

OPINION

WHINES & GRIPES

Why are corn practices so late? A girl needs her beauty sleep!

It's fifty degrees outside, and it's STILL colder in the dorms.

Why do I almost get hit by a car every time I walk to class? Pedestrians have the right of way, and I even bother to use the crosswalks, so slow down!

Dear professors, when it's midterm week you shouldn't feel the need to call out a last minute assignment as you dismiss class. I can't handle any more than what's on the syllabus.

I don't believe the gift cards all these surveys promise are real. I've been filling out every survey I get for 3 years now, and I don't know anyone who's won one!

Why was it so hot in Joyner last week? I shouldn't be breaking a sweat sitting in class!

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

As co-editors for the 2012-13 academic year, we welcome and request letters to the editors addressing local and campus issues. We also invite feedback on The Herald as a whole and individual articles. Please send letters to herald@email.meredith.edu.

*We hope to hear from you!
-Amy Hruby and Julia Dent*

CLASSIFIED ADS

Raleigh Jobs to Turn Out NC Voters.

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Details: <http://www.ncconservationnetwork.org/jobs/gotv-phone-bank-position>

Baby, She Was Born This Way: Supporting Lady Gaga

Rachel Prati, staff writer

If you follow pop culture happenings even half as vigilantly as I do, I'm sure you've heard of the recent Lady Gaga weight-gain debacle. If you haven't, the story basically goes like this: the pop star gained about 25 pounds, received overwhelming criticism from the media and her fans. She responded by posting photos of herself scantily clad and un-retouched on her fan site with the strikingly honest caption, "bulimic and anorexic since I was 15."

'What's the big deal?' you might ask. Gaga very publicly admitted to having previously struggled with a problem many young women are silently plagued by: body issues, insecurity and maybe even eating disorders. We, as women, know how these issues develop. As teenagers, perhaps even as children, we're exposed to a culture full of media images which promote a very narrow ideal of beauty, excluding the overwhelming majority of healthy body types. I admit, I've struggled to overcome a negative body image, and it's not easy. We are constantly bombarded by the media and advertisements assuring us that we are never quite right, never quite perfect enough. It's that feeling that prompts us to buy unnecessary things we don't need and advertisers keep consumers buying the "next best thing."

Lady Gaga's fiasco is seen as just

another media ploy to negatively shape our perception of beauty. When I first saw the initial pictures of the singer, I thought to myself, ok, another ridiculous outfit but still rather tame for the great Gaga.

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Then I read the captions: "Lady Gaga beefs up." I paused, looked at the image again and again failed to notice the "beef." The caption made me reevaluate my previous claim, which I formulated entirely on my own. I concluded, even after reading the rest of the disparaging article and the dozens of venomous comments, that to me, Gaga looked fantastic.

At ages 12 through 16 I did not have the ability to formulate my own opinion and then stand by it in a situation where a woman's weight or body shape was critiqued. I would have taken this scandal and used it to extinguish any self-confidence I had at the time. I would have seen myself represented in

those "beefed-up pictures" and would have taken the media's criticism, intended for a celebrity, and applied it to myself. The scandal would have been the impetus for a crazy new diet, a refusal to go out for ice cream with friends and the missing out on the normal teenage fun.

Luckily, I grew up into a woman that is able to reject what the media portrays. We are not mere victims facing overwhelming disapproval; we can choose to love ourselves, no matter what ridiculous ideals are placed upon us. We can choose to realize and appreciate our unique beauty that cannot be captured in some paparazzi's lens or critiqued in an online gossip column. It's up to us to decide not to listen.

Perhaps you're too mature to care about pop-culture or maybe, like me, you've taken particular interest in this story. I simply feel that we should all respect and encourage Lady Gaga's public embracing of her body, perceived flaws and all, and hope that the younger generation of young men and women takes notice. We should all follow Lady Gaga's example of courage and learn to love ourselves exactly as we are, despite what the cynics say because baby, we were born this way.

Case Threatens to Challenge Defense of Marriage Act

Monique Kreisman, staff writer

Section three of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), signed into law in 1996, prevents federal recognition of same-sex marriages. Section two provides that states not be forced to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. President Obama has stated that he believes DOMA to be unconstitutional, and if it comes before the Supreme Court, his administration will not defend it. Although the Court has not yet announced that it will take a DOMA case, a challenge to the law, Windsor v. U.S., could possibly be heard this year. It might mean changes to the way same-sex marriage is regulated in the U.S., and it certainly indicates changes in the country's attitude since DOMA was passed over fifteen years ago.

The Windsor v. U.S. case pertains to the right of same-sex couples to transfer property after death in states where same-sex marriages are not recognized. In this case, Edith Windsor and Thea Spyer lived together in New York City for more than forty years. They were married in 2007 out of New York, but when Spyer died three years ago and left her estate to Windsor, they were not considered legally married by the federal government. Windsor paid \$363,000 in federal estate taxes

because New York did not recognize same-sex marriages at the time of Spyer's death.

If the Court hears a DOMA challenge like Windsor v. U.S., there are two ways it might rule. It could rule widely and find that marriage is or is not a fundamental right that is protected by the Constitution. It might also rule narrowly about one section. For example, it might require that states recognize marriages performed in other states but make no all-inclusive decision about the right to marry.

The respondent—the government—argues that DOMA is constitutional because it is well within the federal government's authority to define marriage. The brief filed for the government says, "Section 3 of DOMA simply asserts the federal government's right as a separate sovereign to provide its own definition which governs only federal programs and funding." The states are free to define marriage as they wish, but federal benefits of marriage will go only to the marriages that fit the federal definition.

However, the fact that DOMA allows states to deny some federal benefits to same-sex couples that are readily available to opposite-sex couples raises constitutional questions. These re-

wards include numerous advantages in tax, welfare, immigration, and health care programs run by the federal government. The Fourteenth Amendment states that no state shall deny any person equal protection of the law, and as long as the federal government continues to regulate marriage, collect estate taxes, distribute welfare and health care benefits, and control immigration, it seems to be a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment for states to give those advantages to some couples but not to others. If federal laws on marriage exist, the states have a responsibility to apply those laws to all people. DOMA, then, is contradictory to the Fourteenth Amendment, because it allows (and even encourages) states to decide for themselves if they will grant federal marriage benefits only to opposite-sex couples. If there were no federal advantages to marriage, it would not be a constitutional problem for the states to make their own rules. However, if opposite-sex couples are receiving assistance, the states are compelled to allow same-sex couples the same opportunity for federal aid. What remains to be seen is if the justices of the Supreme Court agree.