

**Want to get involved? W.E.L.L. is looking for volunteers! Info within!**

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Welcome! I cannot tell you all how excited I am that we have a newsletter! I want to introduce myself real quick before we get on to the upcoming events and news.

My name is Brittany Whittenberg, and I am the founder of W.E.L.L. I am a

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college student in New Orleans, about to graduate next month with my BA in English. I've lived here since 2004 when I fell madly in love with this city. I am many things, as all women are: a survivor, a sister, an aunt, an artist, a bisexual, a reader, a tap dancer, a traveler, and the list continues. I am growing to love myself all the time. W.E.L.L. is a creation that grew from love.

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The idea has been a long time coming, and still has a long way to go until completion. The main idea is to have a community of women together. I believe that once we unite, we can do anything. Communities of women are so critical to our society, and we do not have the network that men have had established for centuries. There are groups of women who meet through schools, churches, their children, support groups, and so on; still there is no group to unite all these smaller groups of women. I believe that is because our world puts so much emphasis on race, class, religion, and other factors that separate us. They want us to square off against one another.

If women united, the results would be life-changing. If all the women who cared about better education for our children got together, there would be no hall that could hold the numbers. If all the women who want to change the beauty image of today from a thin, young, white, blond girl to a realistic standard all got together, that standard would be forced to recede. If all the women who care about reforming laws for domestic violence all got together,

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domestic violence laws would have to change. If all the women of the world united, the world would change.

Virginia Woolf said that women do not have a country, that their country is the world. Women do not have a common factor that draws us out like nationality. We have something greater. We have our identity as women, which can bring us together despite our nationality, our race, our religion, our class. W.E.L.L. is an attempt at that. We are women, empowered, and learning to love our lives. We are learning to create lives worth loving. We are trying to change the way society has groomed us, primed us, set us up to tear ourselves down with impossible standards, unequal pay, limited rights, and little protection. We are taking our selves back. I belong to myself, and I am going to fight for that, in any and all ways that are required. I will fight to be a healthy, fulfilled, happy woman.

I'm calling you to fight with me. There is much wrong in this world, and it's high time those things changed. It starts with me. It starts with you. It starts with us, together. -BEW

**The first meeting of the W.E.L.L. Book Club is November 18<sup>th</sup> from 7pm to 9pm, at the Starbucks on Magazine Street. We will be discussing The Purity Myth by Jessica Valenti. The lovely and talented Ariana Reid will be leading our group. Hope to see you there!**

If you read only 10 pages, you will have learned something. The biggest thing I learned was that virginity cannot be medically defined. I was fact checking via Google before I finished the paragraph. Look it up yourself, all of her sources are cited within the book. Virginity is just one of the things the “abstinence-only” crowd would have us all believe. Other falsehoods promoted around to children across our nation, is that girls (not boys, mind you) who have sex may become depressed, drop out of school, and even kill themselves. Thought getting an STD was scary? What if you were told that you'd off yourself if you went too far with your boyfriend?!

Valenti surveys this culture: the programing of chastity that keeps women as young girls, forever. Teens and pre-teens who attend Purity Balls (funding by G. W. Bush's administration) where the fathers led their child around in white, and the daughter swears herself to him until he hands her over to her husband. One shocking example of what type of lessons teachers are giving on sex is as follows: Each girl has a piece of tape. They stick the tape on their arms. When they pull the tape off, hair and dead skin is obviously on the tape. Then they are told that this tape is how they are after they have sex.

All of this, and everything that I'm not giving detailed accounts of, is mind boggling. Thankfully, Valenti keeps a sense of humor within her tone. She has footnotes that range from interesting commentary to one-liner jokes. The book is about raising awareness. Valenti is trying to open a discussion, where everyone can talk, including the girls the book discusses.

This book is an attempt to get attention to the facts that girls are being told they are defined by their sex life. To quote the source, “It's time to teach our daughters that their ability to be good people depends on their *being good people*, not on whether or not they're sexually active”. For the sake of ourselves, as adults who encounter the results of the purity myth daily, and for the sake of those after us, read this book. Then pass it along.

November's movie of the month is The Stoning of Soraya M., a film based on the true story of an Iranian woman falsely accused of adultery and killed.



## Books for Young Feminists

**One for Historical Women:** [Yours for Justice, Ida B. Wells: The Daring Life of a Crusading Journalist](#) by Philip Dray

**One for a Far-Away Place:** [Cloud Tea Monkeys](#) by Mal Peet

**One for Sciences:** [G Is for Googol: A Math Alphabet Book](#) by David M. Schwartz

**One for Self-Esteem:** [I Like Me!](#) by Nancy Carlson

**One for Current Events (Election Day = Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>):** [Madam President: The Extraordinary, True \(and Evolving\) Story of Women in Politics](#) by Catherine Thimmesh

“Don't act like the hypocrite, /Who thinks he can conceal his wiles/While loudly quoting the Koran.”—Hafez, 14<sup>th</sup> Century Iranian Poet

The above quote opens the film that is based on a book banned in Iran. Finding the words to explain this powerful true story is impossible. About halfway through, I started emailing an Iranian friend of mine, hoping for assurance that this was a fluke. Surely this could not happen now, in modern times.

The story of Soraya's brutal murder takes place in 1986, but even today in 2010 stonings happen not only in Iran, but also in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, and Nigeria. Amnesty International revealed the truth concerning the stoning of a 13-year-old girl in Somalia: “Aisha Ibrahim Duhulow was killed on Monday, 27 October, by a group of 50 men who stoned her to death in a stadium in the southern port of Kismayu, in front of around 1,000 spectators”. While Soraya's story should be a horrific, rare occurrence, with just slight research one can find this to be an old tradition that is as alive as its victims are dead.

While tragedy weigh the film down, the strength of one woman; her drive, integrity, and truth lift it up again. Soraya's aunt risks her own life to tell her niece's story to a French-Iranian journalist passing through the rural town. Zahra's voice is carried by the journalist to my living room, spoken out by Shohreh Aghdashloo. The 58-year old actress shines. Her passion spits fire at the men who kill her beloved niece, and pour honey over the wounds all women feel watching this injustice. She cradled me as I wept for Soraya, for Aisha, and for the girls whose names are not even remembered.

**Going on all month:****\*National Family Caregivers Month\***

"The typical family caregiver is a 49-year-old woman caring for her widowed 69-year-old mother who does not live with her. She is married and employed. Approximately 66% of family caregivers are women. More than 37% have children or grandchildren under 18 years old living with them."

-Caregiving in the United States;

National Alliance for Caregiving in collaboration with AARP.  
November 2009

Because we as a society are living longer, and creating more medicine for former terminal illnesses like AIDS, we have a population of people who need daily (or more) attention. As usual, it is the women who step up to fill this need. Let's be aware of those who are family caretakers this month, and let's honor them. They take care of us-let's do something to take care of them.

<http://www.nfcacares.org/index.cfm>

**\*National Adoption Awareness Month\***

"Each year, November is recognized as National Adoption Awareness Month. While all adoption-related issues are important, the particular focus of this month is the adoption of children currently in foster care."

Adoption is a powerful, amazing thing we have in our society. Foster care is another thing that we have that can be powerful and amazing. While I do not have firsthand experience, I know several people who have been adopted and have been in foster care. Talk to your friends and family, and see who you know who may fall into this category.

Also, check out this awesome calendar with an event a day for adoption month! <http://www.adoption.com/national-adoption-awareness-month-2010/>

**\*Prematurity Awareness Month\***

"Every day 1 in 8 babies born in the U.S. arrives too soon. Premature birth can happen to any pregnant woman, and no one knows why. It is a serious, common and costly problem. The March of Dimes is leading the campaign to reduce premature births by supporting research and by educating the public and health care providers."

I was personally born one month early, to the day. I had many complications and was in the hospital for weeks. Thankfully, I am fine now, but much worse has happened to many babies because of early births. Let's find out who you know that was a premie, and what happened due to that fact.

**Movie Night-Nov 8<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm**

The movie recounts the true story of Soraya, who was stoned to death after her husband falsely accused her of adultery. It is beautiful and horrible, and impossible to explain adequately. You've just got to see it. Location: Brittany's apartment, 1207 Carondelet Apt B, NOLA 70130.

**Gay for the Holidays comedy show-Nov 14<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm**

Zeitgeist Multi-disciplinary Arts Center, 1618 Oretha Castle Haley Blvd, NOLA. Featuring: Zolra Caston, Jeff D., Diana Salameh, Marcia Wall. Special Burlesque Performance by Ace Falcor and Sugarcock. Hosted by: Kris Ford. \$15 per person. For info and tix call 504-585-1325. Door Prizes, Snacks and drinks, including beer and wine, available for purchase.

**\*American Education Week-Nov 15<sup>th</sup> thru Nov 19<sup>th</sup>\***

NEA's American Education Week (AEW) spotlights the importance of providing every child in America with a quality public education from kindergarten through college, and the need for everyone to do his or her part in making public schools great.

**W.E.L.L. Book Club-Nov 18<sup>th</sup>, 7pm**

Lead by Ariana Reid, located at Starbucks on Magazine Street. The only requirement to attend is that you've read the book. November Book Selection: The Purity Myth by Jessica Valenti.

**"Any One of Us: Words From Prison" Interest Meeting-Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>, 6pm**

This is a meeting for all those interested in the play Any One Of Us: Words From Prison under the V-Day campaign. W.E.L.L. is putting on this play on Feb 18th, 19th and 20th. If you or anyone you know is interested in acting, directing, advertising, or anything else concerning the play, PLEASE attend! \*\*\*\*\*This meeting does not require a commitment! You don't have to be sure about wanting to act/direct/help with the play to attend.\*\*\*\*\* Location: Brittany's apartment, 1207 Carondelet Apt B, NOLA 70130

**\*16 Days of Activism begins-Nov 25<sup>th</sup>\***

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is an international campaign originating from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute sponsored by the Center for Women's Global Leadership in 1991.

**More info for all events on W.E.L.L.'s temporary facebook site.**

Alright ladies (and gentlemen), it's time for us to step up! W.E.L.L. addresses tons of issues, and has many things coming up, but we need you to jump in and be a part of things. Please read the topics below, and if you would be interested in writing about one of these, or any other topic, please submit an article for next month's newsletter. Submit to [brit@britwhit.com](mailto:brit@britwhit.com) by Dec 20<sup>th</sup>. All issues are women's issues, so all issues are fair game to discuss here. So, in no particular order:

-Motherhood: being a mom, having a mom, caring for an older mom, losing your mom, being or having a foster mom, etc

-Sexuality: being LGBT, being straight, dating, masturbation, marriage, sex lives, lack of sex lives, etc

-Kids: your kids, wanting kids, having kids, losing kids, kids growing up and/or leaving home, kids who don't leave home, grandkids, nieces/nephews, step-kids, etc

-Violence Against Women: being raped, being abused, being stalked, domestic violence, incest, molestation, date rape, fears that come with womanhood, going out at night, going out alone, being afraid, being brave, etc

-School Days: being a student, going back to school, missing school, wishing you'd made different choices about school, helping others with school, claiming an education, learning what you want to learn in or outside of school, etc

-Working World: your job, the job you want, the job you hate, the job you love, the sexism at work, the advantages of work, working the second shift, housework, sharing housework, child care, sharing child care, balancing work and family, taking care of a job and yourself, battling the glass ceiling, social networking for women, etc

-Social Issues: how do you feel about reproductive rights; religion; the leadership in your city, state and country; teen suicide due to bullies; gay marriage; legalizing pot in CA and other states; immigration; being a vegan; the death penalty; prison reform, health care, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina; etc

-Double Standards: women are sluts, but men have game; men get angry, but women must be on their periods or PMSing; men can go out and drink, but women who drink are asking to be raped; men don't have to worry about birth control because they don't give birth; a mom who has a life outside of her children is horrible, while a dad who shows to one soccer game a year is amazing; men can be single for decades, but women who are single past a certain age are spinsters that no one wants; being gay is fine, as long as both chicks are hot; and the list could go on for ages....

-Pop Culture: comics, poems, book reviews, music reviews, store reviews, movie reviews, Sudoku games, blog reviews, crosswords, etc. Please make sure all of the films/books/stores are concerned with women's issues. Example: the store you review is owned by a woman. The movie you saw is about a rape survivor. The ban you saw is female punk rock.

-Personal/Interpersonal Stories: your story, why you care about feminism, what feminism means to you, an interview with a woman you admire, a glance at a day in your life, etc

There really is no limit on what we can do here. The only limit is the one that society wants to put on us, and they don't have that luxury unless we allow them to. Channel into your inner writer, and submit away! 😊



**In the works currently...**

W.E.L.L. is currently putting together for 2011:

-a writing workshop for Jr.High girls at a school TBA

-a tap dance class for adults

-a series of lectures on nutrition, eating disorders, and healthy eating habits

-a free weekly childcare service

-a poetry workshop for adults

If any of the above items interest you, please connect with Brittany to find other interested peoples!





# W.E.L.L. Events November 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 <i>An orgasm a day keeps the doctor away.</i> —Mae West	2 <u>Election Day!</u> Find a voting booth near you, and voice your opinions! Others fought hard for this privilege.	3	4	5 <i>When you make a world tolerable for yourself, you make a world tolerable for others.</i> —Anais Nin	6
7	8 <u>Movie Night: “The Stoning of Soraya M.</u> 6:30-9:30pm @ BEW’s apt, 1207 Carondelet Apt B, NOLA 70130	9	10 <i>If I'd observed all the rules, I'd never have got anywhere.</i> —Marilyn Monroe	11	12	13 <i>Our school education ignores, in a thousand ways, the rules of healthy development.</i> —Elizabeth Blackwell
14 <u>Gay for the Holidays</u> (a comedy show with burlesque) 6:30pm @ Zeitgeist Arts Center \$15 to enter	15 <u>American Education Week</u> til 11-19-10 ~national event~	16	17	18 <u>Book Club: The Purity Myth</u> 7-9pm @ Starbucks on Magazine St, Lead by Ariana Reid	19	20 ... <i>They might be able to put our bodies in prison, but they can't put our spirits in prison.</i> —Cindy Sheehan
21	22 <u>Interest Meeting for “Any One of Us”</u> 6-8:30pm @ BEW’s apt, 1207 Carondelet Apt B, NOLA 70130	23	24	25 <u>16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence</u> (starts) goes until 12-10-10 ~Global Event~	26	27
28 <i>If I could have convinced more slaves that they were slaves, I could have freed thousands more.</i> —Harriet Tubman	29	30 <i>Seize the moment. Remember all those women on the 'Titanic' who waved off the dessert cart.</i> —Erma Bombeck	<u>American Education Week: “Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and our Responsibility”</u>  Is it really that way?	Write your views and email them in for the December W.E.L.L. newsletter! Email <a href="mailto:brit@britwhit.com">brit@britwhit.com</a> To submit entries.	<b><u>All month long:</u></b>  ✓ National Family Caregivers Month	✓ National Adoption Month ✓ Prematurity Awareness Month