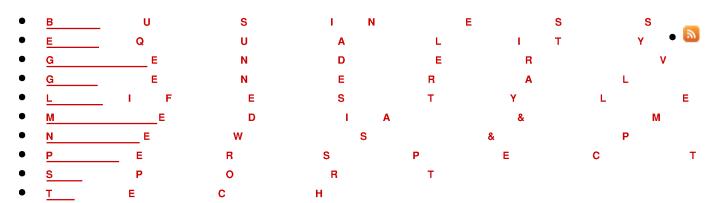






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Posted by: Gillian Schutte

Posted on: January 2, 2013 Posted in:

General, News &

Politics, Perspective

Comments: 583 Comments

Views: 100563



Dear White People

I have decided to start the New Year with a letter to you all. It is a letter that implores you to wake up and smell Africa with a fresh white nose.

Before you get angry and defensive, think of this letter as a crash course survival kit for navigating a new

reality, and please be assured that if you take heed of the call in this letter your life will change in miraculous ways. Once the blinkers are off the world is a much more colourful and celebratory place to engage in.

Let me begin by wholeheartedly apologising for what my ancestors did to the people of South Africa and inviting you to do the same. I reject their legacy as much as is possible and, as you already know, have made it a life mission to deconstruct the phallocentric white view of "white as right" and the misguided precept that white is central to all reality.

I reject the discourse of white domination but I acknowledge that I was brought up in this construct. Though my single-mother household was never economically privileged we were privileged by virtue of our skin colour and my mother was given assistance by the state that a woman of colour was denied.

I call on white people to reflect on what it means to be born into unearned privilege, to excavate our long history of racist exploitation and assumed superiority — to acknowledge that this is what we were taught and then to reject it wholly.

I call on white people to acknowledge that whiteness has become invisible to us and we no longer recognise it for a discourse that perpetuates the dehumanisation of black people in ways so subtle that they appear normal.

I call on white people to admit that the rainbow nation is a myth and until we truly are able to recognise the humanity of all people we cannot claim to be post-racist.

I call on white people to acknowledge how white supremacy continues to play out in the media — in representations of blackness — in the constant accusation that black people are racist when they speak their truth.

I call on white people to recognise the black-bashing trend of our media, which is largely white owned, and to put an end to this dehumanising and destructive infantile idiocy.

I call on white people to recognise that by jumping in on national debates that do not concern them they are usurping a platform for authentic black voices to air their grievances about our leadership. You may have noticed that the black voices we need and want to hear choose to disengage because they are *skaam* to share the podium with a lot of cacophonic white outrage about the same topic but from a white racist perspective.

White people please just shut up for once and listen. Not everything is about white people being accused of racism. Sometimes it is about the black middle class and whether or not they have adopted vile white practices.

I implore you, white people, to listen to black voices calmly and not to react defensively to every outrage a black voice presents.

I call on white people to accept that they are not the only race that is entitled to rage, to hurt, to pain, to anger.

I call on white people, to recognise that they fear the emotions of black people — that it is this fear that makes them shut down black voices and defend themselves from the suggestion that they are complicit in the continued oppression of black people.

I call on white people to recognise that we have all been taught (in varying degrees) that black people do not have the same emotions and psychology as us and that this fallacy is built upon the double-edged sword of domination and fear. To dehumanise a people is to exploit them with no guilt. To recognise their collective pain is to admit the guilt thereby see the humanity.

Dear White People | Thought Leader

I call on white people to recognise how whiteness has unconsciously used blackness as a conduit for its own darkness and unacknowledged savagery.

I implore white people to get over their fear that black people are out to slaughter them in a wholesale genocide of revenge. It has not happened yet and there is so much evidence that it will never happen in a country that has built its economic policy on global standards that favour whiteness and rely on the middle class as a buffer zone between the people on the ground and the elite corporate and political class. Just get over yourselves. White people of middle class are still safer than people living in townships.

I call on white people to work on a strategy to lessen the growing gap between rich and poor because, white people, it is the poor who are really suffering in this country and it is the poor who are the wretched fall-out from a more than 360-year history of white domination, slavery, subjugation and theft of livelihood.

I call on white people to understand that poverty and unemployment are social conditions. By renaming them "laziness", "lack of ambition" and "stupidity" you are furthering your own illogical delusions that whiteness has nothing to do with the untenable conditions that most black people are forced to live in. These are not inherent traits of being black, as many of you are fond of saying. These are the social consequences of a brutal colonial history and current globalisation — coupled with weak anti-the-poor leadership.

And please white people, when you feel compelled to criticise Zuma, as we all do, please ensure that you are critiquing him for his favouring of white corporates and the white middle class over poverty issues — for his pro-capitalist stance and his failure to deliver to the poor — for his patriarchal utterances that threaten to usurp women's rights — rather than obsessing over his penis, his wives, his second-language command of English and using him as a scapegoat for all your fears and negative unconscious stereotypes about all black folk.

Oh and one more thing ... asseblief white people, from well-meaning liberals to white supremacists — just stop telling everyone who is not white how to behave, what to think and when to say what. By trying to control the public agenda you are participating in your own imagined oppression and avoiding the possibility that we are all human and can co-exist very nicely.

Be grateful that you are still welcome in a land that was stolen.

And stop bitching and telling black people to get over their history. Goddammit — if those things had happened to white people there would be an entire world domination film industry built upon the "legitimised suffering of white people" so why will you not understand that colonialism was a holocaust of epic proportions and it will take many, many more decades for the pain to subside.

Instead of defending your privileges by denying them and nursing your guilt through misguided outrage — why not get your hands dirty while helping to restore this country to a space of dignity and respect for all.

Try now to reconsider the possibility of the healing potential of apologising collectively and genuinely for the wrongs our history has perpetrated against the indigenous people of this land.

Oh ja ... and white people, please try not to respond negatively and vilely to my letter because I will never stop pleading with you to get over yourselves and get with the current programme. It is as easy as the blink of an eye.

Yours sincerely,

Settler Sister

Tags: debate, Gillian Schutte, race relations, whiteness

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583 Responses to "Dear White People"



What a letter, i am glade that they are still pple who see things as they are and at the same time not even afraid to tell the truth, great greta.......

Report abusive comment January 23, 2013 at 12:58 pm



Graham #

I am very happy that people can come on here, list all the things you dislike about people in general, and then somehow attach all of them to a specific race group.

Nice. Whatever helps you all sleep at night...

Report abusive comment

January 24, 2013 at 2:02 pm



Hi Miss Schutte,

One thing I wouldn't do is apologise for being white. Apologising for going to a lower class white primary school and white high school and living in the suburbs is something that was not my fault. Yet you expect me to apologise to that effect. It's like criticising you for being able to walk and talk. (All those poor chimps...)

I personally view SA as Africa's Switzerland. Germans, Italians and French live side by side. the one has more dislike to the other than can effectively be put into words, yet they are still neighbors. And that's OK!!! They are allowed to say that they don't like the other purely because "I am Italian, and he is a Frenchmen". And that is OK!!! The fact is, they all accept their "different-ness" and that's ok! Why do I have to go around smilling and liking everybody?? Why may we not live in a mature society where we may have freedom of

05/12/2013 04:36 AM 4 of 17

speech, expression and all those wonderful things that the constitution speaks to ..?

Yours sincerely..!

Report abusive comment

January 24, 2013 at 2:47 pm



@Brandon. Great point, white's arrogance overwhelms their sense of understanding the black person's plight. White's sense of entitlement outweighs those of the blacks, because of the history of suffering the blacks endured. What suffering/losses did us whites go through? None!

@lara – because we are only a democracy for 19 years. Without even trying to understand and defend anybody, it is therefore only obvious that there are a whole lot of whites believing they are superior. This superiority complex is something experienced by the white older generation that were entitled to everything over the black man's suffering, and this thinking is passed on through their kids, families...etc. Only obvious they will still have that mentality in 2013?

@A De Lange – "Dear Gillian, your arrogance is unmeasureable" – Thats in your opinion – what is arrogant about her statements, when the whole point of the article is to address the majority of whites views?

"To understand what happened in the past in SA" – What in the world would you know about SA history? The same history books that were written by the "white man" to show their superiority? – Jan Van Riebeek that killed so many khoi? even in other parts of the world – Christopher Columbus – Never mentioned that he slaughtered thousands of native americans? You need to educate yourself by dwelling into history written by the people that experienced the suffering and not those dishing out the slavery, torture, rapes...

Report abusive comment

January 25, 2013 at 10:11 am

5. Jennifer Bosman #

"governing SA for more than 20 YEARS" – What is 20 years compared to the period of oppression. Do the math. Look at other countries whereby a race was oppressed by the whites – Show me how the oppressed race has prospered since a democracy was reached. It takes time to overcome oppression....

Report abusive comment

January 25, 2013 at 10:14 am

6. Jennifer Bosman #

@Chuck. You dont seem to get the article. Thats the problem with us whites, its always about me (Specifically), But "I" had nothing to do with it. Wake up, its not what you done and how you think, but the majorities view. The majority of whites earn more than blacks, the majority of managers in SA businesses are white (80%), the majority of whites will receive a better education than blacks....the list goes on.....This is all because of apartheid. Its not about you, but about the population. This can never be rectified in 19 years – Impossible -

"Why do I have to go around smilling and liking everybody??" – So you admit you hate black people? – I dont think you wanna walk around with that mentality in a country where the vast majority are black.

Report abusive comment

January 25, 2013 at 10:24 am



And stop bitching and telling black people to get over their history. Goddammit — if those things had happened to white people there would be an entire world domination film industry built upon the "legitimised suffering of white people" so why will you not understand that colonialism was a holocaust of epic proportions and it will take many, many more decades for the pain to subside.

It DID happen to WHITE people. We got over it, infact, it isn't even taught to us in schools like this liberal white-guilt filth.

White slavery may refer to:

Arab slave trade, which involved the enslavement of many European peoples, often captured by Barbary pirates

Convicts constituted a significant group of colonists in colonial America and Australia and were more often treated as indentured servants

Redlegs, the class of poor whites that lived on colonial Barbados, St. Vincent, Grenada and other Caribbean islands

Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800 (Palgrave Macmillan).

Report abusive comment

January 26, 2013 at 2:50 am

8. Nick Lee Knight #

Also, another nifty little-known fact that pretty much destroys your entire little rant here.

According to colonial records, the first slave owner in the United States was a black man.

Prior to 1655 there were no legal slaves in the colonies, only indentured servants. All masters were required to free their servants after their time was up. Seven years was the limit that an indentured servant could be held. Upon their release they were granted 50 acres of land. This included any Negro purchased from slave traders. Negros were also granted 50 acres upon their release.

Anthony Johnson was a Negro from modern-day Angola. He was brought to the US to work on a tobacco farm in 1619. In 1622 he was almost killed when Powhatan Indians attacked the farm. 52 out of 57 people on the farm perished in the attack. He married a female black servant while working on the farm.

When Anthony was released he was legally recognized as a "free Negro" and ran a successful farm. In 1651 he held 250 acres and five black indentured servants. In 1654, it was time for Anthony to release John Casor, a black indentured servant. Instead Anthony told Casor he was extending his time. Casor left and became employed by the free white man Robert Parker.

Anthony Johnson sued Robert Parker in the Northampton Court in 1654. In 1655, the court ruled that Anthony Johnson could hold John Casor indefinitely. The court gave judicial sanction for blacks to own slave of their own race. Thus Casor became...

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January 26, 2013 at 3:00 am

9. Nick Lee Knight #

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Whites still could not legally...

Report abusive comment January 26, 2013 at 3:03 am



Nick Lee Knight #

Sorry it seems to have cut of the latter portion of my article, here it is though.

Thus Casor became the first permanent slave and Johnson the first slave owner.

Whites still could not legally hold a black servant as an indefinite slave until 1670. In that year, the colonial assembly passed legislation permitting free whites, blacks, and Indians the right to own blacks as slaves.

By 1699, the number of free blacks prompted fears of a "Negro insurrection." Virginia Colonial ordered the repatriation of freed blacks back to Africa. Many blacks sold themselves to white masters so they would not have to go to Africa. This was the first effort to gently repatriate free blacks back to Africa. The modern nations of Sierra Leone and Liberia both originated as colonies of repatriated former black slaves.

However, black slave owners continued to thrive in the United States.

By 1830 there were 3,775 black families living in the South who owned black slaves. By 1860 there were about 3,000 slaves owned by black households in the city of New Orleans alone.

Sources: John Casor

Report abusive comment

January 26, 2013 at 3:05 am



11. poshbirdq #

excellent analysis and insights.

Report abusive comment January 27, 2013 at 1:18 pm

12.

Norman Gibson #

Dear Gillian

Your "Dear White people" post surely has had me thinking, of course the unstated and scary

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endgame conclusions that the fascinatingly wide commentary inevitably produce in a fertile imagination have all the catastrophic and explosively destructive power of a "Terminator" movie script.

At first I found myself disturbed by the visceral responses both in support of your views and in opposition to them. What could it be that sparked such powerfully felt emotions in both directions? How did it happen that blackness and whiteness could be so vitriolic about their perceived and experienced responses to the other? How could it be that whiteness has come to mean an inevitable marker of a developed skills level? while blackness becomes a marker of a less developed skills level? And that each condition is just a big ugly from the other side.

And then why the barely controlled, seething, passionately antagonistic levels of emotion evinced by so many commentators?

It really had me beat, I mean we know we have such extraordinary potential, we have worked together and we have achieved remarkable things, and now all this vitriol from all directions? It simply does not make sense. Have we really so completely lost sight of our shared dream of "a better life for all" that we now appear to be walking down a short road to the tyranny of a forcefully shared destruction.

I say ... no.... NO......NO......we South Africans are soooo much bigger in spirit, in fact, sooo hugely...

Report abusive comment January 28, 2013 at 4:35 pm



13. Ricardo #

This entire article assumes that every single, or at least most, white South African had been raised with the ideology that whites are superior to blacks. This article then insinuates that fairness is an attribute only visible in liberal minded individuals. Conservatism doesn't equal racism. There are varying opinions about every aspect of life. Just because you're progressive in terms of one aspect, doesn't mean you're progressive in another aspect.

As South Africans – not black or white individuals – it's our duty to help our country the best way we can. This means criticizing, too. Just because we compare post apartheid to pre apartheid doesn't mean that we view ourselves as more important than black persons. Critique plays a roll in the overall progression, improvement and success of a country.

It's a cold hard fact that crime has increased, that our president and company tries to avoid transparency, that our military has exponentially worsened, that our hospitals, schools, police stations, transportation, research, economy, science, professionalism, ingenuity, etc have all devolved.

Instead of continuing the little good the previous government did for us, the current government completely ruined it. Instead of pouring funds into education for all people, not just the rich, our education has worsened.

Apartheid ended 18 years ago. They aren't responsible for this decade's problems anymore.

Don't rebuke white persons, rebuke the overall...

Report abusive comment

January 28, 2013 at 6:46 pm



...attitude, behavior, progress, decency of all persons of all races and creeds. South Africa is a new country with new opportunities. Simply berating WHITE people and WHITE ideologies is ridiculous. Berate the entirety of South Africa: all racism, all corruption, all unfairness, all superior attitudes.

Don't criticize WHITE people because they have an opinion concerning the current state of SA, and at the same time, don't belittle the opinions of other races.

We all attribute to SA success, and that means taking everyone's concerns and ideas seriously.

Report abusive comment

January 28, 2013 at 6:58 pm



Boereprinses #

Those who may know me, know that I'm a fair person and certainly don't mince words about injustice. I also firmly believe all races should work together, that each and every one of us deserve a right to be who we are, that there is no such thing as one that's 'superior' to another...

But there is ONE thing people must also know about me – I AM ABSOLUTELY FAIR, and that's why I want you and everyone else to read this article below with the attention it deserves...

The ONLY way for all the people on earth to live side by side, is to allow EVERYONE his or her existence... For the elders of EVERY race to work together to ensure abundance for all... Yes, I am also a member of Ubuntu, because I see BOTH SIDES OF THE COIN! http://www.tomatobubble.com/wonderfulrace1.html

Report abusive comment

February 4, 2013 at 3:09 pm



I do not identify with people from any race. i secretly think all the stereotypes are a bit dof. i think i'm special, because i've un-tangled myself from where i was, and re-tangled myself

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elsewhere repeatedly.

there is wisdom in each culture. and vast stupidity.

you can- oddly -not have one without the other.

for the same amount of trouble that a white oukie thinks he's cooler than his cousin from the Kasie, in all truth, the black oukie also thinks his cousin from the burbs is an eedjit – and the room for improvement is like an open stand in Bryanston... earmarked for development but no funds...

human nature dictates that if you're driving a ford, you think BMW drivers are the pits. if you're driving a Merc, you think Subaru's are wintie tappit.

everyone faster than you is a padvark, and everyone slower than you is a drip.

it is who we are in our unenlightened stated.

not many people claim to be enlightened.

they just want to be people.

and that should be their right. love. live. family. enough to survive. die with dignity.

where does this leave our country?

well – i figure if we can manage to let each other love, live, have family, have enough and die with dignity, we may stand a chance that our kids will pick up the pieces.

the americans have it down to a find art, they figured out that there will always be conflict, so they generate fictitious threats for their heterogeneous youth to try and fight – externally. it moves the focus...

Report abusive comment

February 4, 2013 at 7:59 pm



This letter speaks volumes! Those attacking gillian are just plain ignorant! White people should admit that you benefited from aparthied and that doesn't make you superior to darkies. And be gratefull that you are still in this country

Report abusive comment

February 6, 2013 at 3:26 pm



We must remember that white supremacy has infected ALL of us as a country. We can not grow up under Apartheid and be immune, it is simply impossible. I'm not speaking just of the blatant and conscious racist acts of some, I am referring to anyone who witnessed or even indirectly benefited from SA Apartheid. And sadly, it is not just a white issue. Indeed

11 01 1 /

much of the world has bought into the fallacy of white superiority. And it's a disease that has permeated our society in every aspect.

We must acknowledge what we all allow to still exist in SA. We must be courageous enough to face our own lingering racism. We must learn to truly understand our fear responses to an ever changing SA. We must understand that we, regardless of our former relationship to apartheid, have a responsibility to heal the wounds that still fester and love the ones we fear.

Report abusive comment

February 10, 2013 at 10:18 pm



Dear Gillian

In our "freedom of expression" we have the right to say how we feel. Why break one of the many races in our country down while trying to stand with one which you did not go through what they did? All races and all cultures have people that live in wealth, middle-class, and poor. I guess you are from the wealthy class. You don't have an idea what is going on in this country, and most of the country adapted to the new SA, so please do much more research, expecially on the youth, when you write your next article. Nobody is benefitting from the pass, but we all are benefitting through adapting and speaking our thoughts so we can understand all cultures and races in our country

Report abusive comment

February 13, 2013 at 10:04 am



African King #

The Important thing i was Glad to hear in her Letter was that she Said she Grew up with WHITE privilege. Most of them don't Understand that . This Women can Come to My House anytime and if the race war pops off we need to Save this one.

Report abusive comment March 7, 2013 at 9:58 pm



@nick lee, wht a load of rubbish, how can the 1st slave owners be black? when the first blacks to arrive in the usa were black slaves? your comment is cheap

its people like you who are in denial and then try to use reasons to justify slavery, its about time the west takes responsibility for its actions,

 $12 { of } 17$ $05/12/2013 { 04:36 } AM$

look at how the germans teach their citizens about the evils of nazismn aplogizize and even compensate other countries people in the uk usa are always on the defensive when it comes to their evil past, no one is blaming you personally, even if your forefathers were slave owners, we just like you to acknowledge the evil side of your history!

Report abusive comment

March 28, 2013 at 11:57 am



22.

23.

Michael #

The first thing the white people have to learn in language, the language barrier is taking us to war

Report abusive comment

March 30, 2013 at 8:50 am



Frank #

Very well written article. I like the open mindedness and understanding (a bit one sided though) nature of the author, but unfortunately this kind of one sided thinking will cause the lack of action and preparation for the inevitable conflict that will engulf SA. There's lots of evidence to support this opinion, just do some research and look at the patterns and signs. I think you need to understand history, politics, nature, races and Africa in a realistic manner. I consider myself open minded, not racist and compasionate, but my realistic side is urging caution within me when it comes to the situation in SA. I hope nothing massive like all out genocide will occur, but evidence to me seems to suggest the contrary. Please people, arm yourselves and be prepared in the event of an attempted ethnic cleansing. I just wish humanity can stop all this hate and intollarence towards each other. Peace to all. Frank

Report abusive comment

April 13, 2013 at 6:13 pm



peter #

Dear Settler sister,

How dare you tarnish me under your pathetic pen. I am proud to be born a WHITE South African, and we have apologised for apartheid 18 years ago and we are still paying are dues. How can you dare tell us to stop being negative when ANC policies are set to eradicate whites from South Africa by making us jobless through affirmative action... how dare you tell me to stop being negative when my white neighbours are being killed on farms... I suggest you smell that white rose and come to reality that you are white and times are going to get a lot harder. Be white and proud and be strong, its time we all started looking after

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each other!

Report abusive comment April 17, 2013 at 11:50 am

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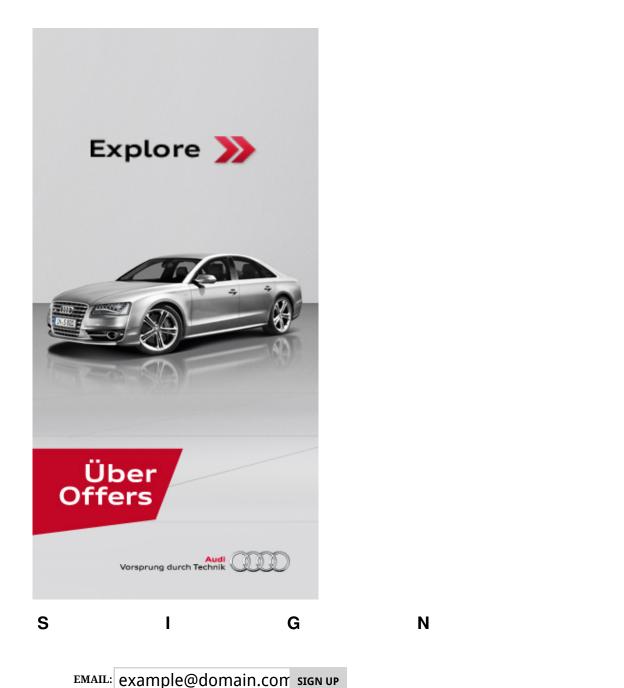
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Feminist, filmmaker, writer, poet, activist and author, Gillian Schutte has a degree in African politics, an MA in Creative Writing and a Film Director's qualification from the Binger Institute, Netherlands. Winner of the Award of Excellence for her documentary entry to the Society for Visual Anthropology Festival in Washington, 2005, and author of the novel *After Just Now* -- Schutte fearlessly and creatively tackles issues of race, identity, sexuality and social justice in her multimedia work. She is founding member of Media for Justice co-owner of handHeld Films. and co producer of the online Reality TV series The Schutte Singiswas'.

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M O R E

Deconstructing 'sugar daddies'

R

P

Mpho, who lives in Alex, tells me how "sugar daddies" hit the townships on weekends in their smart cars. They cruise the streets looking for young fle...

 $16 { of } 17$ $05/12/2013 { 04:36 } AM$

Lynching black men

On March 1 we watched in disbelief and horror as a young Mozambican man, Mido Macia, was forcibly handcuffed to the back of a police van and dragged b...

One billion bodies reclaimed

In the past few years there have been waves of feminine revolution that have been directly rooted in body, art and the carnivalesque. Not essentialism...

One Billion Rising -- South Africa

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2p7zqfkWApc&list=UUtz-lI2aJEf6ZuTJmEdvhmA&index=1 (Scroll through to hear the voices of women as they call f...

O is for Orgasm

Since it is the holiday season and because so many people have assured me that I am "shrill", "aggressive", "in need of a good fuck", et al &ndash non...

B L O G S

Total reads: 168042 **Total comments:** 1075

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