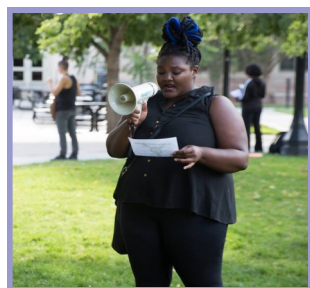




# The Monthly Rag

Brought to You by the Feminist & Gender Studies Student Advisory Council and Edited by Kadesha Caradine (FGS '16)

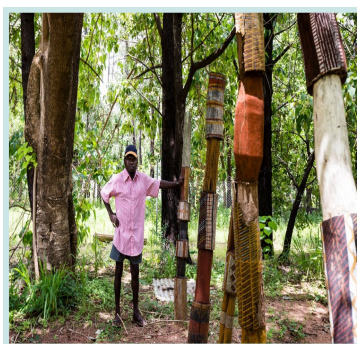


**Editor's Note:** In light of my last *Rag* as Editor, I would like to thank everyone who has made these last couple of years so amazing. Thank you to everyone who submitted, commented, illustrated, and took the time out to read *The Rag*. I enjoyed serving as your Editor for these last two years, and I hope you enjoyed it as well.

## Aboriginal Art of the Tiwi

By Sydney Rogalla (FGS Minor '16)

In "Aboriginal Art, From an Isolated Part of Australia, Resonates Far," Jane Perlez discusses the Aboriginal art of the Tiwi. The Tiwi live on an isolated island off the coast of Australia. Spared much of the early colonization of Britain that the mainland Aboriginals faced in earlier centuries, the Tiwi feel that many of their traditions are still alive and thriving, including their art traditions. Many others agree that Tiwi art is a more authentic expression of Aboriginal traditions. According to Perlez, now Tiwi art is gaining in popularity and being displayed in museums in Australia, the U.S., and all across Europe. Tiwi islanders are receiving awards, accolades and monetary compensation for their art. However, the growing contact with the Western world has caused a resurfacing of the issue of Western values and imperialism on Tiwi Island. Many of the islanders themselves feel that their island represents the mixing of both "white ways" and their "own culture;" they cannot say one is better (Perlez). Through the lens of post-colonialism feminist theories, I hope to question this understanding of Tiwi art and Tiwi culture as more "authentic" and this hybrid culture formation the Tiwi claim is happening.



Colonial powers have a history of objectifying other cultures for the West's amusement and use. In "From Orientalism," Edward W. Said problematizes the colonial powers at be creating the East into an exotic fetish for Western consumption. More specifically, he writes, "The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be 'Oriental' in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it *could be* [...] *made* Oriental" (491). I question if the same thing is not being done to the Tiwi by the West once again. Claiming some people are more authentic than others of the same group creates an artificial subdivision between people, placing them in a competing hierarchy with themselves. This also commodifies Tiwi traditions and history for Western consumption and instills the need for Western judgment of what is "real" and "authentic." As Trinh T. Minh-ha argues, "For they still take the dominant group as a point of reference, and they reflect well the West's ideology of domination" (506). This negates how the Tiwi feel the "white culture" and their culture are mixing or even remaining separate of each other, instead their culture is slowly being taken-over by Western ideologies (Perlez).

This also serves as an example of the mixing of cultures that Minh-ha discusses in "Infinite Layers/Third World?" We now live in a world where no country or community is immune from the mixing and influences of other cultures. As Minh-ha also points out, "The Master is bound to recognize that His Culture is not as homogenous, as monolithic as He believed it to be" (505). Both the Tiwi and the West are victims of believing in the power of their cultures. The Tiwi have lived for many centuries as an isolated community with little or no constant contact with the outside world. Now that the world is becoming ever more connected, they are seeming slow to realize the imperialist nature of Western ideologies as they slowly overtake their own cultural norms and values. Since their culture was never directly challenged by Western ideals before, they are assuming they are somehow immune to those forces when in fact evidence of the Western world is already present.

## The Period Policy

By Christie Ma

In March, Co-Exist, a Bristol firm, announced plans for the implementation of a "period policy," wherein staff who menstruate would be enabled to work on a flexible schedule, taking time off during their period and making it up later. Having witnessed employees doubled over in pain yet unable to get restorative rest due to strenuously lengthy work hours, Co-Exist Director Bex Baxter declared the situation unfair, as it "cripples careers." Along these lines, a study conducted by the makers of the painkiller Feminax found that 10% of the 600 participants were regularly bedridden by period pains, which disrupted concentration and prevented them from functioning regularly, negatively impacting their careers. In fact, up to 50% of people who menstruate experience dysmenorrhea, painful periods. In the past, the hysterectomy—the removal of the womb—has been the main treatment for heavy, painful periods, but the introduction of endometrial ablation—the removal of the lining of the womb—as well as the insertion of the Mirena hormone into the womb offer new, safer methods that have "revolutionized" the approach to heavy periods. However, the effectiveness of this new policy has been put to question. More specifically, that there has been no address of whether men, gender non-conforming, or trans people with bodies that menstruate are included in this change is tremendously problematic. I will attempt to analyze the complexities of this event through a radical and postmodernist feminist lens.

It is vital to note that the misconception that taking time off leads to the unproductivity of a business can co-exist with the encouragement of a work-life balance. This policy has been speculated to cast periods along their cramps and moods as "mysterious ailments beyond [...] aspirin," a move that could further stigmatize periods and hurt employees in the workplace. That menstrual leave "pathologizes a normal human biological function" and may be interpreted as an impression that women are "ill-equipped" for the working world and public sphere is an ironic allegation that does not lie parallel to the aims of the policy. In "Why Women need the Goddess," Carol P. Christ speaks of the Goddess as a crucial symbol dedicated to the "affirmation of the female body and the life cycle expressed in it" (114). To what extent does this notion of decreased productivity during menstruation reinforce ideas of the menstruating body's functions and fertility? Would it be more effective to provide tampons and painkillers to satisfy menstrual needs instead? Christ explores menstruation as a "denigration of the female body" expressed in cultural and religious taboos that deem it a "dirty secret" (114). The gendered biopower that plays into this is further distinguished by that a natural bodily function has been stigmatized and used as a tool to oppress.

For more of Christie's analysis, scan the QR code or visit [www.femgeniuses.com](http://www.femgeniuses.com)!

## The RNC's Transphobia and Cissexism

By Meredith Bower (FGS Minor '18)

In a recent resolution, the Republican National Committee (RNC) called on the Department of Education "to rescind its interpretation of Title IX that wrongly includes facility use issues by transgender students." The RNC further claims that the gender assigned at birth is one's only "true" gender, thus implying that trans people do not exist. The Committee believes that the Obama administration's attempt to protect the rights of trans students by providing them with equal access to bathrooms is an example of "governmental overreach." Their claim is that the current interpretation of Title IX is a violation of the privacy to those using the bathroom that is "correct" for "members of that sex." Through a postmodern feminist theoretical lens, it becomes clear that the RNC's interpretation of these bathroom bills is incredibly harmful to trans people and demonstrates clear discrimination towards bodies that do not fit societal norms.

For more of Meredith's analysis, scan the QR code or visit [www.femgeniuses.com](http://www.femgeniuses.com)!



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