ABC WLOS News 13 anchor Darcel Grimes and Asheville mayor Terry Bellamy share a laugh before the F-Word panel discussion in the Sherrill Center.

Panel discusses female stereotypes, media image

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The negative portrayal of women in the media is the biggest barrier to female equality, said participants in a discussion panel on feminism at a film screening on Friday night.

The discussion panel followed a screening of *Miss Representation*, one of the documentaries featured in UNC Asheville's annual F-word (Feminism) Film Festival.

Miss Representation addresses the barriers women have in American society and the ways the media underrepresents and misuses the female image, undermining gender equality.

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Berryman-Finke, who attended the discussion panel, said the ways in which the media depicts women in both Hollywood and Washington, D.C., have not improved, at least in the public eye.

"These depictions (of women) haven't changed. They've been updated with images that

are even more bothersome and frightening than before," Berryman-Finke said.

The film addressed the female stereotypes most often expressed by the media, including sexualization of the female body, political inadequacy, the "cat-fight" female mentality and the media destruction of female politicians.

UNCA students were among those who participated in the discussion.

"Why are we tearing apart women in (political) power?" said **Rachel Collman, an undeclared freshman who served as a panel member.** "These are the women making policies. We should be supporting the women who are doing that."

Collman said the negative portrayal of American female politicians is one of the biggest barriers to achieving gender equality in our democracy.

"More people need to know how powerful women are in Congress," Collman said.

Spectators at the panel agreed, calling for women to unite and mentor one another in an effort to break social perceptions.

Allison Smith, a senior literature student, says she feels her education at UNCA has better prepared her to break some perceptions preventing female inequality.

"What is important for me is being media literate," Smith said. "To be able to take apart, understand, know who's telling us what and deconstruct these messages."

The discussion panel also addressed the ways in which the film attempted to appeal to the audience and make feminism a palatable issue.

"The film was bookended by objectification images. All the powerful women were in

the middle," said **Catherine Frank, director of the North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement.**

Collman agreed with Frank, saying that the film eased the viewer into feminism, due to the social stigmas surrounding the topic.

"Feminism doesn't just mean women, but equalization of all people," Collman said.

Smith agreed, saying the negative perceptions of feminism keep it from being a forerunner on the social agenda.

"The fact that this festival is called the F-word is testament to those views on feminism," Smith said.

Four films screened at this year's F-word Festival.

Miss Representation, which originally aired on the Oprah Winfrey network, was followed by two faculty and student lead

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