

Girl House and Beyond

**A Facilitator's Guide for
Empowering Young Women**



By Kesa Kivel

Girl House and Beyond

A Facilitator's Guide for Empowering Young Women

*For Those Teaching the Following Topics
from Grade Six Through College Levels:*

Sexual Harassment

Feminism, Sexism

Girls' Empowerment and Activism

Art (Including Protest and Installation Art)

Judy Chicago-Inspired Art Projects



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To the **Divine One, Uni-Verse, and Ultimate Artist**--I marvel at the patterns, colors, music, emotions, challenges, people, animals, and engineering feats that create and are YOU. I am grateful and in awe.

Note: Despite the abundant assistance on this project, I claim all of the blind spots, minefields, and typos. I am solely responsible for the contents herein.

Dear Colleague,

The purpose of the *Girl House and Beyond* curriculum is to help you create a safe environment for students to explore the topic of sexual harassment through engaging activities. The film mentioned in the curriculum is no longer available, but you can still do all of the activities except for Activity #3. Each one uses the lens of sexual harassment to explore a wide range of issues of concern to girls and women.

It is my hope that through this curriculum, students who have been sexually harassed can begin the healing process, and that all students will learn some critical thinking skills and gain an understanding of the social/cultural factors that affect girls' and women's lives. The guide was designed with these things in mind.

The *Girl House and Beyond* curriculum is based on my work with the girls and women I have taught and the issues with which I'm familiar. Feel free to add to or modify the curriculum as needed to make it more useful for a particular group of students. Both female and male students will benefit from most of the activities. However, others, like Activity #6, were designed especially for girls and women.

To start, read the "Facilitator's Overview," then begin the workshop with Activity #1, "What Is Sexual Harassment?" followed by Activity #2, "Sexual Harassment Intersections." In subsequent sessions, your choice of activities will depend on your students' interests and needs. There is no particular order to follow. The curriculum can be used with a wide range of ages and in many different settings, such as art classes, women's studies classes, and after-school programs for adolescent girls.

If you have feedback about your experiences in using the guide, please contact me at www.kesakivelstudios.org. Future editions will be enhanced by your responses. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Kesa Kivel

Section One: About the Project

“(The Girl House Art Project)...made me feel like a better citizen. I’m saying this because I can take more responsibility in helping others around me and in my community.”

-Girl House girl Amanda, from her follow-up feedback form one year later

The Purpose of the Guide

For too long, too many girls have molded themselves to fit cultural standards that do not serve them, their authentic selves lying dormant under “pretty” masks. The girls are under a spell, and we as a society have cast it. The purpose of *Girl House and Beyond: A Facilitator’s Guide for Empowering Young Women* is to help you assist girls in breaking that spell and realizing their full potentials through self-reflection, critical thinking, and engaging activities. More girls should be “full of themselves” – proud, confident, spirited and strong.

In using this guide, you will be providing a framework to help girls identify and study sexual harassment and other gender-related issues. Within this framework, girls will learn that gender injustice is not caused by any personal failure on their part, and they will gain an understanding of how personal and social/cultural factors intertwine. You will be helping the girls to know themselves better so they can speak with their true voices and live authentic lives. You will be helping them to challenge the status quo, one step at a time.

Challenging the norm is a difficult task, requiring courage from the girls and support from you. At a time in their lives when they are still very much under the authority of others, the girls will be asked to rethink their home and school environments and to question gender roles in society. In meeting this challenge, the girls will feel the power of standing up for themselves, working collectively, and making a difference in the community.

To make the process as enjoyable and engaging as possible, the curriculum uses art, discussion, film, and interactive exercises as teaching tools. The use of art, in particular, offers unique access points to the core teachings for those students who learn best through visual imagery. You can further boost the chances for the girls’ active and sustained participation by teaching in a loving, respectful manner.

This guide is also there for you as a person, not just as a facilitator -- let this be *your* journey of discovery, too. On your own time, take the opportunity to examine gender injustices that may come to mind as you use the guide -- for example, situations you may have faced in the past but have not yet processed. I have learned so much as I’ve looked not just for the practical solutions to problems that have arisen, but also for gifts that lead to personal growth. As we lend a helping hand, we can get a hand up as well, if we let ourselves be vulnerable.

The problems of sexual harassment and gender inequity are, of course, too large to be solved through any one project or guide. Because of the ongoing barrage of objectifying media images, the gender bias in schools, and unjust laws and policies, we must be ever vigilant. Individual consciousness-raising and ongoing dialogues are needed, as well as collaborative actions on many fronts. We must offer abundant resources so that girls can sustain the positive changes they make in projects like this one, becoming the strong women they deserve to be and that our society needs.



Adult Focus Group Participants for Girl House
(see Closing Circle Exercise, p. 13)

Introduction to the Girl House Art Project

In the spring of 2005, I passed by the small wooden house on the grounds of the YWCA Santa Monica/Westside, which I had seen many times before. This time was different. I don't know why, but I started to wonder what adolescent girls would create if they had an opportunity to do an art installation inside the house, based on the 1972 "Womanhouse" art installation organized and team-taught by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro (see "Womanhouse," p. 47). "Girl House/Womanhouse." Hmmm. I had never viewed "Womanhouse" in person, but I had heard about it and had seen pictures. How would girls artistically describe the limitations of the female experience in 2006, thirty-four years after women had artistically described the limitations in 1972?

I had already been teaching my feminist arts curriculum at the YWCA's after-school programs and summer camp, but this would be different. Would I be able to develop enough new curriculum for the ten-month project I envisioned? How should I go about raising funds and doing outreach? I knew there would be a lot of work, but I was highly motivated. As a survivor of childhood sexual molestation and of abusive relationships as an adult, I have dedicated myself to helping create a world in which girls and women are respected, informed, and empowered, and which is violence-free for everyone.

The planning stage began. I convinced myself that I could create enough new curriculum and raise sufficient funds. To help with other aspects of the project, I decided to conduct a focus group of community activists to get their perspectives on girls' issues and their input on the best ways to do outreach for the project. With the YWCA's support, a diverse group of fifteen women met a few months before Girl House started. During the focus group, the women offered suggestions on topics to teach, people to contact, guest speakers to invite, and places to put flyers. The "seed" energy they provided encouraged and nourished me and, I believe, helped sustain the ten-month project. I felt that having a large, supportive group of women in the focus group was a good sign, getting things off to a strong start.

I was, then, initially disappointed when only four girls, all of them white, were able to commit to the entire Girl House project. This was one of my biggest personal challenges, because I had fervently hoped for a larger and more diverse group of participants, such as those I had worked with in the past. My heart's desire is that as many people as possible learn about feminism, particularly how gender issues affect their own lives and how these issues can be addressed collectively. Education can lead to change. Ultimately, I had to surrender to the fact that in this case, it was these particular creative, smart, spirited girls who were choosing to take this journey with my assistant, Betty Marín, and me. From start to finish, the project was an adventure of surrendering and learning from these four bright, wonderful girls.

I was happy that some of the girls' words and actions from the last month of the project were captured in a 16-minute documentary directed by Brooke Randolph, a University of Southern California graduate student in film. The Girl House girls were proud to be in the film, and the fact that it was being made underscored for them that their concerns were widespread and not the results of personal failure. It reinforced the idea that *they* were the experts on their experiences with sexual harassment; no adult or set of statistics could adequately describe their pain or discomfort. The film showed them that their efforts were pioneering and could be inspiring to others.

All in all, I believe the Girl House Art Project and film were worthwhile for many reasons. From the participating girls' feedback forms, I think that they "got it" and would never be the same. In addition, more than seventy people attended the public reception and learned about sexual harassment and gender-related issues from the girls' points of view. The National Women's Studies Association selected the *Girl House Art Project* film to be screened at its 2007 conference in Chicago. Even though the project had fewer participants than I had wanted, its impact turned out to be far greater than I had expected.

Girl House Art Project Summary

I created the Girl House Art Project as a broad-based feminist curriculum in an interactive format for a small group of middle-school girls as part of the YWCA Santa Monica/Westside's community service programming. Four girls met weekly after school with my assistant, Betty Marín, and me. The project's duration was ten months.

The Girl House Art Project was divided into three sets of sessions. Each session started with an opening circle, which provided an opportunity for the girls to share personal experiences and bond with one another. It ended with a closing circle, giving the girls a sense of completion and helping them to transition to more self-directed activities once the session was over (see "Opening and Closing Circles," p. 13).

The first set of sessions dealt with building self-esteem and forging the group's identity. Topics included mindful eating, body image, and conflict-resolution skills. The second set of sessions dealt with feminist/political issues. Topics included women's history, the wage gap between women and men, and media literacy.



The third set of sessions was devoted to art, activism, and creating the installation and public exhibition. Topics included the art of perception, the purpose of art, and feminist artists. (Art was used in almost every session during the entire project. See "Using Art," p. 14.)

Guest speakers taught workshops on a variety of subjects, including self-defense, the Salem Witch Trials, and financial literacy. A YWCA staff member spoke on her immigrant journey from El Salvador many years ago, ending up as an ESL (English as a Second Language) student at the same middle school that the Girl House girls attended. My assistant, Betty Marín, who is Latina, offered a distinct and valuable cultural perspective.

The girls were given numerous opportunities to offer feedback, which developed their critical thinking skills and improved the project (see "Ideas for Student Feedback Forms," p. 43).

During the third set of sessions, the girls created an art installation, inspired by the 1972 "Womanhouse" art installation (see "Womanhouse," p. 47). To find the theme for their art installation, the girls wrote and talked about what issues were important to them; sexual harassment emerged as the most distressing common problem.

Inside the small wooden house on the YWCA property, the girls created a bedroom of a girl who is being sexually harassed, artistically expressing her worries, fears, and the potential consequences of this kind of behavior. The Girl House Public Exhibition was held in June 2006, showcasing their artwork. The girls were the expert educator-docents for the day.



The Girl House Girls (l to r): Amanda, age 13; Angelica, age 13; Kaitlyn, age 13; and Lily, age 12, sitting in front of their digital images on a mural they created as part of the Girl House Art Project.

Section Two: Facilitator's Overview

"I'm a lot more aware of sexual harassment, and I now know how to react to any behavior of a sexual nature that is unwanted and unwelcome."

-Girl House girl Lily, from her follow-up feedback form one year later

Creating a Safe Space

Contemporary Issues: 1) Sexual harassment (see "What Is Sexual Harassment?" p. 16) causes complex, confusing emotions that affect a person's thoughts, feelings, and actions. 2) When discussing the topic of sexual harassment, a person may recall or momentarily relive a time when she was harassed, causing considerable distress. 3) A person who is severely traumatized from being harassed may feel vulnerable, scared, and anxious about her future. Below are some examples:

- A mortified middle school girl changed schools after boys lifted up her blouse in a school hallway. The incident and outcome upset and confused her. Why do boys do that? Why did they do that *to her*? Why did *she* have to change schools in order to feel okay about herself? Would rumors about what had happened to her start up at her new school?
- A college student abruptly left a Women's Studies class during the screening of *North Country* because the film had triggered a memory of a time when she was sexually assaulted. She left the class to take care of herself, yet she ended up feeling like a lonely outcast in the hallway.
- A young woman felt traumatized years after an acquaintance tried to have sex with her. His cornering her and insistent verbal pressure, a tactic called "working a Yes out," frightened her. How did she "let" the threatening situation happen? Does she have the ability to make good decisions about men? Next time, would she be raped?

Project Description: Advance reading and writing exercise for facilitators. Discussion questions and journal options for students.

Goal: To familiarize yourself (as the facilitator) with the topic of sexual harassment and to create a safe space for students to explore the topic.

IN ADVANCE--FACILITATOR WRITING AND READING:

- Whether you are female or male, explore your own feelings of being sexually harassed or witnessing sexual harassment. One way to remember past incidents is to write your own story about sexual harassment. What happened and when, where have you healed, and where are your tender spots? Getting in touch with your memories will help you reclaim buried parts of yourself, heal deep wounds, and resonate more empathically with your students. You may want to talk to someone about uncomfortable memories that arise.
- Read through the entire guide so you're familiar with it, especially "Sexual Harassment Intersections," p. 19, and "Contributing Cultural Factors," p. 24.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES TO PROMOTE A SAFE SPACE:

Set-Up: Suggestion box, index cards, pens, butcher paper, marker, and lined paper or journals. If appropriate, have materials from a local sexual assault/rape treatment center and/or a list of hotlines (see "Other Resources," p. 50) available.

- Use an opening and closing circle for each session (see "Opening and Closing Circles," p. 13). These circles promote a sense of unity, safety, and common purpose.
- Place a suggestion box somewhere that's easily accessible to students. Review the contents periodically.
- Pass out index cards during each session so students can write down anything they may want to ask or express in class but don't want to say out loud. Ask everyone to submit a question or comment at the same time, anonymously, so that it will not be obvious who has written any particular one. Review the cards and address the students' questions and comments during the session. (This idea comes from the Rape Treatment Center at the Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center.)
- Use feedback forms (see "Ideas for Student Feedback Forms," p. 43).
- Ask students to journal a few minutes at the beginning of each session to "locate" themselves in the class, especially if they're coming from a class on a really different topic, like science. Journal writing at the end of each session helps students process their feelings and determine for themselves whether they have further questions.

- Tell students at the beginning of the session that you're going to wait three to five seconds before calling on or responding to students who raise their hands so that everybody, even shy students, gets a chance to think and respond. (This technique, which is from David Sadker's film *Gender Equity in the Classroom*, promotes an atmosphere of inclusion, safety, and equality.)
- At some point I like to ask, "Is there someone who has not shared very much who would like to share now?" This promotes a sense that everybody has value.
- Do not ask students to recall their worst experience, since this is not a therapeutic setting. Their worst experience may come to mind anyway, but it's best not to encourage it.
- If appropriate, refer students to a school counselor or a crisis center (for college students).
- Ask at the beginning of the next session (no matter what the topic) whether there are any thoughts about the previous week's discussion on sexual harassment. The reason for this is that one or more of the issues may warrant further discussion and "processing," or a student may be worried about something that was mentioned in the last session (for example, is the person who was mentioned in the discussion of rape okay now?).

WORKING WITH STUDENTS TO CREATE A SAFE SPACE:

Say to Students: *Let's create a Safe Space Contract. What ground rules can we all agree to so that we will have a safe space for everybody in the workshop? I'll write your responses on the paper.*

The italicized words below are possible student responses and/or suggestions to get them talking.

Listen respectfully without interrupting. No put-downs. Opt out of sharing if desired. Agree to confidentiality. Speak from your own experience (I think, I feel, I believe) rather than talking about someone else's. Try not to judge why someone is "holding on" to an incident of sexual harassment that happened a long time ago. Try to forgive yourself for situations you think you could have dealt with better; you did the best you could in the moment. If need be, step into the hallway with a support person after telling the facilitator. Stay after class to talk to the facilitator.

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** Talk to the girls about anything on the list above that they have not mentioned. Everything on this list is extremely important, especially the issue of confidentiality. Then, have the girls signify their agreement with the Safe Space Contract by signing the butcher paper contract. You can sign it, too!

Explain to Girls: The only exceptions to the confidentiality agreement would be if a girl in the workshop said that she might do harm to herself or to another person or that someone is/was abusing her. You, as the facilitator, might want to -- and may be legally required to -- report this. Also, if you sometimes talk with staff about things that come up in workshops, say so to the girls. If other exceptions apply for your particular teaching situation, inform the girls of these exceptions.



The girls drew a picture of a band-aid on the House of Healing sign.

After viewing the Girl House Art Installation (big house), guests could visit the House of Healing (small house).

Inside the House of Healing were signs describing possible actions to take if harassed. Guests could also write in a journal. ⇒ ⇒ ⇒



Opening and Closing Circles

OPENING CIRCLE: In an opening circle, which is based on the ancient tradition called council, individuals seated in a circle have an opportunity to talk, one at a time, on a suggested topic. The opening circle helps to bond a group together and focus their attention. When a person talks she holds a *talking piece*, such as a rock, a stuffed animal, or a rain stick, and everyone gives her their attention. The talking piece is either passed around clockwise so that everyone gets a turn or is placed in the center of the circle for people to take, one at a time, when they feel “called” to do so.

Start by sharing the history of council with the students (use Internet sources or see “Council Book List,” p. 51) in order to honor its origins. Council is a very old tradition and is even referenced in Greek literature. In the United States, the Iroquois, Plains Indians, and Southwestern Pueblos were some of the tribes that used council. Later, it was adopted by the Quakers and others.

After sharing the history, begin the opening circle by asking everyone to go around and say her name. For the second go-around, ask students to respond to a specific topic or question in a few sentences. Suggest that students speak briefly so that everyone has a turn. Students can “pass” to opt out of speaking or can speak on a related topic.

Encourage students not to plan ahead of time what they’re going to say as they wait their turn. It’s difficult but empowering for students to take a breath when their turn comes around, repeat the question out loud, then speak honestly from the heart, without advance preparation. (This idea comes from the Ojai Foundation, in Ojai, California.)

Council is not a conversation. Ask the students to share their own thoughts and experiences rather than piggybacking on what the previous person has said. Their sentences will likely start with “I feel that...” or “In my experience...” or “When I was little, I...”

Ask the students to finish up if they’re taking too long unless something significant is being shared that warrants more time. I gently interrupt and say, “One sentence, one thought” in order to encourage a student to finish.

In the past I’ve used the following topics and questions, but students can also suggest their own.

- Starting this new project makes me feel...
- Something that I think is beautiful is...
- I feel most confident when I...
- I like my body most when I...
- The best compliment I received from somebody was...
- A time when I needed to say NO! was...
- I feel powerful when I...
- If I were a boy I could...
- Were you ever at a disadvantage in some situation because of something that you couldn’t help? (For example, because you’re disabled, you didn’t know the rules, you couldn’t speak the language, etc.)
- Were you ever at an advantage in some situation because of something that you couldn’t help? (For example, you had more money than other people or more talent in a certain area, such as singing.)
- Describe a time that you took a risk with positive results.
- Talk about a personal experience that you feel comfortable sharing and tell us what you learned from it.
- [To be asked in the last session of the entire program] How are you feeling about the fact that this is our last class?

CLOSING CIRCLE (see photos on cover and on p. 6):

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** This quick exercise can be done at the close of each session.

Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theater activist, created the following closing circle exercise:

Students stand in a circle with their right arms outstretched, palms downward. **Their left arms are always down at their sides.** The right hand is closed in a fist except for the right thumb, which is extended. The person on the left uses her outstretched **right** arm to take the extended thumb of the person on her right in her fist and gently hold it. Everybody turns her head and body slightly to the left. One at a time, each person says her name out loud. When everyone has said her name, the group members raise their joined hands for a moment, then drop their joined hands and break the connection.

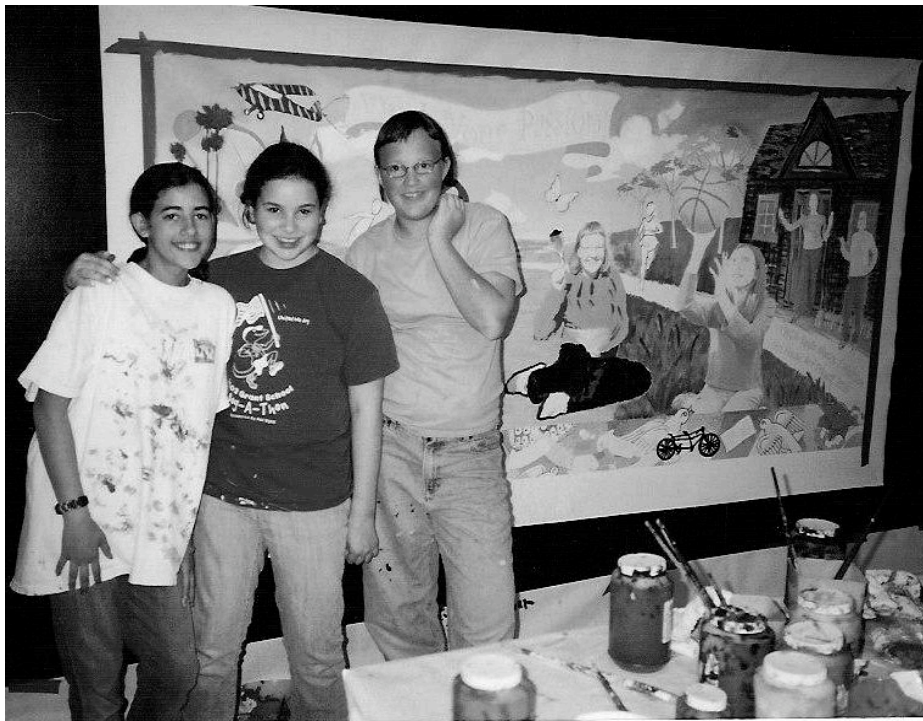
Using Art

You don't have to be good at art to offer it. In fact, your students would love being better than you at something! Explain to the girls that each of them has a creative spark in her, whether it shines through in the way she decorates her room, prepares a meal, solves a math problem, designs a science project, expresses herself on Facebook, paints a mural, or simply lives her life. The only expectation from the facilitator will be for the girls to let their imaginations soar and to have some fun.

Praise each girl for her artwork, both because doing art can be intimidating and because receiving sincere compliments can be a wonderful boost to a student's confidence and sense of self. I like to linger over a student's artwork for a moment and make general positive comments such as these: *You are so imaginative! Very creative! You show lots of passion! Courageous design choices! Wonderful colors!* Make sure that you do not say that one student's drawing or other skills are better than anyone else's!

If you can feel relaxed and loving and can connect with the whole person – that is, with each girl's heart and spirit as well as her effort and technique -- you will be more likely to find the right words to say for any particular student.

- Art makes dealing with difficult subjects more palatable by adding a splash of color.
- Art can be used to educate or protest.
- Art can help to connect people.
- Art can help people express difficult emotions.
- Art can mirror aspects of reality so these can be seen more clearly.
- Art can soothe the soul, promote healing, and restore self-confidence.
- Art integrates the left and right sides of the brain so intuition and intelligence can work together.
- Art opens up a world of possibilities through the imagination.



(l to r) Angelica, Amanda, and Kaitlyn at the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) in Venice, California, where the girls worked on their digital mural.

Section Three: Activities

"I feel more comfortable with my body and
my weight and how I look."

-Girl House girl Angelica, from her follow-up feedback form one year later

What Is Sexual Harassment?

Activity #1 - Introduction

Contemporary Issues: More than 80% of girls and women experience sexual harassment (data from *Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School*, commissioned by AAUW Educational Foundation, 2001). It is so commonplace that most people think it's normal and acceptable behavior. Sexual harassment has serious consequences (see below), and when it's combined with other problems that students may face, the results can be devastating. (See Activity #2, "Sexual Harassment Intersections," p. 19, for more detailed information on the intersection of different factors which puts some students who are sexually harassed at a distinct disadvantage.)

Project Description: Discussion and activities to help girls understand sexual harassment, both in their own experiences and those of others, and to find safe ways to talk about the topic.

Goal: The goal is to help girls and young women feel less isolated, more informed, and more prepared so that they can confront this serious problem.

Say to Girls: *Can you define sexual harassment?* Depending on how the students respond, you can add that sexual harassment is:

- Any unwanted and unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical contact of a sexual nature.
- An act of power, usually of males over females.
- Behavior that reinforces the pattern of unequal power between males and females in our society.
- Commonplace: Over 80% of girls experience sexual harassment at school.
- Sexual harassment can cause embarrassment and discomfort and can lead to a loss of self-esteem, poor grades, depression, and the avoidance of hallways and classes where harassment is likely to occur. Drug abuse, self-destructive behavior, and suicide are other potential consequences.
- Sexual harassment is illegal in any school that receives federal funding in educational programs under Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1972.

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** Make sure that students know that

- talking about sexual harassment is not an anti-male activity;
- not all males harass females;
- a person is more than any one kind of behavior that she/he exhibits -- we are complex human beings; and
- there are many reasons why sexual harassment occurs (activities #5 and #7 help to explain some of the reasons).

The silhouette in the Girl House art installation represents the faceless but threatening boys and men who harass girls. (See "Silhouette," p. 47, for more information.) ⇒ ⇒ ⇒



VERBAL, VISUAL, PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Goal: The goal is for the girls to be able to define and give examples of sexual harassment. This exercise is especially helpful for girls who think that they have never experienced sexual harassment because they believe that harassment is "only" physical.

Set-Up: Draw three columns (see below)) on a large sheet of butcher paper, with the headings "Verbal," "Visual," and "Physical." (Leave the column empty below each heading; the italicized words included are possible responses from students and/or suggestions for you to offer, if need be, to get the girls talking.)

Explain to Girls: Even though sexual harassment is commonplace, it's natural to be upset if they've been harassed. Commonplace incidents are still hurtful. The impact increases when sexual harassment happens often over time. Talking about sexual harassment may be difficult to do, and they don't have to share personal stories if they don't want to. They are in control!

Activity: Tell girls that sexual harassment can be verbal, visual, or physical. Ask them to brainstorm examples for each category written on the butcher paper. Write down the girls' responses on the paper as they are mentioned.

Verbal	Visual	Physical
<i>Pressuring for sexual favors, starting sexual rumors, calling someone sexually offensive names, unwelcome whistling, making sexual comments about a person's body, kissing sounds, telling dirty jokes, rating a person's looks on a scale of 1 to 10.</i>	<i>Making obscene gestures, displaying pornography, writing negative personal comments of a sexual nature in a public place such as a bathroom, staring at someone's body. Someone touching himself/herself sexually in front of others.</i>	<i>Cornering, following, standing too close, unwanted hugging or massages, pulling bra straps, touching, patting, pinching, or grabbing in a sexual way, brushing up against someone in a sexual way, attempted rape, rape.</i>

MINI-BRAINSTORM EXERCISE

Goal: The goal is to help girls try to understand the varied reasons why people experience incidents of sexual harassment differently.

Set-Up: Place butcher paper on the wall and write the students' responses on it.

Say to Girls: ***You may think that someone has overreacted to an incident of sexual harassment. To help us build compassionate mind-sets, let's look into this.*** (Below are questions to ask the students, along with possible responses and/or suggestions to get them talking.)

What influences how a person experiences an incident of sexual harassment?

How vulnerable she felt at the time (was she already worried about her grades?), whether she was satisfied or frustrated by how she handled the situation, whether other students were around or whether she was alone when it happened, whether someone came to her aid, whether the harassment happened often, whether the harasser was reprimanded, whether she feared repercussions from the harasser or from her classmates for "snitching" about an incident to a teacher or a school administrator.

Other possible influences include: her personality and outlook, her personal support network, the school environment, her cultural background (had she been taught to be submissive or to speak up?), the class issue (did she have resources to talk to a therapist or a room of her own to retreat to, or did she work at an after-school job where she was also being harassed?). Was she also harassed for her weight, her race, or for being gay? Did she have a sense that she was harassed because of many contributing cultural factors (see "Contributing Cultural Factors" activity, p. 24) as well as because of the actions of a particular harasser?

Say to Girls: ***What influences how a person talks about what happened to her?***

How comfortable she feels with herself now, how safe she feels talking in front of other students that she might not know well, how self-conscious she is describing something that may be disgusting to say out loud, how much she's already "processed" what happened to her, etc.

Do you know what your school advises you to do if you've been sexually harassed? Do you think this action plan is effective? Why or why not? Why do you think sexual harassment is so common?

There are few consequences for this behavior. It is so common that some people think it's normal.

If students respond that it's normal, ask: **Is what is considered normal always good? What are some examples of laws or traditions that were/are considered normal but were/are wrong?**

The government did not permit women to vote, slavery was legal, the gender wage gap still exists.

Say to Girls:

- **Have they heard the saying "Boys will be boys," which is often used to justify boys' behavior?**
- **Does this saying assume that all boys act in a certain way?**
- **Is it a good idea to lump all boys together?**
- **Does saying that "boys will be boys" mean that it's natural for boys to sexually harass girls?**
- **Why would it be natural to humiliate, disgust, or threaten someone?**
- **Do any of the people that you respect, whether males or females, humiliate, disgust, or threaten others?**
- **Is it just males who are harassers, or do females sometimes harass others, too?**
- **Does it seem to you that boys become as upset as girls are when they are sexually harassed? Why or why not?**

Some boys are **not** upset when a girl harasses them, because they consider it a compliment or an invitation. Most boys **are** upset if they are called "gay" for the way they act or dress, as if so-called feminine attributes in boys and men are despicable. These homophobic remarks, besides being hurtful to gay students, reinforce the already ingrained disrespect of females and the feminine in our society.

Some people say that girls who become upset if they are harassed are "too sensitive." Who gets to decide whether someone is "too sensitive"? Why might a girl or woman wonder if she is, indeed, "too sensitive" and has overreacted to incidents of sexual harassment?

One reason: The effects of daily humiliation and intrusion on one's body/mind/spirit caused by sexual harassment add up, but a girl may not understand how stress can build up over time and make her feel even more vulnerable.

Another reason is that because girls might have heard personal accounts as well as TV news reports about rape and sexual assault, and have most likely seen movies with stories involving "women in distress" -- with violence often part of these stories -- they may be terrified that sexual harassment might lead to something even worse. Such terror is an understandable reaction, not an overreaction.

Regardless of these or other reasons for a girl's particular response, the focus should not be on the girl's reaction but on the perpetrator's responsibility for his/her actions and on the systems that keep sexual harassment in place (see "Contributing Cultural Factors" activity, p. 24).

What could you do as an individual if you or a friend has been sexually harassed?

Write in your journal to vent feelings, document what happened (time, place, behavior) so you can accurately report it, tell the harasser to stop the harassing behavior if you feel comfortable and safe doing so (ask a friend to go with you if that would make you feel safer), tell an adult what happened, submit an official complaint to your school in writing, stand up for female and male friends who are being harassed.

What could you do as a group to create an environment in which sexual harassment is less likely to occur and to confront it when it does?

Create a survey to document the sexual harassment in your school (what kind, how often), then present the evidence to parents, the PTA, and school administrators; write an article about the topic for your school newspaper; educate the public using art (such as the Girl House Art Project); contact your local newspaper; create posters about sexual harassment for your school; ask your principal to make a general announcement telling students what to do if harassed.

Sexual Harassment Intersections

Activity #2 - Introduction

Goal: This exercise helps students to see how the intersection of different factors puts some students at a distinct disadvantage.

Set-Up: Pass out copies of the "Sexual Harassment Intersections" handout (p. 20), along with the "Potential Versus Reality" cartoon (p. 21).

Say to Girls: *An important contribution of black women's studies has been to show us that we need to look at how gender, class, race and other differences intersect with each other. The handouts that I have distributed look at how some of these differences intersect with sexual harassment. Let's read and discuss them.*



Clues inside the Girl House Art Project art installation showing the effects of sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment Intersections: Handout

Boys and Men Are Sexually Harassed: Although this guide mostly focuses on girls and women, boys and men are sexually harassed in almost equal numbers to girls and women in K-12 schools and in colleges/universities.¹ There are, however, significant differences:

- Boys' and men's experience of sexual harassment is **more** likely than girls' and women's **to be verbal and visual rather than physical**. A common type of verbal sexual harassment directed at boys and men is being judged too feminine (considered disgusting) and therefore put down for acting "gay" and not masculine enough. Being harassed by other boys or men for acting "gay" can be very upsetting.
- Boys and men are **more** likely than girls and women to consider that their being harassed was a compliment or an invitation (especially when girls and women harass them).
- Boys and men are **less** likely than girls and women **to fear** being sexually harassed in school. They are **less** likely than girls and women **to be upset** by sexual harassment (except if called gay) or to change their behavior to avoid harassment.²
- Boys and men are **less** likely than girls and women to think that they would be subject to further violation, such as being raped, if they confront their harasser and this person gets mad.

Some Class Issues:

- Females being sexual harassed who also face economic hardship have fewer resources to help them deal with the harassment -- for example, having a room of their own to retreat to or having the means to see a therapist.
- Because of economic hardship, those being harassed are less likely to leave an after-school job even if they're experiencing sexual harassment there.
- Sexual harassment at school may be one more factor -- perhaps the "last straw" -- that leads those being harassed to quit school and go to work full-time if they and/or their families are struggling financially.

Some Cultural Issues: Girls and women raised in a family where they are taught to be submissive to boys and men are not likely to ask for or receive the support they need when they're harassed. Sexual harassment is more likely to be viewed as something inevitable that should be tolerated.

Girls Harass Other Girls: Whether it's a result of meanness, displaced hostility, or a perverted expression of self-contempt, girl on girl harassment can be incredibly hurtful.

Harassment by Teachers: Sexual harassment by teachers is not as common as harassment by other students, but it can be extremely damaging. Students may be reluctant to complain for fear that they won't be believed or that their grades will be in jeopardy.

Homophobia: A girl or woman may be "accused" of being a "dyke" if she doesn't respond to the young man who is harassing her.

LBGTQ Students: Lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender students as well as students who are questioning their sexual orientation are more likely to be sexually harassed than heterosexual students, and it's more likely that this harassment will be physical.³ LBGTQ students are more likely to feel afraid, confused, depressed, and even suicidal.

Some Racial Issues:

- Sexual harassment can be based on racial stereotypes, such as a white boy's saying "I hear that Latina chicks are really hot."
- A boy of color may accuse a white girl of being racist if she refuses to go out with him.
- Students might not defend a girl who's being harassed if they consider her inferior because of her race.
- Black girls are more likely than girls from other racial groups to experience peer rejection for not standing up to their harassers.⁴
- Dealing with both sexual harassment and racism at school and elsewhere is difficult and exhausting.

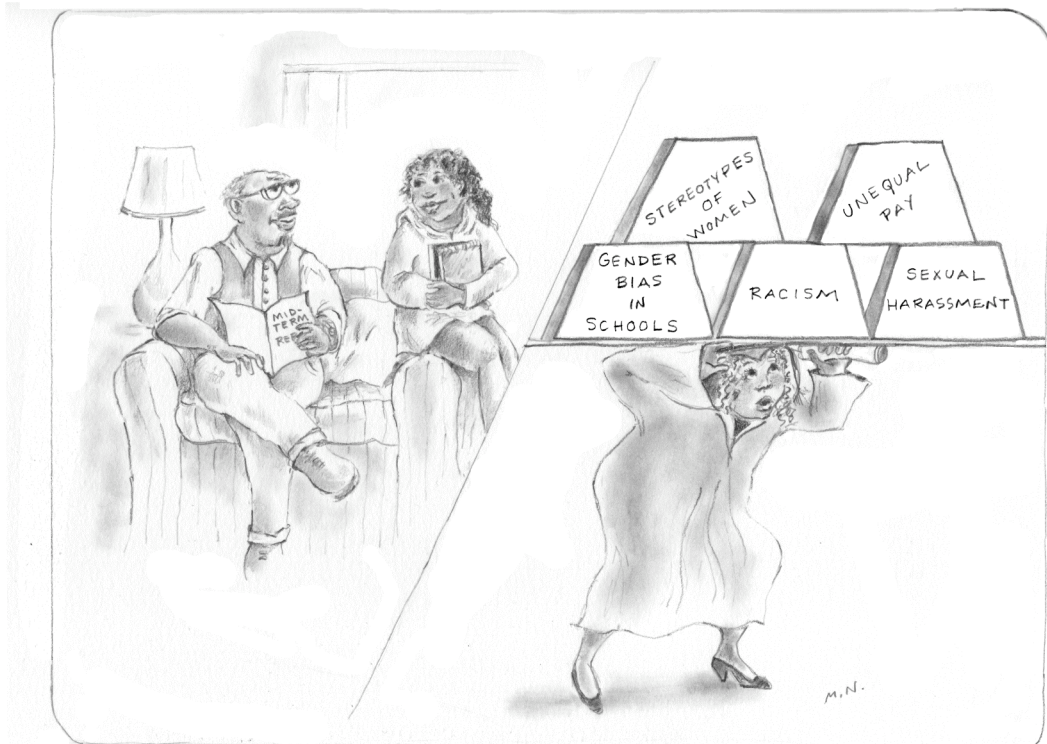
¹ *Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School*, commissioned by AAUW Educational Foundation, 2001.

² *Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus*, commissioned by AAUW Educational Foundation, 2005.

³ LBGTQ stands for lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, and questioning.

⁴ *Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality and Gendered Violence*, by Jody Miller.

Potential Versus Reality



*“I want you to know that you can do anything.
You’re special, talented, and smart.”*

Illustration by Mary Nadler © 2007

Girl House Art Project

Activity #3 - Film Viewing and Discussion

Contemporary Issues: 1) There are many people who do not believe that adolescent girls can, and should, speak for themselves about issues that concern them, relying instead on statistics and professional analyses rather than on girls' own experiences, told in their own words. They just don't think of adolescent girls as the educators and activists they can most certainly be. 2) Many boys and men, as well as quite a number of girls and women, are not familiar with how sexism affect girls' and women's lives and with the value of feminism in dealing with the problem of sexism.

Project Description: Students view the *Girl House Art Project* film and discuss the purpose, content, and effects of the Girl House Art Project art installation. To order the free 16-minute film on DVD (while supplies last), see "Film and Curricula: Kesa Kivel," p. 49.

Goal: The goal is to show what one group of adolescent girls has done through a public art project to increase awareness about sexual harassment and other gender-related issues.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY:

Students do Activity #1, "What Is Sexual Harassment?" followed by Activity #2, "Sexual Harassment Intersections" before viewing the film. Also, ask students to define *feminism* (Glossary, p. 46) and *silhouettes* (Glossary, p. 47). *Defining silhouettes is particularly important so that students will understand that the silhouettes in the film are not meant to indicate race.*

VIEWING ASSIGNMENT:

Students look for clues in the art installation that represent Crystal's reactions to having been sexually harassed.

POST-VIEWING QUESTIONS:

Say to Students: *What stood out or surprised you about the Girl House Art Project?*

Name some clues in the art installation that showed Crystal's reactions to being harassed.

- Wadded-up tissues, indicating tears
- Antidepressant pills on shelf
- Scrabble words
- Crystal's journal entries
- Sad-faced clown
- Bound butterfly
- Marked-up magazine
- Homework with failing grades
- Small "ugly girl" mirror (if you look in the mirror, your image reflects how ugly you feel inside)
- Telephone book opened to a teen counseling line
- Drawing of a broken body on a full-length mirror



Art by the Girl House girls.

Ask Students:

- What else could the girls have included as clues in the art installation?
- Are silhouettes an effective way to represent threatening males? (Refer back to the glossary definition of silhouette on p. 47, if necessary.)
- One of the purposes of the Girl House Art Project was to educate adults about how common sexual harassment is and about some of the consequences to girls of being harassed. Do you think the project was successful in doing so? Why or why not?
- Have you seen other public art projects by adolescent girls that educate viewers about girls' issues?
- Is art a useful way to raise awareness about important matters?
- If you were going to create an art installation about another issue or problem of concern to some girls and young women – for example, eating disorders -- what might the installation look like?

Different Kinds of Power

Activity #4 - Discussion

Contemporary Issues: Girls often experience a lack of power in their lives. For instance, because females are often seen by males as sexual objects, many girls are prevented by their parents from going to public places on their own. These girls therefore have few opportunities to assert their independence, with only limited opportunities to choose what they want to do and to go where they want to go. Within the home, many girls are restricted because of their parents' conscious and unconscious gender stereotypes. In addition, there are numerous ways in which both girls and boys do not have power in our culture because of such things as a lack of money, a lack of transportation, and, significantly, a lack of respect from adults (e.g., "Children should be seen and not heard").⁵

It is natural for girls -- and everyone -- to want to feel powerful. Because of adolescent girls' lack of power in other areas, their newfound feeling of sexual power resulting from others' attention to them can feel especially good. Girls may feel they can finally have some influence and control over other people, and they may therefore feel special or important. Wanting to feel this novel and easily obtained sense of power may lead some girls to engage in sexual behavior and experimentation for which they are emotionally unprepared and which puts them at risk.

Project Description: Discussion about different types of power.

Goal: The goal is to help girls identify different types of power (not just sexual power, with which they might be most familiar) so they can feel powerful in diverse circumstances.

Set-Up: You can either make the quiz below into a handout and give one to each girl to answer, or you can have the girls brainstorm the answers as a group.

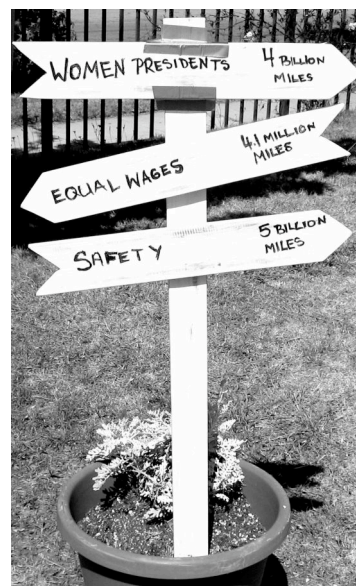
Explain to Girls: They are going to be looking at three kinds of power: **Inner Power**, **Power with Others**, and **Power Over Others**.⁶ Power, in and of itself, is neutral. It's how the power is used that is important. For instance, does the president of the drama club facilitate a decision-making process in which all drama club students can participate, or does she just assume that her own ideas are best and make decisions without consulting other students?

Girls take the quiz below, identifying which kind of power an imaginary girl has.

- ___1) She meditates, connecting with a peaceful spiritual energy.
- ___2) She is the student body president.
- ___3) She works with friends on a school science project.
- ___4) She co-chairs the student council meetings.
- ___5) She dances in her room to music she loves.
- ___6) She stands up for friends, including someone who is being sexually harassed.
- ___7) She joins in family meetings in which the family members decide together where they will go for their summer vacation.
- ___8) She realizes that she is just fine even when she can't get her hair to look the way she wants it to look.

Ask Girls: Can you think of some times when you have felt powerful in your own life? Please explain. *Note: You can ask girls to close their eyes to think about the answer to this question.*

Explain to Girls: Receiving positive attention from someone they are attracted to can also make them feel powerful, and that is fine. But girls can learn to feel powerful -- that is, strong, special, and able to make a difference in their own lives and in the world -- regardless of any attention from other people.



Signage near the Girl House

⁵ *Helping Teens Stop Violence: A Practical Guide for Counselors, Educators, and Parents*, by Allan Creighton with Paul Kivel.

⁶ Based on concepts presented in books by Starhawk, Bell Hooks, and Riane Eisler.

Contributing Cultural Factors

Activity #5* - Interactive Exercise

Contemporary Issues: Sexism is commonplace and tolerated, and it is therefore difficult to step back and grasp how much it's embedded in a system of laws, traditions, policies, and practices. In addition, many people are not aware of the *specific* ways sexism limits females, and how some females are more limited than others. Finally, the relationship between a sexist society in its many facets and sexual harassment is not easy to see. The focus tends to be on the entertainment media's role in promoting stereotypes and objectifying women, which it does do, but that focus is too narrow. Many factors contribute to the environment in which sexual harassment occurs. The entire system, not just the media, must be transformed.

Project Description: This is an interactive exercise in which girls respond to statements made by a facilitator **by stepping backward, away from one sign and closer to another one**. Students who are disabled and cannot step backward can raise their hands or state their position in some other way, if possible.

Goal: The goal is for girls and women to learn about sexism in myriad forms, to discover some of the disadvantages of being female and how some females are affected disproportionately, and to see how a sexist society creates an environment in which sexual harassment is likely to occur. Learning through self-discovery in an interactive format rather than through a lecture will help the girls really "own" the material and see how it affects them and other people.

Advance Preparation of Signs: 15 minutes. Create two signs and the placard for the chair.

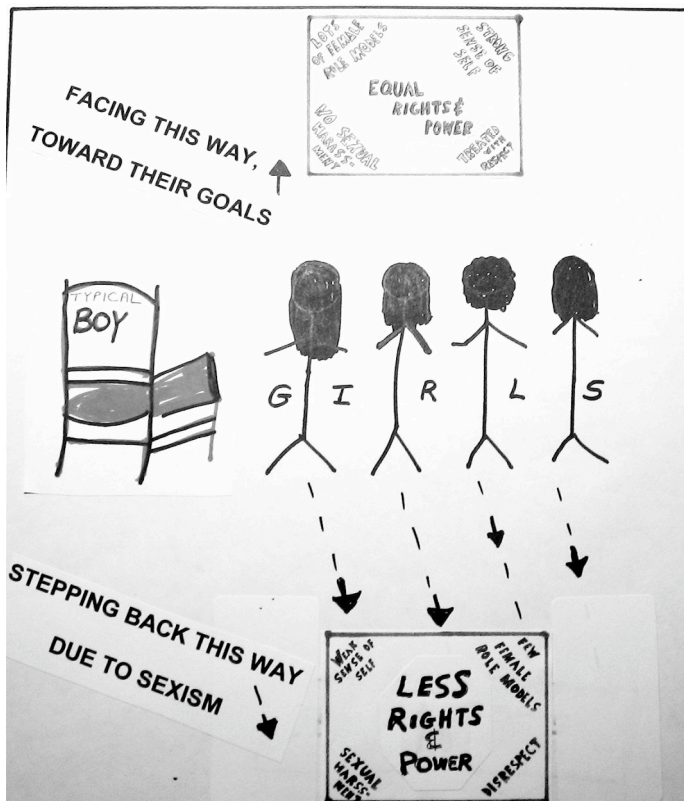


Diagram of a room showing where the girls, chair, and signs are to be positioned.

←←← **FIRST SIGN** shows positive goals, such as these:

- Equal Rights and Power
- Lots of Female Role Models
- Strong Sense of Self
- No Sexual Harassment
- Equal Pay for Equal Work
- Treated with Respect

←←← **TYPICAL BOY CHAIR**

represents the advantages that many boys have simply because they are male. This chair **stays where it is** at all times. The girls **step backward**, closer to the Less Rights and Power Sign, if a statement read by the facilitator applies to them.

←←← **SECOND SIGN** shows some of the impacts of sexism, such as these:

- Less Rights and Power
- Weak Sense of Self
- Few Female Role Models
- Disrespect
- Unequal Pay
- Sexual Harassment.

*The format I used in creating this activity is based on one developed by Paul Kivel and Martin Cano.

Length of Time: One hour for discussion/interactive exercise.

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** Before you begin the activity, read the statements below so you're familiar with them.

- Position the signs and chair (see "Diagram," p. 24).
- Have the girls line up **in the middle** of the room so they're facing the Equal Rights and Power sign and will have room to step backwards. The Less Rights and Power sign will be behind them. (If you have a large group of girls in a small space, invite a few of them to line up and do the exercise while the others observe.)
- Read the statements below out loud to the girls and ask them to respond by taking one step backward, closer to the Less Rights and Power sign, if a statement applies to them.

Say to Girls: At times, people with more economic, social, and political power take advantage of or harm people with less power. What are some examples from history where this has occurred?

Possible answers range from the taunting of gays by heterosexual people to the enslavement of African Americans and the exploitation of Native Americans by white people.



Explain to Girls: The next activity demonstrates how the system of laws, traditions, policies, and practices in the U.S. discriminates against girls and women. This type of discrimination, known as sexism, gives boys and men -- particularly white boys and men -- more economic, social, and political power than girls and women. After the interactive segment of the activity, students will discuss the relationship between this power imbalance and sexual harassment.

STATEMENTS:

Explain to Girls: Tell girls that you are going to read some statements out loud. If a statement applies to them, they should take one step back, away from the Equal Rights and Power sign and closer to the Less Rights and Power sign. Some of them will step back; others won't. The girls never have to explain why they do or do not step back for any of the statements that are read to them.

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** For the first statement below, girls probably won't step back if their parents have given them a unique last name, the mother's last name, or a hyphenated combination last name.

~ ~ ~

♦**Facilitator Reads:** If you use your father's last name rather than your mother's, and/or your mother took your father's or a previous husband's last name when she got married, please take one step back.

♦**Action:** Girls move back one step if this statement applies to them.

♦**Facilitator Asks for Explanation/Explains:** You are moving back, closer to the Less Rights and Power sign. Most U.S. brides take their husbands' last names based on a tradition prevalent in Colonial times. When a white woman married, she took her husband's last name because she was considered his property. Black women who were enslaved did not have the option of getting married, as it was illegal. In their cases, they were forced to take the names and become the property of white male slave owners, with even worse consequences.

In using a man's last name, you and/or your mother, although not considered the man's property, are legally known through his identity based on this sexist tradition.

♦**Facilitator Reads:** If you were raised in a household where your mom, stepmom, or female guardian does more household chores and/or child care than your dad, stepdad, or male guardian, even if she also works outside the home, please take one step back.

♦**Action:** Girls move back one step if this statement applies to them.

♦**Facilitator Asks for Explanation/Explains:** You are moving back because you are watching your mom, one of your main female role models, do all or most of the undervalued and often tiring household work simply because she's a woman.

◆**Facilitator Reads:** If you were raised in a household where you, your sister, your mom, stepmom, or female guardian is more likely to wear uncomfortable shoes, buy expensive cosmetics, or worry about her hair in order to feel okay about herself than your brother, dad, stepdad, or male guardian is to do these sorts of things, please take one step back.

◆**Action:** Girls move back one step if this statement applies to them.

◆**Facilitator Asks for Explanation/Explains:** You are moving away from having a strong sense of self and closer to having a more limiting, costly, and uncomfortable version of yourself.

◆**Facilitator Reads:** If you know more girls and women than boys and men who are dieting because they are worried about how they look (rather than about their health) or who have eating disorders, please take one step back.

◆**Action:** Girls move back one step if this statement applies to them.

◆**Facilitator Asks for Explanation/Explains:** You are moving away from a world with lots of confident females and moving closer to a world where many females feel stressed about how others see them, sometimes to the point of having unhealthy eating habits or even becoming ill.

◆**Facilitator Reads:** If you go to a school where the textbooks are more likely to teach about men's lives than women's lives, please take one step back.

◆**Action:** Girls move back one step if this statement applies to them.

◆**Facilitator Asks for Explanation/Explains:** You are moving away from a world with lots of positive female role models to a world with fewer female role models. This may discourage you from fulfilling your dreams.

◆**Facilitator Reads:** If boys at your school get away with sexual harassment even if you or others complain, please take one step back.

◆**Action:** Girls move back one step if this statement applies to them.

◆**Facilitator Asks for Explanation/Explains:** You are moving away from an environment in which girls are respected and closer to an environment in which girls are disrespected and may suffer from low self-esteem, depression, and other problems resulting from sexual harassment.

◆**Facilitator Reads:** If you have been raised in a society where video games, music videos, and song lyrics often portray women solely as sexual objects rather than as unique people with diverse skills and talents, please take one step back.

◆**Action:** Girls move back one step if this statement applies to them.

◆**Facilitator Asks for Explanation/Explains:** You are moving away from an environment in which females are respected by males and closer to an environment in which females are disrespected by males. It's easier for boys and men to justify harassing girls and women (to justify harassing YOU) if they hear repeatedly from the popular culture that girls and women are primarily valued as sexual objects.

◆**Facilitator Reads:** If you have been raised in a society where men hold most of the highest public offices and where most Supreme Court justices, members of Congress, and heads of big businesses, the military, the media, and religions are men, please take one step back.

◆**Action:** Girls move back one step if this statement applies to them.

◆**Facilitator Asks for Explanation/Explains:** With few female role models and mentors in positions of power to inspire you and help you make useful business connections, you are moving away from the likelihood of holding a powerful, well-paying job.

◆**Facilitator Reads:** If you live in a country where the most commonly used money has pictures of men on it, please take one step back.

◆**Action:** Girls move back one step if this statement applies to them.

◆**Facilitator Asks for Explanation/Explains:** You are moving away from a society that shows females and males equally on its currency and closer to one in which females are not shown equally on the currency. Except for a few rarely circulated coins, U.S. currency does not have images of females. This is one of the many ways in which our society fails to publicly honor and value women.

♦**Facilitator Reads:** If you are African American, Latina, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, Native American, Indigenous, Arab-American, or in any other way identify yourself as a person of color, please take one step back.

♦**Action:** Girls move back one step if this statement applies to them.

♦**Facilitator Asks for Explanation/Explains:** You are moving back because you are likely to experience racism as well as sexism and have even fewer opportunities than white females.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Say to Girls: *Where do you see yourself in relationship to the Typical Boy chair?*

Say to Girls Who Have Stepped Back: *Did anybody actually bop you over the head and tell you that you will not succeed? No? So, why are you so far behind Typical Boy?*

Possible student answers (or facilitator explanation) include: *Sexism in our society gives many males -- particularly white males, who are not held back due to racism -- more power. Because of this power, Typical Boy has many advantages over girls just because he is male. This is so whether or not Typical Boy himself is sexist in his actions.*

Do these advantages lead to an environment in which sexual harassment is likely to occur?

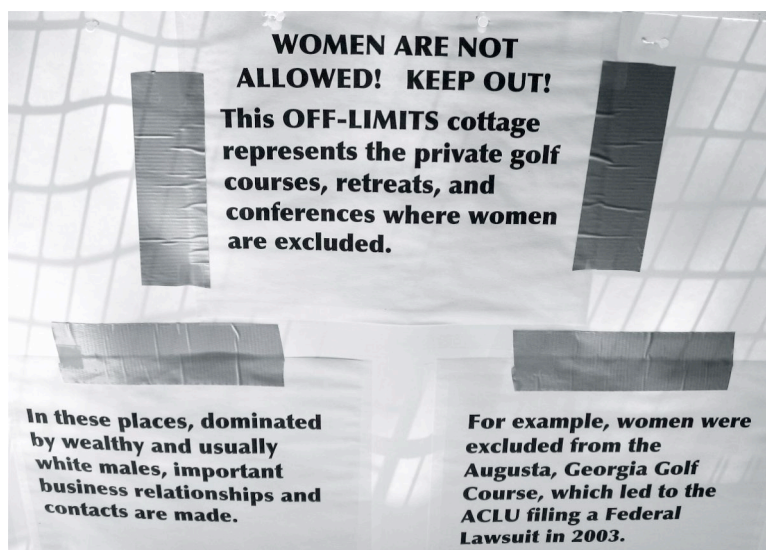
Possible student answers (or facilitator explanation) include: *Sexual harassment does not just pop up like a weed in our schools. It's a product of a society in which boys and men generally have more economic, social, and political advantages than girls and women in a wide range of circumstances. Having more advantages may lead to boys and men feeling superior to girls and women and entitled to sexually harass them.*

Students may point out that some boys and men with advantages do not sexually harass girls and women. If this point doesn't arise, please bring it up. It's important for you to acknowledge that some boys and men are respectful of girls and women and are allies, actively supporting equality and social change. Some boys and men do nothing to change the system and therefore sustain the status quo, allowing things to remain the way they are. Many boys and men with advantages feel superior and believe they are entitled to sexually harass girls and women.

Who is responsible for making the needed changes so that we could have a more equitable, compassionate, and inclusive world? Everyone.

How would boys and men benefit from these changes?

Some specific benefits would be: *Males would be free to nurture others, to cry and be vulnerable, and to hold traditionally female jobs (for example, nursing), without being ridiculed. They would be able to act peacefully without being called wimps, and to dress and act any way they wanted without being "accused" of being gay. Gay males would be treated with respect and could live without fear. All in all, boys and men would be able to live less stressful, more authentic lives.*



This sign, which was placed in front of a YWCA building that was off-limits for the Girl House Public Exhibition, represents the many places that are off-limits to girls and women.

(The full name of the golf course referred to is the Augusta National Golf Course in Augusta, Georgia.)

Some Girls Ask for It

Activity #6 - Invitations

Contemporary Issues: Because many girls and women have been socialized to think of themselves as inferior to males, girls and women sometimes do not support themselves or other girls and women, and sometimes even hold themselves or others back, just because they are female. For instance, girls and women might “act dumb” when competing with boys and men, they might tolerate an abusive relationship with a boyfriend, they might not stand up for themselves or other girls and women, or they might have lower expectations for themselves or other girls and women than for boys and men.⁷ These kinds of behaviors are called *internalized sexism*.

Internalized sexism in combination with the fact that society, for the most part, does not take responsibility for preventing or stopping sexual harassment -- and in fact sometimes supports the idea that girls and women are to blame -- affects how some girls and women react to sexual harassment.⁸

Because of both internalized sexism and external pressures, girls and women may believe that an incident of sexual harassment happened because of the clothes they wore, something they said or did, or something they didn't say or do. Self-blame and blaming other females are understandable reactions, as a girl or a woman tries to rationalize what has happened, process her feelings of vulnerability, and regain a sense of control.

Project Description: Discussion, artwork, and writing. *The invitation segment (see below) is for older/more mature students.*

Goal: The goal is to help girls identify and combat internalized sexism, particularly as it relates to sexual harassment, in order to become more aware and empowered.

Caution: Girls must be mature enough to understand the concept of parody before the “invitation” segment of this activity will make sense to them. Also, the invitation may awaken strong mixed feelings about past incidences of sexual harassment or sexual assault; for instance, some girls may *feel* that they caused a particular incident to occur even though they *know* they did not. Designate enough time to process whatever comes up.

I advise against students' creating their own invitations in case these are found by someone else and thought to be a legitimate invitation to harass someone. And, as I mentioned in “Creating a Safe Space” (p. 11), it's often a good idea to ask at the beginning of the *next* session (no matter what the topic is) if there are any thoughts about the previous week's (today's) topic.

Length of Time: 1 hour for activity; 20 minutes of prep time if you make the invitation.

Set-Up: Provide unlined and lined paper and markers so students can express their feelings through artwork and writing.

For older/more mature students: Create an invitation and display it (see the cover of a sample invitation on this page ⇒ ⇒ ⇒ and the insides of sample invitations on p. 29). This prop will reinforce your words and stimulate discussion.



Does anyone really “invite” sexual harassment?

⁷ Reclaiming Quarterly, no. 96 (online): Winter 2005.

⁸ Society's lack of support is evident when, for example, the entertainment media and the courts foster an impression -- or outright declare -- that females “asked for it” in provoking sexual harassment, sexual assault, or date rape.

Create an invitation that's appropriate for the age you are teaching.

To: Johnny Harasser

Where: School Hallway

When: 3:00 PM Today

Activity: Patting my butt
and pulling my bra straps.

Why: Because I want to feel
embarrassed and humiliated in
front of my friends.

Can't wait! See you there! Don't be late!

Inside of an invitation to use with middle-school girls

To: Bobby Harasser

Where: Campus

When: 7 PM tonight

Activity: Cornering me and trying
to convince me to have sex with you
by endless arguments and pressure.

Why: Because I want to feel
powerless, panicked, and out of
control.

Can't wait! See you there! Don't be late!

Inside of an invitation to use with college-age women

✓ **Note to Facilitator:**

- Refer to "Different Kinds of Power" on p. 23 so that if it comes up, you can respond to the issue of girls feeling powerful by getting boys' attention.
- The italicized words below are possible responses from the students and/or suggestions to get them talking.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Say to Girls: *Is it natural to feel sexual and have sexual desires?*

Girls will respond to the above question in a variety of ways. You can add that, as human beings, it's natural and healthy to feel sexually alive and experience sexual desire. These feelings may get more intense during puberty.

Girls wear "sexy" clothes for many reasons. Can you name some?

They are influenced by the latest fashions shown in magazines, movies, and on television. Girls see the latest fashions on models and teen celebrities. They want to fit in. They like the latest styles. Sexy clothes reflect their newly awakened sexual feelings. The clothes may feel comfortable to wear. Sexy clothes are the ones they are most likely to find in local shops. Girls want to experiment. They want to rebel against the style of clothes their parents wear. Girls and women like attention from boys and men or other girls and women and sometimes seek it out by wearing sexy clothes.

If girls say that some girls and women wear sexy clothes to get attention, ask them:

- Is it okay to want attention from boys or other girls?
- Do people who want attention want to be looked at as sexual objects rather than as human beings?
- Are girls who wear sexy clothes asking for unwanted touching or asking to be cornered in a sexual way so that they feel scared?
- What are some respectful ways to let someone know that you are attracted to him or her?

Some people say that girls are responsible for being harassed because of the sexy clothes they choose to wear. Is it true that only girls and women who wear sexy clothes are sexually harassed?

Students may respond that anyone can be harassed no matter what they are wearing, or that only girls who wear sexy clothes are likely to be sexually harassed.

Explain to Girls: However the girls respond, tell them that some people are harassed no matter what they wear. Girls who have not been personally harassed can also be affected negatively by an environment in which sexual harassment is likely to occur. For instance, girls may find themselves avoiding a school hallway in which they know that groups of boys gather to rate girls walking by on their sex appeal, on a scale of 1 to 10.

Do you believe that girls and women are to blame for what others do to them?

Students may respond that girls and women are to blame because wearing sexy clothes is an invitation to be sexually harassed, and that a girl or woman who is harassed while wearing sexy clothes was "asking for it."

Explain to Girls: However the girls respond, tell them that girls and women are never to blame for being sexually harassed, no matter what they are wearing, and that sexual harassment is wrong -- period. In fact, sexual harassment is illegal in schools that receive federal funding. Under a 1992 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, students who suffer sexual harassment can seek monetary damages from their schools.

Even though sexual harassment is illegal, society in general does not take responsibility for providing a safe, respectful, harassment-free environment. In addition, the entertainment media and the courts sometimes even imply that girls and women are to blame for having been harassed. For these reasons, girls may blame themselves or other girls or women when an incident of sexual harassment occurs. This misdirected blame may give girls a momentary feeling of control and safety -- "If I believe that being slapped on my butt was my fault because of what I wore, then maybe I can do something to keep it from ever happening again. I won't wear again what I wore when I was harassed, so I'll be safe from sexual harassment in the future." However, because sexual harassment occurs regardless of what girls and women do or do not do, there is no guaranteed way to make sure it does not happen to them.

Ask Girls: Besides self-blame and blaming other girls and women for sexual harassment, what are some other ways in which girls and women do not support other girls and women or even hold themselves or others back?

Possible student responses (or facilitator explanations) include: *Some girls might try to hide how smart they are when they are talking with boys they are interested in, or they might let a boy win when playing a game. Some female teachers might discourage girls from pursuing careers in a "man's field," such as engineering. If family funds are limited, some mothers will save money for only their sons to attend college, not their daughters. Some women in heterosexual (male/female) domestic relationships will do most or all of the child care and household work even if both partners are employed.*

Explain to Girls: These kinds of behaviors are called *internalized sexism*. Tell the girls that sexual harassment and gender-related problems **are never their fault**, but that they can try to figure out any ways in which they "buy into" the mind-set that boys and men should have more rights and opportunities than girls and women. All of us -- whether individuals or institutions -- have a responsibility to solve these kinds of problems. Working together, we can!

POST-DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES:

- For students of any age: Have students use unlined or lined paper to draw or write for 20 minutes on what they have learned and what they are feeling in general. If you want, ask girls to answer this question as they write: ***Are there ways in which you personally have ever not supported another girl or woman, or have held yourself or another female back?*** Afterward, students can either share out loud what they have written or opt out of sharing.
- For more mature students: Display and discuss the invitation that you will have created. What do the students think about it? What is the value of parody? Are girls and women ever at fault for being harassed? Do some girls and women "invite" sexual harassment?

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** The idea that girls or women invite harassment is so ingrained that even adult women who intellectually understand that they did not invite sexual harassment or assault may still feel they are to blame for specific things that happened to them. Please be patient with yourself and your students; correcting this idea takes awareness, healing, and social change.

No One Else Is Taking Responsibility!

Activity #7 - Art Exercise

Contemporary Issues: Sexual harassment was not even considered a problem until feminists raised the issue and “named” the behavior in the 1970s. Now people know about it, but it is still so commonplace that it’s almost as if society gives it consent. Sexual harassment is rampant in places as diverse as schools, the military, businesses, summer camps, and on public transportation.

Since it’s tolerated in so many places and no one else seems to be taking responsibility, girls and women often blame themselves or other girls and women for being harassed in order to handle the situation emotionally and feel more in control.

Girls and women could be but are not taught that schools, businesses, the government, the military, and the media could be taking responsibility for sexual harassment, but usually do not unless they are being sued, shamed, or threatened in some way. Girls and women could be but are not taught that they deserve to grow up in a safe, respectful environment.

Without institutions, enacting and enforcing effective laws, policies, and practices as well as establishing meaningful consequences for both the harassers and industry leaders who look the other way, sexual harassment’s sad legacy and other gender-related problems will continue. Institutions as well as individuals must provide and foster a culture of respect and a policy of equality; it is everyone’s responsibility to do so.

Project Description: Discussion followed by editorial cartoon artwork.

Goal: The goal is for girls and women to understand some of the ways in which institutions and individuals suppress females, so that they will be less likely to blame themselves or other females when sexual harassment and other gender-related problems occur. The cartoon illustrations will help bring the information to life so that it will be easier to understand and remember.

Set-Up: Gather examples of editorial cartoons,⁹ butcher paper, and colored markers. Place butcher paper on the wall for the brainstorming session. Copy the “No One Else...” handout (p. 32) and the cartoon (p. 33) for each student. Provide unlined paper and markers for small group work.

Say to Girls: *Does anyone know what an editorial cartoon is? It can be a single image or a comic strip, often found in news publications, that offers visual commentary on current events and social issues. Editorial cartoons are powerful tools that can educate and influence readers.*

The editorial cartoonist uses drawings of people, animals, or whatever she or he decides will best make the point. It may or may not include words (words underneath a cartoon are called captions). The images are often exaggerated. (Show examples **other** than the cartoon on p. 33.)

You will be drawing editorial cartoons to illustrate different statements. What you’ll need is creativity, not expert art skills! Caption and/or illustration ideas will be offered to help you get things started. You can modify the captions or even write your own, if you prefer.

- Pass out the “No One Else...” handout (p. 32) and ask a student to read statement #1, the set-up, and the caption out loud. Explain to students that the set-up and caption hold clues to help them imagine how this statement might be visually expressed as an editorial cartoon.
- With these clues in mind, ask students to brainstorm what the cartoon might look like for statement #1. As they do this, write their ideas on the butcher paper. For example, the cartoon could show a girl looking angry while Bobby rates her looks on a scale of one to ten.
- Pass out the editorial cartoon on p. 33 to show what one professional illustrator created for the statement, and discuss. Students then continue reading the statements and captions out loud.
- Students break up into small groups, choose two to three statements to illustrate, and then sketch their cartoons. Stick figures are perfectly okay.
- Each small group chooses one of its members to share its results with the larger group. Encourage the students to appreciate the creative efforts more than the artists’ drawing skills.
- Display the students’ work publicly. Discuss a potential backlash (see “Potential Backlash,” bottom of p. 35).

⁹ E.g., <http://www.comics.com/editoons/hulme/> and <http://www.ekmillerproductions.com/about.htm>.

No One Else Is Taking Responsibility: Handout

Institutions and Individuals Suppress Girls and Women in Many Ways

Statement #1. Sexual harassment is tolerated in our society. It's almost as if society gives its consent.

Set-up to give you the background: The girl in this situation has said, "Bobby didn't stop when I complained about his rating girls' looks on his stupid scale of one to ten in the school hallway today. The math teacher, WHO SAW EVERYTHING, didn't do anything, and the principal didn't take any action when I reported what had happened."

Caption: "Bobby rates me a six on my looks, and I rate the school environment a zero."

Statement #2. Adults sometimes tell girls who are being sexually harassed that they should just put up with it because "boys will be boys." What they are saying is that males can't control their sexual urges and therefore aren't responsible for their actions.

Caption: Girl says, "I guess I have to put up with boys harassing me because they can't help themselves. But I bet they'd stop if the security guard walked by!"

Statement #3. Society says that this is a land of opportunity where every person can succeed by just trying hard enough. This view ignores the many obstacles that some individuals face. For instance, a girl of color who is poor and has asthma has to leap over more obstacles than other girls.

Illustration Ideas: (1) Show two rabbits in a race. One has to hop over a stone that has the word RACISM written on it, a stone that has the word POVERTY written on it, and a stone that has the word DISABILITY written on it. The other rabbit is well ahead and has a clear path to the finish line.

(2) Show girls and boys in a race. Show the particular obstacles that girls might have to face. Write a caption.

Statement #4. The media ads show skinny models selling cars, TVs, and chewing gum; most actresses are ultra-thin, and many adults are trying to lose weight by following strange or drastic diets.

Caption: Girl says, "Even though the doctor says I'm at a normal weight, when I look in the mirror I think I look fat."

Statement #5. In most school textbooks, males are mentioned much more often than females are.¹⁰

Caption: Girl says, "Where are all the girls and women? I know they exist!"

Illustration Idea: Show men popping out of a textbook and women barely visible behind a wall that has the word SEXISM on it.

Statement #6. Because of sexism in the business world, women working full time make about 22% less money per year than men do for the same jobs (U.S. Census Bureau, reports and data 2007).

Caption: On average, a woman earns 22% less per year than a man for the same job.

Illustration Ideas: (1) Show a waiter/waitress putting a pizza pie on the table in front of a girl/girls, with almost a quarter of it already missing.

(2) Create a coupon that reads, "Due to the gender wage gap, 22% off all goods and services for any female shopper, valid for all purchases in the USA only. Expires 2050."¹¹

~ ~ ~

As you can see from the statements above, many individuals and institutions are not only *not* taking responsibility for sexual harassment and other gender-related problems, but they are sometimes creating situations, traditions, and practices that increase the likelihood that these problems will occur.

All of us, whether individuals or institutions -- schools, the media, government, the business world, boys and men, girls and women, and society in general -- must take responsibility for these problems. We **all** have a part to play in creating a more equitable, inclusive, compassionate world. It's **everyone's** responsibility!

¹⁰ *Gender in the Classroom*, pp. 118-119, edited by David Sadker and Ellen S. Silber.

¹¹ This coupon has been adapted with permission from one that appears at www.pay-equity.org.

**Sexual harassment is tolerated in so many places
that it's almost as if society gives its consent.**



Illustration by Mary Nadler © 2007

Stop It Now!

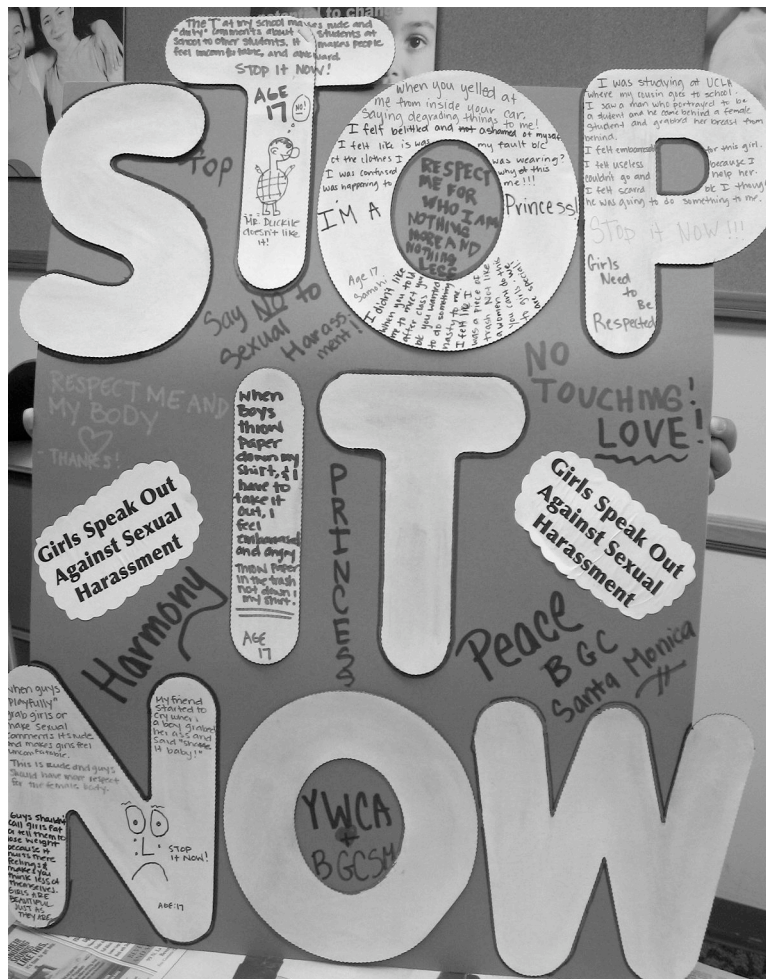
Activity #8 - Protest Poster Exercise

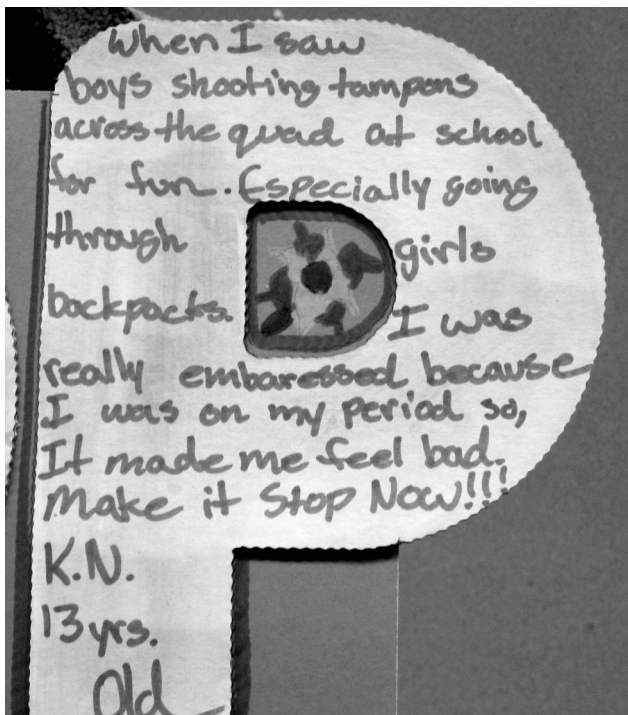
Contemporary Issues: 1) Without awareness of the widespread nature of sexual harassment, girls who have been harassed may feel isolated; they may also believe that the harassment was due to their own personal failure rather than being part of a larger problem. 2) Until healing occurs, girls' feelings of worthlessness and hurt, along with a distrust of males, will likely remain even if the harassment ceases. 3) Without social change, sexual harassment and its damaging effects will continue from generation to generation.

Project Description: Girls create a poster protesting sexual harassment that is displayed along with information about what to do if sexually harassed.

Goal: The goal of this group activity is for the participants to become more aware of the widespread nature of sexual harassment, begin to heal through the creative art process, and impact the community by speaking out for social change. The activity also introduces a conflict resolution formula -- a useful communication tool in diverse circumstances.

Length of Time: 1 hour, if letters are pre-cut.





1) Set-Up: Create 9-inch-tall letters of the alphabet that spell out "STOP IT NOW!" The light-colored inside space of each letter should be about 2 1/2 inches wide -- plenty of room for girls to write personal incidents of sexual harassment using the three-step conflict resolution formula.

Say to Girls: *Think of incidents of sexual harassment that you have experienced or witnessed, whether verbal, physical, or visual. Choose a few that you would feel comfortable sharing. You will be writing about them on one of the letters for the poster. You can decide whether or not to include your name and age.*

Would you feel comfortable signing your name? Would it be empowering?

2) Ask girls to start at the top of the letter and write from top to bottom a statement of what happened, their feelings at the time, and a request for things to change. This is the three-step conflict resolution formula.

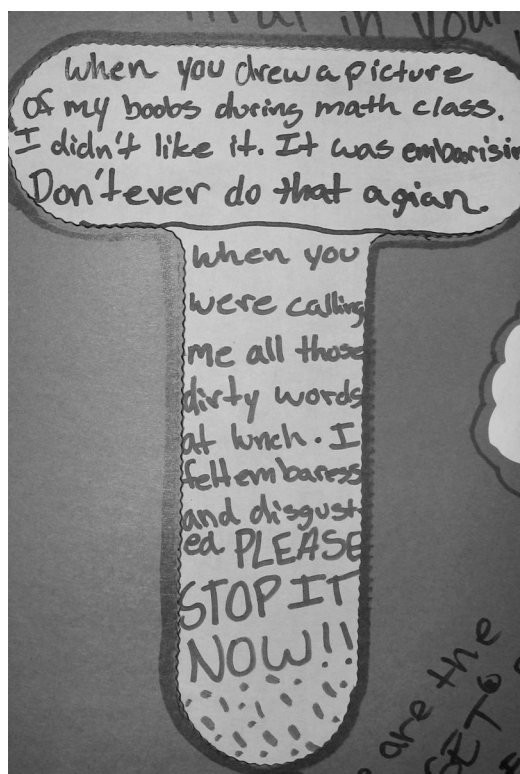
For example, inside the "T" in STOP, one girl wrote, "When you drew a picture of my boobs during math class, it was embarrassing. Don't ever do that again!"

In writing these words, she did the following:

- #1: Stated the specific incident: "When you drew a picture of my boobs during math class..."
- #2: Stated her feelings: "...it was embarrassing."
- #3: Made a specific request for the future: "Don't ever do that again!"

Each letter holds one or two incidents of sexual harassment. Spell out "Stop It Now!" and place the posters in schools or community centers with information about what to do if sexually harassed.

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** Girls should not use the boys' names when describing each incident; the idea is to educate, not shame, the boys involved.



POTENTIAL BACKLASH: Talk to the girls about the potential backlash from others in doing this activity. For instance, a poster may get written over with sexist statements. Are the risks worth the gains? What are some historic moments, such as times during the civil rights movement, when there was a backlash?

I Am the Hero of My Life Story

Activity #9 - Codices

Contemporary Issue: Sexual harassment, gender bias in curricula, and degrading media imagery contribute to many girls' and women's low self-esteem, confusion, lack of assertiveness, and anxiety. Because of these and other negative influences, girls and women are more likely to see themselves as the victim rather than the hero of their own life story.

Project Description: Creation of an accordion-shaped picture book (based on Mayan codices) that depicts one chapter of the student's life story through words, images, and photographs. Symbolic images, such as scary-looking creatures, represent the real-life challenges in the student's life.

Each student will name her challenges, acquire problem-solving skills, identify allies, and witness how problems are worked out over time. Furthermore, she will imprint the hero's journey on her psyche and come away with a memory map of her life at this point in time.

Goal: The goal of this project is to help each student to experience herself as the hero of her life story through an art project based on Mayan codices. In working on this project, girls and women will honor a lost art form and reclaim suppressed female power.

Length of Time: Multiple sessions over several weeks or months.

Set-Up--The facilitator does the following:

- Creates a sample codex with photos of herself and some of her challenges, relaxation places, victories, etc.
- Gathers historic examples of Mayan codices (Internet sources).
- Pre-cuts paper into a rectangular shape. Use stiff paper if you want the codex to "stand" upright.
- If possible, brings a digital camera to take photos (printing photos on regular paper will minimize the costs).
- Brings decorative materials, scissors, tape, markers, glue, etc.
- Gathers symbolic challenges, such as cutouts from comic books and magazines of scary-looking creatures, or of mountains to climb or bridges to cross. Students can also create their own symbolic challenges.

Mayan Codex Defined:

A Mayan codex is an accordion-shaped picture book used by the Mayan and Aztec peoples. The codices (the plural form of codex) show "the social and political histories, cosmologies, religions, and scientific and medical knowledge and practices of these ancient American people." (*Chicano Codices Catalogue*, Mexican Museum, San Francisco). The Spanish destroyed most of the codices when they invaded Central America and parts of Mexico in the 16th century. The "I Am the Hero" project uses this format in a non-traditional way, so please talk respectfully about the traditional purpose of Mayan codices to honor them, use a map to show where the Mayan and Aztec peoples live/lived, and display photos of historic examples of codices. If you don't have time to do this, please consider an optional format.

Optional Formats:

Instead of codices, students could use a comic book, storyboard, or mural format for this project.

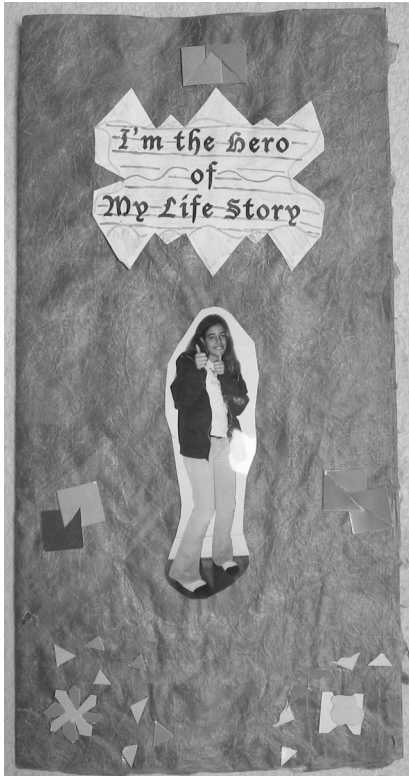
"I AM THE HERO OF MY LIFE STORY" ACTIVITY

PART ONE

Define Mayan codices for students. Explain the project as you share your own codex with them.

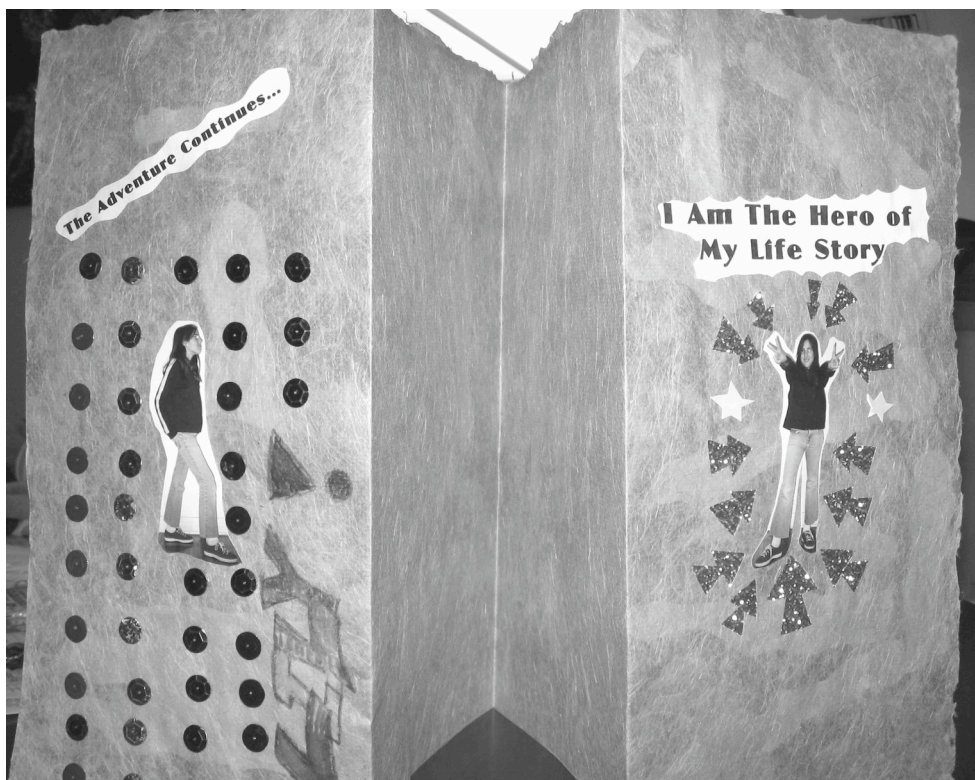
Ask Girls:

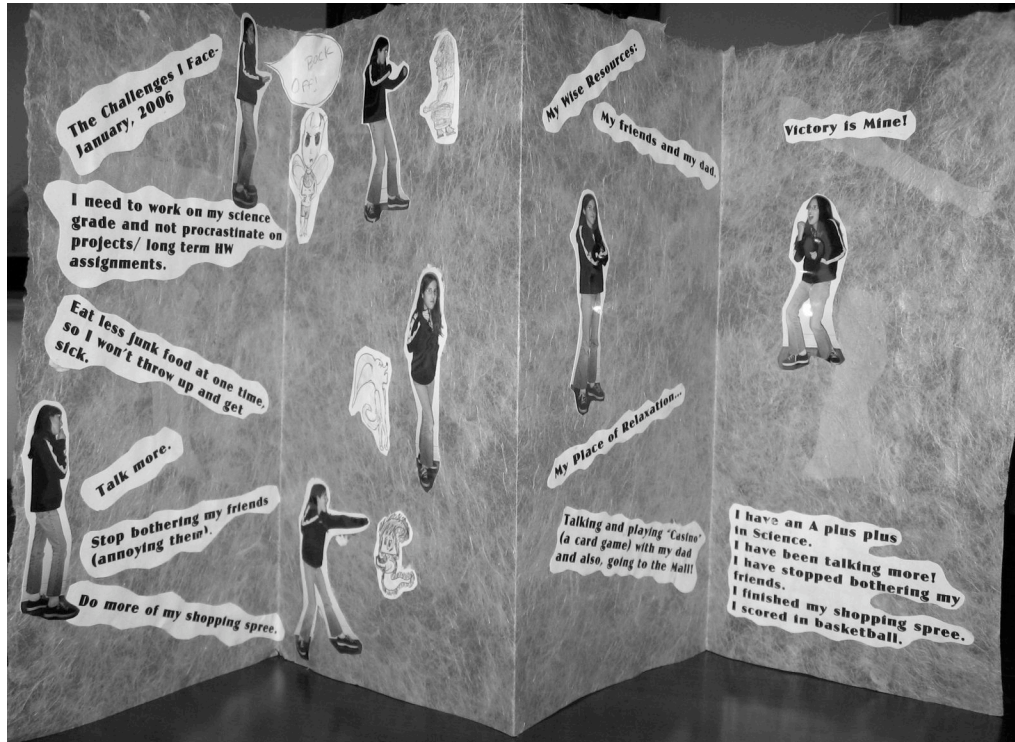
- Who are some of your female heroes? Do people have to be famous to be heroes?
- Do you see your life as an adventure story? Do you see yourself as a hero or as a supporting character?
- Does the role you assign yourself (hero or supporting character) make a difference in how you live your life? What else influences you? How?
- The project ends with "The adventure continues..." instead of "...happily ever after." Is "happily ever after" a realistic ending? Where does the term "happily ever after" come from? Do problems end at a particular age? Please explain.



(above) Cover panels of Angelica's (left) and Amanda's codices. (right)

(below) One side of Lily's codex, showing back (left panel) and front covers.





(above) The other side of Lily's codex, showing inside pages.

PART ONE (CONTINUED)

Students do Front Cover Panel (Welcome Pose), Panel #1 (List of Challenges), Panel #2 (Confrontation with Symbolic Challenges), and Panel #3 (List of Relaxation/Wise Resources).

Students fold their rectangular-shaped paper into accordion-shaped picture books (creating four panels on each side of paper, for a total of eight panels front and back). Students are photographed in eight or more action poses (for convenience, take all photos at the same time). If being photographed seems too overwhelming, students can create a stick figure or another symbol to represent themselves.

Students glue photos onto appropriate panels (this is a good time to show your sample codex to help them figure out which photo goes where). Then they can create their cover art, think about and list their current challenges, pick symbolic images to represent their challenges, and decide how to confront them. Finally, students will think about and create a list of relaxation places and wise resources. After writing, gluing, and decorating, students set the codices aside.

✓ Note to Facilitator:

This and all other activities in the curriculum are designed for girls in an all-girl setting. If you should ever offer the "I Am the Hero" activity to boys as well as girls, make sure that both groups consider using a variety of nonstereotypical ways to challenge their "villains" — for example, verbal statements for boys and martial arts poses for girls.

PART TWO (WEEKS OR MONTHS LATER)

Students do Panel #4 (Victory Panel) by listing their accomplishments so far in facing their challenges. They may not have reached their desired results, but what have they learned? Students decorate Panels #4 and #5 ("The Adventure Continues..." Panel), then share, discuss, and display their codices.

CONTENT OF EACH PANEL

"I Am the Hero of My Life Story" (Front Cover Panel) See top photos, p. 37.

"I Am the Hero of My Life Story" is written on the front panel, with a photo of how the girl would like to represent herself to the world (a fun, welcoming pose).

The Challenges I Face (First Inside Panel)

Each girl determines her current challenges and lists them. The photo for this panel is of a girl in a thinking posture. The girl is thinking about the challenges she has identified. Her finger could be resting on her chin or she could be meditating, etc. Suggest possible challenges to help girls start their lists:

- Eating less junk food
- Confronting a harasser
- Earning money to buy CDs
- Speaking up more in class
- Being more of a team player
- Starting a recycling program at school

Confronting Challenges

(Second Inside Panel) ⇒ ⇒ ⇒

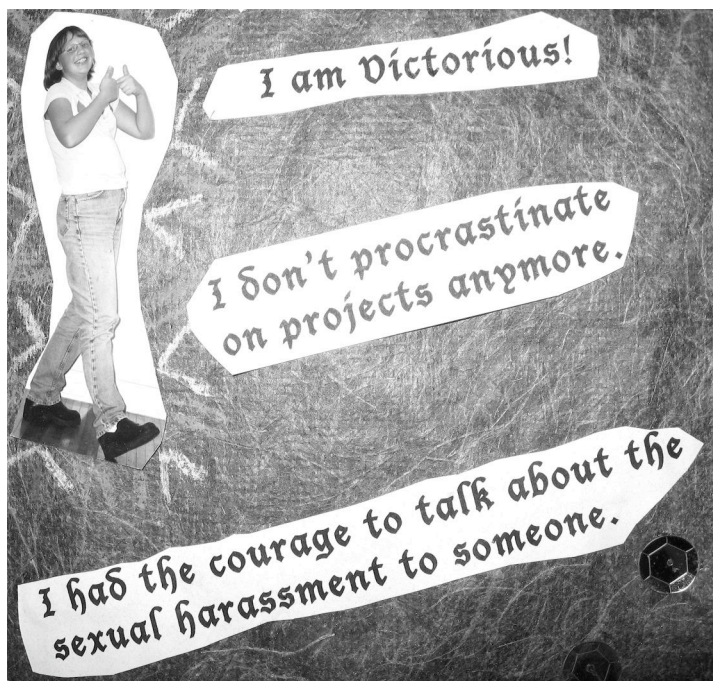
The girl confronts her challenges, which are represented by symbolic images of her choosing, such as scary-looking creatures. The symbolic image could also be a mountain to climb or a bridge to cross. In her photo, the girl may be in a fighting pose or pointing her finger. She may be leaning forward, hands on hips, while she confronts the challenge.



Amanda confronts one of her symbolic challenges.

A Place of Relaxation/Wise Resources (Third Inside Panel)

Each girl lists her place of relaxation (under a tree, at a grandparent's house) and wise resources (a pet, aunt, supportive teacher) on one panel. This photo shows happiness or relaxation, etc.



Kaitlyn proudly lists some of her accomplishments.

Victory Is Mine! (Fourth Inside Panel) ← ← ←

Each girl lists her accomplishments thus far. The pose might be with her arms outstretched in the air, big smile, thumbs up, etc., representing victory.

The Adventure Continues...

(Back Outside Panel) See p. 37, bottom photo, left panel.

The pose for "The Adventure Continues..." panel shows the girl stepping forward and looking ahead. She may choose to have a "creature" lurking around the corner of this panel or show the next mountain to be climbed.

The two remaining panels can be left blank, or each girl could list her friends, favorite books, movies, or activities in order to document her interests during this time frame.

A World Without Sexual Harassment

Activity #10 - Visualization

Contemporary Issue: It's difficult for most people to imagine a world without sexual harassment, let alone take action to stop this kind of behavior.

Project Description: A guided visualization of a world without sexual harassment, followed by artwork so students can "capture" what they've visualized both onto paper and into their psyches.

Goal: The goal is to help students envision the change that they would like to see happen.

Length of Time: 40 minutes or multiple sessions, depending upon whether the students do the group art activity as well as the individual art activity.

Set-Up: Provide unlined paper and markers. Bring a CD player and soothing music to play.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

How do you think your life would be different if there were absolutely no sexual harassment in your school? For instance, are there places in school that you avoid now that you would have access to? Would you feel differently about yourself? How would you dress?

GUIDED VISUALIZATION: Feel free to improvise!

Say to Girls: *It's important to envision the change you would like to see happen, so I'm going to lead you on a guided visualization into a world without sexual harassment.*

Start the visualization by asking the students to close their eyes, but if they feel uncomfortable doing so, they can gaze downward, focusing on their hands clasped together on their lap. Ask students to take a few deep breaths to relax their bodies. Through verbal prompting, bring their attention, one breath at a time, to their feet anchored to the earth, their legs, thighs, stomach, arms, hands, fingers, chest, shoulders, neck, forehead, etc., all melting, softening, relaxing.

*Say something like: You are waking up in your bed in the morning, stretching, and then getting dressed for school. You dress without worrying about unpleasant reactions from anyone. **You look fabulous and will be respected** in this world without sexual harassment. You go to the kitchen, eat breakfast, and leave for school. You take a street that you would normally avoid, because today **you feel safe and free to explore new places**. No one looks you up and down disrespectfully or honks their horn at you on the way. You notice some beautiful flowers and trees. Arriving at your school, you walk casually down the hallway to your first class. No hallway is off bounds, because you feel safe everywhere in this world without sexual harassment. There is no unwanted staring or touching. Students say hello, respectfully, or go their own ways. **Your body is your own, and you feel proud of yourself**. You go to your first class and then to your other classes. Since you're not distracted by rude remarks or gestures during class, **you focus easily on the work you need to do and get better grades than you've ever received**. All day long you feel safe and respected by other students, teachers, and administrators in this positive learning environment. It's time to leave school, and you feel lighthearted and happy. **You deserve to have this wonderful feeling**. On the way home, you look up at the sky, not over your shoulder. Nothing is behind you but the sun disappearing into twilight. Is that the moon coming up in the distance? You feel relaxed and at peace.*

INDIVIDUAL ART ACTIVITY: As the guided visualization concludes, ask students to wiggle their toes and fingers, feel themselves firmly in their bodies, and slowly open their eyes. Before any discussion, hand out unlined paper and markers and ask students to depict a world without sexual harassment, using words and/or images. Writing can take the form of anything from single words or phrases to longer pieces, and can include poetry as well. This activity gives students time to discover their unique individual responses before you have them pair up or form small groups. Sharing is optional.

GROUP ART ACTIVITY: Students pair up or form small groups to create a mural or posters depicting a world without sexual harassment, using words and/or images to artistically describe the changes they would like to see and the feelings that might arise. Then display the artwork and/or writing, adding a place for public comments. Caution: Discuss a potential backlash (see "Potential Backlash," bottom of p. 35).

Imagine...



a world without sexual harassment.

Illustration by Mary Nadler © 2007

Section Four: Resources

"I stood up to some guys when they were
trying to harass this girl."

-Girl House girl Kaitlyn, from her follow-up feedback form one year later

Ideas for Student Feedback Forms

Name: (optional)

I always hope that students will feel comfortable writing their names on their feedback forms; it can be empowering for them to stand up for their views, especially if they are criticizing some aspect of the program. Realistically, however, some students may feel intimidated, and some feedback warrants privacy and confidentiality. Therefore, I always make it optional for students to write their names on these forms.

What did you like about the activities in the Girl House and Beyond workshop? Why?

What didn't you like? Why?

What, if anything, would you change about the workshop to make it better?

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- Were you satisfied with your own contribution(s) to the workshop? What, if anything, might you have done differently?
- Did you like/not like the facilitator's teaching methods? Any thoughts for improvements?
- What did you find to be the most surprising aspect of the workshop, or what stood out most to you about it?
- Would you recommend this workshop to a friend? Why or why not?
- Describe an action that you have taken because you participated in this workshop.

Glossary

✓ **Note to Facilitator:** There are many different *feminisms*,¹² including liberal feminism, radical feminism, womanism, Black feminism, global feminism, and ecofeminism. Each kind has different priorities and a different focus. I have provided brief definitions¹³ of feminism, based on the beliefs of some radical feminists, ecofeminists, and others for two different age groups.

FEMINISM: A definition for *middle school students* that focuses on fairness.

FEMINISM is a belief that girls' and women's rights and opportunities should be equal to those of boys' and men's, and that no one should be oppressed.

FEMINISM is also the movement based on this belief.

FEMINIST: A definition for *middle school students* that focuses on fairness.

A FEMINIST is a person who supports equal rights and opportunities for girls and women that are equal to those of boys and men and also supports the end of oppression for everybody.

FEMINISTS can be of any gender, of any religion, ethnic group, class, or political party.

Being a FEMINIST is *not* about hating men. It is about loving the idea that everybody should have equal opportunities and respect and be treated fairly, and it's also about working to bring that idea to fruition.

FEMINISM: A definition for *older students and adults* that focuses on fairness, solidarity, and transformation.

FEMINISM is a belief system that embraces the following:

- Support of economic, social, and political rights of women equal to those of men.
- Advocacy on behalf of all women, with all of their different situations taken into account, so that every woman has the above rights. For instance, feminism advocates for the elimination of poverty, racism, and homophobia so that low-income women, women of color, and lesbians can have economic, social, and political rights equal to those of men.
- Support of the transformation of the patriarchal social structure into a nonsexist social structure so that one gender (males) does not have power over another (females).
- Support of the elimination of all other forms of oppression, because feminism recognizes that we are all interconnected. When one person or aspect of life is oppressed, we are all affected. In its broadest definition, therefore, feminism works against oppressions of class, race, gender, and nature and works for a cooperative, compassionate, respectful world for all people and every living thing, as well as for the entire ecosystem.

FEMINISM is also the movement based upon these beliefs.

FEMINIST: A FEMINIST is someone of any gender who supports feminism.

¹² *Feminisms* is a term created by radical women of color in response to the term *feminism*, which mostly focused on the concerns of privileged white women. The word *feminisms* encompasses a wide variety of beliefs, issues, and concerns of all kinds of women and takes into account the intersections of many factors, including class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

¹³ These definitions are influenced by my readings of books and essays by Bell Hooks, Starhawk, Riane Eisler, Jennifer Baumgardner, and Amy Richards, and by the beliefs, practices, and traditions of Native American tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy.

INSTALLATION ART:

Usually, INSTALLATION ART comprises an interior space holding an assortment of objects that promote certain thoughts or feelings. In the Girl House art installation, the interior space was an 11' x 12' wooden house on the YWCA Santa Monica/Westside property. The girls fashioned the inside of the house to look like a bedroom.

The objects used in INSTALLATION ART may seem very disconnected from one another, or there may be an obvious point of view. In the Girl House art installation, the objects in the bedroom worked together to express a point of view about the subject of sexual harassment.

The girls created the bedroom of an imaginary girl (whom they named Crystal) who is being harassed, artistically expressing her fears and the potential consequences of sexual harassment.

SEXISM:

SEXISM is discrimination based on gender. Usually, SEXISM refers to a system of laws, traditions, policies, and practices that discriminate against girls and women. SEXISM is described in more detail in the "Contributing Cultural Factors Activity," p. 24.

INTERNALIZED SEXISM:

INTERNALIZED SEXISM occurs when girls and women, who have been socialized by a patriarchal system, see themselves as inferior to boys and men. Consequences of INTERNALIZED SEXISM may include deferring to males, tolerating discrimination and/or abuse, competing with other girls and women for male approval, and/or holding oneself or other females back so that males can succeed.¹⁴

SILHOUETTE (SHOWN IN FILM):

A SILHOUETTE is an outline of something, usually filled in with black on a light background. The girls chose SILHOUETTES to represent the faceless but threatening boys and men who harass girls. In the Girl House art installation, the color black in the SILHOUETTE represents the absence of light and is not meant to indicate race. Actually, girls and women are more likely to experience harassment from people of their own race -- white women are more likely to be sexually harassed and assaulted by white men, and black women are more likely to be sexually harassed and assaulted by black men.¹⁵ Before showing the film to students, it is important to read and discuss this definition with them so as not to perpetuate the stereotypical image of the black male stranger targeting white females.

WOMANHOUSE:

The WOMANHOUSE art installation (with performance art) was first conceived by Paula Harper and team-taught by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro. Twenty-one female students from the California Institute of the Arts took over a 17-room Hollywood mansion over a two-month period in the fall of 1971. The purpose of the project was for students to examine the limitations of female roles and to express their thoughts artistically. Consciousness-raising circles, where the students gathered to dialogue, debate, and share, were an integral part of the learning experience. From January 30 to February 28, 1972, thousands of people came to see WOMANHOUSE, a hugely successful and unique event.

¹⁴These definitions are influenced by my readings of books and essays by bell hooks and Riane Eisler.

¹⁵ Thanks to Mary Valentine, Asst. Professor of Sociology, College of the Canyons, for this information.

About the Author

Kesa Kivel is a Los Angeles-based educator, game-maker, and activist living on unceded Tongva land. For ten years she volunteered to teach feminist issues to middle school girls, offering a broad-based curriculum in an interactive format.

Recent free, downloadable resources include the "Road to Racial Justice" board game (ages 12+), the "Anti-Racist Art and Writing Activity" (ages 7-14), and the fun "Blobber" game (ages 6+). Visit www.kesakivelstudios.org.



Contact Information

Website: www.kesakivelstudios.org

KESA KIVEL'S FREE CURRICULA

www.kesakivelstudios.org

Especially for Girls

Girl House and Beyond: A Facilitator's Guide for Empowering Young Women. The purpose of the *Girl House and Beyond* curriculum is to help facilitators create a safe environment in which girls can explore the topic of sexual harassment through engaging activities, many of which include artwork. Although the film mentioned in it is no longer available, girls can still do all of the activities except Activity #3. The intention is for students who have been sexually harassed to begin the healing process, and for all students to learn some critical thinking skills and gain an understanding of the social/cultural factors that affect girls' and women's lives.

Girl House Art Project Film (16 minutes; directed by Brooke Randolph). This 2006 film documents the last month of the ten-month Girl House Art Project, inspired by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's 1972 "Womanhouse" art installation. Participating girls transformed a small on-site house into the bedroom of a girl who is being sexually harassed, artistically rendering this girl's worries as well as the potential consequences to her of the harassment. The film was screened at the 2007 National Women's Studies Association Conference in Chicago and at the 2008 Davis Feminist Film Festival. *Only the film curriculum is available.*

Moon Magic Workshop on Puberty: A Facilitator's Guide for Helping Girls Come of Age. The curriculum addresses the emotional, practical, and cultural aspects of menstruation and growing up female. It includes: lesson plans; a butterfly art activity to help girls develop their intuition; discussion questions and a handout to help girls deal with leaks; a read-around activity on puberty rites from around the world; an exercise in which girls learn some critical thinking skills and critique menstrual product advertisements; a red jellybean celebration; and a take-home letter for parents (in English and in Spanish), offering them talking points and suggestions for ways to celebrate a girl's first period.

For Everyone

Anti-Racist Art Activity The downloadable activity for ages 7-14 is available for use during Black History Month and throughout the year. The featured Black historical figures include: Malcolm X, Ella Baker, Bayard Rustin, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Harriet Tubman. Two activity pages are provided for each individual featured: The first page is for research and writing, and the second is for coloring/art.

Never Give Up! Ama's Journey to Freedom on the Underground Railroad (online film) A coming-of-age historical fiction set in the 1850s, this free 28-minute educational film provides excellent, well-researched content on slavery in the United States, as well as on everyday acts of resistance by enslaved people.

Road to Racial Justice Board Game Players will become more aware that racism exists in many everyday situations (interpersonal and institutional), learn why the situations are racist (stereotyping, tokenism, cultural appropriation, etc.), and acquire tools to interrupt these kinds of situations. Free curriculum. Ages 12+

Taking Our Place in the Art World: Feminist Arts The curriculum was developed in conjunction with the 2007 exhibition "Multiple Vantage Points: Southern California Women Artists, 1980-2006," which was on view at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery. Includes: an exercise to help students consider why there are relatively few well-known women artists; an exercise to help students explore the topic of gender stereotypes; a handout describing discrimination and obstacles faced by women in the art world; a research and art timeline activity that celebrates women's accomplishments; and a resource list.

Especially for Kids and the Young at Heart

The Blobber Game

In this fun, cooperative game, players respond to requests on "Blobber" cards either by performing simple physical movements (improv-like), or by answering lighthearted questions in order to advance on the game board from "start" to the end of the road. Age 6+.

Other Resources

HOTLINES

Since websites can change, please visit the ones listed below to verify that the information on them is still accurate and appropriate for students before sharing the website addresses. *This is important because websites can be co-opted by the adult entertainment industry.*

- **National Child Abuse Hotline:** (800) 422-4453 [(800) 4 A CHILD]
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** (800) 799-7233 [(800) 799-SAFE]
- **National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline:** (866) 331-9474 Phone support 24/7. One-on-one live chat hours with teen advocates are 4 p.m. to midnight Central Standard Time, seven days a week, at www.loveisrespect.org.
- **Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education:** This federal agency enforces school sexual harassment laws. The national toll-free hotline, 800-421-3481, is open Monday through Friday.
- **Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network:** (800) 656-4673 [(800) 656-HOPE]
- **Suicide Hotline:** (800) 784-2433 [(800) 784-SUICIDE]
- **Teenline:** (800) 852-8336 [(800) Tic-TEEN] Phone support from 6 to 10 p.m. daily, Pacific Standard Time.
- **Trevor Hotline:** (866) 488-7386 This 24/7 crisis and suicide prevention helpline is for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth.



One of the clues in the Girl House art installation showing Crystal's reaction to being harassed was a telephone book opened to a hotline number for teens in crisis.

SPEAKING UP FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: BOOKS, FILMS, AND PEOPLE

Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus, by Catherine Hill and Elena Silva. A 2005 survey and report on sexual harassment on campus. Contact the Association of University Women (AAUW) at www.aauw.org or call (800) 225-9998.

Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality, and Gendered Violence, by Jody Miller.

Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism, by Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards.

Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School, by the Association of University Women (AAUW). A 2001 survey and report on sexual harassment in the 8th through 11th grades. Contact the AAUW www.aauw.org or call (800) 225-9998.

Introduction to Feminisms at the University of California, Santa Cruz. This great, low-cost 17-DVD set documents professor Bettina Aptheker's popular course. www.introtofem.org.

Navigating to No, by Kiini Ibura Salaam. This excellent essay talks about the difficulties in defining and dealing with date rape. See <http://kiiniibura.com/essays/index.html>.

Paul Kivel -- books, workshops, and speaking engagements. Paul Kivel is a violence-prevention educator and author. See www.paulkivel.com.

Sexual Harassment: High School Girls Speak Out, by June Larkin. Out of print but obtainable. A comprehensive look at sexual harassment in schools based on first-hand interviews with teenage girls. Highly recommended.

Sexual Harassment and Teens: A Program for Positive Change, by Susan Strauss with Pamela Espeland. Out of print but obtainable. This book has great information and an excellent survey on sexual harassment that students can use to gather information.

Speak, by Laurie Halse Anderson. 1999 National Book Award Finalist. Beautifully written novel about a high school girl speaking up for herself. Highly recommended.

Young Women's Lives: Building Self-Awareness for Life, by M. Nell Myhand and Paul Kivel. Curriculum to help young women know themselves better and to connect social and political realities with their everyday experiences.

Womanhouse, directed by Johanna Demetrakas. This documentary film about Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's inspiring 1972 art installation can be purchased at www.wmm.com.

COUNCIL BOOK LIST FOR OPENING CIRCLES

Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex & Politics, by Starhawk.

The Way of Council, by Jack Zimmerman in collaboration with Virginia Coyle.

ART BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Frida Kahlo, Artists in Their Time Series (Scholastic), by Jill A. Laidlaw. A Franklin Watts book.

Georgia O'Keeffe, Artists in Their Time Series (Scholastic), by Ruth Thomson. A Franklin Watts book.

Runaway Girl: The Artist Louise Bourgeois, by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan. YA.

ART BOOKS FOR ADULTS

Exhibiting Student Art: The Essential Guide for Teachers, by David Burton. This is an excellent practical guide for exhibiting art that emphasizes an active role for students through an empowering, collaborative process. Published by Teachers College Press.

Art on My Mind: Visual Politics, by Bell Hooks. The author talks about producing, exhibiting, and critiquing art with special focus on the Black struggle in the art world.

The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact, edited by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard.

Additional resources are listed online at www.kesakivel.com.