The Best of Brave New Word
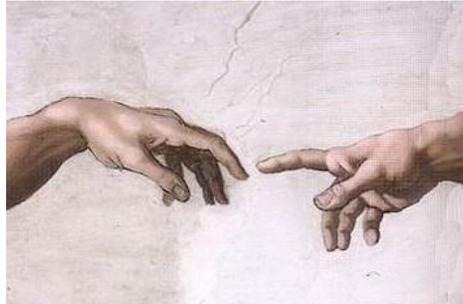
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<u>About Us</u>

Brave New Word is a blog where our diverse groups of creators - all current undergraduate college students - come together and gives our take on the world today. We call ourselves the Kill Joys because as our generation comes of age our causes to end racism, violence, sexism and bias in general are constantly being dismissed by not only most of the older generations but some of our contemporaries. Brave New Word is focused on giving our generation a voice and a space to let the world know that being 'politically correct' or a 'kill joy' is hardly an insult but a compliment and an acknowledgement of unconscious bias

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Daddy Issues and Why I am Angry

Just to preface, I am not here to talk about my actual daddy issues, though they are plentiful. I really want to talk about the problems with how the phrase "daddy issues" is used and how it reflects back on the individual.

There is a common trope about a wide range of women- from those in the sex industry to those coming out of abusive relationships- that their current lifestyles are products of their poor upbringing. Specifically, their poor life choices and mental instability are all the result of trying to fill or replace the void that their deprived fathers created.

This angers me on so many levels. First, this idea claims that choices such as having many sexual partners, deciding to work in the sex industry, or being emotional (all things seen as poor or dangerous reflections of femininity) are inherently and always problematic. Women can be sensitive, unsure in relationships, or uninhibited sexually without it being a product of trauma. These behaviors by themselves are not problematic nor do they have to be explained off to an audience/outsiders.

Second, it implies that women are irrevocably broken or scarred by a man, and can only be fixed by a new man. You see this trope often in tv and movies where a woman comes from an abusive background (be it her father or a previous romantic partner) and only confesses to her past and learns a new way of living by entering into a new relationship with a man. At that point, and only at the point of her being in a new monogamous relationship, is she recovered. With this concept, a woman can never be in charge of her own life. Her well-being and success is always being determined by another, and, without that other person, she would presumably fail in life.

As someone who grew up in an abusive household, I really have to put my foot down about this. Recovery from abuse takes time, professional help, and a ton of hard work. It is hard to understand just how hard you have to work to combat cognitive distortions, skewed core beliefs, very real fears, and panic over the past. All of this must be done by the individual and for the individual. No one else can come in and do this work for you.

I was not broken by my father's abuse, but I was very deeply hurt. Largely, though, in ways that are not visible to anyone who does not know me intimately. Using daddy issues to invalidate these women is an attempt to enforce traditional gender norms, not in any way showing how people actually recover from trauma.

Stereotyping Religion in Media

Yea, you know that there are a lot of wrong stereotypes in movies and TV shows about women, race, sexual orientation, sexuality etc. You probably know a few examples of shows and movies that bring up horrible stereotypes. You even learned how to identify these bad stereotypes. If you agree with what you just read, it is unacceptable to you that women, race and sexual orientation are portrayed in these negative forms in entertainment. So, you refuse to watch shows such as how I met your mother, the big bang theory, that 70's show, etc.

Religion also has a really bad portrayal in movies and TV shows. I'd say that it is almost unanimous that religion and religious people are portrayed with bad stereotypes, such as, hypocrite people, non-sense people, fanatic people, pedophile priests, corrupt church, crazy stupid religious believes, etc.

You will find these and other stereotypes in shows like, the big bang theory, orange is the new black, that 70s Show and Veronica Mars. For instance, Sheldon's mom is the butt of a lot of jokes because her and Sheldon have opposing religious views. But having her be the bad end of the jokes is funny because all religious people are overzealous nut jobs, right? She's not hurting anyone in the show, she's just another caricature, no better than Amy, the 'hypersexual nerd', or Penny the 'hypersexual blonde.'

Bo Burnham has a song where he talks about religious people from "God's perspective". In my opinion, he is just using many stereotypes to make fun of religious people. He basically says that religious people have non-sense believes and are hypocrites. When Bo Burnham says (as God would say) that it is ok to eat pork, he is making fun of somebody's choice to not eat pork because they follow their religion. Not eating pork is part of my religion; it is part of who I am. But of course many people don't see anything wrong with his song. But how would you feel if the song was mocking vegetarian people for not eating meat? It is a choice of vegetarians to not to eat meat, you should just respect that. The same way that you should respect my non-sense religious believes, because for you they might not make sense, but for me they mean something bigger than this life.

So, please don't generalize if you think that religious people are intolerant, closed minded and are wasting their time with non-sense stuff. Just because I am religious doesn't mean I am homophobic, sexist, or that I can't believe in science or the theory of evolution. By continuing to stereotype religion it is my life that you are stereotyping.

<u>Suicidal Shaming</u>

Suicide is a very serious and sensitive topic. Depression is very real and sometimes for some people, suicide seems like the only option they have left. Or the only decision worth making at the time. I am writing this post not to talk about suicide itself, but to emotionally validate the people who experience suicidal ideations or who have attempted suicide.

Please know that I am not advocating suicide here. But I am saying that it is impossible to know everything that is going on in someone's head. We all have our own struggles, and we all cope with them in different ways. Some people feel things much more deeply than other people or some people just have different values. I'm not going to explain what it feels like to be suicidal because that would be way to triggering and honestly that would be completely missing the point of this piece.

The point is, please do not judge or shame people for experiencing suicidal ideations or for trying to commit suicide. There is a way to help someone process these feelings and overcoming them without making them feel even worse about themselves. The opposite of condoning is not shaming or verbally attacking someone. Suicidal ideations feed off of shame and secrecy. The last thing any support should want to do is make someone feel like they have to hide even more, like they are a burden, or like they are inherently flawed/ evil for thinking such thoughts.

Individuals dealing with suicidal thoughts or urges need support and care, not judgment. It is not your roll to condemn anyone else for their actions. Whether you believe suicide is amoral or selfish or anything else, it is not your place to put those judgments or values on somebody else.

Again, I am not advocating suicide or advocating ignoring suicidal urges or behaviors. I just want people to understand that the hate and shame surrounding suicide only keeps people suffering in silence. Suicide is not a result of a moral shortcoming. It is the result of psychological trauma/ distress and a perceived lack of other viable options. So please, in honor of everyone who has, does, and will suffer with this burden, try to extend compassion and understanding their way and assist them in finding professional help.

<u>Are we defining sexual orientation wrong?</u>

Nowadays, there are a lot of different labels used to define sexual orientation. I think this shows a pretty awesome and much needed level of progress our society has taken to acknowledge and accept (or work to accept) the existence of sexual orientation along a spectrum. There are dozens of terms out there help people define their own sexual orientation and give people a sense of belonging.

That's where I think these labels work.

I also think they fail for just about the same reason.

Labels are very limiting and restrictive. And since sexual orientation is a spectrum, there will never be enough labels for everyone. At that point, why even have labels in the first place?

Though the whole label system is flawed just in definition, I think there is another gaping problem that people don't talk about too much. Why do we define sexuality based off of the type of people (gender or sex specific really) that we are sexually attracted to? Why is gender and sex the end-all-be-all when we talk about sexual attraction and identity?

Let's say I am a woman who identifies as lesbian. Just because I am attracted to women does not mean that I am attracted to all women. And even if I find a woman I am attracted to who is attracted to me too does not mean that we will be sexually compatible. What if I am part of the BDSM scene? Or what if my partner only gets off in the reverse cowboy position or absolutely hates all forms of oral sex?

When we say heterosexual, we are not just talking about sexual attraction to the opposite sex. We are also implying a type of normative sex too- missionary position between a cisgender husband and a cisgender wife with the husband being the one doing the penetrating (and penetrating vaginally). That is the image that history and social conditioning will have us dredge up, consciously or unconsciously.

But I think we all know that sexuality is so much more complicated than that. And sex is so multifaceted. I find it kind of weird that we label our sexual orientation based off gender or sex when we could just as easily (and more accurately) label it based off preferred position, favorite kink, or masturbation fantasies.

Telling someone I am pansexual for instance gives them no real clue into just what people I am sexually attracted to, in what capacity I am attracted to them, and how I want that attraction to play out sexually. And quite frankly, it is none of their business.

But if we are going to pretend that it is something we have to disclose to people as if reading a warning label, then why not go the whole way? Why not give the real, dirty picture of what we are talking about? Because the truth of the matter is, labeling sexual orientation in the way that we do is just feeding into a system of "normal" vs "other." Legal vs prosecutable. Moral vs. amoral. I think we are taking steps away from that system, but maybe we eventually need an upheaval of the entire system altogether.

The Problem with Breaking a Stereotype

As a racial and gendered minority I've heard the rhetoric of 'breaking the stereotype' quiet often. As an Asian American or more specifically Chinese American adoptee I know the model minority stereotypes that work for and against us. Such as we're all so smart and good at math but we're also cold, calculated and expressionless. We're also impossible to tell apart. We have small eyes that make us look 'meaner' and have big heads to hold our supposed 'huge brains.' We're known as either the helpless 'China doll' or the 'dragon lady seductress.' These of course are all false and not based on any truths. Sure maybe some individuals are like this within the 'Asian race' but it doesn't those traits have nothing to do with their 'Asian-ness.' For the most part we're regular people with emotions, differing intelligence levels and interests. Yes, we look different than the majority of white Americans but it doesn't mean we're different on the inside. We have basic human needs like everyone else. Not only that but we all do look different and we're not all the same or interchangeable. Maybe most of us have dark hair and 'slanted eyes' but we come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors that are visible the more you are exposed to different people of East Asian descent. Of course, if you live in a racially homogenous area you are sure to believe these stereotypes due to lack of exposure. This happens in East Asian countries as well where there are few people of African origin for instance. However, there is also a weird phenomenon of East Asian people knowing that the west (US) has a lot of different races so anyone can really be 'American.' Some people in East Asia tend to lump foreigners all in one category unlike the US who sees everyone but white as foreign. In the US conversely, it's easy to tell all white people apart because most suburbs have a white majority and white people star in most film and TV roles. But for an Asian person or any person of color who has no exposure to white people they might see all white people as Brad Pitt and Angelino Jolie, even if you don't look anything like those two.

But finally we're getting to the meat of my argument. See how long I had to drone on and on about East Asian stereotypes in the US and also abroad? Should I really have to debunk these myths and let them define me? Should I really try to break the mold of what it means to be East Asian just to prove that I'm 'just like the rest of you?' Well, I don't think so. Rather I think that the more you let a stereotype define what you're not the more you become nothing. So rather than try to break the mold and overcompensate for my 'emotionless and cold face' I just act however I want to act. I know at work some people see me as cold and unfeeling because I don't go out of my way to be as perky as the other Asian Americans who work with me. But I don't think anything in my personality should be based on my race, it's just who I am and I won't try to break down stereotypes.

Moral Literacy

Does one have to be literate in order to not only read their own history but to be a morally literate person (i.e. read other's emotions)? Well, to unpackage this question I think you really need to look at privileging the text and what is written. I think giving written text that power is really problematic because there are people who don't know how to read who can be perfectly moral and maybe just don't know how to read because their culture doesn't have a written language. Some indigenous tribes don't have a written language but rather, a spoken one. Throughout history the people who knew how to read were mainly the wealthy scholars and aristocrats while they kept the poorer people in the dark. But that doesn't mean the poorer people who didn't have access to education were immoral or less moral just because they couldn't read. Reading does open many gateways but we shouldn't equate morality to literacy because usually the people in society who did know how to read didn't exactly do the best things. In US history they were the slave owners who used their literacy in order to control an entire population of people. In Frederick Douglass' memoir he writes how once he learned to read it opened his eyes to the hypocrisy and evils of slavery. He actually was upset at first because he couldn't take the weight of the responsibility it means to read but later he realized that it is what he needed in order to be seen as a 'man.' You need to read in order to work the system but that shouldn't be the end all be all to being a 'good' person.

Privileging the text and written forms of art is deeper than just knowing how to read, it has socioeconomic implications. The reason Shakespeare was able to be successful financially was because his plays though very sophisticated also mocked the English court and were able to cater to the poorer public audiences who sat on the ground floor and laughed at the bawdy humor. They couldn't read the play's transcript but they could still laugh along with the jokes because they were spoken. Not only that but even Homer's the Odyssey was first a tale that was orally told through generations and only written down later because it's not until later in history does the text become more important than spoken history. And the roots of that has to do with being able to have power over 'lesser' people. That is why I don't think we should say that the ability to read equates to being morally right. Privileging the text rather than the spoken word can actually be potentially dangerous as we've read in George Orwell's Animal Farm which is an allegory for not only Nazi Germany but the USSR. The animals who can't read are the ones who blindly follow where as the ones who can read are the ones who either drive the illiterate people into submission or sit back helplessly knowing their fate if they step out of line.

Looking from an ableism stand point tying physical literacy to morality is hugely problematic for people who either can't read brail or existed before brail existed. Just because someone is blind and can't read doesn't mean that they are any less moral than people who can see/hear.

In Shakespearean plays like King Lear blindness is used in an ironically dramatic way. Gloucester can only see once his eyes are forcibly removed. Not only that but going back to Greek tragedies Oedipus can only see that the prophesy has come true once he becomes blind. Looking back at Homer "the originator" of The Odyssey was blind as well and orally recited the epic poem to be transcribed but he was and still is seen as the originator. How many times have we seen the blind prophet (of color) not being literate but being able to read people and the future perfectly? I guess it goes to show that we as people have a big problem if we connect the two together.

Even today a movie cannot be removed from the text that it is representing because it's as if someone who read the actual text is more intelligent that someone who watched the movie. Why can't the movie stand on its own? Why does the book have to be the only source material? These are the questions we should be asking when we consume entertainment today. What audiences are books excluding and who are movies able to include?

The Human Cost of Justice Work (and Knowledge)

I had a really interesting and kind of startling talk with my mentor the other day. We work closely with issues of power-based personal violence (sexual assault, stalking, and domestic abuse), and she was telling me about a conference she went to recently. At the conference, one of the speakers said, "There is a human cost to the work that we do." She went on to say that every time we don't act fast enough, we don't meet our goals, we overlook something, we are putting people's lives in danger. We may not be the ones directly causing the harm and violence, but when we have the power to do something about it and we don't (intentionally or unintentionally), we perpetuate the problem. Silence and non-action in this sense function as agreement.

Spiderman may have learned this lesson many years ago in, "With great power comes great responsibility." I remember hearing this when I was a kid, but it never sunk in how much it applies to me. How much it applies to everyone.

Knowledge is power. Awareness is power. Being a witness is power. Being in any position to say something, help someone, or find someone who can help are all power.

We may not all have web-slinging abilities or super strength, but we don't need those things to combat the oppression and injustices we face in the real world. I know it is a scary thought that our passivity or ignorance can be direct causes of hurt, oppression, and violence. It means culpability; it feels like blame and guilt. It is hard to reconcile feeling like a good person just trying to get by in life with someone else telling you that you are partially to blame for rape culture, racism, heterosexism, and many other injustices. I do not mean to make presumptions about the quality of another person. I am writing this, however, to encourage people to act and be aware of their surroundings. When we all live in an interconnected world, we have a responsibility to the people around us to keep things safe and as fair as possible.

None of us are completely isolated in this world, so neither are our actions. It is not enough to not commit a crime yourself. That doesn't help protect people who cannot protect themselves. We all deserve a fair shot in life, and to feel safe in our own communities. But that change will only come from ourselves, from our own actions. We have to take the first steps ourselves and encourage others to do the same.

Worst Night of My Life (Part 1)

There is a lot that I have never told anyone before. There are stories that I wish I could forget, that sometimes seem like just bad dreams. I'm hoping through writing this the weight on my chest might lessen just a little.

Thank you in advance for listening.

When I was in 8th grade, I wasn't doing too well. I was suffering from depression (not that I knew that's what it was yet), ridiculous amounts of social anxiety, and was on my way to developing an eating disorder. But no matter how badly I was doing, my brother was doing worse. Having taken the brunt of my father's abuse (even purposefully deflecting it off of my mom and myself), he was falling apart. He went off of his OCD and ADHD meds, his emotions were always boiling tightly under his skin, and his eyes were frantic. At least, that's how I remember him.

It wasn't too long until his "I hate this" and "I can't stand this" turned into "I want to die". But it wasn't until that morphed into "I'm going to kill myself" that anyone besides me was panicking. After what felt like forever (but was probably less than a month) of him mentioning suicide, one night it all bubbled over.

I was working on my homework one night when I heard my brother and my mom screaming at each other. That much was nothing new, but I figured I would stick my head in and see just how much damage control was needed. When I walked into the living room, my brother was in hysterics. He was sobbing, shaking with the force of it, and acting like a dog backed into a corner. My mom just looked fed up. Soon enough, my brother stormed upstairs and slammed the door. I turned to my mom to find out what happened, and received just the pretty vague answer that my brother was being unreasonable. We sat together for a while until I saw a crumpled note sitting on the table. Reading it, I realized it was a suicide note. My brother's. My mom told me she read it earlier, that he has reached a new level of dramatic and that I shouldn't worry.

Needless to say, I panicked. Ironically enough, we were learning about suicide in health class that week. I had all of the pamphlets in my backpack on suicide hotline numbers, the local police phone numbers, and counseling resources. I grabbed the house phone, my bag, and raced upstairs. My mom followed me, telling me to give my brother space and not get involved. Hoping she would leave me alone, I went to my room and sat myself down in the bathroom, ear to the wall. My brother's room was on the other side, and I knew that I would be able to hear any movement or commotion from that spot.

My mom sat next to me, telling my to lock myself in my room and not leave it for the rest of the night. She said that she wanted to make sure I was safe, that I shouldn't get involved. As if to reassure me, she said that she was locking herself in her bedroom that night as well. I think that was the exact moment that I lost all trust and respect in my mom. To this day, I haven't been able to build it fully back up with her.

I felt like I couldn't breathe. I was speaking before I even realized it, defending my brother, begging for her to understand. He was depressed. He was scared. He needed help, not fear. I only stopped talking when I couldn't see anymore through my tears or breathe through my sobbing. My mom went to hold me, and I flinched away. She left my room, locking the door behind her. I held my breath, hoping beyond hope that she would turn left down the hallway and into my brother's room.

She turned right, punctuating her decision by the click of a lock.

My next move was obvious, to break the lock if I have to and run to my brother. I started moving to do that and froze.

It's this fear that I will never forget. This was the first time it actually occurred to me what I might find in his room. My brother was my idol, my best friend, and my protector. If I found him hanging from the ceiling or bleeding out in the bathtub, I knew I wouldn't be able to handle it. I would have no life after that; I wouldn't want one. I don't know how long I stood in front of my door, screaming in my head to just move forward, but powerless to control my body. After an infinity, just as I finally turned the handle, there was a knock on my door.

My brother was outside my door, eyes swollen and ashen skin, but for the most part whole and in one piece. I met him in the hallway, and somehow we ended up back downstairs, tucked behind the couch. From the moment we sat down, it was like a dam broke. My brother just started talking, from his anxieties and fears to his issues with my father and mother. He didn't stop until the sun came up, until he was out of breath and out of tears. And even after that, we didn't move. I wanted to comfort him, but had no idea how. So I settled for just being there with him.

I don't remember much more of that day (technically the following morning), but I think we went back to bed at some point. Or maybe we snuck off to school early. All I know is that was the last time my brother seriously threatened to kill himself. The depression didn't go away and the ideations were still there for a while, but he found other ways to cope. We worked on it together.

Looking back on it, I'm still surprised we got through it. We didn't have the help we needed, but we made it anyway. Trust me, though; it wasn't exactly smooth sailing after that. Our family dynamic started falling apart and things even turned more violent than usual. But my brother wasn't bottling it up all alone anymore. He never fell that hard again. I finally go to be the protector he always was to me. And while that didn't work out that well for me in the long term (and I ended up traveling down my own terribly dark roads), I know I did the best that I knew how to do at the time. And I'm proud of where we are now. Who we are now.

The Politics of Political Correctness

The term "political correctness" has always been something of an enigma: people know it when they see it, or are able to recognize the lack of it, but as far as defining it, different people will have different interpretations.

Taken literally, and looking at each word individually, both words have little to do with the idea the term conveys. The so-called "politics" in PC are really more social than political: doing or saying what is unlikely to offend the sense and sensibility of the average person.

The "correctness" part is also a bit of a misnomer. Correctness implies that there is one right answer: for the question "what is 1+1", the correct answer is 2, and any other answers are incorrect. But what is or is not politically correct is rarely, if ever, so indisputable or clearly defined. What offends one person will not offend another, and everything has the potential to offend someone, even this blog: some readers would likely find the content over-sensitive, too inclusive, too liberal, etc. Others will judge these criticizers as incorrect. So whose opinion is more valid? Taking offense to anything is subjective, and if someone says "I am offended," it would be foolish and "politically incorrect" to reply "No you're not!" or "You shouldn't be!"

So, political correctness is a paradox: the very act of subjectively defining something as "politically incorrect" is itself politically incorrect. Political Correctness is a perfect, impossible ideal, and will remain impossible as long as people will have the ability to form differing opinions. Saying that political correctness is impossible may give you the impression that I am opposed to the idea of political correctness. I am not. Unfortunately, political correctness is just that: an idea, and nothing more.

So, we still have not defined political correctness because it cannot be defined. Like Ludwig Wittgenstein's argument that "games" cannot be defined, but only recognized based on common characteristics, (a concept later applied to other apparently undefinable things, such as art) political correctness is the general idea of being inoffensive to the average person. That's as close as we can get using words.

Still, we should strive for political correctness, even with the knowledge that it is impossible. It is not only politically correct, but humanistically correct, to do so.

Why Beauty and the Beast Matters

Since the teaser trailer for the new live action "Beauty and the Beast" had over 98.1 million views within the first 24 hours of its release, I think it is fair to say that people are pretty hyped over the movie. There is no denying that Disney classics hold a lot of weight in our culture, specifically in how we tell stories to young people. And with all of the money and resources going into revamping these classics, as well as their expanded fan base, I think we really need to take a lot at these original stories and decide if they represent the values and morals we want to continue passing down and interring. "Kid's movies" are never just kid's movies; they represent some of the first values we are introduced to and some of the more central themes to most other stories we encounter in our adult lives.

Beauty and the Beast in particular is a movie that I think needs to be reevaluated. Belle, the protagonist of this movie, is painted as a new type of Disney princess- the smart (maybe even nerdy) princess who does not fall for someone just based on physical appearance or love at first sight. I think in this sense, the story of Beauty and the Beast really did try to do something good. But it completely missed the big picture of its actions. Belle is held captive against her will, forced to live with a cursed man who constantly berates and intimidates Belle. He is prone to fits of violence, destroying objects around him or verbally lashing out at anyone around him. He is unused to being around people and at being on an equal level to them. While this may not be entirely his fault, that in no way excuses his actions against Belle.

We are told by this movie that the Beast's violence is justifiable by his past, as well as the love he later develops for Belle. And Belle supposedly shows us what true love is by standing by the Beast long enough to change him into a decent human being (physically and emotionally). Take the word from someone who grew up in an abusive household: these ideas are so beyond problematic. No one should be tasked with the job of "fixing" his or her abuser. A bad past is no justification for treating the people around you terribly or for violating the law (kidnapping people). And "true love" is impossible to form in a situation where such a power imbalance exists. For the same reason you cannot date your teacher or direct boss, power imbalances can distort consent and love in relationships. Belle's relationship is a product of Stockholm Syndrome and abuse. There is no way around it. She has limited rights when she is around the beast, and she gets rewarded when she does what he wants (by him not yelling at her or locking her in her room).

Abuse is subtle sometimes, and does not have to be physical or sexual to be real. And when you are in the abusive relationship, it can be really hard to see beyond it and recognize it for what it is. When we watch Beauty and the Beast, we are watching a woman fall in love with her kidnapper and justify the abuse in her relationship by focusing on how he needs her and how she can change him.

I am really angry, and a little frightened quite frankly, that more people do not see what I see when I watch this movie. If we can all ignore abuse and power imbalances when they are so clearly laid out in front of us in our kid's movies, what does that say about how well we can spot it in the real world?

Also, what does it say that one of our most beloved young feminists is playing the starring role in the new film? I expected more from Emma Watson, and I really hoped for more from all of us as dictators of the content we consume.

<u>Violence Against Women in Film</u>

Violence in movies of course is a prevalent issue. Does being exposed to violence make us more violent people? Does it desensitize us to actual cruelty in the real world? Does it normalize violence? I can't answer all of those questions but I can talk about what I think about violence against women in film and how dead women are portrayed as still beautiful. Most women when they die are still made out to be sexually desirable objects with little to no blood or scarring on their faces. Of course, for men, they're allowed to bleed and have garish faces with burns and scars but women when they're injured or die are still kept in pristine condition as to beautify them even in death. The only purpose of this is to arouse the presumed straight male audience and not to shatter their angelic view of delicate little women.

We're all familiar with the classic movie image when someone dies in tragic way, the closing of the eyes, and the pulling up the sheet to cover the deceased's face. But for some women in film their bodies are held in the frame just to be ogled at. Their eyes aren't usually closed shut by a kind stranger; the camera (the eye of the character, director, and audience) lingers on their whole body, not just their face. And their face usually looks embalmed rather than going through rigor mortis.

In movies such as The Amazing Spider Man 2 and Watchmen and the TV show Pretty Little Liars we see the image of the pristine dead girl or woman perpetuated.

(Spoiler Alert) In the end of the Amazing Spiderman 2 Gwen Stacy dies either by whiplash or hitting the floor just as Peter is slinging his web to save her. Rather than there be oozing blood out of the back of her head or her neck being visibly broken, her body is kept in pristine shape, her clothes aren't even that dirty even though she just fought with the Green Goblin. I'm not saying that we should perpetuate violence and glorify it but why are women seen as perfect and beautiful when they die when most men are able to show blood spatter when they get their brains blown out. We shouldn't keep desensitizing the public to violence but to show the true horrors of violence we should show men and women realistically.

In Watchmen after Ursula Zandt or The Silhouette was out as a Lesbian during the 40s and early 50s. She and her partner were killed while in bed. In the comics they don't show the two women on the bed but in the film adaptation their bodies are in silken pajamas with their eyes glassy and wide open. Their skin is exposed for the presumed male viewer to take pleasure in looking at the two women together. It's extremely disturbing to think that we're supposed to take pleasure in looking at two women who died. Or maybe it's that "at least they're still beautiful?" Aren't they so peaceful in death? As if their humanity didn't matter.

Lastly, in the show Pretty Little Liars their opening credits it shows the main cast looking at Allie in a casket with flawless skin and almost plastic looking. I know that was the point but just

because she's supposedly evil and 'plastic' like a Barbie doll. But does that mean that we have to objectify and sexualize her even when she's dead? Knowing how she died wouldn't she look at least a little more hurt rather than looking like she's been marbleized?

Not to mention in the Oscar winning movie Son of Saul the bodies placed in the concentration camp are flawless. They're objectively beautiful and yes, people are peaceful in death but in a Holocaust film I would expect some historical accuracy.

Even in Dracula the novel, Lucy looks beautiful and seductive when she's a vampire and 'undead' while she's asleep and transforming in order to show how evil she is. What does dead women and beautifying do to the message that violence is bad? Nothing, which is why we need to portray violence accurately to both genders in order to show that it's not something to glorified.

<u>Abortion and Feminism</u>

I really think feminism is important to fix our society. I hate how women are objectified and used as a sexual symbol. But personally I don't agree with everything in the feminist movement. One topic in special that I don't agree with other feminists is about abortion. Feminists claim that getting an abortion should be a decision that only a woman can make. But the thing about legalizing abortion is that abortion itself it's not the problem. The problem in question is unexpected pregnancy.

To solve a problem, one needs to stop the problem from happening, not to give a solution after it happens. So, legalizing abortion doesn't really fix the problem of unexpected pregnancy. Unexpected pregnancies usually happen due to a lack of prevention. So the solution to the problem would be prevention through contraceptive methods and also learning about these methods. Because if a feminist doesn't know all the methods that she can use to avoid an undesirable pregnancy, she is coming from the wrong direction to look for a solution to her problem. And on top of my head I can name a few contraceptive methods: abstinence, pull-out, male condom, female condom, birth control pill, birth control shot, diaphragm and intrauterine device. So let me say it: it is up to you to use one, two three, four, endless contraceptive methods to not get pregnant and not depend on abortions. It is the woman's choice, no one is taking your right to use more than two or three contraceptive methods and not get pregnant. Women should be fighting to get those contraceptive methods more easily and not be fighting for the right to do something that they might even regret doing. If you are pro-choice, do you even know the methods used to abort pregnancies? Just watch the video, if you can.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwdWgr4Ki-w

So, now we are claiming to have the right to get abortions. You get the abortion, but the problem is still there: unexpected pregnancy. In terms of rate of unexpected pregnancy (which is the problem to be solved here), would legal abortion reduce, increase or not change it? Tricky to answer to this question, but I think that it is more likely that abortion would increase the rate of unexpected pregnancy. Abortion being easily accessed and having low cost, people would not have the pressure on using contraceptive methods. One same person could easily get one, two, three... abortions, because it really would be up to them. They could get pregnant as many time as they want and get as many abortion as they want. But the unexpected pregnancy (let's not forget, the real problem here) would still be happening over and over again. Literally the right for people to get pregnant as many time as they want and not give birth one single time!

Abortion is a delicate matter, but I don't think legalizing it it's the way to go. I don't need to be pro-choice just because I'm a feminist. Some feminist say they'd not get an abortion but they are still pro-choice. Is it a code saying I need to agree with everything from the movement? Or I can have my own opinion about some subjects? Don't forget, you're feminist, but you can still not agree with some topics, it'll not make you less of a feminist.

<u>Misconceptions about Brazil</u>

Before we turn on our TVs and watch the RIO 2016 Summer Olympics together (which I'm so hyped for!) I think it's important we unpackage some of the stereotypes and common misconceptions about Brazil. First, I don't speak for all Brazilians, I'm speaking from a western US gaze to remind other people in more 'developed' countries to check our privilege before falling for all of the stereotypes of Brazil. Second, it's important to note that the Olympics being held in Brazil have been contested lately mainly because they are seen as a 'second world' country filled with disease and corruption. I'd like to remind the reader that this kind of uproar wasn't so prevalent with the London 2012 Summer games because unlike Brazil, England is a country that was the imperializer of the world not the imperialisee. When looking at countries in the western world, specifically Brazil, it's important to note that their country is a product of colonialism and though Brazil has a long history of its own native people, Brazil is mainly looked at from a western Eurocentric gaze. That is why the stereotypes of Brazil and Latin America have usually negative connotations. Lastly, I do not believe in using labels like 'first, second or third world' because we all share the same earth. Using those labels is a way of distancing 'ourselves' from 'those people' whom we really shouldn't see as any different from ourselves. We should all realize our differences but not let those differences get in the way of seeing each other's humanity.

1. Brazil is not just Rio and Copacabana nor in the 'middle of nowhere' in the Amazon Rain Forest
   a. A common misconception about Brazil due to the tourism marketing not only from Brazil itself but from the US is that all Brazil is partying, beaches and Rio's Carnaval when in reality Brazil is so much more than that. Brazil isn't one big party and they're definitely not lazy. They have a longer work week than we do in the US and yes they do have more holidays during the year they work hard just like the rest of us in the US.
   b. Secondly, another stereotype is that Brazil isn't a developed country besides Rio and the beaches and the interior is just rainforest and if there are towns there are monkeys everywhere. This also is untrue. There is a huge city in the interior of Brazil and the Amazon Rainforest takes up space in other Latin American countries besides Brazil. Though cutting down the rain forest shouldn't be ignored Brazil has towns in the interior and other places other than Rio. Not to mention there are no monkeys in the streets but dogs and cats which is another epidemic that I can't get into right now.
2. Stop Hypersexualizing Brazil
   a. A common misconception about Brazil is that the women are 'easy' and the men 'chivalrous' and hyper masculine

      i.   Both of these are false. Not every Brazilian woman is easy and why is a woman taking control of her sexuality 'loose'? But anyway, a stereotype in Brazil (not a western one) is that Brazilian women are actually 'hard to get' and the most that a couple looking for love would do on a first date is kiss and then go on a few dates before getting intimate. Of course, I could go on a whole long rant about sexualizing Latin American women not only by westerners but by Brazilian men but I won't. Yes, maybe their bathing suits are smaller but why does that give us as people from the US a right to judge an entire country and call them animalistic beings?

      ii.   Brazilian men aren't a special breed of man that is the last remaining 'real' man on earth, they're just people. They're human beings; they're not there to fulfill your Latino man fantasy. They're not special in anyway and we shouldn't see them as pieces of meat (INSIDE OUT). They're all different and yes they were raised differently than how we're raised in the US but that doesn't give us the license to objectify them.

      iii.   I've met some Brazilians that think the US is more hypersexual due to Hollywood Movies like American Pie and of course those movies don't accurately portray the entire US. It's interesting to see how one country can hypersexualize another and use that as a negative connotation or perception of the 'other' country.

b.   Though this doesn't have to do with hypersexualization it does have to do with plastic surgery. There were articles that came out last year from NPR that stated that some Brazilian medical insurance policies cover plastic surgery costs so even poorer men and women can get cosmetic surgery for a cheap price. This has to do with the myth that Brazilian people happen to be more 'vain' than others. This of course may exist in some parts of Brazil but just because people choose to get plastic surgery doesn't mean they're bad people. Yes, maybe people's backsides are given more attention in Brazil than in the US but I could make an argument against that with the rise of Nicki Minaj and how even 'white girls want big butts.' Brazil was listed as one of the countries with the highest cosmetic surgery percentages in the world but compared to the US and South Korea they shrink in comparison. They shrink even more when it's compared cosmetic surgeries per capita **So do your research before you assume that Brazilians love getting plastic surgery or that getting plastic surgery in general equates to being a bad person.**

3.   Latin American or 'brown' isn't a race

    a.   A lot of people (whether white or otherwise) classify Latin Americans in the US as 'brown' but this is a problem because Indians from India also classify

themselves as 'brown,' when in reality there's a spectrum of colors in both areas of the world and you can't attach any one color to them. But this interesting play on the word brown is important because darker skinned people from Latin America in the US or outside of it are seen as more 'Latin American.' In countries like Brazil a more 'tan' color is desired due to the amount of racial mixing and racial ambiguity. People who are either 'too dark' or 'too light' are ostracized for not fitting into this 'golden' skin stereotype. In the US it's the same thing. Latin Americans in the US who are darker are seen as more 'brown' and thus more Latino because not only do they fit their own country's stereotype but they fit the US's notion of what it means to be Latino, dark skinned and poor. But classifying 'Latino/a' as a race or as one color is extremely marginalizing because not only is Latino an ethnicity not a race but that race exists in a spectrum everywhere but especially where the slave trade was present and being mixed race is a common thing due to not enforcing miscegenation laws.

Finally, they don't need your pity. Brazil has its problems but so does the rest of the world and no one should tell another population of people how to govern themselves, there's no one way to 'success.' There's been this common notion throughout the history of colonialism and imperialism that by taking over a 'lesser' people or taking up the 'white man's burden' and turning the 'other' country's economy into a capitalist one that democracy the 'good' way of governing would follow. And thus, all the countries in the world would be 'developed' into the western Eurocentric image of 'prosperity.' However, this didn't happen mainly due to the fact that all countries are different. Whether it's their geographic location and climate or the fact that there were native people already there that hey, maybe could govern themselves and were fine till you showed up, all places around the world have their differences and there's nothing wrong with that. Brazil is going through a crisis now but they don't need our two cents, they don't need our 'oh look at those poor brown people' and they most definitely don't need us going in there to 'fix' everything. All countries have ups and downs and who are we (the US who has its own problems of people not getting their basic human rights to their people and their own political corruption) to judge.

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