



# Campus Women



## You say what?!?

Or: What the hell is womanhood anyway?

These are very confusing times. For the first time in History, a woman is expected to combine: intelligence with high heels, and an open, non-sexist relationship with a tan guy who has a great bod."

-Lynda Barry

Yes, women are kind of hard to figure out, for men as well as for the women themselves. The simple fact of possessing two "X" chromosomes doesn't guarantee an instant understanding among the global sisterhood. Even having breasts doesn't create a common bond, as small-breasted women don't understand the problems of large-breasted women or mammography patients or women who don't wear bras or ...

But is this really a lack of understanding? It depends on how you define understanding, really. It's like saying men don't understand menstrual cramps because they've never experienced them. Well, sure, a man wouldn't know a cramp if it was just walking down the street, but if he puts a little thought into it, he can understand if a woman is in excruciating, crippling pain. Do you really have to have lived through a common experience to understand how someone else feels?

It's really unfortunate that feminism, which is essentially an empathetic, inclusive movement, by its very nature of being inclusive has included those with exclusive and/or dogmatic viewpoints. The latter group becomes apparent whenever there is an attempt made to define womanhood or women. For instance, there's a quote that runs "What would the world be like without men? Full of fat, happy women." Now, to suggest that women should be able to take pride in their bodies as they are, rather than inflicting torture on themselves to attain some idealized standard of beauty is one thing. To suggest, as an oversimplified maxim like this does, that the only true women are women who are fat is to insinuate that all thin women are oppressed, or unenlightened, or unworthy of consideration. These attitudes extend in varying degrees though such small things as body weight all the way up to very major issues -- issues that affect so many people that a set of "rules" designed by one particular subgroup cannot begin to address all the questions.

There's a theory which in Economics is described as "efficiency". It states that if one person's lot can be improved

without doing harm to another person, then efficiency has been achieved. Specific to the concept of womanhood, it's almost impossible to define one set of principles and characteristics as exemplifying womanhood, without excluding anyone who doesn't perfectly fit that mould, and the right to make their own choices in life. Perhaps having access to a bewildering array of what womanhood is should not be trying to produce a society of uniformly "perfect" women, but rather to allow each woman to form a microcosm within herself that is perfect to her. ■

## BOOK REVIEW

*DON'T: A WOMAN'S WORD*

Elly Danica's book *Don't: A Woman's Word* is an edited version of the author's own journal in which she remembers and attempts to deal with the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse she suffered at the hands of the men in her life. The memories are resurfacing in this journal for the first time since the abuse and they are not only genuine and shocking but downright atrocious. The reason for these memories resurfacing is Danica's quest for a place where she could feel safe -- she spent all her savings on a church in rural Saskatchewan -- having no money left, she was forced to face her immense fear and live in the basement of this sanctuary. Through her need to deal with her fear, the memories of her abuse at her father's hands began to flood her consciousness, and she began to deal with them.

The incidences of abuse portrayed within this book began as early as four years of age and include such things as violence, incest, rape, pornography and prostitution.

These types of abuse continue for approximately eleven years -- gradually growing both in magnitude and frequency. At nine years old, she was prostituted by her father and her uncle during a day trip to the stock car races. She is used by her father as a model for child porn photos -- she is also prostituted to produce the above said photos. Her extreme emotions, pain and questions are portrayed very explicitly without being detailed to the point of being past readability. At the age of eighteen, she jumped into a marriage to escape the poison of her home -- her sisters were never abused and still sincerely believe that she is/was lying about her abuse. Unfortunately, her marriage was a situation similar to her life with her father. To deal with her unhappiness and inability to be a "good wife" to her husband, she was taken to a psychiatrist and after six years of tranquilizers and fears, she leaves her husband and son to try to be happy. She eventually bought her little church and began to work through her fears.