

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In the summer of 1992, in the midst of the Bush-Clinton election race, Newsweek published a cover designed by Barbara Kruger that asked in her signature bold red banner, “Whose Values?” The values in question were, of course, “family values,” the moral majority beliefs that dominated political discourse—and, in many ways, still do.

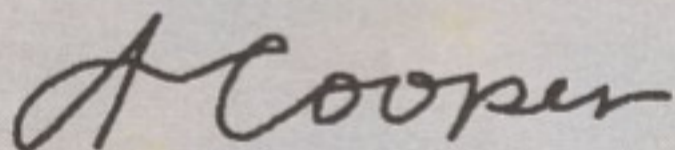
Kruger’s simple, disruptive question rings especially true today, as a debate over “values” once again clouds a presidential election. The barrage of shocking comments in the past several months concerning women’s health, abortion, and birth control from politicians, pundits, and the public alike have turned into an all-out War on Women.

When Rush Limbaugh called a Georgetown student a “prostitute” and a “slut” for testifying in front of Congress about contraception, it wasn’t that surprising (because really, nothing he says surprises me anymore)—but by the time Paul Ryan classified rape as just another “method of conception,” I wondered, as I’m sure many did, how this could be happening in 2012. Forty years after *Roe v. Wade* and the sexual and feminist revolutions, how could conservative morals still have sway over my health care?

Then and now, the medical is inextricably bound up with the moral. In this way, the controversy concerning women's health is similar to the response to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s—a tragic example of how some people's beliefs can influence other people's health and well-being. While thousands of men were dying of an unknown illness, politicians remained caught up in moral quandaries over diverting resources to a so-called "gay disease."

In this week's lead story, Will Hughes discusses the history of AIDS at Columbia—in particular, the Gay Health Advocacy Project, organized in 1985 to provide information and support for gay men facing an epidemic alone. Today, GHAP still provides HIV testing, treatment, and counseling on the fourth floor of John Jay.

Because of organizations like GHAP and other seminal activist groups, the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS no longer pose so serious a threat to gay men. Still, our current political climate reminds us that, in many ways, the fight is far from over.



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