

'Vagina Monologues' warp truth about women, violence, sexuality

Susan Biddle Shearer
Guest Columnist

For those of us who treasure Valparaiso University and the moral truths and Christian teachings the university has sought to exemplify since its founding, these past Februarys have challenged both the foundations of that affection and, for many of us, the extent to which "tolerance" has meant abdication of our responsibility to uphold Christian teaching regarding the beautiful gift of sexuality with which God has gifted mankind.

The cause of this consternation is the now-annual production of the pornographic and undoubtedly vulgar assault on young women's modesty aptly titled "The Vagina Monologues," the objective of which is to contradict virtually every aspect of Christian teaching regarding both the sanctity of women and all that is beautiful regarding sex as an expression of love, commitment and the gift of life which may result from this expression.

Cleverly disguised across campuses nationwide within the context of protesting violence against women, the "Monologues" then proceed to inflict the worst kind of violence one can perpetuate against young men and women, who, while physically mature, are still in the process of moral and character formation.

Specifically, it attempts to eradicate their sense of right and wrong and numb their consciences by the deliberate stripping away of any sense of propriety and modesty. Thus desensitized, one redefines moral truth, and all behavior which is physically gratifying in the short term and soul-killing in the long term becomes acceptable.

In 2003, "Monologues" producer Eve Ensler and her cadre announced the targeting of 45 faith-based colleges for both the play's production and its accompanying discussion groups and panels. People of reason ought well ask what agenda might have been behind her decision to do so.

With no shortage of secular institutions available to showcase her dubious talents, why the focus – indeed insistence – upon inclusion within religiously oriented schools, which by their very nature, will thus have their theological perspectives



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degraded?

Secondly, we ought well ask of the institutions which have chosen to allow the "Monologues" to be shown within their facilities who, specifically, have made the decision regarding the appropriateness of this performance on their respective campuses.

Productions such as these do not occur within a vacuum and require either active or passive administrative assent and generally cooperative departmental coordination. In the case of VU, this year's production appears to have been the result of a collaborative effort spearheaded by the gender studies program.

A reminder to all faculty associated with this production: When we accepted employment with VU, we contractually agreed to advance the mission of the university in the performance of our professional responsibilities. Both the students entrusted to us and their parents have the right to expect that we conform to and exemplify the tenets of that mission in all we say and do.

I am, of course, fully aware that the authority of the administrative hierarchy which governs my faith, Roman Catholicism, does not govern or seek to guide those who shepherd VU in its journey towards moral excellence. However, the wise words uttered by Bishop John D'Arcy (Diocese of South Bend/Fort Wayne) are pertinent here regarding the performance of the "Monologues" at the University of Notre Dame.

Speaking of "the Church" as simply those who follow Christ and his teachings, he said, "the Vagina Monologues is offensive to women ... The human body and the human person, in the tradition of the Church must never be seen as an object, but that is the way they are

presented in this text."

Further, he said, "This play violates the truth about women, the truth about sexuality, the truth about male and female and the truth about the human body. It is in opposition to the highest understanding of academic freedom. For freedom which is not linked to the truth is soon extinguished."

One is hard-pressed to determine which "freedom" was pursued by these events' sponsors. Based upon lies, they also create a false sense of empowerment in which the emotions and hormones are engaged while faith, reason and the dignity of the human person are not. I would also contend that the elevation of these productions to a level of "art" to be protected by academic freedom is absurd.

In closing, the "Monologues" productions on campuses are

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cleverly and invariably cloaked as fundraisers for safe havens and other worthy organizations which serve women who have been abused or assaulted. The use of such reasoning is analogous to a scenario in which, having been convicted of producing child pornography, I attempt to justify my actions by explaining that I had contributed all of my ill-gotten financial gains to child protective services organizations.

All responsible for these events owe those who have walked before them, walk with them now and will walk after them on this beautiful campus their deepest apologies for the infliction of spiritual violence upon our minds, hearts, souls and religious and moral sensibilities.

Shearer is a VU adjunct assistant professor of political science.

She holds a doctorate from the University of Notre Dame and teaches courses in comparative politics, international relations and U.S. foreign policy.