

Reclaiming the V by Laura Mega

A chapter in Eve Ensler's book "The Vagina Monologues" sparked an inner debate, which I have since begun to discuss outwardly with the women* I am surrounded by and would love to discuss broadly with men* and women* alike:

What name do you use for "*vagina*" (if you don't use the word itself)?

This seemingly superficial question actually is deeply rooted in a culture of taboo and oppression of the female body -- topics that are of central importance to queer-feminist movements. When asking the women around me, hardly anyone was satisfied with the existing vocabulary describing this central organ of pleasure and reproductivity. Most names entail a sense of passive-ness ('*flower*', '*hand warmer*'), of diminutivity or are almost child-like ('*mumu*'). Others resemble war-terms ('*mother-ship*') or food ('*beef curtains*', '*meat wallet*', '*pink taco*') or circumscribe an area rather than directly naming a body part ('*between the legs*', '*lady-bits*').

Interestingly, the names people describe as feeling the most powerful and active and in-control are ones usually used in crude, insulting contexts. This raises the interesting and question, whether one wants to create new vocabulary, re-claim and re-appropriate names already in use.

Of fundamental importance remains the fact, that, if I cannot name one part of my body, I am silenced not only in the use of words but also in the relationship I have to this part of me. How can I tell a partner openly and actively, how I like to be touched, when I don't have a word I like to use? How can I speak with the people close to me about matters concerning my body, when I'm so afraid of it that I use terms to describe a general area ('*down-there*') instead of being able to point directly to what I mean and am talking about?

This experience of feeling silenced and cut-off from our bodies and our sexuality seems to be present in so many lives and has long enough been a (subversive) instrument of oppression.

The aim of this workshop is to open a dialogue: to start talking about a topic, that is hardly ever talked about.

In the tradition of sharing circles and collaborative discussions, we want to explore the relationship between body - and language, both for our own bodies and the collective body-image of females*.