

TEACH ENGLISH OVERSEAS

* Overseas Job Guaranteed



Experience of a Lifetime

Free Info Seminar

Tues. @ 7pm

7712-104 Street

*Edmonton-based

(780) 438 5704
globaltesol.com

GATEWAY A&E

Promoting wizard-muggle relations since 1910

Come by and pick up a story.

Meetings Thursdays at 5pm in 3-04 SUB.
entertainment@gateway.ualberta.caStudent Financial Aid
Information CentreARE YOU TAKING
SPRING/SUMMER
CLASSES?YOU MAY BE ABLE TO APPLY FOR
STUDENT FUNDING. COME VISIT US FOR
DETAILS AND APPLICATIONS.*Your Education, Your Money -
Start Asking Questions*1-80 SUB
8:30 AM TO 4:30 PM MONDAY TO FRIDAY
492-3483
SFAIC@SU.UALBERTA.CA
WWW.SU.UALBERTA.CA/SFAIC

Hey, parents, don't censor my vagina

ELIZABETH
VAIL

"Florida's *The Vagina Monologues* was pressured because parents were flustered when children read it off a public billboard and wanted an explanation. If a child is advanced enough to read and intelligent enough to ask, then they should know. Art shouldn't be censored because parents aren't prepared."

Boys have scrotums, girls have vaginas. It's a basic fact of life. However, the particulars of revealing this to children have been aggressively debated for years, and two special cases recently made it into the public eye thanks to the incredible ignorance on the part of some protesters.

With children's book *The Higher Power of Lucky* by Susan Patron, an uproar was caused by the use of the word "scrotum" on the first page of the book. Armies of school librarians across America uttered a collective, "Think of the children!" and banned the book from their libraries. Of course, they apparently forgot that the book won the Newbery Medal, the most prestigious award in children's literature, an award that is actually given out by the *Association for Library Service to Children*.

To put it in context, the book's main character overhears "scrotum" when someone tells a friend where his dog was bitten by a rattlesnake. So the word wasn't used in an objectionable or sexual manner. Scrotum, in this case, was an anatomical word used to describe a specific body part—and it

wasn't even a human body part, for Pete's sake! It wasn't like the book described how the dog was bitten on his "mandangle," or his "sperm factory." One particularly deluded woman considered the whole affair "a Howard Stern-type shock treatment." Really? Because of the long list of colourful words that refer to the male genitalia, I don't imagine Howard Stern would rely on the most professional and respectful of the lot.

But that's not the worst of the recent paranoia regarding genitalia. In Florida, a theatre performing *The Vagina Monologues* was pressured into changing the title on the marquee, because the protesters were evidently unprepared to explain to their children what a "vagina" was when the little tykes read it in passing. The solution? For about two days, the marquee read "The Hoohaa Monologues." Not only does this contradict the entire idea behind *The Vagina Monologues*—that is, that society should be more open about talking about vaginas—but it doesn't even solve the problem.

Children are still going to ask what a "hoohaa" is, and I imagine the parental talk that ensues will be even more

embarrassing, because "hoohaa" is to "vagina" what "hooters" is to "breasts." Hooha is a childish, funny-sounding, misogynistic euphemism for a female body part that basically tells girls that their genitalia is too weird or dirty or gross to talk about properly in public.

What it all seems to come down to is a lack of preparation on the part of authority figures. Most parents, school teachers and librarians object because they believe that there's a certain time when children are "ready" to know about sex (or at least anatomy), but truth be told, it's actually the the parents, teachers and librarians who aren't ready. Patron's book, which was written for ten- to twelve-year-olds, was hounded because eight- and nine-year-olds were reading it and asking questions. Florida's *The Vagina Monologues* was pressured because parents were flustered when their children read it off a public billboard and wanted an explanation. If a child is advanced enough to read and intelligent enough to ask, then they should know. Art shouldn't be censored because parents aren't prepared.



STEFFI ROSSKOPF

FASHION FOR SUFFERING The Ribbon Rouge Fashion Show raised money on Friday for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.