

# BEATS

NEWCOMER YOUTH VOICE + PERSPECTIVE



# GIRLZ

ISSUE 2 SUMMER 2013, GIRLZ ISSUE





## **RHYTHM, COLOURS AND US**

Collage by: Melissa Leong

"It doesn't matter who you are, or where you came from. The ability to triumph begins with you. Always." -Oprah Winfrey

**“A GIRL  
SHOULD BE  
TWO THINGS:  
WHO  
AND  
WHAT  
SHE  
WANTS.”**

BY: COCO CHANEL

## EDITOR'S NOTE

*By: Tania Suarez Mendoza*

Being a girl can be one of the most difficult things in life, but at the same time I wouldn't know how to live otherwise. I moved from Mexico City in 2005, being only ten years old, I didn't see much of a difference. It is when I started growing up, and making new friends and adapting to "Canadian society" that it became complicated. I could not do the same things my friends did. I couldn't go to school by myself like them, or hang out as freely as them. I became frustrated. I couldn't understand why. The thing is being an immigrant is hard. Being an immigrant who is a girl is ten times harder.

But, it's okay! I realized, I'm not alone in this, and neither are you. No matter where we come from, what religion we follow, or what language we speak, we all go through the same challenges. What makes it hard is the difference between society here, and back home. The challenge is defining yourself, by your standards. BEATS Girlz is a collaboration of various perspectives and personal experiences from immigrant and refugee

girls. We have come together to hopefully inspire you to continue to move forward and face the challenges that come with being a newcomer girl.

We want to thank the community and Girls Action Foundation for being supportive of this project and making BEATS Issue 2 happen.

The truth of the matter is that it does not matter whether you are an immigrant or not, girls in our society are often the ones who suffer the most.

**BEATS RECOGNIZES THE COAST  
SALISH LAND AND PEOPLE**

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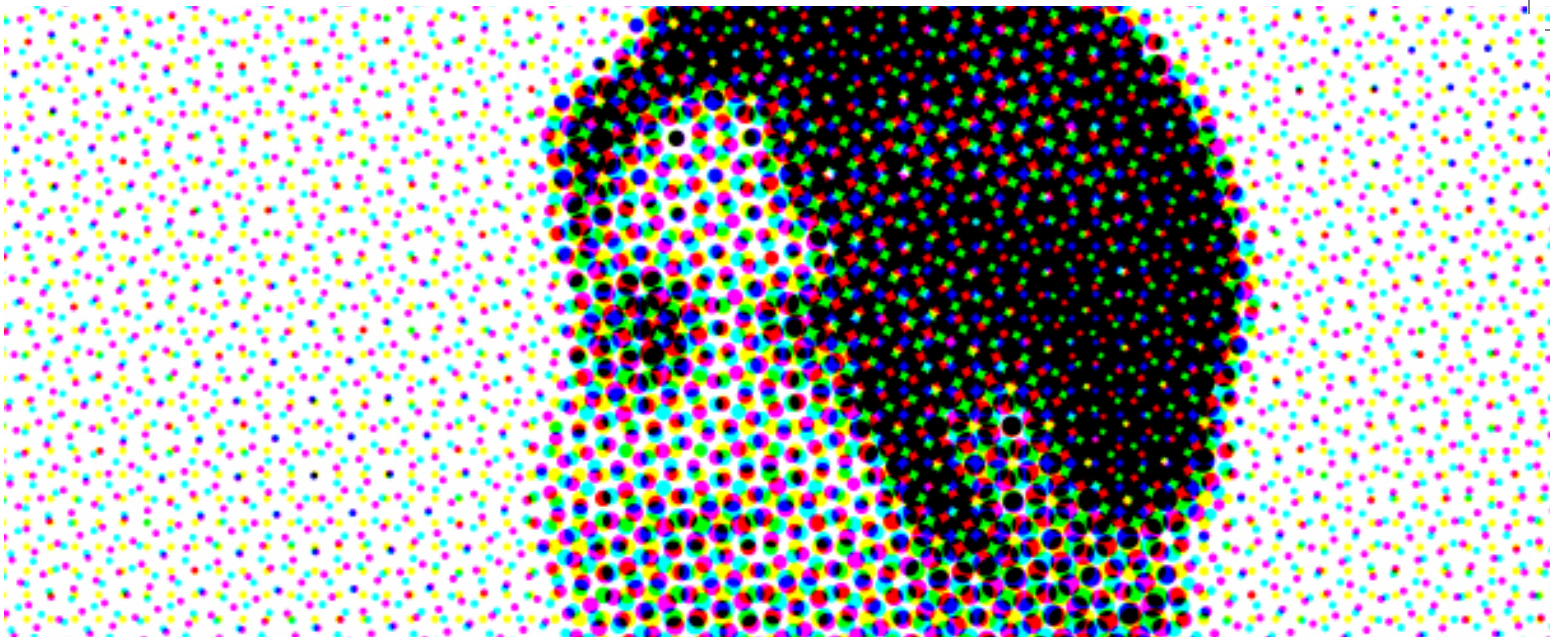
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BEATS Girlz was funded by **GIRLS ACTION FOUNDATION** and supported by **BRITANNIA COMMUNITY CENTRE**





## CONTENT

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**06**

### ART WORKS

Lorena Del Castillo and Melissa Leong

**08**

### WHAT GRINDS YOUR GEARS

Girls share their perspectives

**10**

### "MISS" UNDERSTOOD

A collaboration of stories how girls have been underestimated by many

**12**

### ART WORKS

A poem by Ejemen Iyayi

**14**

### #SEXTALK

Girls share their cultural experiences with sex ed.

**16**

### BEING GIRLZ

Feature Story

**20**

### GIRLZ GONE WILD

Bullying = Violence

**22**

### GUILTY PLEASURES

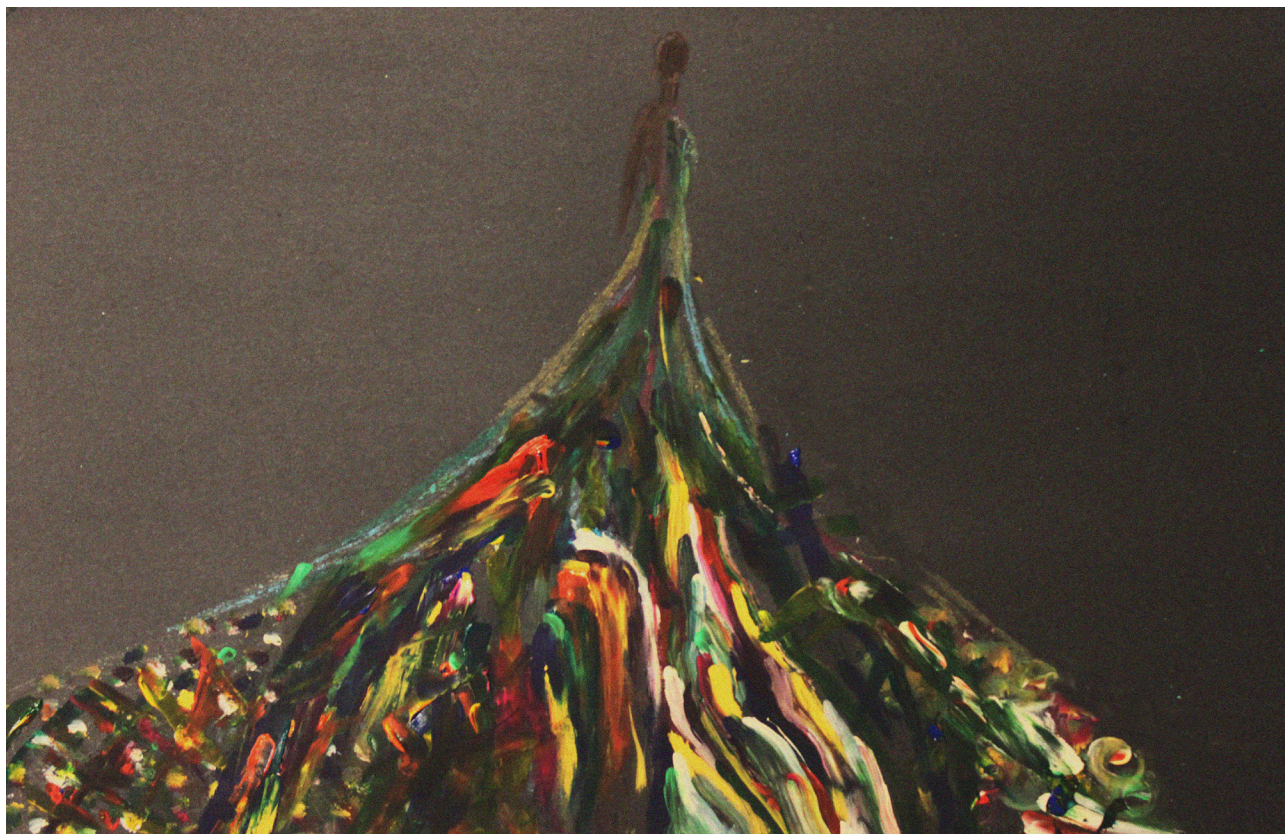
Girls share their guilty pleasures

**23**

### ART WORKS

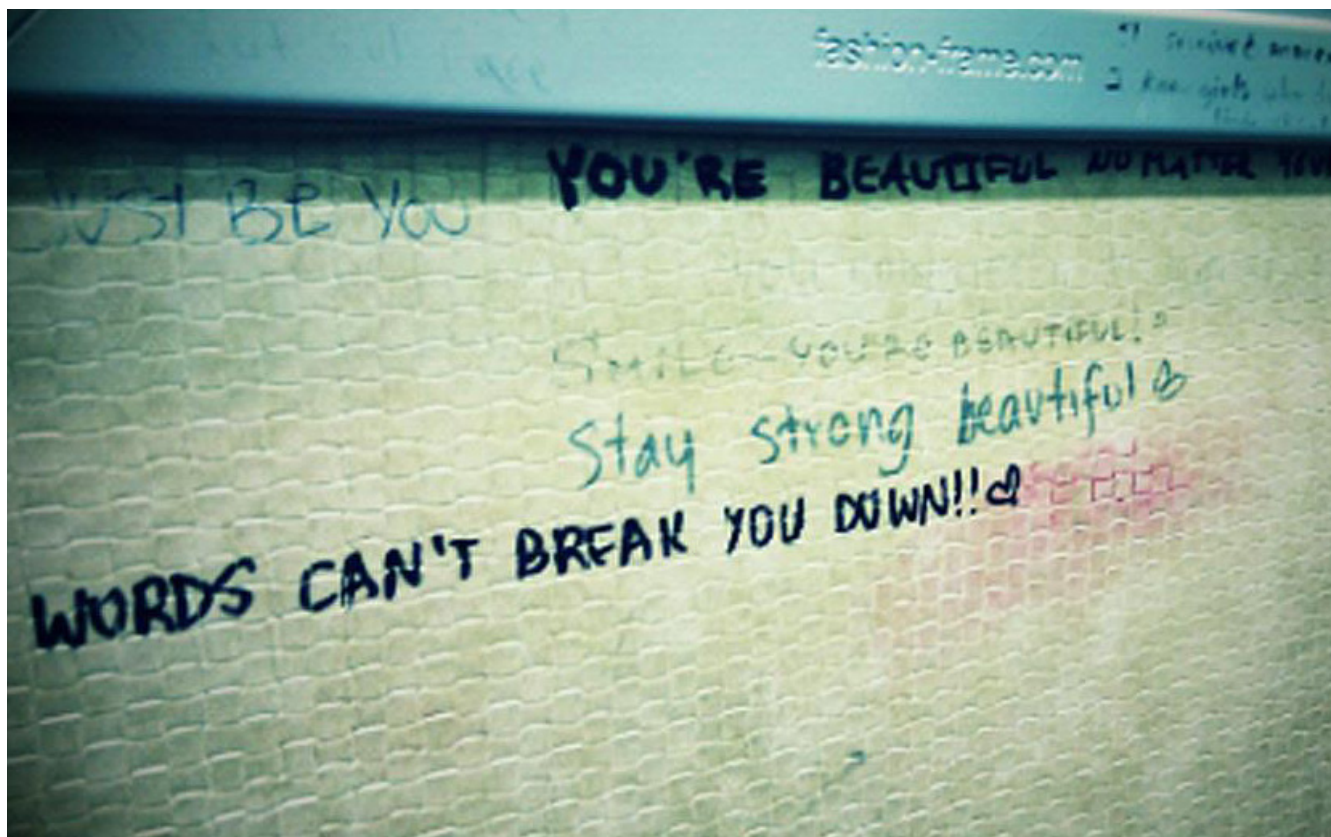
Photography by Melissa Leong





**ALL LAYERS TOGETHER**

Painting by: Lorena Del Castillo



## **YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL AS YOU ARE**

Photography by: Melissa Leong

Sometimes, we girls are too caught up with the comments we receive about how we look and what we ought to be. Nothing matters. The only important thing is that you know you are beautiful as who you are. Everyone is unique, and your beauty too. Love yourself.

# WHAT GRINDS YOUR GEAR?

## **"OH, YOU'RE JUST PMSING"**

*By: Tania Suarez Mendoza*

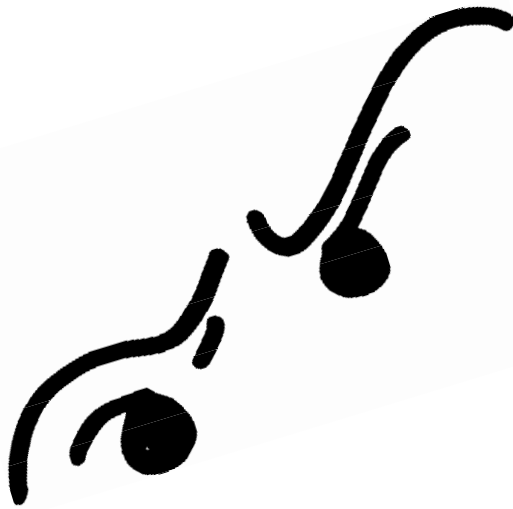
How many of us have heard someone use this phrase before? How many of those times was it a guy using it? While it is true that once a month some of us girls tend to get a little sensitive, it's still no excuse for the use of this expression. What bothers me the most is that, most of the time, when we are accused of "PMSing", we're really not. Let's break this down. What is PMSing? PMS stands for pre-menstrual syndrome describing physiological changes your body goes through every month, it can include emotional changes or physical changes. Having said this, it is clear that it is not what people think. Every time we get upset over what has been said, it's because we are so overly sensitive because we are girls and because we are PMSing. This is not PMSing. We have the right to get upset over things. It's not us being "overly sensitive" because it's our time of the month; it's people not know what they have said is wrong.

## **NEGATIVE NEGATIVE!**

*By: Lorena Del Castillo*

Something that really grinds my gears is when people start being negative. You know, those people that complain so much that you eventually start complaining yourself or start feeling discouraged. People that complain so much about a situation that they overshadow the positives. They can be complaining about even the smallest thing so often that it gets plain annoying to the point where you don't want to be around them. When we find ourselves in a difficult situation, try not to think that your life sucks. Just remember that other people may have it worse and they may even wish to be in your shoes. Whatever trial you may encounter is temporary. Even if it is life threatening, I would rather live the rest of my days happily and positively than waste them thinking how miserable my life is; it's better to go through it with a positive attitude than with a miserable one. If you think something will go wrong then it most likely will go that way.





### SHITTY BUS DRIVERS

*By: Jennifer Sarkar*

There are quite a few things that bother me about bus drivers who clearly need to have a solid workshop around how to treat others. Not everyone knows how the North American transit system works. Bus drivers need to be patient and considerate of others, especially newcomer families. I remember once I was on the bus and a woman (who didn't seem to speak English very well) got on the bus with her kid. She didn't know where to insert the ticket. She seemed helpless and lost while the bus driver started to almost yell saying "no free" ride and "why don't you know this?" I was frustrated with this situation; however, a nice guy behind her showed her politely where the ticket should go.

As newcomers we are already scared in a new place on top of that, people treating you like trash does not create a good first impression of the place which is known as one of the best places to live in the world.

### TOLERATE THIS!

*By: Sara Mehmedi*

What really grinds my gears is the use of the word "tolerance" to promote the acceptance of diversity in our community. I tolerate pain, but I don't like it. I also tolerate waking up early but I'd avoid it if I could. I tolerate deadlines but I wish I didn't have to. You see where I'm going with this? "Tolerance" implies the bare minimum, and does not necessitate mutual appreciation. If tolerance is the standard upon which we base our respect for difference and diversity, then we will never achieve the intended sentiment: one of respect and admiration. If we tolerate, we succumb to a defeatist attitude, one that condones attitudes of superiority. Let's not tolerate, let's love!

### POPULARITY CONTEST

*By: Sara Cardona*

Popularity is still a major issue in high school since it prevents interaction between certain people and therefore forges changes in someone's personality. In order to be considered popular, people must be of a particular weight and have certain friendships. I have had friends or seen people go through these changes in order to feel included, but what truly bothers me is how inconsiderate these people become as they go through these changes. First, they demand their parents to change their whole wardrobe and even to change the eating habits at home so they stop gaining weight, which they don't even consider the expenses of that. Next, they get rid of their old friends because they think that they are the cause for which they are not considered popular. In conclusion, they change drastically and start being indifferent with the ones who love them without considering their feelings.

# *“Miss”* UNDERSTOOD

## THEY FELT THE PRESSURE!

By: Ejemen Iyayi

I once went go-karting with a couple of my guy friends. Tons of fun! But I don't think those guys expected me to have half as much fun as they did! At first they were faster than me. After about 3 laps, I settled into the driving and I was ready to blaze the tracks! I picked up more and more speed until I was neck and neck with most of the guys. They felt the pressure! After our time go-karting, they commented on how they really didn't expect me to be driving as fast as them. The assumption was that girls can't drive or live on the edge driving fast. Nuh-uh, boys! Misunderstood. I showed them that ladies too can have a need for speed!

## 'CLARIFY'

By: Nathalie Lozano Neira

Rather than describing one specific moment, I thought I would focus on general assumptions or entitlements people usually take that often end up in "miss-understandings" or to be more precise in stupid comments or actions. There have been numerous occasions in which typically men but sometimes women feel like they have to 'clarify' what I am saying. Well, having an accent and all probably makes people think like they are doing me a favour by paraphrasing what I said, but I have a mind of my own and if I am not understood I will find a way of making myself clear. Please leave your saviour complex at home for your cat or your flowers I definitely don't need an English to English without an accent translator.

**"WHEN WE FINALLY ASKED HIM ABOUT THE GYM CLUB HE ASKED: "WHO IS THE ONE THAT WANTS TO JOIN THE GYM CLUB?" I ANSWERED IT WAS ME, AND HE LOOKED AT ME UP AND DOWN, STRIPPING THE LITTLE COURAGE I HAD COME TO TALK TO HIM."** - Lorena Del Castillo

## JOIN THE GYM CLUB

By: Lorena Del Castillo

It was one of those days where I decided to turn my life around and I wanted to eat healthy and take better care of my body. So I decided to join the gym club. That week I went with two of my friends to talk to the Physical Education teacher who was in charge of the club. He was known to have little patience and sarcastic personality, so when we went to talk to him, my friends and I were very nervous. When we finally asked him about the gym club he asked: "Who is the one that wants to join the gym club?" I answered it was me, and he looked at me up and down, stripping the little courage I had come to talk to him. He made a smirk and in a demeaning voice asked me if I had the money to paid the membership, and told me not to come until I had it. Once I had paid, I went there and the gym was full of guys. They started at me and I felt really uncomfortable. After that I only attended 3 times. The teacher and the other guy's stares make me feel like I should not be there. It wasn't only me, but also other girls that had try to join found it very intimidating. During those moments, it really sucked to be a girl.

## "WOW! YOU'RE ACTUALLY SMART"

By: Sara Mehmedi

As a woman, my actions are often met with much resistance. I am forced into the proverbial box by people I have yet to meet. My abilities are underestimated and my skills are patronized. As human beings, we have dubbed ourselves the most intelligent species on Earth because of our (oftentimes questionable) ability to think abstractly. Too often, however, we cannot see past our default mode of thinking; that of mutual exclusivity. In other words, you're either strong or feminine, pretty or intelligent. If I want to wake up a little earlier in order to do my hair and makeup, how does this take away from my intelligence? It doesn't. Far too often, I have been "complimented" on my intelligence to the tune of "Wow! You're actually smart!" What made you think I wasn't? Forgive me if I don't consider that a compliment.



# HER CHALLENGE

POEM BY: EJEMEN A. A. IYAYI

Since when did common dreams become exclusive?  
Since when did a thirsty mind become repulsive?

...Social constructs become conclusive?  
...Human rights become elusive?

Since when did this very species become alien?  
Since when did "equality" fall on a gradient?  
...Dropping some in abandonment?  
...Suppressing the voices that rest in them?

...Leaving meek smiles that hide within  
Layers upon layers of untapped wisdom?

Since when?  
Since when?

Since when did that woman,  
With great strength in her stride,  
Spreading out her goodwill  
With still more to provide,  
Since when did she fall?  
...Did she fall lower?  
..Did she fall to the bottom?  
..Did she fall to the lowest rungs of humanity?

# OUR CHALLENGE

Since when did she become "The Other"?  
...Did she stand alone amongst us all?  
...Did she fail to be an equal?  
...Did she need to lose her dignity?

Since when?  
Since when?

Since the time we forgot.  
Since the time we let our eyes shut.  
Since the time we refused to comprehend  
That a woman  
Is a human  
And the struggles she breathes  
Are struggles we have in common  
'Cause her pain and life marginalized  
Come from a world where we reside,  
And the lessons she takes and leaves with her child  
Impact the world that we leave behind.  
She's trying  
To be seen,  
Fighting  
To survive in,  
This world,  
Pushing her against the grain...  
Her world,  
Where her actions and thoughts remain con-  
strained...  
Your world,  
In which inaction adds to the strain...  
Our world,  
Where our perspectives have power to frame  
The experiences  
And dreams,  
The opportunities  
Foreseen  
That we'll build together  
For all to endeavour,  
Side by side, not below or above each other,  
Making us part of a place  
Where one woman's burden  
Gives the next person space  
To stand up to a system

That has left values debased,  
To shift 'round the borders  
And give rise to a case  
In which anyone's worth  
Cannot be replaced.  
No! Because,  
In this place-  
Not just in mental space-  
But, in THIS place  
Equality can thrive  
And it will come alive  
At the point when we realize  
That, in actuality,  
Within our ties,  
Her gains  
Can stem from our gains.  
Her smile  
Can take root in our smile.  
Her hurt,  
Can reflect our own hurt.  
Because,  
Her fight,  
Using up all her might,  
Her plight,  
To attain a simple right,  
Is embedded within  
Her challenge  
Her challenge,  
Her challenge.  
Her challenge-  
A human challenge-  
Her challenge,  
Is.  
Our.  
Challenge.

INNER BEAUTY  
EQUALITY  
STRENGTH  
PASSION  
LOVE



ILLUSTRATION BY: SARA MEHMEI

## WHAT THE ~~FUCK~~ IS GOING ON?

*A personal experience of Jennifer Sarkar*

I was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 1988 in a Catholic family but in a Muslim country. Since grade one to ten I went to an all girl Catholic school. I immigrated to Vancouver in 2005 with my mom, my dad and my younger sister. I was in ESL classes for three months; however, I was allowed to take a few regular classes. I remember during one of my regular classes we had two guests from an organization to give us a sex education workshop. This was the first time, in my sixteen years of life, I was getting "The Talk". Usually, the first time you get the sex talk most people get weirded out or something. My story was a bit different. I was sixteen, got here (Vancouver) two weeks ago from a country where I had never seen couples holding hands or being affectionate in public places. Oh! and I never studied with boys and didn't have access to high speed Google to look things up. I was just really confused during the entire workshop. I didn't understand why we all had a banana and transparent purple looking plastic thing in our hands? Why we are trying to put this plastic rubber (whatever it was) over the banana?! I learnt that the sex educators were referring to the banana as "penis". I didn't have a clue what a penis was or how it looked like. The entire workshop experience was funny; people around me were giggling. I went home and Googled a few things and realized what the banana actually meant. I never told my mom or anyone else in my family about this experience. Soon after that I graduated high school and went to college to study Fine Arts. Ironically, I got really comfortable drawing nude male models. My peers

at college seemed way more open-minded than my family so, I asked them questions. I learned more and educated myself.

I never blamed anyone for this situation. I never blamed my mother for not giving me a heads up about getting my period (the time I thought I was dying). All she said was "this will happen every month" and I replied "Ok". Although I was mad later to learn that guys don't get periods but that's another story. I am pretty sure my grandmother never told my mother about any of this. It is the conservative society I grew up in. Open sex talk is not appropriate to have in public. This is something you do in your private place or behind doors. Even when I was growing up which was in the early 90's most girls in Dhaka figured out sex education either from friends or from their secret boyfriends. However, thanks to modern technology and open access with smart phones young girls in general learning and getting themselves educated about it. Nonetheless, personally I haven't heard one Bengali girl (the ones I know so far in my life) saying, "My parents gave me the sex talk". It took me time and a lot of questioning to my peers and friends to learn about sex education and safe sex.

TANIA

JEN: SO, I WAS GETTING THE SECOND HALF?

TANIA: PART 1 IS ABOUT HOW U DO IT AN PART 2 IS HOW TO BE SAFE ABOUT IT.

JEN: I NEVER HAD PART 1 IN MY LIFE.

LORENA: DID U KNOW WHAT A CONDOM I

TANIA: DID U PLAY THE PENIS GAME?

JEN: NO, WHAT'S THAT?

LORENA: THIS GAME IS SO HIGH SCHOOL!

TANIA: IT'S NOTHING. ONE PERSON STARTS SAYING THE WORD "PENIS" AND IT GETS LOUDER AND LOUDER EVERY TIME SOMEONE ELSE SAYS IT.

JEN: I  
PROTE  
INSIDI



# #SEXTALK

TANIA: DID U GET ANY IMAGES WITH SEX ED?

JEN: NO, IT WAS JUST THE BANANA AND CONDOM DEMONSTRATION.

TANIA: IN GRADE 6 THEY CAME AND TALKED WITH US. I KINDA KNEW. BUT IT WAS MORE SCIENTIFIC WAYS RATHER THAN LIFE. THEN IN GRADE 10 THEY SEPARATE GUYS AND GIRLS AND SHOWED A SLIDESHOW OF DISTURBING IMAGES OF DISEASES AND TOLD US THIS WOULD HAPPEN IF U DON'T WEAR A CONDOM.

IT AND IT.

IDOM WAS?

JEN: I DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE.

LORENA: WHAT DID U THINK IT WAS?

JEN: I WAS THINKING IT COULD BE A BANANA PROTECTOR. U KNOW HOW U PUT YOUR BANANA INSIDE YOUR BAG AND IT GETS SQUISHED.

LORENA: GREAT! U ARE THE ORIGINAL INVENTOR OF THE BANANA CASE.

TANIA: THE BANANA NEEDS TO BE THE RIGHT SIZE TO FIT IN THE CASE THOUGH.



## 'THE TALK'

By: Lorena Del Castillo

My parents are very open-minded about everything. They used to teach sexuality to young couples at church so it wasn't much of a surprise when they bought me my first sexuality book for children when I was just about 7 years-old. They went through the book with me and explain it to me. Being in grade one, I was learning about so many things that learning about sexuality didn't scare me or shock me. It felt as normal learning about it as learning how to add or subtract. However they also told me that no all children knew about this and warned me to never talk about it with any other children since they will get scared. One day in grade 2, I said to a girl who used to bother me, that I knew something that will scare her so much that will scare her for life, I was referring to menstruation. As I was growing up I started to realized how little children knew about sexuality. Girls seemed the most affected by it, since the ones that knew the least, often ended up pregnant in their early teens or with really bad experiences when they got their period because they

didn't even know about it until they got it and didn't know what to do until their mom told them. It's surprising to see how many people, specially parents, expect the children to learn about sexuality at school instead of at home to avoid the awkwardness. There seems to be a taboo around sexuality when in reality, if people were more informed about it, they will use it more carefully and wisely avoiding despair.

# BEING GIRLZ

*The feature story is a collection of various thoughts and perspectives of girlz from immigrant and refugee communities about their own identity as girls, how they are view by their own cultures and the society. Contribuiton of stories by: Sara Mehmedi, Nathalie Lozano, Parniyan Hazhir, Lorena Del Castillo and Sara Cardona.*

## **NATHALIE LOZANO NEIRA**

When I was little, I hated being a girl. I grew up seeing how much cooler being a boy was, not because of Freud's stupid theory of penis envy, but because being a boy, at least where I grew up, had lots of perks. Guys were able to play until later, walk around the neighbourhood without shirts and never ever had to do any chores at home other than maybe run to the store to buy bread or eggs. I also hated wearing the stupid girly dresses because once my mom put on the princess costume I was unable to play soccer, run around with my friends and I always got yelled at because I was never able to sit with

my legs crossed. However, now that I am older, there are many aspects I love about being a young woman. I feel that because I get to experience the world as a woman, I view the world differently and therefore I have insights and make connections to other women that are impossible to describe. Regardless, every little benefit I get from being a woman comes with 100 expectations behind it. Therefore, though my mother has given up on seeing a daughter that will have a more 'traditional' life and attitude in life, my family in Colombia has yet to come to







terms with this idea. And so, every time I visit my home country, from the moment I get off the plane I am criticized on my body weight, my height, my out of wedlock relationship and more recently on my disinterest on having children. Thus, what keeps me going is the life I have chosen to live, my chosen family that includes my mother, my partner, my newly arrived siblings, my friends and my community. I find that surrounding myself with people that share, or at least meaningfully respect my values goes a long way into keeping me mentally and physically safe.

#### **SARA MEHMEDI**

Being a girl means being underestimated, and this I would have to say is my favourite part about being a girl. To me, there's no motivation greater than one fueled by the desire to break the mold that is so uncharacteristically created by society. Being underestimated means that when I achieve what I intend to, I shock. And "shock" is as vulnerable as you can get. It forces you to rethink everything you thought you knew. What empowers me as a girl is exactly this, being able to change peoples' minds by showing them rather than by telling them.

Growing up promises to be a balancing act between who you and your parents want you to be. Throw in another culture to the mix and you've got quite the juggling act. As a young refugee woman growing up in Canada, I've experienced the added struggle of having to grow up in a place where the society's expectations don't match my parents'. What's a girl to do? Hold onto my own cultural beliefs or assimilate and lose myself for the sake of fitting in? There's no easy answer. All I know is, I've heard "girls don't [insert action or belief here] enough times to warrant becoming immune to it. The fact is, there's no universal recipe for

growing up in a different culture. The first step is to quit thinking in terms of "black and white" (or pink and blue, I should say) and realize society's attempt to force us into boxes we were never meant to fit into.

#### **PARNIYAN HAZHIR**

My favourite part about being a girl is always proving people wrong – many people that I have met certain stereotypes or judgements about what girls are capable of or not and I just LOVE making them check their prejudices.

My religion expects me to be silent, obedient and passive. My culture gives me the opportunity to be brave but most of the time, my culture just expects me to get married young, have children and host big dinner parties for my husband's friends. My family on the other hand, expects me to be a fighter for my rights, to have a career and to be outspoken.

Art, especially in the form of literature and music empower me as a woman very much. My favourite heroines are Anna Karenina and Hermione Granger; Anna because she had to face the wrath of an unjust and patriarchal society and Hermione because she's secretly the real hero in the Harry Potter series. When someone makes me feel bad about being a girl, I love to crazy-dance to good music – it makes me feel better instantly!

#### **SARA CARDONA**

My favourite part about being a girl is being able to have a more diverse wardrobe than guys, to be able to have beautiful accessories and to wear makeup. I absolutely love putting nail polish on and doing decorations on my nails. I also enjoy playing with my face, and therefore I try different colours of eye shadows, eyeliner and lip

gloss on as a leisure. However, my favourite part is being able to wear different styles such as dresses and skirts to formal events or parties.

Coming from a Colombian background, a lot of things are expected from me regarding treatment towards men, maintenance of the house, having a certain weight, etc. In my opinion, society in Colombia like many other parts of the world, define women as being a slave (in some cases) since women must have the meal ready and served once the man is at home, must clean his dish and be attentive and comply to any of his desires. Women are also expected to maintain a clean house without the contribution of the man because if so they are judged by society and portrayed as lazy. Another expectation for women in my culture is to have a small waist, sizable breasts and gluteus.

As a woman, I want a job where my voice can be heard and in which I can inform people about the occurrences and therefore motivate them to help improve society. I also want a job in which I can inspire people and especially women to do things that they normally wouldn't do because society says differently.

#### **LORENA DEL CASTILLO**

My favorite part about being a woman is everything! I love being me and it specially amazes me the power women have to give the gift of life.

Well society and culture expect different things out of women, but I don't let that bother me too much. I'm concerned more about what I expect of myself which is building my own family in the future, exercise my profession while taking care of my family and simply be a great woman,

# IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING A GIRL AND BEING A WOMAN?

**“I FIND THAT SURROUNDING MYSELF WITH PEOPLE THAT SHARE, OR AT LEAST MEANINGFULLY RESPECT MY VALUES GOES A LONG WAY INTO KEEPING ME MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY SAFE”**

*- Nathalie lozano*

by showing respect for myself and being grateful for all the awesome things women do and are capable of doing. I don't really care what the world thinks, I may not fit into the women stereotypes that are out there but sincerely I don't care, I want to help other women to achieve that empowerment, and don't let oppression hide the light that women naturally have.

What empowers me is to know that I can choose to be who I want. I don't have the pressure on me to follow worldly trends that prejudice women and make them look like they have no worth. It's up to me if I want to impose that on me, and that's what empowers me, to know that I have a choice, lots of women and girls in the world don't have that choice, so I have the responsibility to take advantage of the choice that I have and make the best out of it.

## **NATHALIE LOZANO NEIRA**

Yes, and yes! I don't think that the difference between being a girl and being a woman is getting your period. That is a stupid way of forcing people into a category. To begin with, being a woman is not even about having the parts that are 'supposed' to make you a woman or about 'acting' the part, I truly believe that it is about self-identifying yourself as one. In the same way that I would never question anyone's name I would never question anyone's gender because it doesn't fit the narrow-minded picture I have in my head. So, I am talking about self-identification because it very much relates to the difference between being a girl and being a woman. In my opinion, this is also about what you choose to identify as, however, the term girl, is often used to infantilize woman or young woman into helpless beings or when have you ever heard a 20, 30, 40 or 50 something year old man being called a boy?

## **PARNIYAN HAZHIR**

I think being a girl and woman represent different times and different feelings I have in my life. When I think of being a woman, I feel as though it's more serious because as a woman I have more responsibilities and I need to be mature and patient. As a girl, I can be more radical, more free-spirited. The beautiful thing is that you are free to be a girl or a woman depending on how you feel – it's not age-restricted!

## **SARA CARDONA**

One of the few things that differentiate women from girls besides physical appearance is being accepted into the guys "world" without much judgement. Little kids are more innocent than adults; therefore their minds are not influenced by society gender disparity. Children are satisfied as long as they have someone to play, talk and laugh and therefore they don't discriminate girls for the fact of being just girls. In other words, as little girls we don't feel the discrimination of society as much.

## **SARA MEHMEDI**

To some, the difference between a girl and a woman is age or maturity. I don't quite agree with this distinction. Some days I feel like a girl and other days I feel like a woman. To me, one big difference is that women don't see gender in the colour pink. Also, the days when I feel like a woman, the difference between "needing" and "wanting" something is much clearer.

# GIRLZ GONE WILD

*This part of the magazine talks about girls-on-girls violence. As new-comer girls to a new country and to a new school we kind of expect other girls to be helpful and supportive. However, most of the time this is not the case. We girls, rather than being supportive of each other, we become each others' enemy, bullying each other at schools, at work-places and even sometimes within our own families.*

## I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS

*By: Jennifer Sarkar*

During our second week in Vancouver my parents took my sister and I to the school board to figure out which school we would be attending. We ended up attending David Thompson Secondary. We were put in ESL classes. My sister and I got separated because she was better at English than I was so she moved up grades faster. There was a group of girls at our school among them was one specific girl who happened to be a family friend. We went over to their house for dinner the first night I arrived to Vancouver. She was nice. At school, I remember she used to make fun of us and most of the time mocked us base on our accents, dressing style etc. At the time we didn't tell this to our

parents due to our situation at home. Later when we graduated high school we told our parents. I didn't understand most of the swear words they threw at me. They used to leave mean notes in my locker. I asked a few people around about some of the words and they told me they were being really mean to me. After a few weeks I stopped caring about all this bullshit. I ignored and trashed all notes in front of them. Sometimes I smiled at them in hallways. They called me weird and most likely realized I didn't give a shit anymore and their words did not affect me. Somehow I found the courage to held my head high and more forward. Turns out it is true, bullies **ARE** insecure.

**"After a few weeks I stopped caring about all this bullshit"**

## BULLYING = VIOLENCE

*By: Sara Mehmedi*

Bullying has become a normal part of growing up. It is time we see it for what it really is : Violence. We live in an individualistic society, one that encourages seeking out that which makes us different from others. As long as we focus on our differences, we will never look at what makes us similar. Promoting difference breeds contempt, it breeds competition. The truth is, no one can understand a woman better than another woman. We are all much more similar than we are different, so why not be each others' allies? Bullying is in no way, shape or form a normal part of growing up. To think that is to invalidate and belittle the violence experienced by its victims.



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# WHAT SUSIE SAYS OF SALLY SAYS MORE OF SUSIE THAN OF SALLY

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ILLUSTRATION BY: JENNIFER SARKAR



## SARA CARDONA

My most recent guilty pleasure is watching a Colombian soap opera called, *Alla Te Espero*. I can't let a week pass without watching this soap opera, not only because it entertains me and releases some of my daily stress, but it also connects me to my roots. I watch this soap opera every Friday for about 4 hours and the next day I call my best friend to gossip about it.

## MELISSA LEONG

I have a "food best friend". She is cold on the outside, but colorful and soft on the inside. She always comforts me when I'm unhappy or sad. I really have to say thank you to my best friend - Ms. Ice cream. But on the other hand, I have a "logical best friend". He is smart and alert, but worrisome. He always asks me not to "hang out" with Ice Cream because he knows the best about what I think about my diet. He is sometimes right - Mr. Conscience. I like them both and I don't want any of them being upset, so it's a "guilty pleasure" whenever I meet up with either one of them. Yes, it's complicated. :)

## LORENA DEL CASTILLO

My guilty pleasure is window shopping. I like going to the mall and just looking at the stores. I like thinking about what I could buy. The problem is when I actually have money to buy stuff. I have so much trouble thinking what could I buy and I go window shopping for hours. This activity is great since it allows you to find the best prices, what you need and are looking for. Sometimes I want to buy something from every store and my parents get mad. However it feels good to go and buy something. Window shopping relaxes me and I find it as entertaining as watching a movie, or even better.

# GUILTY PLEASURES

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## SARA MEHMEDI

One of my favourite guilty pleasures is sitting in bed with a tub of ice cream (my choice of flavour being Ben & Jerry's "Chunky Monkey") and watching old, black and white movies. There's just something about ice cream that makes it the ultimate comforter. Even the classic horror flicks seem that much less intimidating.

## NATHALIE LOZANO NEIRA

My guilty pleasure is listening to hard-core metal, grunge and rock music. Why is it a guilty pleasure? Because often, though not always, the messages that come across in their songs are sexist and racist. Both principles that deeply affect me and which I strongly oppose. In this genre there are also very few women bands that make it in the industry. However, there is something about bands like AC/DC or Metallica whose actual raw sound makes me feel free and releases all my rage! *For socially conscious bands listen to: Pearl Jam, Nirvana, SOD, Rage Against the Machine, etc. For women rock/grunge bands listen to: Joan Jett, Janis Joplin, Bikini Kill, Heart, and many more!*

## EJEMEN IYAYI

Eating Nutella right out of the bottle! C'mon, who REALLY spreads this stuff on bread? It's way too good on its own to be combined with anything else! This is why I dive spoon-first right into chocolate satisfaction! Mmmmm, so good.

## TANIA SUAREZ MENDOZA

One of my guiltiest pleasures is watching *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*. It is quite entertaining. Instead of looking at all the "negatives" that come with the Kardashian girls, I find them to be motivating. They are powerful working women and no one can take that away from them. They have worked hard for what they have, who says that's a crime?



**FALLING COULD BE ONE KIND OF BEAUTY**

Photography by: Melissa Leong

wind blows and you fall, light and pink said you all. Not ashamed of the fall,  
because It's your beauty 's call. Just stand up from where you fall.



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