

# Lessons from a 7-foot Penis

(or, how I performed anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, sex positive and queer-friendly, sex comedy cabarets across North America)

Norman Nawrocki

I came home one night many years ago to find my then girlfriend crying on the couch. “What happened?” I asked. “Nothing. Just some guy in the street.” “What did he do to you?”

“He wouldn’t let me cross the street unless I told him my name and agreed to go out with him. He kept blocking my way.”

She told me that this total stranger kept harassing her for blocks and wouldn’t give up. No one intervened.

I told her that the next day, I would follow her home with a baseball bat and watch for the guy, then, like any good pacifist anarchist, clobber him. She rolled her eyes, sighed, and said, “Don’t be stupid.”

Then, she explained.

“You don’t understand. It happens all the time. And to a lot of women. It’s on-going. Not just here, in our neighbourhood, but everywhere. All over Montreal. On the bus, while I’m shopping, in the library at the university, in different places, day and night.

“It’s all kinds of guys, all ages, saying stupid things. They leer at me, yell at me, brush up against me. Try to come on to me. I don’t like it, but I’m used to it. I just put up with it. I don’t take the time to say or do something every time it happens. It would take forever. And I’m not going to tell you every time it happens either. I have better things to do.”

My stomach turned. Another one for the patriarchy.

As her boyfriend, and a socially conscious artist, I resolved to do something about it—other than take vigilante action—to try to stop violence against women.

So, a few months later, I wrote and produced an “anti-sexist sex comedy cabaret.”

To reach “other guys,” the ones who wouldn’t normally come to an anti-sexist/stop violence against women workshop, but who might come to a show.

I planned to poster the neighbourhood—“Free Sex Show, Norm’s Bachelor Pad!” I’d borrow 20 chairs from my neighbours and stage the performance in my apartment.

I was hoping that the jerk that targeted my girlfriend would be among the audience. Then, friends set me straight.

“No guy or group of guys will come unless you offer free beer.”

I couldn’t afford to supply free booze for the masses, so, friends suggested I take the show to the local university, McGill, where my target audience hung out.

“Do it in their bar.”

A few weeks later, I performed my “I Don’t Understand Women!” solo comedy cabaret on campus. It was a simple poster billing the show as:

“A one-man comedy show for studs, wimps, dweebs, sissies, macho men, lover boys, nice guys, dudes, dickheads, Playboys, wusses, bachelors, husbands, boyfriends and women.”

The poster said nothing about the real content of the piece; that it would deal with date rape and sexual harassment. Over 300 men and women attended. Next day, Concordia University administrators called me.

“We hear you have an anti-sexist sex comedy. Can you perform it here?”

This was 20 years ago. Since then, I created, produced and toured three other hour-long, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, but sex positive and queer-friendly, informative, hit, solo “sex” comedy cabarets all across North America.

I’ve given a few thousand performances of “I Don’t Understand Women,” “My Dick & Other Manly Tales,” “Sex Toys,” and “Lessons from a 7-foot Penis,” playing at almost every single post-secondary campus in Canada and a few dozen in the US, including MIT.

About one million people have now seen my original show, plus the others.

I play for 300 to 1,000 people at a time, not just on campuses, but in bars, theatres, and community centres. Once, I performed in a men’s prison; another time in a hockey arena for 1,500 cheering hormone and testosterone raging youth who wanted to see my giant vagina and butt plug. For good reason.

I have large accessories. The biggest dancing and singing genitals in Canada, I say. A 7-foot tall purple penis, a 10-foot high orange butt plug, an 8-foot tall vagina, and a 6.5-foot high anus. They are among the 12 or so characters I play in each show.

Three of the shows are non-stop high-energy, with soundtracks, costume changes and lots of audience interaction. I get people to do “Clit Class 101” warm-up exercises in their seats, to flex their buttocks, to practice touching, to hug themselves and their neighbours. People laugh, people cry, because I push a lot of buttons. And, I usually ask for campus counseling staff to be present, to deal with the aftermath.

Survivors want to talk. Others in the closet want to share. My shows help some think about coming out to friends or family, to talk to others they might have mistreated, to speak up and challenge sexist or homophobic or heterosexist assumptions or actions. I occasionally hear back from audience members the next day or years later about what happened when they went home after my show.

I must say, it’s gratifying to hear that people can and do change. But isn’t this what anarchy is all about? Individual empowerment and positive change in social relationships?

In these shows, I use non-sexist, non-homophobic humor to address important issues around health, gender, relationships, date rape, human sexuality, heterosexism, homophobia, harassment, diversity, violence against women, anatomy, techniques, attitude, etc.—but I don’t joke about the serious stuff.

All of my shows have been reviewed in mainstream media and appeared on national radio and TV, allowing the general public to read about, watch and hear explicit anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, sex-positive alternative perspectives about sexual politics.

I have received the endorsements of hundreds of campus health and counseling professionals, human rights organizations, and dozens of women’s and GLBQT groups coast-to-coast. Shows on campuses tend to be co-sponsored by anyone from Equity and Diversity Committees, to student groups, Security Offices, Deans, Residence Life, Gender Centres and even trade unions.

The funny thing? These shows are not advertised as “anti-sexist” or “anti-homophobic.” They come with an “Adult Contents” warning, and are a “sneak attack.” Mostly on unsuspecting men.

Both men and women and everyone in between attend the performances, but if you watch the audience during the shows, you notice a lot of straight women partners elbowing their hetero husbands or boyfriends. Queer couples also exchange knowing or surprised looks or whisper, “Honey, I told you so.”

My shows are meant to be preventative. To stop the queer/women/trans bashing. To change sexist, transphobic and homophobic attitudes and behaviour.

Of course, not everyone loves what I do.

For many years, I felt like I wore an extra-large bulls-eye. Hateful Fundamentalists and others put me on their hit list issuing death and bomb threats. Anything to stop students from hearing my queer-positive, anti-sexist, sex positive messages.

There were even nights I had police protection before, during and after the performances. As an anarchist, I’d never call them. The campuses did out of fear for my life.

However, during the 1990s, I did require security on many campuses before I'd agree to perform. Once, I was punched out on stage in the middle of a performance.

Thankfully, I was safely ensconced inside my well-padded, 7-foot purple penis.

Generally, the shows receive and continue to get rave reviews in the media and from sponsors. Because they work. They reach the "unreachables." The guys, like the one who assaulted my girlfriend, who will come to a "sex" comedy, expecting to hear about "tits and ass." And, I give them a lot of tits, a lot of ass, and more.

I break the ice so they can go home to think and talk about what my 7-foot penis or giant, ejaculating vagina says about how to have healthier, happier, more respectful and loving relationships with themselves and others. It helps, too, that I guarantee that anyone who pays attention will become a better lover.

Anarchists included!

More info: [nothingness.org/music/rhythm/en/html/sexshows/sexshows.html](http://nothingness.org/music/rhythm/en/html/sexshows/sexshows.html). Norman's latest book is *RED: Quebec Student Strike & Social Revolt Poems* from AK Press, [akpress.org](http://akpress.org)

# fifth Estate

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