

Ending Sexual Violence

By Tina Godby-Ware, RN

Coordinator Otero/Lincoln Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program

The goal of sexual health promotion is to foster healthy relationships and comfort with sexuality. It is based on the premise that adults who are comfortable with their sexuality and at ease with open discussion of sexual issues will create a family environment that supports healthy sexual behavior and responsible sexual choices. Healthy sexuality is based on respect, value, honesty, and joy.

But first, we must work diligently to challenge the institutions and practices that uphold male domination, the powerlessness of children, the turning of sexuality into a commodity, and the glorification of violence and exploration of fellow human beings. Every two minutes, somewhere in America, someone is sexually assaulted. Only 83 percent of victims ever report this crime, with a large majority never telling anyone, allowing this silent epidemic to multiply and explode. The literature states that sexual violence is perhaps the most insidious manifestation of patriarchy, because it involves the corruption and distortion of that which is fundamental to our existence; our sexuality. We are taught every other part of the amazing human body except in the unmentionable area—“down there.” This leaves us unprotected and vulnerable. Women developed a deep anger as the truth of violence against the female body was revealed—in the form of rape, childhood sexual abuse, anti-lesbian violence, physical abuse, sexual harassment, terrorism against reproductive freedom, or the international crime of female genital mutilation. The pervasive belief that sexuality is derived from a weakness in humanity promotes the detachment of sexuality from self. This pervasive cultural norm shames us out of accepting and/or embracing our sexuality as a positive part of our own humanity. Thus sexuality exists on a foundation of relatively rigid and well-enforced ideas about gender. Males learn that their sexuality is characterized by action, control, and achievement, making it a game that man’s worth is to be judged according to the ability to play this game. Females are taught that their sexuality involves learning how to balance being a “good girl” with pleasing men.

The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program along with NMSU-Alamogordo, Peace and Justice of La Luz, COPE, and other community citizens have joined forces to locally direct, produce, and act in Eve Ensler’s award winning masterpiece *The Vagina Monologues*. *The Vagina Monologues* give voice to women’s deepest fantasies and fears bringing the hidden experiences into the open, naming them, and turning rage into positive action. It is witty and irreverent, compassionate and wise. *The Vagina Monologues* has been performed in cities all across America and at hundreds of college campuses. It has been translated into over 24 different languages, and has inspired a dynamic grassroots movement—V-Day—to stop violence against women. The V-Day movement is growing at a rapid pace throughout the world, in 130 countries from Europe to Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, and all of North America.

The Vagina Monologues is the truth-telling that our bodies are sacred. With the help of outrageous voices and honest words, the grandmothers, mothers, and daughters of the future will heal their selves—and mend the world. Eve Ensler believes that nothing is more important than stopping violence toward women. The desecration of women indicates the failure of human beings to honor and protect all life and if we do not correct it, it will be the end of us all.

It will be difficult to encourage people to overhaul their experience of sexuality through a lens of well-being, rather than a lens of shame, fear, and power. Doing so directly confronts our culture's unhealthy sexual status quo, and therefore threatens to upset the numerous interests that benefit from it. Those of us that want to positively redefine this status quo will need to forge alliances in order to surmount these formidable barriers to change. Join us in the global movement to change the story of women and end the violence.

The Vagina Monologues

Rohovec Performing Arts Center NMSU-Alamogordo campus

February 6 at 7:30 pm

February 7 at 2:00 pm

Tickets \$5 at the door or at the COPE office 909 South Florida in Alamogordo