

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 20 Iss 47 2012-12-07

Writing Dreams

Big houses, big scams

Sports Violence

Dropping the ball

Modern Woman

Miss Representation

*Plus:
From Where I Sit
and much more!*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and
comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please
indicate if we may publish your letter.



FOOTBALL, GUNS, AND A HALFTIME REALITY CHECK

E.L. Farris



After Kansas Chief linebacker Jovan Belcher killed his girlfriend on December 1, committing suicide shortly afterward, commentators reacted with a mixture of grief and outrage. A couple days later, television sportscaster Bob Costas used the entire 90-second halftime segment of Monday's Cowboys vs. Eagles game to argue in favour of stricter gun control laws. Costas paraphrased and quoted from a piece by Fox sports columnist Jason Whitlock:

"How many young people have to die senselessly? How many lives have to be ruined before we realize the right to bear arms doesn't protect us from a government equipped with stealth bombers, predator drones, tanks and nuclear weapons?"

"Our current gun culture simply ensures that more and more domestic disputes will end in the ultimate tragedy, and that more convenience store confrontations over loud music coming from a car will leave more teenage boys bloodied and dead."

Costas went on to say that had Belcher not possessed a gun, both he and Kasandra Perkins, the mother of their three-month old daughter, would be alive today.

At that moment, I grimaced and turned off the television. The last thing I want to think about while I'm relaxing on a Monday night is gun control and another senseless domestic assault. For me, football, crime, and politics should not mix unless the issue, like regulation of performance-enhancing drugs, is germane to the sport. Costas's rant struck me as an abuse of his invitation into my cozy family room. Like all guests who overstay their welcome, I showed him the door.

And yet his words remained with me. I had heard a lot of outrage in his voice, but somehow it seemed misplaced. Where was the outrage over domestic violence itself? How many more professional athletes must batter and even murder their significant others before Costas would express outrage at the acts? How many more women must suffer before we, as a civilized people, take the issue of domestic violence more seriously?

In homes all over this continent, men are hurting the women they supposedly love. According to a 2006 Harris poll, approximately 33 million, or 15 per cent, of all US adults admit that they have been a victim of domestic violence. Incredibly, 39 per cent of all adults say that they have experienced at least one of the following:

"Called bad names (31%)

Pushing, slapping, choking or hitting (21%)

Public humiliation (19%)

Keeping away from friends or family (13%)

Threatening your family (10%)

Forcing you to have sexual intercourse without consent (9%).”

As tragic as these statistics are, what makes them scarier is that less than half of all domestic violence incidents are likely to be reported to police.

As one commenter wrote on my blog:

“Battered spouses are often blamed instead of given the help they need. I used to call the police — often — but when they arrived, even though they saw I was injured or the house was torn apart from his rages, they would tell me I provoked it, I contributed to the argument, and there was no PROOF that it wasn’t I who had thrown and broken things . . . when you are in it, it looks as if there is NO way out.”

How many football players assault their wives, girlfriends, or fiancées? Given the flood of perp walks and news headlines describing an unending cycle of violence, and given the fact that many domestic violence incidents are never reported to the authorities, I suspect the true number could be high. Even if Kasandra Perkins had called the police, would she have received the help she needed? After all, boys are boys, tickets must be sold, and the game must go on.

And that brings me back to Bob Costas and the world we live in. Costas dropped the proverbial football when he went after gun owners. He should have taken the opportunity to speak out against a legal system that all too rarely provides just outcomes to the victims of domestic violence. Now that would have been worthy of a halftime show.

Writer E.L. Farris blogs at [Running from Hell with El](#).

“In homes all over this continent, men are hurting the women they supposedly love. According to a 2006 Harris poll, approximately 33 million, or 15 per cent, of all US adults admit that they have been a victim of domestic violence.”

VOICE HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

The final 2012 issue of *The Voice Magazine* will be published on Thursday, December 20. All submissions for this issue must be received by Thursday, December 13, 9 pm MST. We will be on break for the holidays as of December 21, 5 pm MST. *The Voice* will be back in early 2013 with our annual “Best of *The Voice*” issue, which will showcase some of our top writing from 2012. This special issue will be published January 4, 2013, and our first regular issue of the year will appear on January 11, 2013.

POWERFUL MODERN WOMAN

Wanda Waterman

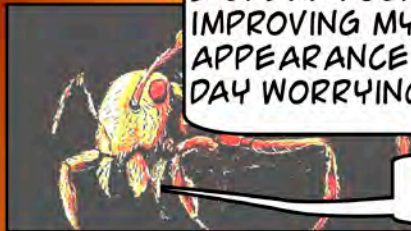
ANTBOY IN: POWERFUL MODERN WOMAN



I AM A
POWERFUL
MODERN
WOMAN!



BOO-YA!



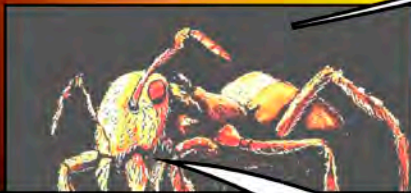
I SPEND FOUR HOURS A DAY
IMPROVING MY PHYSICAL
APPEARANCE AND THE REST OF THE
DAY WORRYING ABOUT IT!



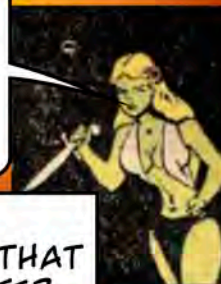
IT SHOWS!

I SPEND THREE QUARTERS OF MY DISPOSABLE SUGAR DADDY
INCOME ON PLASTIC SURGERY.

POOR DADDY!



WHEN ANOTHER
WOMAN STANDS IN
MY WAY, I THROW
HER ON THE
GROUND!



UM, YEAH. BUT I'M DYING TO KNOW— WITH ALL THAT
POWER, WHAT HAVE YOU ACHIEVED IN YOUR LIFE?

ACHIEVED?! HAVE YOU
EVEN BEEN LISTENING TO
ME?!



WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



Selling Dreams

For a while there, it looked as though the traditional but highly flawed publishing system was down for the count. The self-publishing (as opposed to vanity publishing) movement had gained traction, and indie authors were reaching the bestseller lists. But publishers may have found a way to stay in the game after all: by selling dreams instead of books.

For decades, savvy readers and writers (and even many people working at traditional publishers) have known that the publishing emperor wasn't wearing any clothes. The perception that it was about quality writing, not profit, had worn thin. True, publishers need to make money to stay in business, but their image as exalted gatekeepers of excellence faded as self-publishers began to find success—often with books that had already been rejected by those same agents and editors.

The shift came in large part thanks to services like Smashwords and Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP). They were the missing link

for true self-publishers, those individuals or micro presses who handled the cover design, editing, and layout themselves but had no way to get their work in front of readers. With these venues, there are no fees to distribute, and the company doesn't get paid unless a book sells. A lot of dreck flowed through those gates alongside the good stuff, but at last the barriers to distribution were gone.

The flip side to self-publishing is vanity publishing, a business model that makes money from the writer, not the reader. Whether or not a single book ever gets sold, the vanity publisher has already turned a profit by selling overpriced, often low-quality, services to writers who dream of success.

Now many traditional publishers, the same ones who held themselves up as bastions of quality and scorned vanity publishing, have signed on to peddle dreams.

With falling profits and a steadily rising indie market, it's no surprise that traditional publishers are looking for new ways to stay afloat. Unfortunately, they've chosen a method that will ultimately do them more harm than good: They've partnered with Author Solutions, Inc.

If that name means nothing to you, be glad. If you want some brief background, check out this [post](#) by Emily Suess. Among the many problems she's documented are "non-payment of royalties, . . . predatory and harassing sales calls, excessive markups on review and advertising services, failure to deliver marketing services as promised, telling customers their add-ons will only cost hundreds of dollars and then charging their credit cards thousands of dollars, ignoring customer complaints, shaming and banning customers who go public with their stories, and calling at least one customer a 'fucking asshole.'"

So what reputable publishing houses would stoop to collaborate with a company like that? The list is growing, and probably holds some surprises for the average book lover: LifeWay, Thomas Nelson, Harlequin, Hay House, and Writers' Digest. And the latest to sign on? Simon & Schuster.

Like those other trade publishers, Simon & Schuster has tied its "self-publishing" division (called Archway) to Author Solutions. The S&S publishing packages will cost anywhere from \$1,599 to \$24,999. That's right, 25 grand.

And although the collaboration means S&S won't distance themselves from a profit, they've been quick to try putting the Author Solutions name at arm's length. As *The New York Times* noted, the operation will have "no Simon & Schuster personnel involved, and without the Simon & Schuster name attached in any way to the final product."

Whether you welcome the self-publishing revolution or hold on to a refined image of traditional publishing, one thing's for sure. Publishing should be about connecting readers with books, not selling overpriced dreams.



S.D. Livingston is the author of several books, including the new suspense novel Kings of Providence. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing (and for more musings on the literary world!).

DID YOU KNOW?



If you have undergraduate courses ending December 31, 2012, you'll want to note the University's special holiday exam procedures—and order your final examinations as soon as possible.

If your course contract date is December 31, you must submit your exam requests before the University closes for the holidays. Athabasca University will be closed from December 24, 2012, at 4:30 pm MST until January 2, 2013, 8:30 am MST. No examinations will be shipped during that period.

Exam requests received after the close of business on December 24 will be treated as Late Examination Requests, and the Late Examination Request Fee will be assessed.

However, if you submit your exam request before the holiday closure, you will have until January 15, 2013, to take your exam. This is not a course extension; all other course components, including essays, projects, and quizzes, are due by the December 31 course contract date.

For further information, check out the holiday exam policy [here](#), or contact the Information Centre at 1.800.788.9041.

AU Holiday Exam Procedures

THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

Film: *Miss Representation* (2011)

Director: Jennifer Siebel Newsom

Genre: Documentary

Like a Smile from a Big Sister Who Really Believes in You

Several intelligent, sensitive high school girls are talking about what it's like to grow up in a culture that honours male achievers and female bombshells, a culture in which women are expected to conform to an ideal of beauty and domestic *savoir faire* that doesn't exist anywhere in the real world. The girls reflect on how this contributes to low self-esteem, eating disorders, depression, and suicidal thoughts, and ultimately affects their ability to achieve.

But doesn't the West, and America in particular, have the most progressive attitudes toward women in the world? We hear

about this a lot, especially when we're comparing ourselves to other cultures. Most especially we hear it from men who want us to show more skin and give out more--apparently, this is what makes us "free."

The myth of American female freedom prevails in spite of the fact that compared with the rest of the world, the US ranks 90th in terms female representation in legislatures. Additionally, there is an entertainment industry that portrays women as intellectually limited bimbos.

Often the blindest apologists are Western women themselves. When asked why women are freer here, women almost inevitably answer, "We get to wear what we want," as if that were even true. We scream foul when we see a headscarf, even though women who wear the headscarf often do so expressly to avoid the kind of objectification to which we so often fall prey.

The media has played a major role in bringing about the current degeneration of attitudes toward women. After the huge strides made by feminists in the '60s and '70s, we've hit a slippery slope that's already led to an increase in violence toward women and a limiting of opportunities.

The rise of conservatism in government would have, but for a few indomitable women, edged out women's concerns completely. The plight has been rendered the more dolorous by an increasingly dumbed-down news media that's garnered enough power to influence mainstream attitudes. The fact that it's mostly men who control the media presents a nightmarish bedtime story.

On television, billboards, the Internet, and the silver screen, we're presented with digitally enhanced standards of beauty that we might be able to approximate given enough money, free time, and the absence of interest in anything else in life. But if we do achieve flawless beauty, what have we gained? We've been told we'll have power over men and even women because of our incredible desirability, but in fact we'll have no power at all. And after the age of 40, we might as well just disappear.

If we reject the pursuit of personal beauty and pursue high levels of achievement and power and try to influence culture and society, we're met with a tremendous amount of opposition and criticism. Witness hecklers yelling "Iron my shirt!" at Hillary Clinton during one of her speeches.

"The media has played a major role in bringing about the current degeneration of attitudes toward women . . . we've hit a slippery slope that's already led to an increase in violence toward women and a limiting of opportunities."

Objectifying someone is the first step toward justifying violence, hostility, rejection, and blame, and capitalism is a major cog in the objectification machinery. As Marx quoted a ruthless English factory owner: "There is much money to be made here, Mr. Marx." And there is money to be made in degrading and dehumanizing women, in deriding feminists, and in dismissing the concerns of women as trivial.

Those responsible for deregulating the economy and news media were the very "family values" people who for years bleated that feminists were destroying the family. Huge conglomerates sprang up with no accountability except the bottom line, which meant catering to the lowest common denominator.

Yelling gets more ratings, for example, and so do barely-dressed female news anchors talking about trends and fads. Celebrity news and gossip are now breaking news. We've come a long way, baby! In the post-Friedman world, marketing dictates our values while lawmakers are conspicuously absent.

Miss Representation is an extremely thorough documentary, managing to convey the full spectrum of the problem in a simple, engaging way. It's good to see so many great minds weighing in on the issue, and the fact that so many excellent solutions are proposed is also encouraging. Did I mention that the film is incredibly uplifting? After you watch it you'll be convinced that, come hell or high water, you can do it.

Proposed Solutions:

- We should be telling our own stories in media and the arts.
- We must acknowledge that in our culture, men need spiritual healing; we need to teach our sons not to divide their hearts from their heads.
- We should stop competing and scrutinizing each other and support each other more as colleagues and mentors.
- We must not be afraid to pursue our dreams.

- We need to use our consumer voice. Women have 86 per cent of the buying power in the US--we can use it to express our resistance.
- We need to promote female role models who've actually scored something in their lives besides great bodies and rich husbands.
- We can join the movement!

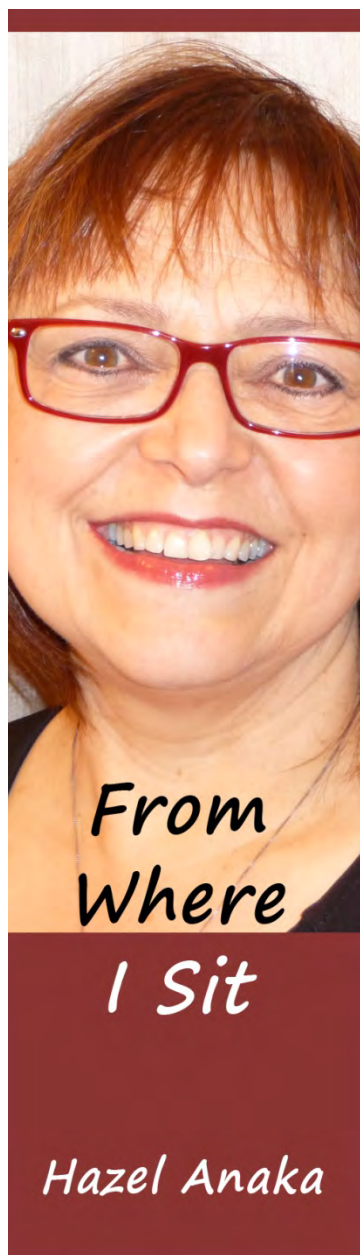


Miss Representation manifests seven of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence; 3) it stimulates my mind; 4) it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda; 5) it is about attainment of the true self; 6) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 7) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

"Feminism directly confronts the idea that one person or set of people [has] the right to impose definitions of reality on others."

Liz Stanley and Sue Wise



On My Own Two Feet

Like everyone else under the sun, I have talents. Unfortunately, the list of shortcomings is equally long. I can craft a sentence better than I can bake a pie. I'm good at teaching a preschool-aged grandson, but abysmal at algebra. I can read between the lines but struggle with . . . well, you get the idea.

In a long-term relationship, ideally the competencies of the partners begin to complement each other. I'll decode the operation of the washing machine if he'll empty a mouse trap. He'll be in charge of oil changes if I'll do the gift buying. Sometimes the division of labour is negotiated; sometimes it happens by default. It's wonderful and, well, efficient to have someone to share duties with. There's a partnership, a synergy and sharing that nurtures each party.

In a perfect world, both would try and learn and persevere and be supported, thereby broadening their own range of skills. In reality, it's much easier to grow reliant on the other. Why do I have to know the Honda's tire pressure when that's always been Roy's department? Why should he learn how to cook when he's got me?

But every so often it doesn't hurt to be tested. To be reminded that ultimately we are in it alone; that we need strength and resources to carry on by ourselves. We can't become paralyzed or a quivering mess when we're called to bat. We may prefer to share the load, but we must be capable of going it alone if we have to.

It's only when push comes to shove that we're forced to see what we're made of. There's an old saw about a woman being "like a teabag; you don't know how strong she is until she's in hot water." I'm sure we've all found it to be true.

While Adele might have had love gone wrong as the theme in her song "Turning Tables," I love some of the lyrics for my own reasons. Every time I hear her sing, "*Next time I'll be braver/ I'll be my own saviour/ Standing on my own two feet,*" I feel strong, empowered, and proud of what I can take on by myself. Yes!

I was reminded of all this recently when Roy was trucking 12 hours a day and we were at a critical time in our renovations. I may not have the title (or the pay), but I have been the de facto general contractor on this job. I rose to the challenge by picking up appliances, driving all over town, going to the landfill, scheduling the workmen, staying a few steps ahead of the game, and juggling a million details. All this insight reminded me to be grateful for his help when I have it and proud of myself when I don't. That's standing on my own two feet, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is *Lucky Dog*. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Democracy Blues

Sick of politics? Disillusioned by the governmental machine? Disappointed in your local MP? You're not alone; an increasing number of Canadians are becoming fed up with the whole thing.

As the *Toronto Sun* [reports](#), "Canadians are significantly less happy with the way their democracy works now than eight years ago."

In 2004, 75 per cent of Canadians were "satisfied with how our democracy works." Now, that number's taken a nosedive; just 55 per cent of Canadians feel good about the system.

Most specifically, Canadians are dissatisfied with the performance of their MPs, believing that they're failing their constituents by "[toeing] the party line at the expense of their constituents' needs and wishes." Among those polled, 61 per cent of respondents said that MPs "represent their party's views" rather than those of the people whom they serve.

For example, 46 per cent said their MP represents the views of his or her constituents, while 61 per cent said MPs represent their party's views instead.

The polls were conducted by Samara, an organization "whose goal is to improve political and civic engagement."

Around the World: The Nose Doesn't Lie

Poor Pinocchio; the wooden-puppet-turned-boy couldn't tell a lie and get away with it, thanks to his ever-elongating nose. But while a growing nose remains firmly in the realm of fairy tales, here's a surprising truth: The nose really can betray its lying owner.

As *The Toronto Star* [reports](#), "researchers have confirmed the human nose heats up . . . when we lie."

A team at the University of Granada in Spain has used "psychology and sophisticated thermography" to uncover the phenomenon, which they call "the Pinocchio effect."

According to the researchers, "when a person lies they experience an increase in the temperature around the nose and at the orbital muscle at the corner of the eye." This temperature rise occurs because "anxiety is involved" in creating the lie. Normally, "mental effort" results in the lowering of facial temperatures.

AUSU UPDATE



AU Students urge candidates to improve university funding

AU students are concerned about the financial health of Athabasca University and the effect of recent news stories on the reputation of the AUSU membership.

A recent CBC report notes that in recent years the university has made a series of reserve draws to cover budget shortfalls, draining the once \$30-million reserve fund.

Tuition and fees at AU, meanwhile, continue to increase despite the concerns of AUSU that education is becoming increasingly unaffordable in Alberta.

“I’m very concerned about AU’s financial situation,” says AUSU President Bethany Tynes. “AU is increasing student fees, observing hiring freezes, denying sabbaticals, delaying projects, and downsizing their offices due to a lack of available funds. We don’t want to see the quality of our education diminish.”

“At the same time,” Tynes continues, “I am confused by AU Board Chair Barry Walker’s comment to the CBC that AU is ‘in a very sound financial position,’ as the concerns we’ve noted do not support the notion that we’re financially sound.”

Chronic underfunding of public post-secondary education is a factor in AU’s financial stress. AU students have lobbied Alberta in recent years to address the shortfall; our members call on the candidates in Alberta’s provincial election to make post-secondary funding a priority in their platforms and to ensure that all Alberta universities are funded equally and sufficiently. Public post-secondary institutions need a reliable, predictable funding model that provides sufficient base operating funds to support a world-class education.

Athabasca University Students' Union is the largest students' union in Alberta, representing nearly 40,000 undergraduates annually.

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This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. The Voice does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

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