

DIFFERING AIMS OF FEMINISTS?

Hannah Ho



For many Asian women (and other women who aren't white) our self-determination often involves challenging colonial and white violence that constructs us as sexually open and accessible. We are trying to prove that we are not demure geishas gagging for some big white man's cock. That we're not all whores and only chasing white men for money (some of us actually do just like them). But that many of us may be whores and after money because we are poor and sex tourism is big, and it sometimes beats working in a stink arse factory. Also we may not be fighting for our right to work outside the home, because many of us already do. We work in factories, in minimum wage jobs and cleaning white rich people's houses like my mum and her friends used to, because white women had gone out to work and the men were sure as hell not cooking and cleaning.

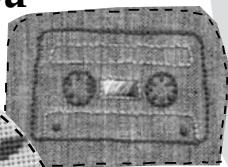
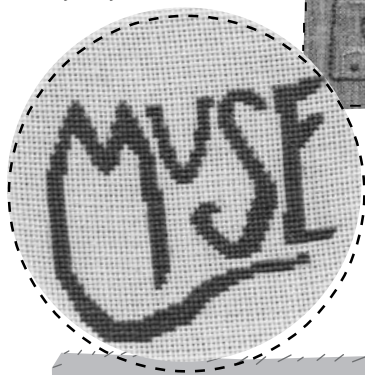
Often my experience in feminist spaces has been one where analysis is focused on sex and gender only. I often feel that the dynamic between non-white women and white women is not talked about much. Even less discussed is the impact that liberal white women's rights have had on non-white women. For example, the gentrification of poorer and brown neighbourhoods has often been led by groups seeking their own self-determination, such as middle-class white women, gays and lesbians. In the quest for equal gender opportunities within the workplace, I would question whether the mission for some white feminist women

is to join white men on the capitalist ladder of privilege and monetary gain, as opposed to challenging the power held by mainly rich white men and exerted over women of all ethnicities as well as poor people here and across the world. Another place where I feel race analysis in tau iwi (non Māori inhabitants of Aotearoa) feminist spaces is lacking, is in the lack of recognition that as migrants/settlers to Aotearoa, we have participated, and continue to participate and receive the benefits of, colonisation and the upholding of colonial structures, although we are all fighting the patriarchy. Again, this IS a feminist issue.

For me as a queer Asian woman living in Aotearoa, resisting assimilation, actively resisting racism and white supremacy, challenging class elitism, dismantling capitalism that degrades peoples and the land, and decolonising myself and my community are all feminist issues.

Getting Hooked: the Craft Revival in Aotearoa

Jenn Jones



Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, craft seems to be making a revival among the women of Aotearoa. Everywhere I look I see little photocopied flyers for Bitchcraft, notices for stitch'n'bitch groups, and packets of alternative cross stitch patterns popping up in craft and design stores around Wellington. But is craft really going through a revival, or are those clicking needles just more visible these days?

Personally, it all started when I was looking for something to get my grandma for Christmas a few years back. Knowing she was a bit of a knitter, I decided she would appreciate something handmade. I was able to resist the consumer drive of the holiday season and get DIY at the same time. I made a beautiful (and tricky) Victorian pansy bookmark for her... and was converted. It scored points with my grandma and my

boyfriend's mum, but I couldn't help getting the feeling it was a little un-cool among women my own age. So I searched the net for other patterns or ideas, and lo-and-behold, subversive cross stitch came up. I was inspired to make my own designs, and have since used cross-stitch as a form of release, political statement, and creative feminine expression.

Since then I've realised that there's more to cross-stitch than one woman and her needle. Feminist art and the use of craft as an expression of feminism have been around for at least thirty years – and women expressing themselves through craft for much longer. And, while many women are individually getting hooked (crochet pun intended), they are also getting into it in (and as) a collective fashion. Historically women's art was traditional craft like knitting, sewing, cross-stitch, crochet and patch-working. Women weren't accepted into the competitive and individualistic world of fine art, and neither was their artwork. It was marginalised and devalued; denied the title "fine" art.


The women's movement in Aotearoa brought with it the rise of feminist artists such as Jaqueline Fahey, L.Budd et al, and Allie Eagle, whose work challenged the patriarchal paradigm surrounding the art world, and who sought to break down barriers for all forms of women's art. They created an alternative space for women artists, where craft was intentionally used as an expression of feminist art, and where traditional female art was celebrated.

They worked collaboratively, organised alternative exhibition spaces (installations, interactive sculptures) and bypassed the “art market” by creative non-saleable pieces such as performances. One particular example is Carole Shephard’s Amazon Shield II, (1984), whereby she combines lacing and binding of wooden lattices with strips of painted canvas to form a circular shield. Her aim was to blur the boundaries of traditional female art with the “fine” arts.

The legacy these women have collectively left is that craft is no longer sidelined, and in fact I’ve heard that Creative NZ has tagged approximately \$3.25 million for craft grants this year. Despite the fact they label it “object art” (and thus removing its historical context) and despite its blatant northern bias (the majority of the grants only available for North Island projects), this could be seen as a step in the right direction, particularly for the feminist alt craft movement, in gaining institutional recognition. However, in an interview with National Radio, a Creative NZ spokesperson admitted that craft doesn’t get the attention it deserves, and still isn’t celebrated as much as the fine arts.

Creative NZ appear to follow a gender neutral grants process, but my guess would be that male artists will dominate regardless of whether “craft object art” is mainly a female genre. The herstory of women’s art shows women tend to use less formal means of exhibition and the grants available are mainly for gallery and exhibition funding. However, the nature of the craft

movement will be what sustains it. The joy in producing craft art comes from working with other women, learning from them and sharing experiences, whether in a craft group or at a craft market. Craft empowers women, it brings them together. It allows them to bypass consumer culture and reclaim traditional women’s skills devalued by society. It is essentially a collective act, and a consciousness raising one at that.



The reality is that alt craft and women’s art has the potential to be huge, and the masses of women flocking to make Julie Jackson’s Subversive Cross Stitch, Jenny Hart’s Sublime Stitching, and attending Bitch Craft religiously are testament to that. These are all examples of women getting together to create feminine (and feminist) art, to express themselves, and to talk – this is the key to alt craft and the power in its revival.

Sources:

- National Radio Art Segment, 1.30-2pm, 23/4/06, compiled by Justin Gregory
- Chamberlain, Claire, Art History: Aspects of Modern New Zealand Art, (Pearson Education New Zealand Limited, Malaysia, 2000)
- www.subversivecrossstitch.com
- www.sublimestitching.com – officially available in NZ only at Juniper Gallery, 114 Riddiford Street in Newtown, Wellington

Wanna try it? Wellington craft fun...

CLANDESTINE REVOLUTIONARY SEWING CIRCLE

Sundays 3pm, in the art room upstairs at 128 Abel Smith St. Take along your sewing, knitting, crochet, embroidery, friendship bracelets etc. This is a space for sewers to socialise and skill share. If you can't sew, this is a chance to learn, and if you're an experienced sewer it's a chance to share some of your knowledge. They also have fabric and materials available, and one sewing machine. Other craft-isans are also welcome!

KNITTING

Adult learn to knit classes at Knitworld (62 Queens Drive Lower Hutt)

Free knitting lessons at their shop too:
www.knitting.co.nz/site/page_features/

SUBLIME STITCHING CLASS

Embroidery classes, \$10 at Juniper (114 Riddiford Street, Newtown) using your choice of Jenny Hart's awesome Sublime Stitching patterns. Third Thursday and Sunday of every month. Call (04) 389 4058 to book. Parent child afternoons are coming soon.

SECRET CRAFT FUN

Also at Juniper... sshhh secret squirrel. A poster will go up at Juniper with what you need to bring with you, but the actual project is a secret until you get there! Same number as above.

CRAFTWERK

Wellington's cutting edge craft fair launched in July at The Paramount Theatre. There will be further fairs in October and December.

The organisers are hoping it will eventually become a bi-monthly event.

www.craftwerk.co.nz (From the people that brought you Bitchcraft).

OTHER CRAFT TIDBITS

Craft web forum – share projects tips and designs: www.craftster.org

Craft blogs and craft activism sites:

<http://knitting.activist.ca/>

www.craftivism.com/blog.html

Guardian article about the UK craft scene:

<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/features/story/0,,1785059,00.html?gusrc=rss>

Craft funding information:

www.craftinfo.org.nz/

www.creativenz.govt.nz/funding/board/craft.html

Interviews with Jenny Hart:

Crown Dozen – www.crowndozen.com/features/archives/000458.shtml

The Modernist – www.themodernist.com/terminal2/hart.html

Crafty Gal – www.craftygal.com/archives/spring04/porch_spring04.html

Jenny Hart official website:

www.jennyhart.net

Interviews with Julie Jackson:

Venus Zine:

<http://venuszine.com/stories/diy/632>

Leah Peah blog:

<http://leahpeah.com/blog/interviews/julie-jackson>

Globally Speaking...



By Karin Brown

In the last issue Muse brought you some statistics. Here is some evidence that subjugation and marginalisation of women is neither a simple nor just a local problem. Globally women are overrepresented in negative statistics. Here are a few for thought:

- Every year about 500,000 women die during childbirth. That equals about one woman every minute.
- Of the 1.3 Billion poorest people, 70% are women.
- 60% of the 150 Million children without access to primary education are female.
- Even the adverse effects of environmental events like deforestation and water contamination increase the risk of disease for girls and women, as they tend to be the water carriers and wood gatherers for families.
- In many countries around the world girls are sold into marriage to provide income for their families. This often ends education prematurely and increases the risk of childbirth-related death and HIV.

The good news is that there are many organisations that are working hard to improve the lives of women around the world. This is a brief and by no means exhaustive list of such organisations:

- The Global Fund for Women. A foundation that provides grants for worldwide organisations that work to improve economic independence, access to education and violence-free living for women.
- Asesoría Capacitación y Asistencia en Salud (Health Training and Support Association). Based in Mexico, this organisation works to improve maternal health by tackling domestic violence and poverty.
- SIN-DO. This organisation makes training and funding for small business available to poor women, and is in Benin.
- Unión Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas (National Union of Guatemalan Women). Functioning like a union, this group organises women who campaign for social justice and equal rights.
- Groups of Women in Water and Agricultural Kochieng. Builds wells and promotes women's health and rights to education.
- International Women's Health Coalition. Takes a worldwide approach to supporting the rights and health of women and girls.
- UNIFEM. The branch of the United Nations providing financial and technical assistance to improve the lives of women globally.

Sources:

The Utne Reader
World Health Organisation
International Fund for Women
Centre for Women's Policy Studies
National Geographic

More money for your sex



Do men really earn more than women?

My dad, storyteller that he is, has often recounted the one about the time he lived in a caravan in Queenstown with his cousin Mark and spent the summer working in a hotel. Waiting tables, he said, or some such thing. The point of his story, though, wasn't mere nostalgia for those days of liberty, long hair, holey jeans and jandals (mostly because nothing has changed) but it was the lasting impression that working with the women in the hotel left on him. Now he's not one to notice gender differences all that much – his mother was a staunch farm manager who possibly shored sheep with one hand and fixed tractors with the other – but he was dumbfounded by the one enormous disparity he saw between the two sexes in that hotel. Pay. The women were earning \$25 a week, the men \$40, for doing exactly the same work to the same standard.

This was in the late 1960s of course, before second wave feminism had gathered momentum and before consumerism and the third wave of modernity had forced households to, at times, be dependent on a woman's income. Very few women were in positions of power. (Though if the

prime minister was a woman then, would she have earned less than the male prime ministers before her?)

Thank God herself that we're not still living in those times, right? As a woman in my early twenties I see few discrepancies between my income and those of my male contemporaries. And it is often pointed out that many of the top political and financial positions in New Zealand are currently held by women.

In 2004 Statistics New Zealand published a report entitled "Focusing on Women 2005" that spelt out just how great the pay divide still is, and what patterns it follows. Generally, women my age (20 – 24) earn almost as much as men of the same age, the difference being about \$2000 – \$3000 a year. From here on however, the gap widens. In our late 20s I can expect to be earning about \$7000 less a year and by my thirties the difference will be as large as \$17,000 to \$18,000 a year. And the gender pay gap is actually greater for those women with tertiary qualifications, than for those without. For example, research undertaken by the New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Committee reveals that within one year of graduating women with business and commerce degrees are earning \$11,000 less on average than their male classmates. It is not until men and women reach retirement that pay rates will again be almost on par. Even when the factor of part-time work is removed from the equation, the pay gap still follows this same trend, getting steadily larger from the mid-twenties to reach a peak in middle age, slackening off in the mid sixties. If we examine pay rates across all sectors – not only age but number of hours worked, occupation, highest qualification and marital status, we see the trend is consistently the same.

Throughout their lives and irrespective of social factors, women earn less than men.

So, is this pay disparity unfair? Dr. Pat Moloney, a senior politics lecturer at Victoria University with an interest in issues of sexuality and gender, says that given the statistics yes, it is unfair. He points out, using the example of male partners in a law firm, that this injustice is not only due to any discriminatory decisions made by individuals, i.e. those law partners in hiring a male over a female, but is also due rather to the larger set of expectations society has about what each person must do, dependent on their gender.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs states in its discussion document: "Next Steps Towards Pay Equity" that the difference between men's and women's pay in the work force cannot be explained only by factors like education and hours worked, and suggests that often there is a general undervaluing of the work women tend to do. It also claims that a current gap in government policies that address pay rates may be a factor. We've moved on since my dad's days in the Queenstown hotel – New Zealand has legislation that states that women must be paid the same amount for doing the same jobs as men. But there's no regulatory body that ensures this actually happens. We also don't have legislation that requires equal pay for work that is of equal value.

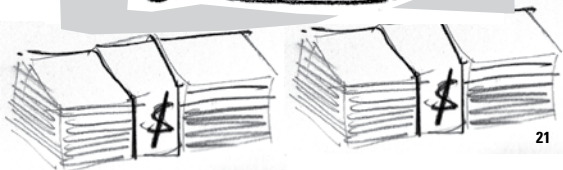
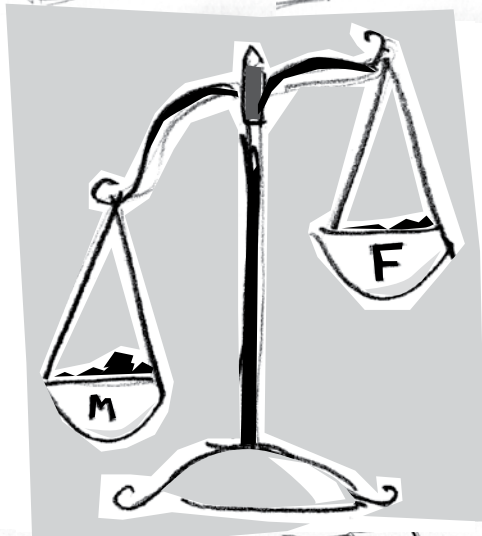
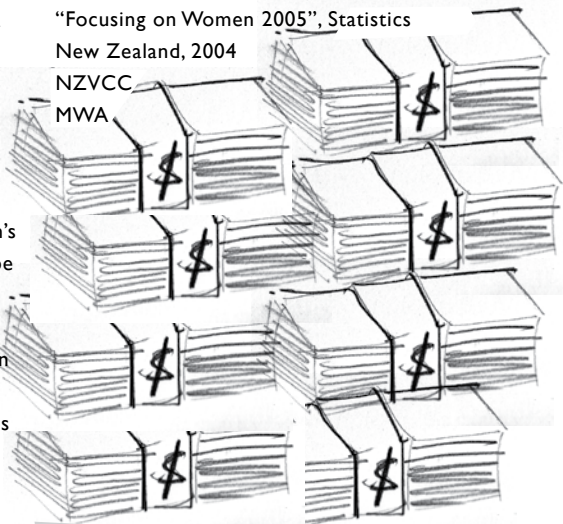
Although New Zealand has changed since the 1960s, there is still a larger societal set of attitudes that favour male attributes and gendered characteristics over female. As Pat Moloney puts it "There are still certain structural features of our society that are advantageous to men". Of course there are also aspects that are advantageous to women; it is easier for a woman to stay at home with the children, or become nurses, because society expects this of us. But in the public spheres, the spheres that are valued in our

society – wealth, status, income – the bias still tends to be male.

Many of us women in our early twenties feel as though things are equal now, because we're currently earning much the same as our male friends. Will we still feel this way in ten or twenty year's time?

Sources:

"Focusing on Women 2005", Statistics New Zealand, 2004
NZVCC
MWA



SINGLE CORE BENEFIT: THE END OF THE DPB

Tina McIvor

This Labour-led government is poised to make fundamental changes to our social welfare system by the end of 2007. Legislation that will abolish the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB) is due to be introduced by the end of this year. Instead, sole parents on the DPB (over 90% of them mothers) will be put on the same core benefit as those who are unemployed. Sole mothers who currently receive a DPB, will be expected to be in paid work i.e. doing something of value for the economy and the GDP. This is of concern to feminists as it further devalues the work being done by women as mothers.

If we allow this government to proceed with its plan, the principle which underpins the payment of all our social security benefits will be destroyed, that is, to provide all people with a primary income which takes account of different circumstances. The principle was established in 1938 and restated by the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security. The Domestic Purposes Benefit was introduced in 1972, to cater for sole parents, who had not been included under the 1938 legislation. The DPB has been a lifeline for many mothers and their children, especially those escaping violent and abusive family relationships. This system will be removed and replaced with the equivalent of a meagre unemployment benefit for all. Everyone will fall into the same box: "out of full-time work".

The attitude that only paid work has any value was institutionalised at Work and Income by National in the mid-nineties. National's policies included the implementation of the DPB work test, and this will become the norm once again if the Single Core Benefit is allowed to proceed. At present the official policy is that case managers create work plans to fit mothers' individual circumstances. For example a

mother may feel that her children are not ready to be left in childcare. However, a culture already exists at Work and Income where mothers are often levered off benefits by unsympathetic case managers, and this will be encouraged if the Single Core Benefit is allowed to proceed.

The proposed Single Core Benefit is clearly a cost-cutting measure, designed to save the government \$20 million per year rising to \$70 million per year. In order to achieve this, Work and Income will introduce a new service delivery model which aims to prevent people from claiming benefits. Applicants will be shunted off to look for a job before any application form for a benefit will be offered to them. This is yet another huge shift in policy around the provision of social security in New Zealand.

In the past, benefits have been provided to meet need – need that was recognised by the state as soon as a person approached Work and Income for help. The approach for help itself was taken as a genuine approach for assistance and an application form was provided and processed accordingly. Under the new regime, an approach for financial help is met with stone walls, hoops, and hurdles, as a person is referred to look for work. It will take a great deal of persistence and time to simply apply for a benefit to meet basic needs.

We are told government savings are not related to any cuts to benefits. We are also told no one will be worse off due to the introduction of the Single Core Benefit. However, we are told benefits will be grandparented¹, weekly abatements² are proposed, and there is deafening silence regarding the fate of the Training Incentive Allowance³.

If the past is anything to go by, this government will introduce benefit cuts, very sneakily, during the Christmas holidays, as it did when it reformed hardship assistance last year. Keep an ear out for the Single Core Benefit reforms, and have your say now!

¹ When a benefit is 'grandparented' it means that new applicants will be worse off.

² People who receive the DPB have the choice whether their earnings affect their benefit weekly or annually – the Ministry of Social Development is proposing to remove this choice. Most people who opt to have their earnings affect their benefit annually are financially better off. The difference can sometimes mean thousands of dollars.

³ The Training Incentive Allowance is currently available to people receiving the DPB, Widows, and Invalids Benefits, and is paid for course costs and course fees for those who undertake tertiary study. This benefit is worth up to \$3528 per year.

Have your say:

By writing to Minister David Benson-Pope, Parliament Buildings, Private Bag, Wellington. No stamp is necessary.

At the time of printing this issue of Muse the Ministry of Social Development is still seeking feedback regarding this proposal at:

www.workandincome.govt.nz/get-assistance/single-core-benefit/questionnaire

FEMINIST WORD FIND

Choice	Equity	Movement	Oppression
Collectivity	Feminism	Patriarchy	Social Change
Community	Freedom	Personal	Women’s Rights
Empowering	Justice	Political	

Q R P M V D T K A J F R E E D O M O U O
L I W Z H C C M T L A N O S R E P W A M
H S P S O N J P R Z S N C M E P U B Q E
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F E M I N I S M I O S C U N F J W P J E

THINGS THAT MAKE YOU GO GRRRRRR!

Natalie Gousmett

Every day there are so many frustrating, disgusting, ridiculous or unacceptable images and comments that we see or hear and that make us go grrrrrr. Often there is no one around to express your anger at, or for self preservation you decide to walk away. I have shared some of the things that have made me go grrrrrr recently, and I hope that in future issues readers will send in their own observations.

Nuts: I was walking down Cuba St with a friend and one of the guys from the Nut Stall yells at us “Hey ladies, would you like to try my nuts?” in a very suggestive manner! For fucks sake, will you please grow up!

Womanly skills: I was at the counter of the Marion Square Post Shop when a man in his 40s comes up to the counter next to me and says to the two female staff “Good morning ladies, can I have a pack of 40 cent stamps and a recipe?” to which one of the staff members says jokingly “do you mean a receipt or did you want a recipe for cheese scones?” Mr Smug and probably very insecure says “A recipe would be good, chance for you to practice your womanly skills.” At which point of course I am fuming but keeping my head down as I don’t want to interfere. Both staff seemed pretty embarrassed by that comment and told him in a joking way not to be so rude. Then he came back with this little



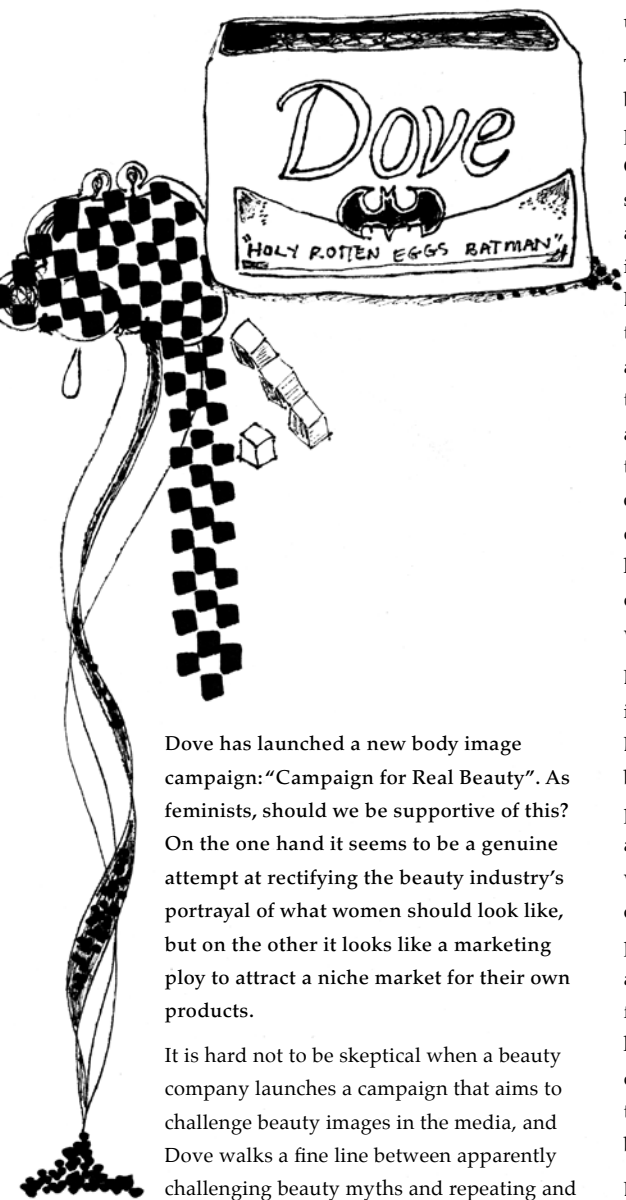
gem “As long as you chicks expect me to hold the door open for you, you can do the cooking for me”. Then while I still had my head down he had the audacity to start counting on his fingers how long it would take to get a reaction out of me! When I looked up he said he was wondering how long it would take to which I replied “You are only embarrassing yourself mate”. I would have liked to say much more, but who is on guard 100% of the time?

Get some pussy: Recently Nashville Pussy were touring here and did a gig at Indigo. You may have seen their very ugly and poorly designed posters all around town. I often get angry at posters with nothing but tits and arse advertising nothing to do with that, but the bursting busts of the cartoon women on these posters made me sick, not to mention the tag line “Nashville Pussy – Come Get Some”. Nice. Apparently ‘Come Get Some’ is the name of the album, of course a total fluke but if you go to their website looking for porn they do have a link to their favourite porn sites to help you out. This band is all class.

Send in things that make you go grrrrrrr for print in future issues of Muse to muse@riseup.net with “Grrrrrrr” in the subject line.

The Quest for 'Real' Beauty

Jenn Jones



Dove has launched a new body image campaign: "Campaign for Real Beauty". As feminists, should we be supportive of this? On the one hand it seems to be a genuine attempt at rectifying the beauty industry's portrayal of what women should look like, but on the other it looks like a marketing ploy to attract a niche market for their own products.

It is hard not to be skeptical when a beauty company launches a campaign that aims to challenge beauty images in the media, and Dove walks a fine line between apparently challenging beauty myths and repeating and

perpetuating them in their advertisements. They claim they want to use responsible marketing. But aren't they just exploiting women's insecurities to boost product sales, and raising their company profile amongst the new 'green generation' that is growing up now?

Their expensive campaign features giant billboards with "real" women striking a pose, and bus advertisements asking Grey? Gorgeous? and Fat? Fabulous?, amongst other slogans. Print media and advertisements have also been utilised as well as a website that has information about the campaign, research that Dove has initiated and discussion forums to talk about body image, unconventional beauty and older women. Dove has gone all out for this campaign, making it highly noticeable and consumer friendly. Their confidence in their campaign message could almost convince even the most ardent feminist of their genuine concern for women's body image and the harm that the beauty industry (and the media) causes through unrealistic portrayals of women. Almost, but not quite.

Dove has even set up a "self esteem fund" in collaboration with EDEN, the Eating Difficulties Education Network to support body image and self confidence education programmes. While there is no information about what exactly the self-esteem fund will do or is currently sponsoring, EDEN's own website states they run peer-support programmes in New Zealand high schools, as well as providing consultation and advice for school policy and curriculum formulation, hold parent education sessions and facilitate community support networks. They are targeting high schools as this is where they believe those at highest risk are situated.

Both the Dove campaign and EDEN's work

seem to be backed up by academic research, and in Dove's case provided the incentive for the campaign in the first place. In 2004 Dove commissioned a global survey of women "to explore the relationship women have with beauty". In total 4,100 women from thirteen different countries were surveyed, with women from New Zealand taking part in January 2006. The New Zealand study was conducted by Newspoll via telephone among 300 females aged 18-64 years.

As a response to the survey results, Dove initiated the campaign, claiming to want to start a movement for societal change around the "beauty" industry which they believe is unnecessarily narrow and one-sided. They also interviewed psychologists in relation to their campaign, such as Sara Chatwin from Auckland who claims "the study demonstrates that authentic beauty is a concept lodged in women's hearts and minds and seldom articulated in popular culture or affirmed in the mass media."

The results of the New Zealand survey provided some interesting statistics: 81% of New Zealand respondents felt that media and advertising set an unrealistic and unattainable standard of beauty, and 78% wished the media did a better job at portraying realistic images of women. However on closer inspection, the website provided conflicting statistics and also appeared to confuse New Zealand statistics for Australian ones. The value of the survey is highly diminished on these inconsistencies alone, let alone investigating the real motivations for the survey.

Disturbingly, Dove's work with EDEN could also be seen as targeting a new younger group of consumers who already potentially have body image problems. By associating their brand with a progressive organisation such as

EDEN, young women are encouraged to use their product and be drawn into the damaging consumer culture of beauty products.

Another let-down of the campaign is that the parent company, Unilever, is trailing behind in the "ethical" stakes. In Britain the company was the biggest proponent of genetically modified food until recently. Another Unilever company is Slim-Fast, a diet programme similar to Jenny Craig whose marketing aims specifically at women who are dissatisfied with their appearance and weight. These inherent contradictions within the company undermine the current campaign, and raise questions of how independent Dove is from its parent company and its dodgy ethics.

The Dove campaign appears to have good intentions, but the real agenda for the desire to be a socially responsible company is still unclear. Is Dove really trying to live up to an ethical marketing mantra, or are they utilising and manipulating our fears about body image to promote their product? As their website says, "[e]very day we are bombarded by hundreds- if not thousands- of airbrushed images of "beauty". These images have the power to affect how we see our bodies and ourselves. How can we encourage young girls and women everywhere to embrace a more positive body image?" Dove still has a long way to go in actually answering this question, rather than perpetuating it.

Sources:

www.campaignforrealbeauty.co.nz/

(Dove's campaign web site)

www.eden.org.nz

(EDEN website)

www.eatingdisorders.org.nz

(Eating Disorder Services NZ website)

www.eskimo.com/~largesse/

(Largesse, the network for size esteem)

Susi's Chocolate Balls

Ingredients:

- 1/2 - 3/4 cup cocoa
- 1 packet vanilla wafers biscuits
- 5 tablespoons of fluid eg. fruit juice
- rum
- 3/4 cup of coconut + a bit extra
- 250g butter grated
- 2 cups icing sugar
- little bit of vanilla essence

Steps:

1. Smash the biscuits
2. Mash all the ingredients together
3. roll the mixture into small balls
+ roll them in the extra bit
of coconut (or some chocolate
sprinkles!)
4. Freeze the balls for at least
an hour
5. serve 😊



Supplied by
Tanya Newman

Time to Repeal Section 59

Later this year, the Crimes Amendment (Abolition of Force as a Justification for Child Discipline) Bill comes before Parliament's Justice and Electoral Select Committee. The Bill would repeal Section 59 of the Crimes Act (1961), the legislation that gives parents who are prosecuted for assaulting their children the defence of 'reasonable force'.

Repeal means a parent hitting a child may be considered an assault, just as an adult hitting another adult might be. The age of the victim will be irrelevant in terms of prosecution and defence, as will the relationship between the victim and their assailant. Prosecution will depend on the event, and as with adult-to-adult assault, the context and circumstances.

There are many reasons why Section 59 should be repealed.

- Repeal gives a clear message against violence in our families and communities. We all have the right to lives free from violence, irrespective of our age or our relationship to the assailant.
- Repeal is consistent with the Paramountcy of the Child Principle that underpins New Zealand family law.
- Repeal favours 'positive parenting'. Hitting children is the most ineffective way to discipline them, and being hit as a child is a major risk factor for poor child and adult outcomes.
- Repeal will ensure New Zealand meets its international obligations. Article 19 of the UN Declaration on The Rights of the Child requires signatories to take all appropriate measures to protect children from violence while in the care of their parents. The UN has noted that Section 59 is inconsistent with Article 19.

Opponents of repeal use a 'smacking discourse'. This discourse normalises the hitting of children as acceptable, minimises hitting as 'smacking', asserts that 'smacking' children does no harm, maintains that 'smacking' children is sometimes necessary and effective for disciplining them and that after repeal, parents will become criminals 'just for smacking'. Children are seen as the property of their parents in this discourse, just as women were once seen as the property of men.

This smacking discourse which normalises hitting children as acceptable and 'rational' has real effects in children's lives. Research has shown children are most likely to be hit when their parents are angry, tired, and 'out of control'.

In countries where hitting children is no longer legal, there has not been any significant increase in prosecutions of parents for 'smacking'. Rather, the clear message that hitting children is not OK has seen big improvements in child outcomes.

Parents today are under a lot of pressure. Along with the repeal of Section 59, we need to ensure parents are well supported. Positive parenting programmes have been successful, but we also need better working conditions for working parents, and much better practical support for families when parents are stressed.

Get behind the campaign to repeal Section 59. Tell your local MP you support repeal, write to your local newspaper and challenge people who use the smacking discourse that normalises violence in our families and communities.





Opportunity to provide support

We are a small group of young women, living in Wellington, who have come together to create this free feminist zine. As a magazine, we wish to provide a space for women's voices, a forum for discussion, which enthusiastically encourages action, in a format that is easily accessible.

We all work on Muse in our own time but really need assistance to get copies printed and available.

Donations

If you can provide a donation to support the printing and the cost of materials for Muse then please do so using the following options;

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Tara B. E.