

THE BODY MONOLOGUES

My university in Ann Arbor, Michigan, recently hosted an event called Body Monologues, greatly inspired by the popular Vagina Monologue series. An empowering venture, the event showcased spoken word poetry and speeches about body image and issues from a diverse group of people. Adding hilarious jokes, the performers shook the audience into laughter as they talked about appearance issues they have battled with during their lives such as being anorexic, homosexual or someone of colour.

However, the first part of the show impacted me the most because it was opened by a Bengali American girl. Shy and yet eloquent in her words, she stood tall and proud on the stage and talked about how as a Bengali living in America, she had constantly been the target of body shaming for not showing enough skin in front of her friends and always feeling like the outsider in school and society. She even had to come to terms with different labels—such as “exotic” that were used to describe her appearance. She then shared her experiences about the Bengali community that she had grown up in and the criticism she constantly had to face when people criticised her for not being skinny enough. As a student who had just finished her first semester in America, I could greatly relate to her issues, having faced similar situations and applauded her for her concluding remarks, as she said that she always incorporated her cultural values in all her activities, even if they were deemed outdated by many.

Our culture is not oppressive, she added firmly, but it certainly taught her to be unique in a field of American faces and their traditions. It helped her to become herself, she concluded. It helped her to live life as a Bengali in America.

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Height of Inconsiderate Behaviour

Earlier this week I was returning home from a friend's place on a rickshaw. My rickshaw was getting out of a lane when it suddenly braked to a stop. A car was parked there, blocking the entry to the lane completely. The rickshaw-puller requested the driver to park the car somewhere else so that others could pass by. The driver of the car told the rickshaw puller that he wouldn't be able to move and that he should try to cross the area while the car was still in that position. This was impossible as there wasn't enough space for anyone to move, let alone for a vehicle to pass by. The rickshaw-puller stated the same to the driver but instead of heeding to the needs of others, the driver started to shout and verbally abuse the rickshaw-puller. I asked the driver to behave politely and to park the car elsewhere, as it was obstructing the entryway. The driver, however, was adamant. By then some locals of the area arrived at the spot, and told the driver the same thing. Despite that, he wasn't ready to budge an inch. When all of us started to scream at the driver in unison, he finally decided to gather the remains of his self respect and leave the place. I was surprised at the driver's attitude. Drivers should be examined carefully before they are given their driving license.

The driver told the rickshaw-puller to go from behind the car when there was not enough space to pass. The rickshaw-puller said this to the driver. Rather removing the car, the driver started to shout at the rickshaw-puller. I told the driver to behave politely and park the car elsewhere. But the driver was adamant. By then locals came and told the driver the same thing. He wasn't ready to budge even. When we all started to shout at the driver, only then he decided to leave. I was surprised to see the driver's common sense. The drivers should be carefully examined before giving driving license.

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B a b u

Disbeliever

