

MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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Teen Sexuality in a Culture of Confusion

Transcript

MICHELLE: I think sexuality is a lot more than just having intercourse.

SUSAN DOUGLAS: Your sexuality, particularly when you're an adolescent, expresses itself in virtually every physical way – in the way you walk, in the way you talk, in how you dress, in what you do, and how you act.

MICHAEL: I express my sexuality even though I've never had sex.

LINDSAY: Sexuality is that little butterfly or knot in your stomach that says I care about this person.

RAPHAEL: Sexuality is how a given individual feels toward another given individual, whether it be man to woman, woman to woman, or man to man.

SUT JHALLY: Sexuality is one of those things that makes us human. And so the only question then is: how is the society going to talk about it?

TITLE SCREEN – TEEN SEXUALITY IN A CULTURE OF CONFUSION

MICHELLE: I've learnt a lot myself being a peer educator that I can stand up for what I believe in, and I can make a difference in other people's lives. I am really lucky to have a mother that trusts me. I guess the best way to say it is she really shows that her love is unconditional. And if we make mistakes, well, that's okay. Just learn from them, and go on. And I was eleven when my older sister had her first baby, and she was eighteen. If I'm eighteen, I want to be out with my friends, and I want to be going to school and going to parties on a Friday night and not having to worry about a babysitter. I think a lot of pressure comes, really, from the media. I don't think you see a commercial, and you're going to go out and do what that commercial says, but the media does really set a lot of expectations. And so if you have sex, then you're going to be cool and rich and famous, and they don't mention HIV, and you don't get unwanted pregnancies on TV, and nobody's getting Chlamydia or Syphilis. I think a lot of people minimize teenage relationships and say, "Well, it's just puppy love," or "it's just teenage lust," or whatever. When you're a teenager, you have feelings, and they're very real feelings and they're very intense. I was sixteen when I first had sex. I had sex because I really felt that it was something I was ready to do, and it was something that I wanted to do and I wanted to share with Curtis. We both loved each other and both respected each other and that was a way to further our love and to further our respect and our support. Curt had been having a lot of problems and, especially with drugs, he

was not the same person that I had met two years ago, and we were still friends but decided to date other people. So you know, I said, “okay, well, I’ll date Sam.” As I got to know Sam more, I realized that he wasn’t really the type of person that I wanted to be with, and he didn’t respect me, and I didn’t really respect him. He told all the guys on the hockey team, who told the rest of the school, that I had slept with him and I never had. I had a good time at the prom. I didn’t have a good time with him. I think a lot of times people do have sex when they’re under the influence, and I think a lot of teenagers have sex simply because it’s a way to feel needed and wanted, even if it’s only, you know, for a couple of minutes. But I think, for some people, sex is really an emotional part of a relationship where it’s just continuing the relationship further. If I was going to be in a relationship with somebody, they would have to respect themselves, and they’d have to love themselves because I don’t think you can respect anybody or love anybody unless you respect and love yourself. I know when I go to college, a lot’s going to change, and I’m probably going to change my outlook on a lot of things. But I’d like to think that, you know, I can still have a relationship without having sex.

SUSAN BORDO: For human beings, sexuality is the most profound meeting place of nature and culture. At its best, sexuality allows us to give ourselves over to feeling, to other people, to the world. But sexuality is also where we experience most intensely the demands of religion, morality and culture in general. Popular culture, I would insist, has a profound influence on teenagers’ sexuality. That’s where they get their ideas about what is attractive, what’s feminine, what’s masculine, what’s cool, what’s sexy, what’s romantic. People now respond to these images in different ways, but no one exists outside them, in a bubble of cultural immunity. We are all parents, peer groups, rich, poor, black, white. We are all inhabitants of this culture. We need to realize that people no longer learn primarily through verbal instruction in this culture, but through pictures and images, which get directly at fantasy and desire and feed the hunger for stimulation and excitement. These images are created to feed into powerful feelings that already exist – insecurities, fears, and fantasies. Designers and advertisers rarely take responsibility for this. “Fashion is not about reality,” they claim. “It’s not to be taken so seriously.” When fashion designers or advertisers make this argument, it’s kind of baffling to me. Why would a profit-motivated industry pump billions of dollars into creating images that no one takes seriously? Sex is so pervasive, and it’s presented as such an essential part of being an attractive human being, with an exciting and fulfilling life, that if you reject sex, you become the ultimate outsider.

SUT JHALLY: We have this notion that we have a free media in a society; it’s an absolute lie. The media are actually not there to provide news. They’re not there to provide entertainment. Their prime function is to sell commodities to us. My question is: whose version of sex is used to sell? The story of sexuality can take on a number of different dimensions. The stories we get are coming out of the male fantasy. The people who are heads of creative departments at an advertising agency are 90% men. The people who are behind the cameras are 90% men. You know, the people making up the storyboards, the people in the editing rooms. Whose eyes are we encouraged to see the world through?

SUSAN DOUGLAS: I think teenagers today are surrounded by even more exaggerated mixed messages about sex and about gender roles than we were when we were kids. On the one hand, the person in the news might be Ruth Bader Ginsburg. They see Roseanne mouthing off about motherhood and raising kids, strong assertive women who are perfectly capable of managing

sexual relationships on their own, with a certain amount of strength and fortitude and intelligence. On the other hand, they're seeing women tied up, bashed, beaten, strapped down, vilified if they so much as step out of line. We continue to see women as just passive, decorative, sex objects, whose main function is to look pretty, have huge breasts, giant pouty lips, and no brain.

LOUISY: Sex isn't that important, but like school is important, money is important. Why do people want to have sex so bad? I don't understand why. It's not like I'm totally like, I don't want to. Just, I just don't feel ready, that's it. Physically, yes I am. Emotionally, no I'm not. For me to have sex with someone, I would have to totally love them. And like, that's where I think making love comes from, because if you make love, then you make a child and that child is like love. I mean, at one time I did feel like I was the only virgin on the Earth, but then like my friend was like, "Well, you know, I'm a virgin and she's a virgin and she's a virgin," and I'm like "yeah, you're right". I guess my confidence comes from my mother a lot because she always taught me to not let people tell me what to do. I could not imagine what it would be like to be a pushover, so to be someone who'd have sex with your boyfriend just because you would lose him because that's just the way I am. I just, you cannot pressure me. I think it's why I fell in love with Malik. He's sensitive himself, he's a sensitive guy. He hasn't pressured me at all. His eyes are gorgeous; I could just look at his eyes all day. I think nice full lips, big eyes, nice cheekbones is beautiful. People try so hard to look beautiful. Because I think beauty plays a lot, a big role in our society. You're treated different when you're beautiful. Beautiful for me is like power. You can almost get anything when you're beautiful. That's why I know so much about models; I'm so fascinated by them. They're all like thin and pretty, and what you see of them is like glamorous, good life, money, they marry rock stars and they live in big houses. Even though you know there's the other side, that's not what you see and that's not what you get. And even though there's a lot of stuff you know consciously, that other part of your head, that's still telling you, "be thinner, be thinner," it's still there. Like, I mean, women are still expected to be weaker. Guys are always asking me "so how much do you weigh? How much do you weigh?" Finally I asked one of them, I was like "Why do you ask how much do you weigh?" and they're like "Because I want to see if I could bench press you." They need to be stronger. They need to be dominant, and even though I know this, I still think a guy should be stronger than I am. If you've never read a magazine or watched TV and then all of a sudden you turn on the TV, those messages would be like in your face like, oh my God, what are they saying here, but we've always lived with this, so it's just something you accept, but you don't want to.

SUSAN BORDO: Today, so much of our reality is pure image. And it is a perfected and retouched reality. We don't see behind the scenes of that perfection. We don't see Cher's surgeries. We don't see Stallone's compulsive workouts. Almost all actresses that appear naked in movies today have breast implants. It's now the norm. If an actress lies down and her breasts stand straight up, she's got implants. Husbands and boyfriends go, "Wow!" and then their wives and girlfriends consider their own breasts, undoubtedly somewhat saggier and usually quite a bit smaller and what are they to do? All too often, if they can afford it, they go out and have the operation done on themselves. A lot of people see a woman who has had plastic surgery, or who has embarked on a diet program as a passive victim, a dupe of the culture. I don't see it that way. I think women understand that in this culture, unless you achieve a certain look, you don't do as well, romantically or professionally, and they respond rationally. But I do see the fact that the

culture requires such conformity as tragic and a waste of human resources. There are really three current versions of the ideal body. There's the lanky, almost anorexic look exemplified by Kate Moss, who is 5'7" and 105 pounds. The epitome of cool: someone who is in charge of her own life and isn't going to let anything ruffle her. Then there is the very tight, muscled, wiry, athletic look, a very recent development in aesthetic ideals for women. If you look at pictures of Madonna that were taken when she was first becoming popular, what you see is a quite voluptuous but certainly not fat body. Madonna now has the most chiseled body, the most sculpted legs, and she diets rigorously and works out three hours a day in order to achieve it. Even today's more curvaceous ideal, exemplified by Cindy Crawford, is actually just big breasts on a toned, slender body. Men too are working out to sculpt and power up their bodies. Having muscles is no longer a sign that you are a jock or a manual laborer. This new glamorization of discipline, of strenuous workouts, building muscles, burning away every spare ounce of fat reflects our turning to the body to achieve the sort of control we no longer feel we have. Our lives are becoming increasingly unmanageable and complicated. There are grave environmental problems, AIDS, an uncertain job market. Community is no longer the source of identity and support that it once was. The mass media brings death and destruction and political upheaval to us on a daily basis. In an age of AIDS, by keeping ourselves tight, toned and hard, perhaps we create the illusion that no virus will penetrate us, a protective armor.

JOSE: My parents told me I had to take care of myself, wear condoms, protect myself. I'd say "yes, I'll be careful," but I never paid any attention. I started having sex at age ten in Puerto Rico. We hadn't heard anything about HIV. We came here in 1984 to find a better life. I saw a girl sitting by the stairs with red hair. I looked at her, she looked at me, we smiled, I asked her if she wanted to go out with me and she accepted and we've been together ever since.

DORIS: The first time I had sex was with my husband. You know, I was a virgin. I didn't know nothing about sex. I didn't even know how to kiss. I decided yes because I loved him, and I didn't want to lose him neither. I came out pregnant when I was 17. I wasn't that surprised because he was telling me that he wanted a kid. And I wanted one too.

JOSE: I had a friend at work who was very skinny and I kept telling him, "you've got AIDS," teasing, "you've got AIDS AIDS AIDS," and now look at me. I'm the one who's got it. I blame liquor and drinking. And I got this on the street, and I got it through sex. I blame myself. I did this to myself. This stupid thing I did. I was 19. I talked to Doris. I was very honest with her because, as a man, one makes mistakes because we cannot be perfect in this life. I asked her forgiveness. I didn't want to lose my family, my children; I love them too much. Thank God the kids don't have it.

DORIS: When I found out that Jose had the HIV virus, I just started crying. I told my mom that I was going to leave him, but they all, all the families spoke with me and told me don't leave him because he needs me now more than ever.

JOSE: The only thing I ask God is to give me health to see my grown children and my grandchildren. After I've seen my grandchildren, well, if I have to die, I'll die, but God makes many miracles, but I know the time will come.

DORIS: If I have another chance I would say no to Jose and waited until I had my career that I wanted. But then I think no, you know, if not, I wouldn't have my kids. I thought he was going to leave me. Like other guys do, but he didn't. Maybe because he loved me. I don't know. Or maybe because of the baby or maybe his parents, so maybe it's because he felt love or felt something for me.

JOHN NGUYET ERNI: When AIDS first broke out, even scientists were baffled by it, the first twelve cases happened with gay men, so if we don't feel comfortable about gay people anyway, within a year or so, what was only a disease became a gay disease. The need for challenging these values is so important in the age of AIDS because AIDS is not only a disease syndrome, it's not only a health crisis, it is a social crisis, a cultural crisis, a political crisis that affects everyone.

MICHAEL: My parents affirm me all my life. And when I say affirm me, I don't mean just "don't have sex," but "you're a good kid." Even though I have really strong faith now, my parents never pushed it on me or my sisters. They lived the faith, but they didn't always talk about it and shove it down your throat. My parents presented me with options like, "We think that you should wait until you're married, but if you are gonna have sex, we hope it's with someone you love and if it is, you know, we hope you use protection." Before my senior year in high school, I always wanted to wait to have sex with someone that I was deeply in love with, but not necessarily until marriage. But it was what Father Gerry told me that when you give yourself to someone in sex, that's the ultimate act. You can't become any closer biologically and emotionally. It's one of the intimate, maybe the most intimate, act you can perform. Marriage is a sacrament, and if you think that a sacrament, by definition, is a sign instituted, you know, by Christ to confer grace, then you can't enter into the sacrament until you have the ritual because the ritual's what confers the meaning. Maybe living together, but not having premarital sex seems self-contradictory, but in a way it's not for me because I'm respecting Tina, and I'm respecting myself. And we're not having intercourse, which is important to me. And it's not too far off that we will be, and then it won't be a problem. I'm not trying to mold the faith into ways that are convenient for me. I'm trying to figure out exactly what the faith is. If you want to be a person of hope and positive person, someone that really respects life, then religion can teach you better than any other institution how to love. I think religion, the way it shepherds people, leads people to have faith and to be at peace with others and themselves and to love, can lead people also to counteract anything that's harmful going on in the pop culture. Basically, I can receive the messages but just not respond to them. It's not hard to abstain from sex or to do anything that you want to do when you have the power in your own psyche, in your own spiritual being to make those decisions. I think part of it is self-control and self-discipline, but maybe a better way to describe it would be just a commitment to yourself. I have a commitment to my faith, to God, and to myself, and now to Tina. So if you wait until marriage, then you are committing to the person that you do marry on your wedding day, finally, that I have never given this part of myself to anyone before. That is the ultimate act of love.

RON GREEN: Sex is a very important part of our lives, but it shouldn't be made the end-all or be-all of everything we do. It should be integrated into a whole life. Sex is not something, which when exercised appropriately, you have to be guilty about. It's not the result of a fall. The book of Genesis suggests that Adam and Eve were to have had sex even before the fall. So one doesn't

have to feel guilty or evil or bad. Nobody is doomed by the behavior in their adolescence. My concern is when people are so concerned about teen sexuality that their response is to bury their heads in the ground and say, “People shouldn’t be sexual.” That ignores something that we all know – that teens are and will, to some extent, be sexual. And the question is: how can they be helped through this difficult passage of their lives?

LINDSAY: I started painting when I was going through a very complicated, a very depressed time in my life, and paint was like my hiding place. Generation X came out in this big furious, creative spurt. I had been rebelling from just all the restraints that had been put on me. You know, you’re not actually right out told, you know, “You have to like men.” It’s kind of like, “You know, well, when you get older, you’re going to fall in love, you know, you’re going to have babies, you know, dah dah dah.” It’s just like, if you’re brought up to believe that chicken is gross so you’re just like, naturally you’re just like, “Ah, don’t eat that, that’s gross.” This collage was just a transitional point in my life. I discovered women. When I was fourteen, I started having dreams about females, and at first I was kind of, like, grossed out, you know “don’t eat the chicken.” Basically, I was afraid of it. It would cause turmoil in my life. I can’t be gay too, on top of it all; I was like, “no, no, this isn’t happening.” I was sixteen when I started seeing Christine, and that’s when I started coming out to people, and saying, you know, this is who I am. I wore a t-shirt to school and it said, “I’m not gay but my girlfriend is.” I was asked by my dean to remove the shirt. You know, I said, “no, I will not remove my shirt. There’s nothing in the rule book that says anything about, you know, ‘you may not wear a shirt that represents gender preference.’” I felt very alone, and that really ultimately, the school did not want me there. So the best path for me was to leave. Basically, what happens when you’re a teenager, while you go through so much turmoil, is you’re taking who you’ve been molded into by everybody else, and you’re changing it into who you want to be. Where I’m at right now is I do have my desire for women, and I do still have desires for men, you know, and it’s not a matter of sex, it’s a matter of personality. It’s not your body, it’s who you are inside. If you can come to terms with your emotions and express those openly, and if I find you attractive, then hell ya, I’ll be with you. I do have sex a lot, but to me, sex is not satisfying or nice unless there is an emotional tie. Diseases are definitely a factor. But the way I figure it is, I’ve had a wonderful life, I’m sure I have a lot ahead of me. At whatever time I go out of this world is the time that I am meant to come out of this world. They say the only real way to be totally careful is abstinence, and that is obviously not a part of my life. There’s so many wonderful people that I am meeting every day. I really see no sense in limiting myself in any way. I don’t want to put a label on myself anymore. I am Lindsay. That’s the category I fall into. Everybody definitely has the potential for me to love.

SUSAN BORDO: I think that, in many ways, the idea of clear gender difference oppresses boys more than girls. Girls have some gender leeway, to be tomboys, for example, but for a boy to be seen as behaving like a girl, in dress or in manner, is the worst thing that can be said about him. A teenage guy is not going to go out on a limb trying to embody some new sensitive kind of man. He’s going to go for the images that suggest power, and strength and accomplishment and toughness.

GERMAINE: I want, when we play on the teams, that the teams are saying, “I know we’re going to beat them, but we gotta watch out for Germaine.” When you got people fearing you,

people know not to mess with you. I want so that nobody's scared of anybody, and if you're getting beat up, pick something up and just smash them with it, no matter what it is, a bottle, a brick, anything. I don't try to fight for image. I got enough image as it is. I'm a funny man. I make everybody come across laughing. Plus, I got big ears. I used to get teased about that when I was little, but girls like my ears now, so it doesn't, it doesn't make a difference to me. If you get girls, you got game. And other people, their front, that's their game. Basically, if you don't got game, you're gonna get dissed. When you get dissed, you get embarrassed. Nobody wants to get embarrassed. The ideal female body is a nice big chest, a nice butt, big, and a pretty face. I don't determine who makes up a certain style, but that's just how it is. I don't feel comfortable around gay people. I don't got nothing against them, not like that, but I just don't feel comfortable around them. I don't know why. I guess it's just because I don't like it, and I never did and I'm never going to either. I guess I'll talk about what's up with my mom and my dad. She trusts me. She knows I don't want to die or get somebody pregnant. I used to be scared, and not like talking to girls, but my friends always pushed me, probably. A girl that liked me, she asked me if I wanted to have sex with her and I said "yeah." We both virgins. Said, "I wanted to experiment." Think I was just turning thirteen. Most of my friends did it, and they said it felt good, so I tried it. I didn't use a condom, I wasn't informed enough about it to really care. I had seen the music and the TV, but that's just in people's heads. Everything doesn't fall into place like it does in the movies. Like, sometimes you don't say the right thing or do the right thing.

SUSAN BORDO: Very often my students haven't known anyone who was gay. Others haven't even seeing anyone portrayed as gay in the movies. But they have a lot of ideas from impersonations and caricatures and stereotypes. When they actually meet someone who is gay, they are almost always shocked by how ordinary, how normal he or she seems. I think teenagers are particularly susceptible to homophobia because this is a time when young men are vulnerable to questions about their own masculinity and identity. So homophobia becomes a way of men defending themselves against their own fear that they aren't masculine or that they aren't manly.

RAPHAEL: I used to laugh a lot. I used to hug more, you know, I used to show affection. High school has taken that away from me, and it makes me very angry. Every single day was "Fag this, fag that," "Queer this, queer that," and there were vicious rumors spread about me. What astounds me is that, as far as the gay issues concerned, I find that there's a lot more prejudice, and a lot more hate and bigotry among the blacks of the society. And it angers me because black people, I feel, of all people, should know what it feels like to be hated. Why should it be any different for gay people? I remember distinctly when I started high school, my mother looking at me like very sad, like almost she was about to cry and saying, she goes, "What's wrong?" She goes, "You don't smile anymore." My mom is a very wise woman. Men can't feel emotions. If you show emotions, then you're put outside of this iron curtain and you're shunned by everyone else. It's the media mostly. You see on television, football players, someone gets hurt on the field; it's like "yeah, alright! Confront me." There's nothing manly in the hurting of other people. Nothing at all. I was emotionally and mentally abused by my stepfather for 17 years. I had a very low self-esteem always. I ate like a pig. I didn't take good care of myself. I'm not a very promiscuous person. There was a time when I was promiscuous, but it was like, "I don't care, you know. You don't care about me. I don't care about myself, you know, so let's just do it and get it over with." Now, I have gathered the strength from others and myself. I handle myself and my body very highly. And it's like, I would not subject myself to that because I'm worth more

than just someone who just wants a quick fling and then it to be over with. I find that I've had to have a lot of strength to survive four years of high school. I was able to tap into that strength and draw from that strength and pull myself literally through high school. A lot people aren't that fortunate and commit suicide. They can't deal with themselves so they decide to end themselves.

SUSAN BORDO: There is a new generation of women now who are not at all pleased to be regarded as helpless and who have been educated to regard themselves as highly confident to do virtually anything a man can do. Popular culture responds to cultural changes such as these. Commercials and ads now often feature two job families, women in positions of power, men with babies. But so much of our literature, from fairy tales to classic novels to philosophical and religious practice, tell men that in order to be real men, they have to feel dominant in a relationship with a woman. There's going to be backlash and some of that will take the form of violence against women. It makes perfect sense to me that we also have an epidemic of eating disorders in this culture. But I believe it's not just about the pressure to be thin. Women have traditionally been taught to feed others, physically and emotionally and to recede into the background. Now that they are starting to feed themselves, that is to take care of their own needs and to take up more public space, Wham! We are suddenly starving ourselves and shrinking our bodies. There's a lot of guilt and shame there about women wanting too much, being too much. The culture takes it out on women's bodies, and we internalize it.

KERRY: I was always seen as the most popular girl in my school. I would stand outside in between breaks for school, and people would just gather around me like I was some kind of guru type of person. Wanting to be liked by everybody, and wanting to have the approval of everyone, led to recreational drug and alcohol use and not knowing how to say no to somebody because I didn't want them to not like me. I used to starve myself when I was a teenager. I'd eat like an apple, and then I'd have peanut butter on it because I was just starving for protein, and then make myself throw up. I think food became a problem for me because if there was nothing else in my life that I could control, this is something I could control. If I could just be thin enough and attractive enough, that all would be right in my world. I had a non-consensual sexual experience in my life that at a very young age that that made me act out sexually later on and made me feel that, you know, this is what love is. That played the biggest role in my life and why I have HIV today, I think because it made me feel like, you know, that that was just kind of my role I was supposed to play, that was what I was supposed to do is have sex. At fourteen, I had a really awful relationship with my parents. It was very much put on my sister and I that she was the studious, intellectual, academic one and I was the athletic, fun, cute one. I feel like I was never told that, "you have a future beyond what you do today." I ended up moving out of my parents' home because I felt that I would be safer, and I don't even know if that means physically safer or just emotionally. I was fifteen. And I ended up having sex with this guy. I found out from another girl who had also had sex with him before me that he had HIV. The stereotype of a person with HIV was a gay man. You know, it literally never, never once even occurred to me that I could contract HIV. I had little to no sex education of any kind when I was in school. I knew virtually nothing about it before I actually participated in it. I went in to the doctor's office and sat with him for what seemed to me like a really long time, and he finally spoke up and said, "You have tested positive for HIV." It was just like my whole world stopped. HIV affects each and every second of my every day of my life. I have massage therapy or I have acupuncture or I've got something going on that constantly reminds me of HIV. When I was doing speaking to, you know, public schools, private schools, virtually every day of the week, for five days a week

for the past three years. I've had several relationships since having HIV. I am very consistent and very safe with how I use condoms and when I use condoms. I've never given HIV to anybody else. The chances of someone getting HIV from having sex with me are probably less than going out and having sex with someone that they don't know whether or not they have HIV and not using a condom. I am many other things before I am a person with HIV. I am an athlete, and I'm a weightlifter, and a runner and do vaulting and hat-making and a student now. I'm a lot more than just a person with HIV.

SUSAN BORDO: I see resources in this generation that are really quite remarkable and that for me represent a kind of hope. My men and women students, my black and white students, do seem to be able to talk to each other more honestly and with more tolerance of each other's differences than my generation was. In their desperation to find some solid ground in this shallow, polarized and chaotic culture, they're also creating something new. Getting involved in a social movement to change things even on a small scale, such as at one's school or place of work, can shift one's sense of life significantly. You begin to develop bonds that are based on things other than romantic attraction or admiring someone's appearance. You begin to feel that you are affective in the world in a context other than making yourself beautiful or making yourself thin. And I think that this is much more affective at giving people inner resources to fight the abuses of the culture than anything else. When we're most integrated in the world, we become much more sexual in a fuller, more expressive way. Aren't we getting a little bored with all the perfect thriving bodies? Can't we come up with something more interesting than that? After all, intimacy and real knowledge of the other person, the kind that can't come with a one-night stand are powerfully sexy things.

MICHAEL: I think it's a bad thing to turn to sex when you're trying to substitute sex for emotional affirmation – if you're using sex as a nourishment because something else in your life is missing.

RAPHAEL: There are many people out there with ignorance and they will do anything, anything to hurt you. What humans fear or don't understand, they want to destroy.

LINDSAY: Wouldn't it be so much nicer if we could all just help each other and work together and care about each other regardless of who you are? You're black, you're white, you're Puerto Rican, you know. You're a man, you're a woman, whatever. You have polka dots, you're from the moon, whatever. It shouldn't matter.

KERRY: The body image that society is selling now is horrifying to me. I think it's awful. I think it's abusive. I think it's damaging. It's just so all consuming.

MICHELLE: I think my peers, my generation, really had to deal with a lot of problems. And we were really handed a lot of things to deal with, the prejudice and the violence and the guns in school, and you know, we're seeing our friends die of HIV. I think it's teaching us a lot about who we don't want to be and what we don't want our kids to go through. I think there's a lot of positive energy and a lot of positive anger, and I really think that we're going to make the world good again.

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