

*The Emily & Ain't I A Woman?:*  
An Introduction to Feminist Issues taken up in the University of Victoria's Women  
Centre Publications in the 1980s-1990s

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## Prologue

Hello. My name is Dev. I penned this thesis on Coast Salish territory, specifically on the lands of the WSÁNEĆ (Saanich) peoples, and ləkʷəŋən speaking peoples (Songhees and Esquimalt).<sup>1</sup> In terms of self-location, I am an uninvited white settler and a middle-class, able-bodied, queer trans student. I am a dreamer of new worlds, a lover of learning, and a hater of rotten settler-colonialism, capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy and ableism – forces bound together to shape North American empires (the United States, and Canada). Let these systems burn!!

My thesis turned out differently from what I dreamed it would be. In part, this thesis emerges from profound love and respect for the newspaper creators, my thesis advisor Georgia Sitara and the GEM (Gender Empowerment Centre.) Simultaneously, this thesis bears the weight of immense frustration that comes from writing within academic confines required by the University. Grief, academic burnout, and the challenge of shutting the world out to focus (blah),<sup>2</sup> underlies this imperfect thesis which comes from a place of great love and turmoil.<sup>3</sup>

I started this thesis in Fall of 2022. Beau Houle brought me down to ‘the cage’ in the basement of the Student Union Building (SUB) at the University of Victoria (UVic) where the GEM Centre (previously known as the Women’s Centre) archives are stored. I looked through boxes of artworks, photographs, clothing, zines, and came across a beat-up, falling apart cardboard box filled with newspapers that a previous student had organized by year. I started to read the newspapers from the beginning and knew there were stories that needed to be told.

I completed this thesis in Fall of 2023. I cannot emphasize enough that these newspapers are treasures: filled with incredibly stimulating, thought-provoking and badass artworks, poetry, journal articles and photographs, as well as music, film, and theater recommendations, and traces of past events and spaces dedicated to the gay and lesbian and trans communities of Victoria. There are so many projects that can come from these papers...

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<sup>1</sup> Land acknowledgements are contested. This recognition of Coast Salish land appears out of responsibility. Coast Salish lands, among all Indigenous lands, are the original peoples governing these lands. The settler colonial state of ‘Canada’ would rather ‘Canadians’ forget this to normalize ongoing settler occupation and dispossession of Indigenous lands. Fuck that though! Land Back.

<sup>2</sup> In the past year, Russia launched an attack on Kiev, the last Gay dance club in Victoria became a straight club, COVID continues to mutate, transphobia has been on the rise, police presence continues to heighten, and the Zionist state of Israel is committing genocide of Palestinian people funded in part by Canadian tax paying dollars (which includes investments by UVic).

<sup>3</sup> This prologue is necessary. If this thesis feels painful to read sometimes it’s likely a reflection of the difficulty felt when writing it.

## **Introduction: *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?***

*The Emily* was a feminist newspaper produced at the University of Victoria (UVic). The first edition of *the Emily* was released on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1982, just one year after the Women's Centre opened on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1981. The first publication of *the Emily* explained that the newspaper was named after Emily Bronte, Emily Dickenson, Emily Carr, Emily Murphy and Emily Pankhurst; essentially, after white women, but the paper did not name the women's whiteness.<sup>4</sup> *The Emily* was created out of a felt need by the Women's Collective to "reach out to more women on campus" and to educate students, faculty and staff on "women's issues and interests from a feminist perspective."<sup>5</sup> *The Emily* was produced by student volunteers within the Women's Centre on UVic's campus. *The Emily* reported on a range of women's issues and interests. The content of this publication was rich and expansive and contained numerous identifiable feminist topics of discussion. Key themes included childcare, anti-militarism, pornography, sexual violence, abortion, birth control, sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, motherhood, lesbianism, sexism at UVic, sex work, spirituality, prison abolition, vegetarianism, amongst an array of additional topics. The wide spectrum of women's issues taken up in *the Emily* appeared in a variety of formats: from short fiction, poetry, photography, and visual art graphics, to film, music and book reviews, as well as non-fiction and journalistic reports. *The Emily* ran as the sole Women's Centre publication out of UVic until 1996.

*Ain't I A Woman?* was a second newspaper produced at UVic's Women's Centre. The initial release of *Ain't I A Woman?* was in March 1996, however, despite efforts, the original publication could not be located within the archives utilized for this thesis. *Ain't I A Woman?*

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<sup>4</sup> Unknown author, "Editorial," *The Emily*, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1982, Vol. 1, No. 1. University of Victoria Women's Centre Archives.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

was first published in March 1996 by a coalition made up of *the Emily* collective, the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group (VIPIRG) and a Women's Studies Class (Women's Studies 351).<sup>6</sup> The second publication of *Ain't I A Woman?* clarified that the newspaper was named after a famous speech given by Sojourner Truth<sup>7</sup> at the Akron Ohio Convention in 1851.<sup>8</sup> *Ain't I A Woman?* was created out of a felt need for a journal on campus that focused specifically on issues of "race, gender and colonization."<sup>9</sup> Writers of *The Emily* sometimes overlapped with writers of *Ain't I A Woman?* and vice versa; as both publications ran out of UVic's Women's Centre.<sup>10</sup> *Ain't I A Woman?* reported on an array of topics which included, but were not confined to critiques of white feminism, antisemitism, reclamation politics, identity politics, cultural appropriation, racialization and 'race,'<sup>11</sup> racism at UVic, gendered roles and racism, sexual violence, and histories of colonialism, immigration and eugenics. Like *the Emily*, *Ain't I A Woman?* presented these issues in a variety of formats including fiction, poetry, photography, and artistic graphics, along with film, play, music and book reviews, and also non-fiction and journalistic articles.

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<sup>6</sup> The existence of the first edition of *Ain't I A Woman?* was stated in the "Editorial" of the second volume. Unknown author, "Editorial," *Ain't I A Woman?* December 1996, Vol. 2, No. 1. University of Victoria Women's Centre Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Sojourner Truth was an advocate against gendered and racist oppression during the 19<sup>th</sup> century abolitionist and women's movement.

<sup>8</sup> *Ain't I A Woman?* was named after the most widely known version of Sojourner Truth's speech which was written and published by Frances Dana Gage 1863. Historians have criticized the historical accuracy of Gage's version of Truth's speech as it was penned down by memory twelve years after it happened. The speech presents Truth with a 'southernized' accent which is historically inaccurate as Truth spoke Dutch for the first nine years of her life, then moved to upper New York; her dialect would have had a distinct New York state, low-Dutch accent (not southern). Frances Dana Gage's version of the speech that was printed in *Ain't I A Woman?* as: "Dat man ober dar say dat womin needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to hab de best place everywhar. Nobody eber helps me into carriages, or ober mud-puddles, or gibs me any best place. And a'n't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And a'n't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it and bear de lash as well ! And a'n't I a woman? I have borne thirteen chilern, and seen 'em mos' all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! *And a'n't I a woman?*" Information on the historical inaccuracy of Frances Dana Gage's record of Sojourner Truth's Speech can be found at: [thesojournertruthproject.com](http://thesojournertruthproject.com)

<sup>9</sup> Unknown author, "Editorial," *Ain't I A Woman?* December 1996, Vol. 2, No. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* were written by two distinct collectives operating within the same UVic's Women's Centre during the years of parallel production. Each collective was named after the newspaper collections: the Emily collective, and Ain't I A Woman Collective. Future research should investigate the internal politics of UVic's Women Centre revealed in these newspapers.

<sup>11</sup> 'Race,' denoted in quotation marks, is recognized as a social construct used to categorize humans based on prescribed social meanings. 'Race' is not a biological fact and has not been scientifically substantiated—like 'gender.' Instead, 'race' is a product of historical, social and political processes. The meaning of 'race' varies across different places and historical periods. The ongoing impact of racism(s) underscores the enduring consequence of the concept of 'race.' In many ways, 'race' has been used to justify white supremacist social hierarchies, racist violence, and unequal distribution of resources. 'Race' intersects with other social categories like gender, class, and ethnicity, which shapes peoples' experiences and opportunities.

### *Situating the Emily and Ain't I A Woman? in Canadian Feminist Print History*

Feminist print media proliferated in Canada in the late 1960s through to the 1990s; a period coinciding with transitions from second to third wave feminisms. During the twenty-five years leading up to the millennium, over 300 feminist publications emerged in Canada in the form of newsletters, zines, newspapers, periodicals and magazines.<sup>12</sup> Women's groups launched press publications to communicate feminist issues and to organize direct actions with their readers and the general public.<sup>13</sup> Feminist print media was produced by a range of women's groups popping up across the country, from University Women's Centres' newsletters to grassroots publication houses, to nationally distributed feminist magazines with high production value. Feminist publications from unique standpoints emerged concurrently, actively engaging, critiquing, and building upon one another. The landscape of feminist print media played a collective role in shaping, changing, and mapping the evolution of Canadian feminist discussions in the second wave and the transition to the third wave. *The Emily and Ain't I A Woman?* was part of the Canadian feminist print movement during the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, *the Emily* is the oldest University produced newspaper in Canada.<sup>14</sup>

Historians have taken up feminist print media in Canada as a topic of discussion since the 1980s. Penned during the heyday of feminist publications in Canada, Eleanor Wachtel's 1982 report to the Women's Program Secretary of State on "Feminist Print Media"<sup>15</sup> stands as foundational scholarship in exploring Canadian feminist print media. Wachtel's report analyzed

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<sup>12</sup>Barbara Godard, "Feminist Periodicals and the Production of Cultural Value: The Canadian Context," *Women's Studies International Forum* 25, no. 2 (2002): 212. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395\(02\)00231-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(02)00231-5).

<sup>13</sup>Tessa Jordan, "Branching Out: Second-Wave Feminist Periodicals and the Archive of Canadian Women's Writing," *Project Muse* 36, no. 2-3 (June/September 2010): 73. DOI: 10.1353/esc.2010.0033.

<sup>14</sup>*The Emily* noted this regularly after their tenth edition which stated that "...the Emily is Canada's oldest feminist student newspaper, published one year after the opening of the University of Victoria's Women's Centre." Unknown Author, "Editorial," *The Emily*, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1990, vol. 10, no. 1.

<sup>15</sup>Eleanor Wachtel, *Feminist Print Media*, Women's Programme, Ottawa: Secretary of State, 1982: 1.

twenty-four feminist periodicals of various genres to establish their financial standing, social impact within the Canadian publishing landscape, and their contribution to the status of Canadian women during the 1970s and early 1980s. Wachtel's list of periodicals, complete with citations, addresses, frequency of publication, and subscription prices serves as an important foundation of analysis for historians interested in Canadian feminist print media.

Barbara Marshall's 1995 article "Communication as Politics"<sup>16</sup> was based on Wachtel's 1982 report. Marshall argued that feminist print media served as a space for feminist activism by politicizing previously 'private' issues into 'public' channels; giving voice to women who were systemically marginalized by male-dominated mainstream media. She argued that academics need to revalorize feminist print archival records because they illuminate historical and ongoing contemporary feminist struggles and strategies.

Feminist periodicals were ceasing in publication at an increasing rate due to state budget cuts targeting the arts during the 1990s and early 2000s when Barbara Godard was writing her 2002 article "Feminist Periodicals and the Production of Cultural Value."<sup>17</sup> Building on Wachtel's work, Godard echoed Marshall's argument which emphasized feminist print periodicals as an invaluable resource for historians studying feminist issues and women's groups activities' in the 1980s and 1990s. Godard further urged feminists to find new forums to continue disseminating critical feminist discourse and activism.

In the 2010s, academic scholarship on second wave feminist press publications evolved from broadly examining the significance of feminist print media to arguing that these materials serve as a disruptive space, challenging taken-for-granted historical conceptions of second wave

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<sup>16</sup> Barbara L. Marshall, "Communication as Politics: Feminist Print Media in English Canada," *Women's Studies International Forum* 10, no. 4 (1995): 466. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(95\)80036-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(95)80036-0).

<sup>17</sup> Godard, "Feminist Periodicals and the Production of Cultural Value," 212. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395\(02\)00231-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-5395(02)00231-5)



feminism as a white, middle-class, heterosexual woman's movement. Tessa Jordan's 2010 article "Branching Out: Second-Wave Feminist Periodicals and the Archive of Canadian Women's Writing" analysed the content of a grassroots Edmonton-based magazine to make the argument that periodicals, written by multiple authors, ranging in form and subjects, spanning several years, can disrupt and unsettle "existing literary and political histories."<sup>18</sup>

A 2011 article written by Tessa Jordan and Joan Wallace entitled "Waves, Tangles, Archaeologies, and Loops"<sup>19</sup> elaborated on Jordan's previous scholarship and argued that the dominant historical characterization of second wave feminism as theoretically and politically naïve, unconcerned with issues of race, class and sexuality, and as created by and for white, middle-class, heterosexual women, was only one branch of an extremely diverse movement.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, Joan Sangster's 2015 article entitled "Creating Popular Histories" critiqued the oversimplification of the complex history of second-wave feminism into a hegemonic category for making feminism appear as a luxury for the privileged, rather than a "product of a range of historical struggles that included coalitions, the working-class, poor, and racialized women."<sup>21</sup>

In contrast, recent scholarship, like Noelle Chaddock and Beth Hinderlinter's 2021 book *Antagonizing White Feminism*,<sup>22</sup> argued that limiting definitions of 'woman' and 'womanhood' in first wave and second wave (white) feminist movements persist in academic settings; as women's issues and spaces continue to be intentionally constructed as spaces which prioritizes

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<sup>18</sup> Tessa Jordan, "Branching Out: Second-Wave Feminist Periodicals and the Archive of Canadian Women's Writing," *Project Muse* 36, no. 2-3 (June/September 2010): 67. DOI: 10.1353/esc.2010.0033

<sup>19</sup> Tessa Elizabeth Jordan and Jo-Ann Wallace, "Waves, Tangles, Archaeologies, and Loops: Historicizing the Second Wave of the Women's movement," In *Not Drowning But Waving: Women, Feminism, and the Liberal Arts*, Susan Brown, Jeanne Perreault, Jo-Ann Wallace and Heather Zwicker (Eds.), Ottawa: Ontario, 2011: 240-259. <https://canadacommons-ca.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/artifacts/1878222/not-drowning-but-waving/2627195/>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Joan Sangster, "Creating Popular Histories: Re-Interpreting 'Second Wave' Canadian Feminism," *Dialectical Anthropology* 39, no. 4 (2015): 381 – 404. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43895166>.

<sup>22</sup> Noelle Chaddock and Beth Hinderlinter (eds.), *Antagonizing White Feminism: Intersectionality's Critique of Women's Studies and the Academy*, Foreword by Beverly Guy-Sheftall, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020).

hegemonic, white, cisgendered Western, heteronormative, able-bodied, academy-related, upper middle-class women to the exclusion and othering of everyone else.<sup>23</sup>

There is a need to study *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* to see what they reveal about how the second and third wave of feminism unfolded in materials produced by UVic feminist print media. While the second wave was complex and women's issues were approached in an intersectional way within some feminist print publications, the feminist print media produced by UVic's Women's Centre during the 1980s does not uphold Jordan, Wallace and Sangster's argument. This thesis contends that *The Emily* featured articles with a predominant focus on white, middle-class, heterosexual women's issues throughout the 1980s. However, in the 1990s, transformative shifts occurred within *the Emily* as Black women, women of colour and Indigenous women prompted white women to acknowledge and confront the racism within the Women's Centre and *the Emily*. Women of colour in the Women's Centre redirected *the Emily*'s focus in the 1990s to broaden its narrow lens and led to the creation of *Ain't I A Woman?* in 1996 where issues of racism, colonialism, and classism became integral points of focus.

One goal of this thesis is to write-in UVic student publications of *The Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* into Canadian feminist press publishing history. Through a curated selection of primary source articles, this thesis intends to explore *some* of the feminist issues that *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* defined, debated, and negotiated during the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter one presents a brief historiography on selected themes of abortion, sexual violence, pornography, lesbianism, white feminism and racism, to contextualize UVic's Women's Centre articles on these topics. Each of these subjects have distinct rich histories and there is no attempt made here to be exhaustive. Chapter two features a chronologically arranged selection of primary source articles

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<sup>23</sup> Chaddock and Hinderlinter (eds.), *Antagonizing White Feminism*.

on these themes as an introduction to how selected feminist issues were taken up in *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* The primary source articles within *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* during the 1980s to 1990s exemplifies a range of feminist standpoints and activism that developed on and off UVic's campus and reveal developments from a white feminist politic in UVic's Women's Centre to a pluralistic feminist politic. Onto the historiography first!

## **Chapter One: Historiography of feminist topics in *The Emily & Ain't I A Woman?***

Chapter one connects arguments raised by secondary sources to selected articles in *The Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* that are presented in Chapter two. The arguments raised by secondary scholarship adds context and shows how feminist issues were articulated in *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* Furthermore, secondary scholarship illuminates second wave feminist issues that were omitted from *the Emily*.

### **On Abortion**

Secondary scholarship on feminist abortion movements in North America adds nuance to *the Emily*'s primary sources on abortion by contextualizing and highlighting facets of the reproductive rights movement that were not reported on in the publication. At the same time, the secondary sources explored also outline pro-choice and pro-life/anti-abortion rhetorical arguments from the second wave that were presented in *the Emily*.

A 1970s film by Catha Maslow, Jane Pincus, Mary Summers and Karen Weinstein entitled *Abortion and Women's Rights 1970*<sup>24</sup> is an example of media created during the second wave that approached feminist issues in a pluralistic way. The film underscored the violent and negative impact of abortion laws on women by telling the stories of women who underwent illegal abortions in the United States during the 1970s. This film connected forced sterilizations and experimentations of birth control on Black, Indigenous and Puerto Rican women as integral components of the reproductive rights movement during the second wave which supports Sangster's argument.

Abortion was a topic of discussion in nearly every edition of *the Emily*. *The Emily* articles on abortion often centered pro-choice arguments that advocated for woman's right to access,

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<sup>24</sup>Catha Maslow et. al. [Directors], *Abortion and Women's Rights 1970*, WMM: Women Make Movies, 1970, 28:26 minutes. [https://webapp.library.uvic.ca/videos/view.php?vfn=abortion\\_and\\_womens\\_rights\\_1970.mp4](https://webapp.library.uvic.ca/videos/view.php?vfn=abortion_and_womens_rights_1970.mp4)

legal and safe abortions and birth control. In the 1980s, writers in *the Emily* advocated for women's bodily autonomy and agency over their own reproductive systems without mention of forced sterilizations and experimentations of birth control on Black, Indigenous and Puerto Rican women as part of this fight. It was with Barbara Berta and Laurie Sluchinski's 1996 article "Services & Solutions: Options for women facing unwanted pregnancies," that *the Emily* presented considerations of 'race,' class, place, sexuality and nationality as factors affecting women's access to birth control and abortion.

The influence of feminist (pro-choice and anti-abortion) activism on abortion legislation in Canada is elucidated by Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren's 1997 book *The Bedroom and the State*.<sup>25</sup> The McLarens' argued that debates and legislation in Canada over birth control and abortion in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were shaped within a web of social, sexual and cultural politics by campaigns of doctors, priests, eugenicists, feminists, politicians and labour leaders. Their book contextualized the decriminalization of abortion as the focus of 1970s and 1980s second wave feminist campaigns which resulted in the 1988 Supreme Court case *R. v. Morgentaler*.<sup>26</sup> *The Emily* was part of this 20<sup>th</sup> century wave described by the book. Writers in *the Emily* called for the decriminalization of abortion in the 1980s. In Pam Franche and Michelle Robidoux's 1990s article "Abortion Law Can Still Be Defeated," *the Emily* used its' platform to organize against Bill C-43 which attempted to recriminalize abortion in Canada.

The rhetoric of pro-life and anti-abortionist movements in Canada during the second wave were taken up by Sonya Bourgeois in her 2014 article "Our Bodies Are Our Own"<sup>27</sup> and

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<sup>25</sup> Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, *The Bedroom and the State: The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1980*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986).

<sup>26</sup> The 1989 *Morgentaler* decision made abortions legal in Canada but did not create a law that guaranteed women's legal right access abortion. In November 1989, Brian Mulroney's Conservative government introduced Bill C-43 which would recriminalize abortion in Canada. For more information on the history of Abortion rights in Canada see: Teen Health Source, "History of Abortion Rights in Canada Part 1," *TeenHealthSource*, <https://teenhealthsource.com/blog/history-of-abortion-rights-in-canada-part-1/>

<sup>27</sup> Sonya Bourgeois, "Our Bodies Are Our Own: Connecting Abortion and Social Policy," *Canadian Review of Social Policy Revue Canadienne De Politique Sociale*, no. 70 (April 2014). Page 22-33. <https://crsp.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/crsp/article/view/38700>

Paul Saurette and Kelly Gordon in their 2015 book *The Changing Voice of the Anti-Abortion Movement*.<sup>28</sup> Both Bourgeois and Saurette and Gordon, identified sets of discursive frameworks underpinning anti-abortionist arguments in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to advance the argument that discursive politics matter. The rhetorical strategies used by anti-abortionists shaped political webs of public opinion, legislative decisions, and social norms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bourgeois' identified discourse of 'abortion is traumatic' and 'fetal rights,' as well as Saurette and Gordon's discourse of 'abortion-harms-women' and 'fetal personhood' were frameworks presented and challenged by pro-choice feminists in *the Emily*. Specifically in Kristin Norget's 1985 article "Does Abortion Exploit Women" and Franche and Robidoux's 1990 article "Abortion Law Can Still Be Defeated."

### **On Sexual Violence**

Secondary sources on feminist anti-rape literature in North America contextualizes the arguments underpinning *the Emily* articles on sexual violence. Written less than a decade before *the Emily* was created, Susan Brownmiller's 1975 *Against Our Will*<sup>29</sup> is recognized as a leading contribution of feminist literature on rape and analyses of sexual oppression during the second wave. Brownmiller's central argument was that rape represented the ultimate expression of gendered oppression: the expression of male dominance and power to subordinate women. Written amidst *the Emily* productions, Andrea Dworkin's 1987 book *Intercourse*<sup>30</sup> argued like Brownmiller, that sexuality, sex, and gender under patriarchy are inextricably linked with violence and domination.

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<sup>28</sup> Paul Saurette, and Kelly Gordon, *The Changing Voice of the Anti-Abortion Movement: The Rise of 'Pro-Woman' Rhetoric in Canada and the United States*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctv2fjwvfx>

<sup>29</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women And Rape*, Toronto: Bantam Books, (1975) [Internet Archive]. <https://archive.org/details/againstourwillme00brow/page/n7/mode/1up>

<sup>30</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987). <https://caringlabor.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/intercourse-andrea-dworkin.pdf>

*The Emily* writers wrote about rape and sexual assault in nearly every edition of the newspaper's production, signalling the ubiquitous importance of this feminist issue. Margot Harrison's<sup>31</sup> 1982 article "Rape Report," and Karen Ballinger's 1989 article "Sexual Assault: Taking Back the Campus" demonstrate that *the Emily* articles on sexual violence echoed Brownmiller and Dworkin's feminist politics on sexuality that located rape and sexual violence as sites of gendered power imbalances, fear and violence.

*The Emily* articles on rape and sexual assault links the newspaper to the second wave anti-rape movement where feminists acted in concerted political efforts to address the problem of sexual violence. Maria Bevacqua's 2000 book *Rape On The Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault*<sup>32</sup> studied the history of anti-rape movements in the United States and argued that feminist anti-rape efforts changed public consciousness about the issue of rape and sexual assault as evidenced by the passage of pro-victim legislation and the creation of rape crisis centers. As a campus-based paper, *the Emily* was part of feminist efforts in the second wave to develop social consciousness about the prevalence of sexual assault and rape, and led to the creation of a campus based project in support of students who experienced sexual violence.

### **On Pornography**

As detailed in the sexual violence section, one prominent stream of second wave feminist thinking, exemplified by Brownmiller and Dworkin, approached sex and sexuality: as fraught with danger, patriarchal oppression, and violence. While this focus did not encapsulate the entirety of second wave feminist discourse on sex and sexuality, the writers for *the Emily*,

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<sup>31</sup> Their names appear lower case in the article.

<sup>32</sup> Maria Bevacqua (Ed.), *Rape On The Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault*, (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000). [https://search.library.uvic.ca/permalink/01VIC\\_INST/1ohem39/cdi\\_proquest\\_journals\\_221486609](https://search.library.uvic.ca/permalink/01VIC_INST/1ohem39/cdi_proquest_journals_221486609)

particularly in their treatment of pornography, predominantly adopted a stance of pornography as danger; paralleling feminist arguments around sexualized violence.

Carol Vance's 1984 book *Pleasure and Danger*,<sup>33</sup> an edited collection of talks and papers that originated at the 1982 conference "Towards a Politics of Sexuality" at Barnard College, serves as a testament to a contrasting stream of the second wave feminist thinking on sex and sexuality. Vance responded to second-wave antipornography feminists and called for the creation of a feminist movement that spoke "as powerfully in favour of sexual pleasure as it does against sexual danger."<sup>34</sup> Fifteen years later, Lynne Segal also critiqued antipornography feminism in her 1998 work entitled "Only the Literal."<sup>35</sup> She contended that antipornography feminists, who positioned pornography as literal violence and attributed it as a causal factor of sex crimes like rape and sexual assault, failed to acknowledge the nuanced nature of fantasy, which is distinct from a representation of real life. Segal further argued that antipornography feminism perpetuated scientific, religious and biological essentialist gender norms in portraying women as passive victims subjected to sexual acts which did not recognize the sexual agency of women who might like porn and explicit content.

*The Emily* articles on pornography during the 1980s and early 1990s advanced the precise antipornography arguments critiqued by Vance and Segal. From 1982 articles' "Snuff" by Brenda Percy<sup>36</sup> and Lesley Bullard and "The Poetry of Oppression: Pornography" by Megan Davies and Barb Grantham, to a 1997 article "Pornography and Sex in the True North" by Elise Mitchell, *the Emily* presented antipornography feminist arguments which interpreted pornography as literal

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<sup>33</sup> Carol Vance (ed.), *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1984).

[https://monoskop.org/images/9/9c/Vance\\_Carole\\_S\\_ed\\_Pleasure\\_and\\_Danger\\_1984.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/9/9c/Vance_Carole_S_ed_Pleasure_and_Danger_1984.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Vance, *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*: 34.

<sup>35</sup> Lynne Segal, "Only the Literal: Contradictions of Antipornography Feminism," *Sexualities* 1, no. 1 (1998): 43 – 62. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1177/136346098001001>

<sup>36</sup> Again, the authors names appear lower case in the articles.



acts of violence against women and children, and connected to sex crimes, like sexual assault and child molestation. It wasn't until 1997 that *the Emily* published an article entitled "Responsible Writhing" which focused on exploring the potential of sexual pleasure within pornography and sexually explicit materials, that Vance's plea for a more nuanced feminist approach to sexuality started to be taken up.

The antipornography feminist movement in Canada led a successful campaign for state censorship of sexually explicit materials with the *Butler* decision in 1992.<sup>37</sup> Written in response to that decision, Shannon Bell and Brenda Cossman's 1997 book *Bad Attitudes on Trial*<sup>38</sup> argued that the *Butler* decision, supported and advocated by antipornography feminists, relied on dominant (heteronormative) discourses of sex and acted as a mechanism of repression through state-sanctioned censorship of pornographic materials which targeted gay and lesbian sexualities, sadomasochist sexualities, youth sexualities and any alternative forms of sexuality. During the 1980s and 1990s, *the Emily* presented an anti-pornography and pro-censorship position which connects the publication to the broader anti-pornography movement that directly targeted these communities' access to representational sexual material.

The effects of state censorship on targeted groups are exemplified by a 2002 film by Aerlyn Weissman entitled *Little Sister vs Big Brother*.<sup>39</sup> The film documented the 15-year struggle between Little Sisters (a gay and lesbian book shop) and the Canadian state over the censorship of gay and lesbian, s/m materials enabled through the *Butler* decision. The film contextualized antipornography feminists' firebombing of Red Hot Video stores, which was

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<sup>37</sup> The *Butler* decision was a leading Supreme Court of Canada case on pornography and state censorship. More detail on the *Butler* Decision can be found here: *R v. Butler*, Supreme Court Judgements, 1 SCR 452, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1992, <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/844/index.do>

<sup>38</sup>Brenda Cossman, Shannon Bell, Lise Gotell and Becki L. Ross, *Bad Attitudes on Trial: Pornography, Feminism and the Butler Decision*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.) <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442671157>

<sup>39</sup> Aerlyn Weissman [Director], *Little Sister vs Big Brother*, Homeboys Productions, 1970, 47:17 minutes. [https://webapp.library.uvic.ca/videos/view.php?vfn=Little-Sisters-vs-Big-Brother-\(2002\).mp4](https://webapp.library.uvic.ca/videos/view.php?vfn=Little-Sisters-vs-Big-Brother-(2002).mp4)

discussed in *the Emily's* 1985 article “Wimmins Fire Brigade,” in conjunction with Little Sister’s fight against state seizure and censorship of non-heterosexual sexually explicit materials.

Building upon existing scholarship, Jay Daniel Thompson’s 2015 article “Invisible and Everywhere: Heterosexuality in Antipornography feminism” named the elephant in the room: heterosexuality.<sup>40</sup> Thompson argued that second wave antipornography feminism in Canada often conflated heterosexual sex as sex. Thompson called for a critique of the heteronormative basis of antipornography feminist rhetoric, which consistently portrayed men as active-dominant and women as passive-submissive.<sup>41</sup> In alignment with Thompson’s argument, *the Emily* articles on pornography assumed a heterosexual idea of sex and sexuality, rooted in patriarchal hierarchy and essentialist gender roles.

### **On Lesbianism**

The heterosexual paradigm underpinning discussions on pornography within *the Emily* publication during the 1980s was also woven into conversations about lesbians. Lesbianism was framed as an alternative to heterosexual relationships, reinforcing heterosexuality as the norm. *The Emily* did negotiate and problematize the institution of heterosexuality in later years, aligning with the call of lesbian feminist Adrienne Rich.

Adrienne Rich’s 1980s essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”<sup>42</sup> popularized the term compulsory heterosexuality. She argued that heterosexuality needed to be studied as political institution that supports patriarchal male domination over women. She challenged feminists to destabilize the idea of heterosexuality as an assumed natural or innate

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<sup>40</sup> Jay Daniel Thompson, “Invisible and Everywhere: Heterosexuality in Anti-Pornography Feminism,” *Sage Journals* 18, no. 5-6 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460714561722>

<sup>41</sup> Thompson further argued that the omission of heterosexuality from discussions perpetuates and normalizes an invisible and pervasive concept of heterosexuality; characterized by hierarchy and steeped in essentialist gender roles. According to Thompson, this concept of heterosexuality leaves no room for heterosexuality to be transgressive or subversive.

<sup>42</sup> Adrienne Cecile Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence (1980),” *Journal of Women’s History* 15, no. 3 (2003): 11-48. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2003.0079>.

basis of human relationships. Written as a challenge to the erasure of lesbian existence from emerging feminist literature of the second wave, Rich wrote to encourage heterosexual feminists to “examine heterosexuality as a political institution which disempowers women – and to change it.”<sup>43</sup>

*The Emily* did (sometimes) write about lesbians. The first text which mentions lesbians in *the Emily* appeared in a 1984 article entitled “Lesbian Families” by Judy Andrew which highlighted lesbian concerns about their social ostracization from society and the women’s movement itself. Rich’s concept of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ appeared without accreditation in Jane Ozard’s 1992 article in *the Emily* entitled “There are no lesbians on the *Love Boat*,” which explained the concept of compulsory heterosexuality and how heterosexism informed mainstream media at the expense of lesbian and gay people.

In the broader context of feminist print history, lesbian feminists were frontline creators of feminist print publishing houses during the 1970s and 1980s as outlined by Kate Adams in her 1998 article “Built out of Books.”<sup>44</sup> Adams argued that lesbians were central actors in establishing lesbian-feminist publications, publishing houses and bookstores in the 1970s in response to the historical invisibility of lesbians from mainstream print as well as their marginalization within the women’s liberation movement. Similarly, Julie R. Enszer’s 2014 article “The Black and White of It” studied the editorial work of Barbara Grier, the white lesbian publisher of *The Ladder*, and compared her to other lesbian-feminist editors and publishers to illuminate different generational conceptions of racial-ethnic and class formations within lesbianism and feminism.<sup>45</sup> Enszer argued that Black lesbian writers and publishers, as well as

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Kate Adams, “Built Out of Books: Lesbian Energy and Feminist Ideology in Alternative Publishing,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 34, no. 3-4 (1998): 113 – 141. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v34n03\\_07](https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v34n03_07)

<sup>45</sup> Julie R. Enszer, “‘The Black and White of It’: Barbara Grier Editing and Publishing Women of Colour,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 18, no. 4 (2014): 346 – 371. DOI: [10.1080/10894160.2014.901845](https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2014.901845)

efforts by white lesbian publishers, were instrumental in shaping a new epistemic position in the lesbian-feminist publishing world of the 1980s and 1990s which she described as ‘coalitional intersectionality.’

*The Emily* began to fit into this history of lesbian-feminist print publishing in the 1990s. In 1994, an article by Theresa Newhouse entitled “Dykes Take Over the World” published in *the Emily*, highlighted a global vision which considered how factors of ‘race,’ place, economic position, gender and sexuality shape lesbian organizing. Newhouse’s article, echoed Enszer’s insights by reinforcing the importance of lesbian’s writers in steering feminist print media towards a more ‘coalitional intersectionality.’

### **On White Feminism**

Just as heterosexuality was ignored as a foundational paradigm influencing the content of *the Emily* articles, so too was whiteness. Looking to critiques of white feminism by white scholars, black feminists and feminists of colour provide context and a language to the feminist politic of *the Emily* in the 1980s. Peggy McIntosh broke ground in 1989 with her essay “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”<sup>46</sup> which questioned of the role of whiteness in her life. Coining the term white privilege, McIntosh created a framework on whiteness and white privilege as an “invisible backpack” made up of “unearned assets which [white people] can count on cashing in each day, but about which [white people were] ‘meant’ to remain oblivious.”<sup>47</sup>

Writing in the early 1990s, Razia Asiz published “Feminism and the Challenge of Racism” where she defined white feminism as not just any feminism advocated by white feminists, but rather “any feminism which comes from a white perspective, *and* universalizes

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<sup>46</sup> Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” *Peace and Freedom* (July/August 1989). [https://psychology.umbc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2016/10/White-Privilege\\_McIntosh-1989.pdf](https://psychology.umbc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2016/10/White-Privilege_McIntosh-1989.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” [https://psychology.umbc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2016/10/White-Privilege\\_McIntosh-1989.pdf](https://psychology.umbc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2016/10/White-Privilege_McIntosh-1989.pdf)

it.”<sup>48</sup> A white feminist politic, to Asiz, speaks for women as a whole, and sees white women’s position and problems as most important, instead of recognizing that different groups of women experience oppression in different ways. Asiz argued that white feminism perpetuates racial inequality by being inattentive and oblivious to the particularities of white women’s roles within racist structures.<sup>49</sup>

Terese Jonsson added another perspective on white feminism with her 2014 article entitled “White Feminist Stories” which studied the representation of feminist activism, particularly focusing on race and whiteness, in the left-leaning newspaper *The Guardian*. Jonsson argued that white feminism is “an articulation of feminist politics which is inattentive to histories of colonialism and racism.”<sup>50</sup> Jonsson called on scholars to examine white feminist stories to not only deconstruct and contest white-washed accounts of history, but also to shed light on contemporary power structures within feminism which privilege white women as central feminist subjects.<sup>51</sup>

During the first decade of *the Emily*’s production, white women reproduced a white feminist politic by failing to recognize their specific location as white and position their politics in a social and historical context of white supremacy. By the 1990s, particularly written in a 1991 anonymous “Editorial,” the universalization of ‘women’ and ‘women’s struggles,’ to the absence of considering racism, classism and colonialism in their feminist analyses was recognized in *the Emily*. This 1991 “Editorial” preceded the publication of *Ain’t I A Woman?*

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<sup>48</sup> Razia Asiz, *Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge*, edited by Helen Crowley and Susan Himmelweit, (New York: Polity Press/TheOpenUniveristy 1992): 291-305.

<sup>49</sup> Asiz, *Knowing Women*, Page. 294.

<sup>50</sup> Terese Jonsson, “White Feminist Stories: Locating Race in Representations of Feminism in *The Guardian*,” *Feminist Media Studies* 14, no. 6 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.903287>

<sup>51</sup> Jonsson, “White Feminist Stories”. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2014.903287>

McIntosh's concept of white privilege appeared for the first time in a 1996 article in *the Emily* entitled "Challenging Racism" by Carolynn Van De Vyere which argued for white people to acknowledge how racism affects them through the privileges accorded by whiteness. By the first release of *Ain't I A Woman?* in 1996, white women were challenged by women of colour to confront racisms manifesting within and outside of the Women's Centre as evidenced by Carol Campers' 1996 article entitled "To White Feminists," Naomi North's "Women's Centre News" and a 1999 article titled "Our Stories Dialogue," which all appeared in *Ain't I A Woman?* Black women, women of colour and Indigenous women in the Women's Centre were the actors and activists that prompted shifts in feminist thinking in the Centre and its publications to consider racism, colonialism and classism.

### **On Racism**

In the 1970s and 1980s, conversations critiquing racism and white supremacy within the second wave (white) women's movement were occurring within Black feminist and Indigenous women's scholarship, coinciding with the production of *the Emily*. A key writer on the topic of racism within white feminist movements was bell hooks who wrote *Ain't I A Woman*<sup>52</sup> (1981) and *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre* (1984). In each of these texts, hooks focused on writing Black women into feminism and explored the rhetorical strategies deployed by white women in the women's liberation movement to exclude Black women and absolve white women from complicity and the responsibility of challenging racism, colonialism and classism. In her text *Ain't I A Woman*, hooks argued that white women's insistence of "'race' and 'sex' [being] two separate issues" split Black women's existence. hooks further asserted that white women's tendency to draw analogies between the social status of women and Black people erased the

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<sup>52</sup> bell hooks, *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, (1982; reis., London: Pluto Press, 2014).  
<https://hamtramckfreeschool.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/hooks-bell-aint-i-a-woman-black-woman-and-feminism.pdf>

existence of Black women who experienced racism, sexism and classism simultaneously. In hooks' *Feminist Theory: from margin to center* she proposed the building of a feminist movement aimed to fight sexist oppression and exploitation, while simultaneously combatting racism, classism, imperialism and other oppressions. Before 'Intersectionality,' hooks was talking about developing a feminism that recognized each form of oppression as interrelated and inseparably connected to each other in a web of interlocking oppression.<sup>53</sup>

Aligned with hooks's critique of the women's movement, white women in *the Emily* during the 1980s and early 1990s separated issues of 'race' from 'women's' issues. This was evident in multiple articles in *the Emily* where white women drew analogies between the social status of women in comparison to Black and Indigenous people which led to the erasure of the existence of Black women, women of colour and Indigenous women who experienced racism, sexism, classism (and homophobia too) simultaneously. By the mid to late 1990s, *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* were developing a pluralistic feminism that hooks called for, as articles began consistently tending to racism, white supremacy, sexism, homophobia and classism as intersecting oppressions within the Women's Centre publications.

Adding colonialism into the conversation, Lee Maracle from Stó:lō nation released *I AM WOMAN* in 1996 which argued that there are three mountains on the path to liberation: "the mountain of racism, the mountain of sexism and the mountain of nationalist oppression [colonialism]."<sup>54</sup> Maracle's book situated the women's movement as a white women's movement which did not include Indigenous women (and women of colour) as integral parts of

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<sup>53</sup>bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: from margin to centre*, (1984; reis., New York: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> Lee Maracle, *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*, (Vancouver BC: Press Gang Publishers 1996). [Internet Archive] <https://archive.org/details/iamwomannativepe0000mara>

the movement, unless they were called to speak only about racism or colonialism. For Maracle, Indigenous women's writing must be central and integral to any feminist analysis.

Black women, women of colour and Indigenous women were integral voices calling out white women's racism in UVic's Women's Centre. Articles that appeared in *Ain't I A Woman?* demonstrated the labour of women of colour changing the feminist politics of UVic's Women Centre. Much of the work produced by women of colour and Indigenous women in *the Emily* during the 1980s appeared in alternative formats like art, poetry and prose thus it is necessary for future researchers to take up hooks and Maracle's call to locate these voices in alternative text in the newspapers.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the exploration of *The Emily* articles in the 1980s and *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* articles in the 1990s in conversation with secondary scholarship unveils a dynamic tapestry of feminist discourse and activism connected to broader second wave feminist rhetoric and activism in Canada. Turning attention to the primary source articles within *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* further clarifies the connection of these secondary sources to UVic Women's Centre newspapers.



## **Chapter Two: Primary Source Section**

In chapter two, each theme – abortion, sexual violence, lesbianism, pornography, white feminism and racism – is examined through a curated selection of three or more articles drawn from *the Emily* and/or *Ain't I A Woman?* Each section unfolds chronologically to chart the changes and continuities of feminist discourses within the Women's Centre publications from the 1980s to the 1990s. The selected articles are intended to illustrate multiple feminist standpoints and forms of feminist activism that appear in *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* Furthermore, the primary sources are also used to analyze the evolution of the feminist discourses in the Women's Centre publications, from a white to a more pluralistic feminist politic.

### **Abortion**

*The Emily* served as a platform for diverse feminist standpoints on abortion during the 1980s to mid 1990s. The first piece, Kristin Norget's 1985 article "Does Abortion Exploit Women?" reflected internal debates among feminists regarding abortion by both anti-abortion/pro-life and pro-choice feminist positions at UVic. The article's pro-choice feminist activism challenged anti-abortionist/pro-life positions. The second article, Pam Franche and Michelle Robidoux's 1990's "Abortion Law Can Still Be Defeated," showed that *the Emily* served as a vehicle for pro-choice activism by rallying readers to protest anti-choice legislation. The third article published in 1996, Barbara Berta and Laurie Sluchinski's "Services and Solutions: Options for women facing unwanted pregnancies," showcased *the Emily*'s proactive stance and activism in providing information about reproductive options for women in Victoria. The gradual consideration of 'race,' class, sexuality, and nationality in Berta and Sluchinski's 1996 article captured changes in *the Emily*'s feminist politic underpinning the paper, from white

feminism to the development of a feminism that considered racism, classism, homophobia and colonialism.

Published following a talk by anti-abortion feminist Christine Munson, who was invited to campus by UVic Students Against Abortion, Kristin Norget's 1985 article "Does Abortion Exploit Women?" reveals that in the 1980s, *the Emily* aired contrasting abortion politics; containing and engaging both anti-abortion and pro-choice positions.<sup>55</sup> Munson, a Catholic woman, deployed religious-based rhetoric which positioned abortion as "sin" and as a "moral disorder of society."<sup>56</sup> She claimed abortion was an act of violence women inflicted on themselves. To Munson, unsolicited sex and rape which lead to pregnancy were nothing compared to "what woman has done to herself through abortion."<sup>57</sup> Munson's talk was interrupted by pro-choice audience members. One argued that women might seek abortions because "single mothers comprise one of the poorest socio-economic groups in Canada, [and] after being raped."<sup>58</sup> For pro-choice activists, larger structural issues, women's socio-economic oppression and sexual violence, not abortion were the real "social sins."<sup>59</sup>

Munson mobilized affective rhetoric by centering on her own abortion story<sup>60</sup> and argued that every part of abortion is harmful/traumatic. Munson's abortion itself was described as "a grisly, horrifying experience" which left her feeling "guilt-ridden and depressed" afterwards.<sup>61</sup> Using her experience as evidence, Munson argued that women are "exploited by the choice itself" because women are "lied to about the pain," "when they are told abortion is safe," and

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<sup>55</sup> Kristin Norget, "Does Abortion Exploit Women," *The Emily*, Valentine's Day, 1985, Vol. 3, No. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Norget, "Does Abortion Exploit Women," *The Emily*.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Munson described that she was pressured into an illegal abortion in the 1970s by her family..

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. She furthered her argument that abortion irreversibly changed her life for the worse by naming abortion as the cause which led her to "...quit school and drift into a life of promiscuity."

“when they are told there are few psychological problems after an abortion.”<sup>62</sup> In opposition, Norget argued that “women who have abortions do not undergo the same psychological and physical turmoil that Christine did.”<sup>63</sup> Rather, reported Norget, damage to a womb occurred in “well under one percent of cases” and the “risk of dying from legal abortion in Canada is less than the risk of delivering a baby.”<sup>64</sup> The article concluded that pro-choice activism meant pro-“educated, [and] informed choice for the woman.”<sup>65</sup>

*The Emily* debates on abortion were a microcosm to the broader political landscape of abortion rights in the late 1980s to early 1990s. While the *Morgentaler* decision decriminalized abortion in 1988, the threat to abortion rights resurfaced in 1989. With the introduction of Bill C-43<sup>66</sup> which would make “abortion a criminal act,” Pam Franche and Michelle Robidoux wrote their 1990 article “Abortion Law Can Still Be Defeated.”<sup>67</sup> The writers not only challenged anti-abortion/pro-life arguments, but rallied readers to protest the potential criminalization of abortion.

Franche and Robidoux opposed the fetal-centric framework of Bill C-43, which sought to balance “the rights of a woman and the rights of a fetus.”<sup>68</sup> Recounting Yvonne Jurewicz tragic death in June of 1990 following a self-induced abortion, the writers argued that abortion laws which prioritize fetal life “kill women.”<sup>69</sup> Whether or not abortion was legal, the writers contended “women will always seek to control their reproduction” by “resorting [to] backstreet abortions or by risking their lives by attempting to terminate the pregnancies themselves.”<sup>70</sup> In

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<sup>62</sup> Norget, “Does Abortion Exploit Women,” *The Emily*.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Bill C-43 was proposed by Brian Mulroney’s Conservative Government.

<sup>67</sup> Pam Franche and Michelle Robidoux, “Abortion Law Can Still Be Defeated,” *The Emily*, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1990, Vol. 9, No. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Franche and Robidoux, “Abortion Law Can Still Be Defeated,” *The Emily*.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

this 1990 article, the writers recognized class, but not racism, colonialism, and heterosexism, as a factor which disproportionately “forced poor women to go to backstreet butchers” while “wealthy women have always been able to get around those restrictions.”<sup>71</sup>

Accountable to 62% of Canadians who opposed the recriminalization of abortion, Franche and Robidoux urged readers to action: to “kill the bill” by attending the March for Women’s Lives as “one woman’s death is too many.”<sup>72</sup> In this way, *the Emily* in the 1990s acted as a platform for pro-choice feminists to communicate direct actions for abortion rights to their readers. Bill C-43 passed in the House of Commons in May of 1990 but was ultimately defeated in 1991 in Senate, albeit only by a tied vote.<sup>73</sup> With abortion rights reconfirmed (but not yet enshrined), *the Emily* did not feature anti-abortion/pro-life articles again.

In 1996, *the Emily* writers’ Barbara Berta and Laurie Sluchinski focused on providing “Services & Solutions: Options for women facing unwanted pregnancies,” in response to limited information about reproductive options. For Berta and Sluchinski, health care choices supported women’s bodily autonomy and self-determination. The writers advocated “you can only make the choice that is the best one for yourself at this time [and] you are fully entitled to all the available information that you may need to help with your decision.”<sup>74</sup> Berta and Sluchinski provided information about resources available to women in Victoria facing unwanted pregnancies which included: The Morning After Pill (MAP), Abortion, Herbal Fertility Regulation and RU 486.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Franche and Robidoux, “Abortion Law Can Still Be Defeated,” *The Emily*.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. The article names that a National Day of Action was planned for October 13<sup>th</sup> by the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL) with the ProChoice National Network. Cities like Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, and Halifax, along smaller communities joining the protest were named in the article.

<sup>73</sup> Shannon Stettner, “A Brief History of Abortion in Canada,” in *Without Apology*, (Canada: Athabasca University Press, 2016). <https://read.aupress.ca/read/00913433-901c-4c7d-9262-bbfbc55ff3/section/d9f18d76-1657-46b3-99b4-c8ffbc964b37#en75>

<sup>74</sup> Berta and Sluchinski, “Services & Solutions: Options for Women Facing Unwanted Pregnancies,” *The Emily*, February 1996, Vol. 14, No. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. These options were capitalized in the original article which is why they are capitalized here. Under each resource, writers outlined how these birth control methods worked, the cost, the safety, risks, and bodily effects of each method, and the steps required for recovery.

In this way, by the mid 1990s *the Emily* shifted its pro-choice politic from challenging anti-abortion/pro-life arguments to offering resources and practical information to make ‘informed choice’ possible. Published the same year that *Ain’t I A Woman?* was first produced, Berta and Sluchinski noted that accessing abortion is made more difficult if you’re “poor or not passing as heterosexual or from a rural area or [if you don’t] speak English or [if you aren’t] ‘white,’ or from Canada.”<sup>76</sup> The article’s consideration of class, ‘race,’ sexuality, place, nationality and language as factors influencing abortion access marked a shifting feminist politic in *the Emily*.

### **Sexual Violence**

Sexual violence emerged as a recurring theme in *the Emily*. In the early 1980s, *the Emily* published articles about sexual violence as a systemic symptom of patriarchy and as a persistent feminist concern as demonstrated in margot harrison’s 1982 article “Rape Report.” This article laid the groundwork for dispelling myths about sexual assault, a task taken up by Karen Ballinger her 1989 article “Sexual Assault: Taking Back the Campus.” By 1989, Ballinger captured Brownmiller and Dworkin’s second wave feminist perspectives of rape and sexual violence by writing about sexual violence as rooted in patriarchal power, violence, and male supremacy, not sex itself. The third article, a 1995 anonymous piece entitled “Date Rape and Dating Violence Project” announced the Women’s Centre’s creation of a sexual violence support project.

harrison’s 1982 “Rape Report” started conversations on sexual violence (and specifically rape) in *the Emily*. harrison identified the prevalence of sexual assault, specifically in Victoria noting that “15 cases of rape and 14 cases of sexual assault” had been reported to the police over

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<sup>76</sup> Berta and Sluchinski, “Services & Solutions: Options for Women Facing Unwanted Pregnancies,” *The Emily*.

a period of ten months.<sup>77</sup> These numbers were the tip of the iceberg as harrison pointed out that “as few as one in ten rapes are even reported.”<sup>78</sup> harrison attributed “the high incidence of unreported rapes” to the incredulous attitudes of police and the judicial system.<sup>79</sup> A 1982 Statistics Canada report was quoted to prove this point, as “Canadian police consider 30 percent of all rape cases unfounded.”<sup>80</sup> harrison localized this police attitude to a Victoria detective, Harvey Stevenson who claimed that “30 percent is a ‘reasonable figure’” and invoked myths around sexual violence by suggesting “revenge, emotionally unstable women, attention seekers, and hookers [trying] to get back at their pimps all contribute to the large numbers of rapes being reported when no rape took place.”<sup>81</sup>

By 1989, Karen Ballinger reinforced the ongoing problem of sexual violence<sup>82</sup> and took up the work of dispelling harmful myths around sexual assault with her article “Sexual Assault: Taking Back the Campus.”<sup>83</sup> Framed by essentialist gendered conception of sexual violence, Ballinger asked “who are the people who attack women and who do they attack?”<sup>84</sup> She replied that “as you may suspect, males most often attack women and children.”<sup>85</sup> Ballinger defined sexual assault as “any form of non-consensual sexual contact ranging from unwanted sexual touch to forced sexual intercourse.”<sup>86</sup> She argued that sex had nothing to do with sexual violence. Sexual assault was about “Power and violence against another person.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> margot harrison, “Rape Report,” *The Emily*, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1982, No. 1, Vol. 1. The name of the author was not capitalized in the newspaper which is why it is not capitalized here.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. Stevenson further warned women who come forward about sexual violence that they might be “given a polygraph to prove or disprove their claim, all for the protection of the accused.” Protecting the accused persists as a problem.

<sup>82</sup> Karen Ballinger, “Sexual Assault: Taking Back Campus,” *The Emily*, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1989, Vol. 8, No.2. Ballinger noted that sexual assault can happen “across all social and economic lines, in small towns like Fort St. John, and in cities like Victoria and Vancouver, and it could happen to you, your sister, your brother or neighbour.”

<sup>83</sup> Ballinger, “Sexual Assault: Taking Back Campus,” *The Emily*.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

To stop sexual assault, according to Ballinger, readers needed to “lobby to see more women elected as MPs, judges and lawyers,” and advocate against the pornography industry “since [it] increases violence against women.”<sup>88</sup> She called on readers to “encourage males to speak up for women when men degrade them in jokes and conversation” and for women to “take self defense courses to increase chances to survive or defeat an attack.”<sup>89</sup> Implying racist comments contribute to a culture of violence and harm, she made an analogy between sexual violence and racism and advocated to “correlate sexual comments with racist comments.”<sup>90</sup> The article ended with direct information on “WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED.(sic)”<sup>91</sup> In this way, by the late 1980s, *the Emily* provided vital information in support of sexual assault survivors.<sup>92</sup>

Moreover, in 1992 the Women’s Centre opened a student run project to support students who experienced sexual violence. An anonymous 1995 article in *the Emily* entitled “Date Rape and Dating Violence Project (DR/DV)” listed a range of services provided by the project for students. These included educational materials like “workshops on sexual assault and violence in intimate relationships” and informational “posters and pamphlets.”<sup>93</sup> The DR/DV “worked to educate students about the extent of sexual violence that exists on campus” as well as to “advocate for survivors of violence on campus, both on a collective and individual level.”<sup>94</sup> As an advocacy project, the DR/DV lobbied “the administration for changes in responding to sexual violence among students.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Ballinger, “Sexual Assault: Taking Back Campus,” *The Emily*.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Anonymous, “Date Rape and Dating Violence Project,” *The Emily*, February 1994, vol. 12, No. 2.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

In 1995, the DR/DV gathered data to create statistics about sexual violence on campus. The information derived from their “Sexual Aggression and Violence in Intimate Relationships survey” was used to “prod the Administration into taking survivors seriously.”<sup>96</sup> The survey revealed that one in six, to one in four women experienced sexual assault while attending UVic.<sup>97</sup> Writers in *The Emily* undoubtedly contributed to the Women’s Centre opening a student-run ‘Date Rape and Dating Violence Project’ (DR/DV) in 1992. The work of the DR/DV led to the establishment of ‘Open UVic Resource Sexual Assault Centre’ (OUR-SAC) in 1996, later known as the ‘Anti-Violence Project’ (AVP), as a separate entity in the SUB at UVic.<sup>98</sup> Sexualized violence is an ongoing issue on campus and beyond.

### **Pornography**

Pornography was a topic of conversation consistently taken up by *The Emily*. Pornography was understood to create and foster sexual danger. Aligned with Jay Daniel Thompson’s argument, *the Emily* writers were not thinking about pornography as anything but heteropatriarchal, in which men dominated women. In 1982 two pivotal articles on pornography, “Snuff” by Brenda Percy and Lesley Bullard and “The Poetry of Oppression” by Megan Davies and Barb Grantham laid the groundwork which mapped subsequent arguments against pornography.<sup>99</sup> A 1985 publication entitled “Wimmins Fire Brigade” by Corinne Mel, connected *the Emily* to broader antipornography feminist movements and exemplified debates among antipornography feminists on how to take down the porn industry. The third article “Responsible Writhing,” which appeared in 1997 alongside Elise Mitchell’s “Pornography and Sex in the True North,”

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<sup>96</sup> Anonymous, “Date Rape and Dating Violence Project,” *The Emily*.

<sup>97</sup> See the AntiViolenceProject website for a brief history on this survey: <https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/about/history/>

<sup>98</sup> Anonymous, “Date Rape and Dating Violence Project,” *The Emily*.

<sup>99</sup> The authors did not capitalize their names which is why they are not capitalized here.



showcased the emergence of a new, sex positive feminism developing in *the Emily* alongside a consistent antipornography feminist stance.

“Snuff” by Brenda Percy and Lesley Bullard grounded *the Emily*’s framework of pornography, as a site of sexual oppression and violence, to the absence of sexual pleasure and agency. Percy and Bullard condemned ‘Snuff’ films and advocated for “obscenity and censorship standards” on the grounds that such films, “jeopardized the mental health of all,” and were “personally offensive; degrading and exploitative of women and men as human beings.”<sup>100</sup>

Likewise, in the same issue, another article “The Poetry of Oppression: Pornography” by Megan Davies and Barb Grantham framed pornography as a dangerous force which hurt men, women and children alike. The authors argued pornography “plays an important role in maintaining the established power structure [of patriarchy].”<sup>101</sup> Pornography influenced men and women to internalize patriarchal gender roles and behaviours which reinforced male domination over women. Pornography compelled men to “deny all that they perceive as feminine within themselves” and portrayed women “as powerless objects who exist in service of the male ego [and] as the anti-thesis of the male.”<sup>102</sup> Pornography endangered children because of its “eroticization of childhood.”<sup>103</sup>

In this 1982 article, Davies and Grantham stated “the jury is still out” on the question “does pornography encourage men to link sex and violence?”<sup>104</sup> Within a few years, the jury no longer appeared to be out as *the Emily* articles argued matter-of-factly that pornography created, and was explicitly violent against women and children. By 1985, at least at the level of rhetoric, Corinne Mel’s article entitled “Wimmins Fire Brigade” appeared to conclusively link

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<sup>100</sup>Brenda Percy and Lesley Bullard. “Snuff,” *The Emily*, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1982, Vol. 1, No. 1.

<sup>101</sup>Megan Davies and Barb Grantham. “The Poetry of Oppression: Pornography,” *The Emily*, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1982, Vol. 1, No. 1.

<sup>102</sup>Davies and Grantham. “The Poetry of Oppression: Pornography,” *The Emily*.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

pornography to violence against women and children in arguing that feminists generally view “pornography as the theory, and battery, rape, molestation, and other crimes of sexual violence as the practice.”<sup>105</sup>

Mel’s article documented the firebombing of three Hot Red Video stores in Vancouver by anti-pornography feminists on November 22, 1982, and featured ongoing debates among anti-pornography feminist circles on strategies to combat the pornography industry. To counter mainstream media which cast the Wimmin’s Fire Brigade as terrorists, Mel explained the reasons behind the Brigades actions:

a) pornography hurts women and must somehow be stopped; b) the government and legal system of capitalist countries have a mandate to protect men’s interests, including profit making; c) there never has or will be much done to stop pornography; and d) women are justified in taking legal and illegal direct actions against pornographers.<sup>106</sup>

To Mel, the Fire Brigade’s action may seem contradictory. After all, “if feminists desire a peaceful, non-exploitative society, is there a place for coercive actions such as firebombings?”<sup>107</sup> Mel appeared to answer in the affirmative by amplifying the Fire Brigade’s claim for self-defence. Pornography was sexist “hate propaganda,” an industry that “promotes and profits from violence against women and children.”<sup>108</sup> While feminists debated how to combat the pornography industry, the fundamental argument against pornography remained consistent.

Over a decade later, *the Emily* expanded perspectives on pornography in featuring both an anti-pornography feminist article entitled “Pornography and Sex in the True North” by Elise Mitchell, alongside an anonymous pro-pornography article entitled “Responsible Writhing.”

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<sup>105</sup>Mel Corinne, “Wimmins Fire Brigade,” *The Emily*, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1985, Vol. 3, No. 2.

<sup>106</sup> Corinne, “Wimmins Fire Brigade,” *The Emily*.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. She further presented an argument that not all anti-pornography feminists condone or support direct illegal actions, like firebombing, by drawing a parallel to the justification of firebombing to the argument “that Right-To-Life people would be justified in bombing abortion clinics and Women’s Centre which procure and endorse abortions.”

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

Mitchell's article "Pornography and Sex in the True North" opened by acknowledging women's sexual interest in consuming sexually explicit material and asked "Since we like sex, we like looking at pictures of and reading about sex. Where, if you'll pardon the pun, is the beef?"<sup>109</sup> By asking what's the beef, the article opened the question up to debate.

"Responsible Writhing" also acknowledged women as consumers and enjoyers of pornography and sexually explicit content. The author asked readers "What do you like? Do you prefer pictures or written material? Do you enjoy mainstream pornography or underground erotica? What strange fantasies do you have when you're alone? How, if ever, do you achieve these fantasies?"<sup>110</sup> Reflective of a developing stream of sex positive feminism, the article queried if it is "necessary to justify what turns you on?"<sup>111</sup> Differentiated from pornography, erotica was presented in the article as "sexually explicit material based on equality" available to fulfill sexual needs, desires and fantasies without harm to women and children.<sup>112</sup> The article did not outright condemn pornography, but rather encouraged "every women [to] decide for herself whether or not to use pornography and what pornography to use. [And to] choose with care; take responsibility for your orgasms!"<sup>113</sup> By 1997, *the Emily* no longer focused discussions only on pornography's potential dangers but also on its potential pleasures.

### Lesbianism

Lesbians appeared sporadically throughout articles in the 1980s and more consistently in the 1990s in *the Emily*. As we will see below, "Lesbian Families" by Judy Andrew contained both heterosexist and non-heterosexist elements. Jane Ozard's 1992 article "There are no lesbians on the *Love Boat*" defined heterosexism in the mainstream media. The third article,

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<sup>109</sup> Elise Mitchell, "Pornography and Sex in the True North," *The Emily*, February 1997, No Volume, No Number.

<sup>110</sup> Anonymous, "Responsible Writhing," *The Emily*, February 1997, No Volume, No Number.

<sup>111</sup> Anonymous, "Responsible Writhing," *The Emily*.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

Theresa Newhouses' 1994 "Dykes Take Over the World" highlighted how by the mid 1990s, third wave lesbian writers considered 'race,' place, class, gender and sexuality as factors informing lesbian struggles.

Judy Andrew's 1984, "Lesbian Families" defined lesbians as a woman who loves "other women and prefers sexual and emotional relationships with women as opposed to men."<sup>114</sup> At the same time, Andrew desexualized lesbianism. She argued that all women have the capacity to be a lesbian, or a "honorary lesbian" which she defined as "a woman who doesn't necessarily sleep with other women but enjoys the company of women as creative/ loving/ individuals."<sup>115</sup> Lesbianism was not described as a "unnatural and perverted 'sexual' orientation," but rather a "natural lifestyle," "healthy" and "totally acceptable."<sup>116</sup> Andrew also argued that lesbian struggles were "far deeper than sexual independence."<sup>117</sup> She acknowledged lesbian struggles were also about sexual, social and economic independence.

In the same article, Andrew discussed a guest lecture given by Rowena Hunisett, a lesbian feminist counsellor, at UVic. Responding to the social ostracization lesbians experience in mainstream feminist movements, Hunisett called for unity, to work "together as women fighting oppression and not as women who are divided by different values."<sup>118</sup> Additionally, Hunisett made an analogy between lesbophobia and racism by arguing that "if people talked about blacks, natives or any other ethnic group the way they talk about lesbians, they would be described as racist."<sup>119</sup> This analysis failed to acknowledge the existence of Black feminist and

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<sup>114</sup> Judy Andrew, "Lesbian Families," *The Emily*, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1984, Vol. 2, No. 4. Lesbians were defined in opposition to heterosexuality, with heterosexuality remaining as the central paradigm.

<sup>115</sup> Andrew, "Lesbian Families," *The Emily*.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

Black lesbian feminists who argued, since the inception of the second wave, that homophobia, racism and gender oppression were simultaneous rather than analogous.<sup>120</sup>

Compulsory heterosexuality as heterosexism was defined in Jane Ozard's 1992 article "There are no lesbians on the *Love Boat*." Heterosexism, defined by white feminist Suzanne Pharr,<sup>121</sup> was described as a political institution that created "the climate for homophobia with its assumption that the world is and must be heterosexual and its display of power and privilege as the norm."<sup>122</sup> Heterosexism in the media normalized heterosexuality as the status quo by depicting "that bastion of patriarchal power the nuclear family" as the standard in which all other forms of relationships were measured.<sup>123</sup>

The normalization of heterosexuality through media, according to Ozard, limited opportunities for lesbian and gay families to find positive "models of a non-heterosexual experience."<sup>124</sup> Heterosexist media often modelled "homosexuality [as] a 'deviance,' 'queer,' or something that should be psychologically fixed" and as a choice "when homosexuality is not."<sup>125</sup> Heterosexist media was also described as often "racist, classist, ageist and so on, excluding many people by presenting a very exclusive world."<sup>126</sup> Rather than seeing themselves well-represented in dominant culture, Ozard asserted that lesbians and gay people have always relied on outside mainstream platforms for "any affirmative literature, images [and] programs."<sup>127</sup>

Shifting the focus away from heterosexuality as the predominant paradigm guiding discussions about lesbians, in 1994, Theresa Newhouse's article entitled "Dykes take Over the

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<sup>120</sup> For reference: Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," Black Past.org (1977), <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/combahee-river-collective-statement-1977/> is one of many examples of writing available during the time of this article's production.

<sup>121</sup> Jane Ozard, "There are no lesbians on the Love Boat," *The Emily*, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1992, Vol. 10, No. 3. This *Emily* article focused on Suzanne Pharr's article "Homophobia: a weapon of sexism" despite Adrienne Rich popularizing the term compulsory heterosexuality.

<sup>122</sup> Ozard, "There are no lesbians on the Love Boat," *The Emily*.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

World” aimed to connect and inform lesbians on campus to global lesbian movements. Information was drawn from the *International Lesbian Information Service*, an organization aimed at fostering global lesbian organizing through print media. Newhouse recorded lesbian organizing efforts in North America, the Philippines, Croatia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Brazil, Malaysia and Vietnam. Newhouse wrote about a Filipina group of activist lesbians who established a lesbian library and archive. Despite the exclusion of lesbians from the Filipina feminist movement, as elsewhere, this Filipina group asserted that “lesbians are visible everywhere in the city. In the streets, market, bars, schools everywhere.”<sup>128</sup> Focusing on empowering lesbians and building community connections, this group let readers know that “no matter what educational background, personal background or economic strata that lesbians belong to, they are all entitled to be organized and to be informed that being a lesbian is not something to be ashamed of.”<sup>129</sup> Newhouse connected the work of *the Emily* to the broader feminist print movement in “recognizing the value of print media in creating community.”<sup>130</sup>

### **White Feminism**

Throughout the 1980s, *The Emily* writers produced articles about ‘women’ and ‘women’s issues’ focusing on white middle class, heterosexual women without naming that’s who they were writing about. In 1991, *the Emily* published an “Editorial” where writers, for the first time, acknowledged the white feminist politic guiding the papers prompted by Black women, women of colour and Indigenous activists starting these discussions. As a result of these discussions, *Ain’t I A Woman?* was created in 1996. Carol Campers’ 1996 article “To White Feminists,” in *Ain’t I A Woman?* illustrated that Black women and women of colour have always talked back to

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<sup>128</sup> Theresa Newhouse, “Dykes take Over the World.” *The Emily*, March 1994, Vol. 12, No. 2.

<sup>129</sup> Newhouse, “Dykes take Over the World.” *The Emily*.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

white women's racism. Finally, in 1999, an unsigned "Editorial" of *Ain't I A Woman?* indicated that the recognition of white feminism's grip on *the Emily* led to a shift in changing feminist praxis in the Women's Centre.

White feminism was first recognized as the political orientation guiding *The Emily*, in a 1991 "Editorial"<sup>131</sup> which explained that in the past decade of *the Emily*'s production (1981 – 1991), conversations about 'women' and 'women's struggles' were about "white middle-class heterosexual, Anglo Saxon, literate, not hungry etc. etc. women."<sup>132</sup> Recognizing how narrow and limited this scope was, the "Editorial" noted "*the Emily* has in many ways been saying the same thing to the same people and in the same way for ten years."<sup>133</sup> This approach catered to "clique-y, radical leftoid [white] feminists" which contributed to "lots of people find[ing] *the Emily* alienating."<sup>134</sup> The Women's Centre in 1991 wanted to change this approach.

The "Editorial" documented "more women of colour in the Women's Centre regularly this year than there ha[d] been before."<sup>135</sup> Black women, women of colour and Indigenous women in the Women's Centre were the central actors and activists that prompted discussions about "racial and ethnic diversity," "class," "sexuality," and "men."<sup>136</sup> Rather than conceiving men as oppressors and opponents, these activists recognized "lots of women feel more affinity with men who share their colour / ethnicity / class / sexuality / background than they do with other women, especially women defined as [white middle-class heterosexual, Anglo Saxon, literate, not hungry etc. etc.]."<sup>137</sup> These activists argued "the feminist revolution, that is the

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<sup>131</sup> Anonymous, "Editorial." *The Emily*, November 6, 1991, Vol. 10, No. 2.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. Today, we can add cisgendered and able bodied to the etcetera's.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

‘humanization’ of the planet is not going to happen without men just as it will not happen without women.”<sup>138</sup>

From this 1991 acknowledgement of whiteness, moving forward the Women’s Centre and its publications began publishing more materials which addressed racism as part of feminism. Women of colour and Indigenous women sparked the creation of a new parallel running newspaper out of the Women’s Centre in 1996, called *Aint I A Woman?*

The second issue of *Ain’t I A Woman?* as an independent newspaper came out in December 1996.<sup>139</sup> *Ain’t I A Woman?* focused specifically on issues of “race, gender and colonization.”<sup>140</sup> The 1996 “Editorial” explained that *Ain’t I A Woman?* centered on historical and contemporary “issues of race, gender and colonization [that] are prevalent in our everyday lives.”<sup>141</sup> Although *the Emily* did provide (some) space to racism and colonialism, a separate publication was needed to “encourage women to keep these issues in the forefront of our minds, our writing and our activism.”<sup>142</sup> For *Ain’t I A Woman?* “racism, like all forms of oppression, cannot be eliminated until we teach ourselves, until we work together, until we fight together and most importantly until we all are active.”<sup>143</sup>

Originally published in 1994, in Canadian Women’s Studies, a manifesto by Carol Camper<sup>144</sup> was reprinted in *Ain’t I A Woman?* and connected the UVic’s Women’s Centre press with the larger Canadian feminist print media. Camper’s “To White Feminists” enumerated fifteen ways white feminists are racist, beginning each point with “YOUR RACISM IS

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<sup>138</sup> Anonymous, “Editorial.” *The Emily*.

<sup>139</sup> The first publication of *Ain’t I A Woman?* was released as an insert in *the Emily* in March 1996 but is not available in the archives of this project. That is why the second edition of *Ain’t I A Woman?* is focused on as the first independent publication of this publication throughout this project. Anonymous, “Editorial,” *Aint I A Woman?* November 1996, Vol. 2, No. 1.

<sup>140</sup> Anonymous, “Editorial,” *Aint I A Woman?*

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Camper describes herself as a Black lesbian writer, visual artist, mother and women’s health worker. The original version of this article: Camper, Carol. 1994. “To White Feminists.” *Canadian Woman Studies Les Cahiers de La Femme* 14(2). <https://cws.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cws/article/view/9943/9047>



SHOWING when...”<sup>145</sup> Some forms of white feminist racism identified by Camper included: tokenizing Black women, white fear, tears and guilt in response to outspoken Black women, fetishizing and objectifying Black women, exclaiming reverse racism, conceiving racism as isolated actions rather than a systemic issue, and white women’s expectation of Black women to do anti-racist labour for them.<sup>146</sup> Camper ended stating “TO WHITE FEMINISTS, BE YOU LIBERAL, RADICAL, SEPARATIST, RICH OR NOT – YOUR RACISM IS SHOWING, YOU CAN EXPECT TO HEAR FROM VOCAL, ORGANIZED BLACK WOMEN WHO WILL BE IN YOUR FACE ABOUT IT. (sic)”<sup>147</sup> Camper’s reprint amplified conversations among feminists at UVic’s Women’s Centre and beyond while foregrounding women of colour talking back to white women’s racism.

In 1999, *Ain’t I A Woman?* released an article entitled “Our Stories Dialogue” which featured excerpts from a roundtable discussion that happened in Women’s Centre that month. The topic of the discussion, on the “future of gender, race and decolonization.”<sup>148</sup> “Our Stories Dialogue” was written in a Q and A format, with questions asked by a facilitator and participants’ responses. The facilitator critiqued the exclusionary “idea that gender oppression is the ultimate oppression and then racism, is built in, or has been built into [white] feminist movements” and asked white listeners “how can we get away from this idea, which is so obviously exclusionary to people of colour?”<sup>149</sup> First, one participant noted that white women needed to recognize that “gender oppression is very different for a black woman than for a Native woman or a white woman...[and so] it’s important to look at the interlinkages and see where they come in, rather

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<sup>145</sup> Carol Camper [reprint], “To White Feminists,” *Ain’t I A Woman?* November 1996, Vol. 2, No. 1.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. All caps in the original.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Anonymous, “Our Stories Dialogue,” *Ain’t I A Woman?* February 1999, Vol. 4, No. 2. One issue with white feminist movements, was that “women who bring up racial issues is told that she is dividing the agenda and bringing up secondary issues.

than making a hierarchy of oppressions.”<sup>150</sup> “Our Stories Dialogue” reflected the development of a feminist politic in the Women’s Centre that critiqued white feminism.

Within this January 1999 edition of *Ain’t I A Woman* another “Editorial” underscored the Women’s Centre’s commitment to heed calls from Black women, women of colour and Indigenous women. The “Editorial” proposed the integration of the Women’s Centre publications, *the Emily* and *Ain’t I A Woman?* into one newspaper. The “Editorial” explained “*the Emily* named after several (white) women, would be combined with *Ain’t I A Woman?* and renamed.(sic)”<sup>151</sup> The movement away from white feminist analysis and the consolidation of the two Women’s Centre newspapers into one was “based on the feminist concept of complete integration and analysis of race, gender, sexuality, class, age, and ability issues.”<sup>152</sup> In 1999 the two newspapers became one as *The Womyn’s Publication Network*. The Women’s Centre newspaper was renamed *Thirdspace* in 2000 and ran as a newspaper turned magazine turned zine until its eventual dissolution in 2016.

### **Racism**

*The Emily* writers did not consider racism an integral feminist issue during the 1980s. When racism was mentioned, it was often in passing, in reference to an individual person and/or experience as racist. The first article on racism in *the Emily* was published in 1994, entitled “Challenging Racism” by Carolynn Van De Vyere. It was an effort by white women to challenge racism as a structural, not individual issue. This article illuminates an understanding of ‘race’ in the Women’s Centre as related to skin tone. On the other hand, *Ain’t I A Woman?* directly attended to issues of racism from the start. In 1996, Naomi North’s article

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<sup>150</sup> Anonymous, “Our Stories Dialogue,” *Ain’t I A Woman?* February 1999, Vol. 4, No. 2.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. The editorial asked and welcomed reader “feedback, criticism and/or comments” on this change and invited readers to meet and discuss a new name for the new paper.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

“Women’s Centre News” in *Ain’t I A Woman?* located white supremacy and racism as foundational issues within UVic’s Women Centre and *the Emily*. Rather than theory, North’s work focused on tangible actions. In a 1999 edition of *Ain’t I A Woman?* ‘race’ was recognized as a cultural construction in “Our Stories Dialogue.” Lindsay Sung’s “Buttfucking Etc.” and Sarah Hunt’s “Wading through Whiteness” centered women of colour and Indigenous women speaking directly to their experience of racism in Victoria, UVic’s Women Centre and *the Emily*.

Before *the Emily* and *Ain’t I A Woman?* merged into *the Womyn’s Publication Network*, *the Emily* published “Challenging Racism” by Carolyann Van De Vyere in 1994. The article was written by Van De Vyere after she attended the workshop Unlearning Racism by Ricky Sherover-Marcuse<sup>153</sup> at UVic. After 13 years and 12 volumes of *the Emily*, Van De Vyere acknowledged for the first time that white people experience privileges “on the basis of white skin.”<sup>154</sup> White skin, De Vyere added, had the privilege of “being the ‘unmarked’ race.”<sup>155</sup> De Vyere explained considering whiteness as the norm perpetuates racist behaviours by treating people of colour with “contempt, with indifference or as exotic.”<sup>156</sup> ‘Race’ (specifically whiteness) in this article is linked with skin colour, illuminating ideas of ‘race’ coming out of the Women’s Centre in 1994.<sup>157</sup> The recognition of ‘race’ as a cultural construction would only come into conversation in 1998 in *Ain’t I A Woman?*

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<sup>153</sup> Ricky (Erica) Sherover-Marcuse was a well-known American feminist, famous for her ‘Unlearning Racism’ workshops that she delivered in California and nationally. For more information on Sherover-Marcuse and her publications visit: Harold Marcuse, “Erica Sherover-Marcuse (1938-1988),” Herbert Marcuse Official Homepage, <https://www.marcuse.org/herbert/people/ricky/index.html>. To look into Ricky Sherover-Marcuse’s writings visit: Sherry Mouser, “Ricky’s Writings,” UnlearningRacism, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110728144510/http://www.unlearningracism.org/writings.htm>. This points to a connection between anti-racist workshops funded by the University of Victoria as an influence what was in the student newspaper on the topic of racism.

<sup>154</sup> Peggy McIntosh’s argument. Carolyann Van De Vyere, “Challenging Racism,” *The Emily*, March 1994, Vol. 12, No. 3.

<sup>155</sup> Van De Vyere, “Challenging Racism,” *The Emily*.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

De Vyere's "Challenging Racism" argued that white people (such as herself) did "not choose to learn racism" but rather "racism is the legacy of culture."<sup>158</sup> Racism was framed not as an individual choice or action, but a systemic issue in which "all white people are indoctrinated in racist ideology and are therefore, perpetrators of it."<sup>159</sup> Systemic racism did not excuse or absolve, but rather required white people to take up "the responsibility to unlearn the racism which society has taught us."<sup>160</sup> The use of the term 'us' illuminates a pattern of white women in *the Emily* grouping white people into 'us' and 'we,' and people of colour as 'others' and 'them.' By doing so, the article reproduced the racist dynamic the article is trying to dispel. Van De Vyere outlined eight lessons to call-in white people to acknowledge white privilege and 'unlearn' internal racisms, and to challenge individual and external racisms.<sup>161</sup>

Carolynn Van De Vyere's "Challenging Racism" stood as a precursor to the first release of *Aint I A Woman?* in 1996. In 1996, *Aint I A Woman?* published "Women's Centre News" by Naomi North which directly located racisms within the Women's Centre and outlined tangible actions to eliminate racisms from the Centre, including in the publications themselves. North grounded "discussions about racism, anti-racist work, women of colour, and First Nations' women's sense of safety, and white women's fears and/or ignorance" in the context of the Women's Centre for 1996.<sup>162</sup> Women of colour and Indigenous women activists called for a shift

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<sup>158</sup> Van De Vyere, "Challenging Racism," *The Emily*. The 'culture' which Vyere notes here might be the idea of a 'dominant culture' which includes larger structures like white supremacy/colonialism/capitalism/patriarchy. I read her use of the term 'culture' as a term as summing up these systems.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. The guide of eight lessons asked white people to: 1. Assume "the right and responsibility to get involved with racial liberation issues." 2. Assume "that people in the target group want you as an ally." 3. Assume "that target people are experts on their own experience and that there is much to learn from [people of colour]." 4. To "inform and educate yourself about the issues which are of concern to people of colour." 5. To "assume that racially targeted groups of people have a history of resistance [and] to take initiative to learn about these histories." 6. To "recognize your own ethnic heritage, especially if it's associated with violence and privilege. Learning about your own cultural history helps refrain 'borrowing' from people in alliance with." 7. To "not to try to convince people of colour that you are an ally; just be there." 8. To "acknowledge your own role in the oppression of people of colour and your own privileges in a white dominated society."

<sup>162</sup> Naomi North, "Women's Centre News," *Aint I A Woman?* November 1996, Vol. 2, No. 1.

in making Women's Centre resources more "accessible" and "safe" for people of colour.<sup>163</sup>

Clearly, the Women's Centre had a legacy of racism which lingered in the publications and space itself.

North's article put to print anti-racist actions to-be-taken based on feminist approaches which tended to "the interconnectedness of oppression" by "seeking to address issues as part of an intricate web, each form of oppression has particularities that need to be dealt with."<sup>164</sup>

According to North, the active focus of the Women's Centre for "the duration of the 96-97 school year" would be to: run "anti-racism / anti-oppression workshops," engage in "guerilla / street troupe" theater, center "speakers on race, class, gender and the doing of anti-oppression work," support and/or create "women of colour and First Nations women's space," and support "a white women's anti-racism group."<sup>165</sup> This article in *Aint I A Woman* transformed knowledge of racism into anti-racist action within the Women's Centre and its publications. Women of colour and Indigenous women called out the historical and ongoing racism of *the Emily* and the Women's Centre which led to the creation of *Aint I A Woman?* and the creation of a separate space for women of colour and Indigenous women in 1998, called *Women of Colour Collective*, known today as the Students of Colour Collective.

In 1999, three years later, *Aint I A Woman?* published three articles that shifted how 'race' and racism were taken up by writers in the Women's Centre. "Our Stories Dialogue" reiterated the importance of considering "white people as racialized" because "white people have certain privileges [which means] obviously issues of race effect white people too."<sup>166</sup> The use of the term 'racialized' and the definition of 'race' as "a purely cultural construction" with "no

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<sup>163</sup> Naomi North, "Women's Centre News," *Aint I A Woman?*.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Anonymous, "Our Stories Dialogue," *Aint I A Woman?* February 1999, Vol. 4, No. 2.

scientific basis; you can't categorize people genetically," indicates that by 1999, racialization was considered as making 'race.'<sup>167</sup>

The second article on racism in this 1999 edition of *Ain't I A Woman?* entitled "Buttfucking, etc."<sup>168</sup> by Lindsay Sung was about her experience as a woman of colour engaging with issues of racism on campus and in Victoria. Noting the frustrating contradictions of anti-racist work at UVic, Sung asked "how can a mostly white school paper, radio station, feminist paper, be made to diversify, if all the volunteers are mostly white?"<sup>169</sup> Sung argued *the Emily* should have "outreach[ed], to ensure that everyone is welcome from the start, not to just come out and help for the 'queer,' 'colour,' and 'class' issue."<sup>170</sup>

Self-described as a "card carrying, racism-battling feminist woman of colour," Sung wrote that when she started to think about racism, "racism surrounded [her] all of a sudden."<sup>171</sup> Racism in Victoria was "more coded, silent, ingrained, backlogged in hundreds and hundreds of years of history."<sup>172</sup> Finding herself deeply unhappy existing in "pithells of race/racialisations theoretics," Sung called for "something new to [be brought to] the forefront. Action. Change. Something real."<sup>173</sup> She asked readers to "think about the ways in which you've learned what you practice today and pass on those methods and processes through your own work."<sup>174</sup> To Sung, theories of 'race' and racism were nothing but paralysing unless transformed into creative action.

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<sup>167</sup> Racialization is the social process by which particular meanings are assigned to individuals or groups based on constructed racial categories. Racialization is a concept used in critical race theory to explain 'race' not as a biological or scientific reality, but as a socially and culturally constructed category.

<sup>168</sup> Lindsay Sung, "Buttfucking, etc." *Ain't I A Woman?* February 1999, Vol. 4, No. 2.

<sup>169</sup> Sung, "Buttfucking, etc." *Ain't I A Woman?*

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. The quote continued as: "Not just a university class on the topic of extending postmodern theoretical debate on the theoretical usage of the term racialization."

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

Like Sung, Sarah Hunt also critically engaged issues of racism in this edition of *Ain't I A Woman?* in her article “Wading Through Whiteness, offering blood: same old, same old.” While Sung called for proactive inclusivity and creative activism, Hunt addressed white feminists’ complicity in perpetuating colonialism. She framed her article with an opening-quote by Adrienne Rich that reads:

I believe that white feminists today, raised white in a racist society often ridden with white solipsism – not the consciously held belief that one race is inherently superior to all others, but a tunnel-vision which simply does not see nonwhite experience or existence as precious or significant, unless in spasmodic, impotent guilt-reflexes, which have little or no long-term, continuing momentum or political usefulness.<sup>175</sup>

Hunt’s article responded to “some feminists [who] go off about their supposedly progressive, forward thinking equality-based feminist politics, which [she] happen[ed] to find racist and biased and exclusionary.”<sup>176</sup> Hunt critiqued a feminism which considered “the most important issue for all women is patriarchy and that systemic racism, global capitalism, and other huge oppressive systems are simply a side-effect.”<sup>177</sup> The idea that “all we need to do is get rid of / get out of ‘the patriarchy’ and all our troubles ‘as women’ will go away, and that all other oppressions be subsumed under patriarchy, that ‘we’ (feminists) will get to ‘their’ (‘other’ women’s) issues once patriarchy has been annihilated” was described by Hunt as “(euro-north-american-centric),” “patronizing in tone,” and “simply not true.”<sup>178</sup>

Hunt further took issue with the tendency of white women to think it is acceptable and not racist to “claim spiritual belief systems of ‘other’ cultures and to appropriate spiritual ceremonies, ideologies, images and rituals because we are sharing between ourselves as

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<sup>175</sup> Sarah Hunt, “Wading Through Whiteness, offering blood: same old, same old,” *Ain't I A Woman?* February 1999, Vol. 4, No. 2.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

women.”<sup>179</sup> She asked white feminists to “consider the context in which you take from us and if you would have been so willing to admit your alliances with Aboriginal women a hundred years ago?”<sup>180</sup> Moreover, she asked “...how many elders have given you the rights to these rituals you claim and medicines you are healing yourself with?”<sup>181</sup> Hunt questioned “women who claim this universality of ‘we are all women’ ...what are you sharing with me? What bit of truth do you have to offer me?”<sup>182</sup>

Hunt tied ongoing colonialism to the appropriation of Indigenous spiritual beliefs, ideologies, and rituals by white feminists. According to Hunt, “white women played a part too [in colonization practices], as you do now.”<sup>183</sup> Disrupting the white feminist universalizing of oppression, Hunt argued that white women “have agency and privilege in your whiteness, despite the oppression we face ‘as women.’”<sup>184</sup> She asked white feminists to recognize the privilege of having “the ability to choose: ignorant bliss or informed decision making and alliance building.”<sup>185</sup> White feminists are privileged in that choice to “either make a commitment to joining in struggle against colonialism, global capitalism, police states, or you can become cozily entrenched in the white second wave leftovers of ‘inclusion,’ ‘diversity’ and tokenistic tack-ons of ‘our’ concerns, while maintaining a white feminist theory and practice rooted in white supremacist ideologies.”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Hunt, “Wading Through Whiteness, offering blood: same old, same old,” *Aint I A Woman?*

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. She also asked if “you would have been buying up the ‘bargains’ being made of our traditions as we were being forced to give up our very essence to white men (and some women)?”

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid. She furthers this question by asking as white feminists “...integrate this deep wisdom for which my ancestors went to jail, were called ‘heathens,’ were raped, stolen from, taken to residential schools, confined within one of the most sexist racist pieces of legislation in Canadian state’s history of racist practices [the Indian Act], what bit of spiritual uplifting do you offer me in exchange.”

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.



### **Conclusion:**

This thesis scratches the surface of the historical significance of the Women's Centre publications at UVic, by focusing only on *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* These publications reveal various feminist perspectives emerging from these university student publications during the 1980s to 1990s. Moreover, these publications showcase UVic's Women's Centre's activism which brought meaningful changes to the landscape of campus and beyond. Furthermore, *the Emily* articles in the 1980s indicate the entanglement of GEM Centre history with issues of white supremacy, classism, racism and colonialism. Articles in *the Emily* and *Ain't I A Woman?* in the 1990s show that women of colour activists prompted the creation of *Ain't I A Woman?* which led to more substantial discussions on white supremacy, white feminism, classism, racism and colonialism in both publications and the Women's Centre.

GEM Centre history is rooted in an evolving feminist politic. Future research might adopt a multi-media approach to comprehensively analyze and create a richer vision of these newspapers. Additionally, researchers might also consider how cisheteronormativity, ableism and fatphobia show up in these papers. Furthermore, it would be worth looking across the publications out of the GEM Centre to see what stories emerge: including *the Emily* (1982), *Ain't I A Woman?* (1996), *the Womyn's Publication Network* (1999), and *Thirdspace* (2000). The GEM Centre's 2023 resurgence of circulating an online newsletter suggests that the history of GEM publications is ongoing. Woo hoo!

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