

## Audience Response to Kimberly's shows

**“Kimberly Dark’s ethno-autobiographical performance work presents an innovative and highly original approach** to a host of potentially contentious social issues, which are rarely addressed outside the college classroom. Seamlessly blending comedy and high seriousness, Dark immediately puts her audience ease and thereby engages them in a profound and honest conversation regarding gender and sexuality.”

-Dr. Andrea Herrera, Ethnic Studies Department, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

**“I’d never seen Ms. Dark perform before I saw ‘Stripped and Teased: Scandalous Stories with Subversive Subplots’.** I must say I’m sorry I waited so long. The performance was humorous while at the same time offering a sincere examination of some of the painful aspects of women’s lives. One of my students attended the performance and said, ‘She’s cool! This is everything we talk about in class, but different.’ Stripped and Teased: Scandalous Stories with Subversive Subplots’ is perfect for social science students. This performance offers new ways of examining the social construction of gender.”

-Valerie Reed, Sociology Department Chair, Mt. San Jacinto Community College

**“This [Dykeotomy] is one of my favorites, when it comes to your work** — so brave and so necessary. I still bring up your performance of Dykeotomy at the SF Center For Sex and Culture when in conversation with community members... and I always feel really emotionally and mentally prepared to make space for many different understandings of and questions around trans allyship because of the ways in which you were so smart and courageous with your words. That show was also the first time I felt like I was given permission to name my own gender, which

**“She said that women collect compliments like they were currency.** Wow! What a way to put it! I feel like she’s right; we get all dolled up, put on a show day in and day out so that we always seem pleasant and as soon as our act isn’t so good we get called a bitch or a snob or something is wrong with us in some way. We as women continue to accept this day in and day out for years! I cant tell you how many times I’ve been stressed out about meeting new people and felt the pressure to act just right – and why? This idea of a perfectly behaved woman is ridiculous and because of Kimberly’s courage to bring it up I really feel a little more empowered.”

-Female college student

**“Since her lecture I’ve actively been monitoring myself and my actions around others** and I’m trying to cut out any unnecessary kiss ass behavior. I’ve got so many other things to worry about – like me and how I want to feel about myself and my life. We put so much of our energy into pleasing people, namely men and we allow people’s reactions to define who we are. Thanks goodness I can stop doing that now.”

-Female college student

**“I think Kimberly Dark is doing a good social service by talking about body image** because it is planting a seed in women’s heads that they don’t have to be perfect... Kimberly Dark is a good example because she is not the stereotypical blond-haired blue-eyed model, but in my eyes she is attractive because presents herself in a confident matter. You can tell she feels good about herself. It is important that women and men see different shapes and sizes of women in the media because then they will change their ideas about what a woman should like.”

-Female college student

was monumental for me.”

-Audience member

**“You pretty much saved me when you did this show [Dykeotomy] in Liverpool last year.** Thanks for being willing to broach difficult subjects in such an honest and open manner – it really does help not only to open up communication, but also to open people to all of the possibilities within their own identities.”

-Transgender Audience member **“Often I get pumped up by a performance and think, “Now what?”** I liked that Kimberly Dark gave out resources to continue the exploration of this topic through her website and the hand out on the 5 Strategies for Becoming the Subject of Your Own Story. I would definitely recommend her show and website.” - Female student

**“Dark used humor and art to demonstrate every day activities people engage in** which involved power and control through what society deems ‘normal’ or ‘acceptable.’ Discrimination goes beyond gender, class, and race and people are judged by appearances or even weight or height. We are so easily conditioned to allow society to dictate what is beautiful and desirable, that we begin to measure our own self worth according to these standards. It was really refreshing to hear confirmation that we are in charge of our actions and beliefs even when it doesn’t fit societal expectations. When we do conform and buy into cultural values and perception of worth, we only objectify ourselves.”

-Female student

**“I benefited from this event personally** because there were many stories she told that had happened in my life and she reinforced what I thought was right.”

-Female student

**“She told the stories in a way that gave respect and honor to this marginalized group.** She uplifted women by telling them to stand up for themselves and make

**“Man, I never knew other women experienced the same things that I did.”**

-Female college student

**“After the presentation by Kim Dark a couple of things came clear to me** after seeing and hearing her words of truth... When a woman goes out she should be able to feel free and comfortable in whatever she’s wearing and where she goes. Women are often the victims of cat-calling and other animal reference names... Women are not objects of entertainment and should never be treated as so.”

-Male college student

**“Gender is a very complex thing.** As a result of seeing this presentation, I think I’ll tip more when I go to a strip club. I liked most the honesty and humor in the performance because that’s the way life should be. I was disappointed to have it end so soon.”

-Female college student

**“I used to be really quiet and I encountered many situations like that** when I didn’t know what to do or I was just too shy to say what I was feeling. Now I have caught myself speaking up in situations like the ones Kimberly talked about and it makes me feel proud of myself to have become a stronger woman and to set an example to men that we women are not going to take it anymore.”

-Female college student

**“I do recommend others to watch her performance,** especially teenagers, husbands, boyfriends, bosses and fathers. I think if all of these figures and possibly more were to see her presentation they would benefit by seeing the world through a woman’s eyes.

-Female college student

**“I just wanted to say what an amazing speaker you are,** but on top of that such an amazing women. Thank you for speaking to us in such a powerful, yet

yourself happy not rooted by society's wants. It was important for her to do this event and others like it, because not enough people talk about the unjust treatment women go through. Men especially benefit from these types of stories because they are the dominant group in this patriarchal society who can make a true social change."

-Female student

**"Kimberly Dark is a powerful, creative and informative speaker who is deeply connected with her audience.** Through her performance Dark is able to express herself in a way that allows her audiences to become engaged and active participants... By using real life stories Dark was able to show the audience the importance of being comfortable. It was through her performance and seeing the ways in which she herself was comfortable. She was then able to raise the level of comfort among her listeners..."

-Female Student, Acadia University

**"I was extremely impressed with Kimberly Dark because of her physicality and sensuousness and her presence was amazing...** I found her two day master class inspiring and invigorating – it was so enjoyable and freeing to write creatively and perform stories in such a way – bringing life and humour to them but also making a statement for people to hear...she's an all round excellent package – including the lipstick! We bought a copy of her cd and played it in the car on the way back – her voice is just so creamy..."

I suppose what I heard was her take on being active and physically doing something to make a difference – this resonates deeply with me as does her belief that we can use the arts to make the world a better place.

Her poetry was/is a mix of the ethnographic and autoethnographic and very engaging, entertaining, poignant, sensuous and did not shy away from taboo and sensitive topics such as race, gender, sexuality,

understanding voice."

-Female college student

**"[The show was] perceptive, bold, insightful and right on!"**

-Male theatre-goer

**"[The show was] sprinkled intermittently with humor,** I love that! We both loved the piece with lesbians at the strip bar and also the high school experience."

-Female theatre-goer

**"What a joy to hear humor from a woman's perspective** — I laughed and cried and felt affirmed and entertained — I now know what's missing from mainstream media — a woman's voice — my voice — Thank You!

-Female theatre-goer

**"I am so very grateful to have had the opportunity to see you perform.**

Yesterday, I took the opportunity over lunch to discuss the "sweetness" factor (the imperative for women to act sweet, as discussed in the show) with some of my female co-workers. It was an interesting discussion. It seems like something they had all noticed and experienced, but never talked about. The latter being the most disturbing..."

-Female theatre-goer

**"I sat in the front row next to a young former stripper.** She so agreed with you! You may have heard her 'oh yes!.' It was like a response from the crowd at a Southern Baptist tent revival. 'Amen'"

-Female theatre-goer

**"You watch your audience...** You use ideas and images as crowbars to pry open minds, stir blood. Watching you perform is akin to watching a Super Nova — with a great deal of poise."

-Female theatre-goer

**"Sexy and tantalizing — 'My Body is My Home'** (quoted from the show) Brilliant!"

incest, rape and body size – and without making them stories of victimhood – I felt we were invited to witness the events and peoples’ struggles and it was up to us to connect with the messages/our feelings or whatever came up for us in whatever way we wanted. The connection between the personal and the social/cultural was clearly and cleverly and creatively made in that our personal stories act as statements of our experience of social and cultural themes – all in a generative and constructive way rather than an angry destructive dig from a place of woundedness, she took the ‘sting’ out of the stories whilst keeping their powerful messages. Her delivery also made an enormous impact in that through her eye contact with each of us I personally felt she was talking to me...she connected with us and that made the impact for me very personal.”

-Female Workshop Member

**“Seeing your work live was very moving for me.** You have said some things in your work that I have heard before (concepts) ...but it was the first time that I heard them that actually were able to hit home for me on the gender stuff. Your mastery of vocabulary and ability to present your work in an accessible way is truly astounding. You have changed my perspective on things that I believe is going to truly be helpful in my evolution. Thank you for that!!!”

-Female Festival Audience Member

**“I thought Kimberly’s presentation was good for me.** It made me think of things a little more outside the box... it also made me understand sociology a little better through how she was speaking, animating some key points in our boring books, especially the gender roles in today’s society.”

-Female college student

**“I truly enjoyed the presentation that Kimberly Dark gave us.** I would never have thought that such important social issues could be addressed with such an

-Male theatre-goer

**“More men and women need to know these things!** (It’s shocking) that you are really real and say the things nobody else is saying or can even admit that they are thinking!”

-Female theatre-goer

**“Funny with an edge — my kind of humor!”**

-Female theatre-goer

**“Especially (thought provoking was) the skit on being “sweet” and needing approval.** I was really shaken awake on that one! I felt exposed and maybe I’ll be more conscious of being desperate for approval.”

-Female theatre-goer

**“Kimberly’s presentation deepened my understanding of society** a whole lot. I never really noticed how much of an impact society has on us and how foolish many of us are to just follow it and never once question it. It is much easier to just be part of a group than to part yourself from everyone else. I really enjoyed the presentation.”

-Female College Student

**“All the stories that Professor Dark shared were thought provoking and cleverly written,** but when she discussed the tribulations and double standards of the female species, I was even more amazed. She was able to word it so precisely: I did not know that it was okay to feel so uncomfortable by advances and comments, or how to deal with it other than cringe, smile, and walk away. Now I know I have the option of simply telling them to back off. This story could not have been more suited for me and be exposed to me at a more perfect time, because at the time I was becoming extremely aggravated and frustrated with the demeaning actions and comments that were dealt to me on a daily bases With it I felt a little stronger, and able to stop such treatment.”

enjoyable demeanor. I was influenced by her thought provoking skits in a way that an hour and a half session has never done before... I enjoyed the time with Kimberly so much because there was no pressure to believe what she believed. It simply opened up your mind.”

-Male college student

**“Kimberly’s performance did bring up various emotions in myself.** The emotions were primarily negative, but not towards her. At various instances, I as a male felt guilty, and insensitive. I felt this during the story that illustrated the practice of sexism by males toward females. As a male, I have committed such subconscious acts without realizing that statements like “put on a smile” are in fact sexist toward females.”

-Male college student

**“Since viewing her spoken word performance, I have thought differently** on what I as an individual can do on a day-to-day basis to break such social injustices. In addition, I have looked at society through a different sociological lens in terms of how my actions affect others by placing myself into their shoes so to speak. The presentation made me self-evaluate for the better.”

-Male college student

**“Kimberly’s performance without a doubt deepened my overall understanding of sociology** and in fact reinforced some topics/areas that were unclear to me.”

-Male college student

**“The same day before her performance I had actually experienced that sort of incident.** I was walking to my car and three men approached me and asked me if I needed a ride to my car. I ignored them and continued to walk away. What surprised and scared me was that before I ignored them they were saying that I was beautiful, but as soon as they felt rejected they started to curse at me. The emotions that the presentation brought up

-Female College Student

**“Dark has a talent and with it she moves, informs, and changes her audience**—and she’s doing one hell of a job at it.”

-Female College Student

**“Kimberly’s presentation was remarkable.** Her story telling skills are both impressive and they touch very important matters that people generally do not discuss.”

-Female College Student

**“The one thing that stuck in my mind the most is how she used humor in her poetry** and that kept my attention. I have not had the opportunity to enjoy any poetry that had such a strong message such as this... The style that Kimberly uses in her poetry allowed me to see a bigger picture in the stories she told.”

-Female College Student

**“[Dark] told her story in a meaningful way.** She presented her story in a artistic way. She doesn’t choose sides to her story. It really leaves you to decide on your behalf. She brought her story through humor, beauty, emotion, pain and happiness and hope that we learn to make the world a better place... Her story telling is so a powerful. It changes the way I view life.”

-Male College Student

**“I found her presentation to be humorous and authentic** in how she was able to connect societal cultures within the stories she shared with us. Her stories were nothing like typical happy-ending tales, but stories that were real, and had deeper meaning.”

-Female College Student

**“Ever since Kimberly Dark shared her story [about sexual harassment], I’ve seen myself in a new perspective.** I’m not doing anyone else a favor when I shut myself up and let it pass. I too am a human being and deserve the respect that I give to others. There are many

for me was that I felt understood, like I was not alone.”

-Female college student

**“As a result of the presentation I do look and think differently about certain things.** For example I do not have to be thin in order to be loved or respected. What I liked most about her presentation was that she looked and sounded so passionate about her stories. Her passion made the stories that much more interesting.”

-Female college student

**“Kimberly’s presentation brought emotions of sadness because she told us about segregation** that exists throughout the national school system. She told us that segregation exists under the facade of diversity... schools seem to determine which students will become doctors or lawyers and which ones will do the jobs of let’s say trash collectors or janitors.”

-Male college student

**“Kimberly did a great job in improving my personal perceptions on life,** and the connection to the world... I did not understand the fact that everybody was influenced in some degree by the outside world.”

-Male college student.

**“The first story that Kimberly shared about her son and his hesitation to mold to the elementary school system** of rules and hierarchy really struck a chord with me... She brought up so many valid questions in this story that I had never heard anyone talk about before and I kept saying to myself, yeah, no kidding!”

-Female college student

things in our society that we will just let it pass us, but there needs to be a call of attention to these things. Whether it’s speaking up for the person who is ostracized at work, or speaking up against an unjust act. It’s really not that difficult, and it only takes a conscience mind to notice it.”

-Female College Student

**“[Kimberly] showed through her form of artwork a very strong theme** that everyone can change the world through various ways.”

-Male College Student

**“The performances that Kimberly Dark performed were that of the feminist point-of-view,** the way women might encounter or perceive certain situations. I really enjoyed it because it gave me a better understanding of what women have to deal with... Now being able to realize that, indeed, men have had it easier than women! that we can do so much more unacceptable behavior than women and receive less ridicule for it and that women today have been caught in the media’s trap of how a beautiful woman should look. Even though we had read much of what Dr. Dark explained, she gave us a rendition of how it might have occurred in real life which made much of what I read so much more clearer.”

-Male College Student

**“Normally, when a speaker comes into a class, people would be either half-asleep or bored out of their mind** within the first 15 minutes of their presentation without remembering a word they said, but with Kimberly, she had the attention of the audience from start to finish, she never let down the intensity...”

-Male College Student

**“In Kimberly’s presentation I really began to think about... poverty.** I began to think of ways to not support companies or factories such as Nicky or Wal-Mart. I have come up with the conclusion that we can make a difference in what is really

happening in other countries on the choices we make as we consume items.”

-Male College Student