

Advertising

# Do you know a community hero?

2006 Eppy Winner -- Best multimedia  
Providence, R.I., Monday July 17, 2006 9:03 p.m.

[Welcome, Visitor!](#) [Sign In/Become a registered member](#)  
[RSS feeds](#) | [Customize projo.com](#) | [Make this your home page](#) | [E-mail newsletters](#) | [MySpecialsDirect](#)

Search Site    
Search Archives



- Home
- Rhode Island
- Business
- In Memoriams
- Lifebeat
- Multimedia
- Nation/World
- Obituaries
- Opinion
- Pagina Latina
- Sports
- Weather
- Your Turn



**Subscribe**  
Newspaper In Education  
Advertise with Us  
Guide to requesting coverage

## Storyteller Judith Black bemoans the invisibility of the older woman

01:00 AM EDT on Sunday, July 16, 2006

BY BRYAN ROURKE  
Journal Staff Writer

"I started off by being surprised that I had suddenly become invisible," Judith Black says.

The 54-year-old Marblehead, Mass., woman is on the phone. So technically, it's possible she's incorporeal. But it's not likely.

In fact, Black is scheduled to appear at AS220 on Wednesday for the fourth and final show in a monthly series by American Story Theater. She says she'll show up.

However, Black says, some men may not notice her.

"Your body starts to change," Black says. "Your estrogen pulls back. Let's face it, you can't reproduce the race anymore."

As a woman, your relevancy is reduced when you hit menopause. Or at least that's how Black began feeling at 50. She says it was as though she disappeared along with her hormones.

"Until it happens to you, you don't realize how important sex is," Black says. "It is such a force in your life. It's gone and you go, 'Oh, wow. I can't use cleavage to get service at the automotive shop anymore.'"

"Mine's wrinkled. People don't want to see that. You don't realize you've used that until you can't."

If you haven't had (or will never have) the experience of menopause, Black's willing to share hers: The Fading Scent of . . .

That's the title of her new 45-minute show that makes its premiere in Providence. Actually, that's most of the title. For reasons of decency, you'll have to fill in the blanks, or ellipses, yourself.

"It's a series of stories mixed with rants," Black says. "We all need to rant."

Black rants about her recent, significant life change: the loss of her sexual allure.

"It's not that post-menopausal women don't want sex," she says. "It's just that we're not sexy. You realize it's the beginning of the rest of your life."

When women realize that, Black says, they reflect back on their lives. They see how their appearance played a large part.

"Sexuality creates play in your world," Black says. "It doesn't mean you're having sex with a lot of people, but it attracts a lot of people. Business gets done around it. It touches everything."

Seriously funny

Black has been a professional storyteller for 30 years. She talks about what she knows. And she tells it straight. She doesn't use cutesy convention.

"Storytelling is telling who you are," Black says. "This is who I am. Other people will tell you a story, 'Once upon a time. . . .' You're already puking."

Be real. Get gritty.

In her most recent previous production, Retiring the Champ, Blacks talks about aging and dying in America.

Serious subjects are significant and universal, and well-suited for stories, Black says. However, she says, they need not be somber.

"A spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down," she says. "If you could see Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night or hear Robin Williams do standup, who would you choose?"

Laugh at life. That's Black's recommendation, and her storytelling style. She's funny, but she's not a comedian.

"With comedians you need to hit punch lines every 8 to 14 seconds," Black says. "People are laughing. Then three minutes after your set is over, they don't remember anything."

Black wants her audiences to think, remember and relate.

"You see your own life mirrored in another's," Black says. "We can learn about ourselves through stories."

Advertising

# Do you know a community hero?

### newspaper ads

- Search newspaper ads and weekly inserts from The Providence Journal
- Cardi's Furniture
- Champion Windows
- More advertisers...
- Commercial Real Estate

### shop & subscribe

- Shop and subscribe among a variety of services
- Archives
- My-Netlink
- Front Page
- Ticket Center
- Store

60 and sexy?

One woman's midlife story is often another's: menopause. In some cultures, Black discovered, it's honored; in others it's ignored. Then there's the United States.

"In our culture, you have a heart attack and get an appointment with a plastic surgeon," she says. "You can look like Cher the rest of your life. But I suspect her organs are still rotting."

Mainstream America does not accept or even acknowledge menopause, according to Black. A recent issue of AARP's monthly magazine, she says, featured a cosmetically enhanced Goldie Hawn beside a headline: "60 and still sexy."

"Why do you have to be sexy at 60?" Black says. "Why can't you be nurturing or kind? Why can't they let it go?"

They, by the way, refers not just to women, Black says, but men.

"We've all seen the men who try to brush their hair from the far right side of their head to the far left side," Black says. "We know they're bald. These people are not accepting the aging process."

Ultimately, that's Black's message: acceptance.

"Between 45 and 55 things change," she says. "You either learn to embrace them or else you become a crank, or you just try to hang on to your youth."

Black has found the silver lining in diminished sexuality.

"Sex is no longer the first thing you're thinking of," she says. "In some ways, it's such a relief. You can think of other things."

Judith Black performs at 9 p.m. Wednesday at AS220, 115 Empire St., Providence. An open-mike session starts at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$10, \$5 for students and seniors.

For more information, call (401) 831-9327 or visit [www.americanstorytheater.org](http://www.americanstorytheater.org).

[brourke@projo.com](mailto:brourke@projo.com) / (401) 277-7267

#### More headlines...

- 2nd Story to start season in Bristol
- Storyteller Judith Black bemoans the invisibility of the older woman
- Brown/Trinity actors, director do their best with poor script
- Fifth annual Flight of Steps a collaboration of choreographers
- A droll look at dating, death, families
- More...

ARTICLE TOOLS: [Print it](#) | [Discuss it](#) | [E-mail it to a friend](#) | [Most e-mailed stories](#)

ARCHIVES: Search for related articles:  Search

Get The Providence Journal delivered to your home or office. [Subscribe now.](#)

Advertising

#### Table of Contents

[Home page](#)

[PROJOCCLASSIFIEDS](#) | [PROJOCARS](#) | [PROJOHOMES](#) | [PROJOJOBS](#) | [OBITUARIES](#) | [IN MEMORIAMS](#)  
[Rhode Island News](#) | [Business](#) | [Lifebeat](#) | [Multimedia](#) | [National / World news](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Sports](#) | [Weather](#) | [Your Turn](#)

[Help Center](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Advertising](#) | [About Us](#)

News tip: (401) 277-7303 | Classifieds: (401) 277-7700 | Display advertising: (401) 277-8000 | Subscriptions: (401) 277-7600  
© 2006, Published by The Providence Journal Co., 75 Fountain St., Providence, RI 02902.