

Honi ⦿ Soit



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HONI SOIT
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WOM*N'S
EDITION

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Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge that *Honi Soit's* office is located on the traditional lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work, and pay our respect to to the Elders past and present. We stand here today as the beneficiaries of a racist and unreconciled dispossession. We acknowledge that the racism that permeates our society is also present in student activism and organisations.

Content Note

We would like to flag that some of the articles included in this publication may be distressing or triggering for some readers. Some of the issues that will be explored in this publication include sexual assault and harrassment against wom*n, trans* and gender diverse people, sex work, and experiences of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. If this issue brings up anything uncomfortable or triggering for you, please feel free to contact any of the following organisations, which offer a range of accessibility options such as translations, braille and interpreters.

Rape Crisis Centre

Ph: (02) 9819 6565/1800 424 017
TTY: (02) 9181 4349
www.nswrapecrisis.com.au

RPA Sexual Assault Service

Level 5 (g) KGC Building, RPA
Hospital, Missenden Road
Ph: (02) 9515 9040

Sydney Sexual Health Centre

Sydney Hospital, Macquarie St
Ph: (02) 9382 7440
TTY: (02) 9221 6516
www.sshc.org.au

NSW HIV/AIDS Info Line

Ph: (02) 9332 4000/1800 451 600

NSW Sexual Health Info Line

Ph: 1800 451 624

Our Cover

Constellations that fill the night sky, stars of all different shapes and sizes, aligning to form a beautiful pattern. Our cover artists felt that images of the galaxy represented our Collective as a harmonious collection of diverse individuals creating and working together.

“And I will seize whatever finality I can grasp, for the world is One burning phenomenon away from some Hell we've imagined And I hope you will take my hand as one, even in too Much silence, too much stimulation, and we will pinpoint the Right constellation”

Elena Zagoudis, excerpt from Acknowledgement I, II, and III



Artwork by *Jena Ye*

Check out our blog for more pieces and self-educative resources! <http://usydsr womens.blogspot.com.au/>

Failure

I wrote an article
For this paper
I choked it with words and that
What I made up and I thought
Could be made what we knew
I tried and tried
Countless hours
Bleeding with ink
Wasted on the effort
No one will ever read
Barely even
An excuse
Why I'm sensitive, why I missed
Your deadline
In the choked hours of sleep
I tried to work
Promise to act upon a bind
That had me in my flesh
Carved a little bird
Which struggled to free as
I pressed it, softer and softer
Until I let it go
Fly off into the calm above
Sparkly sky
Light which never extinguishes itself,
Let me learn,
Let me love now my self.

- *Isabella Hellig*

Georgia Cranko: On Life

Georgia Cranko explores the complex interplay of her sense of privilege and oppression in her life.

In certain circles, privilege and oppression are terms we use to describe our unequal social experiences. I imagine these words with quotation marks around them, because I tend to regard them as ideas which are somewhat intangible and academic. It's hard for me to pigeonhole and categorise my experiences of being alive. They seem to be just more boxes to squeeze myself into, leaving no room for grey areas, ambiguity, nor celebration. However that's perhaps a privileged perspective enabling me to undermine terms used to describe very valid, real, socially constructed lived experiences in order to appease my ego and pretend I'm more than the sum of my privileges and oppressions

My life, at times, appears to be a theoretical obstacle course. Despite the fact that I have a fair cache of social privilege, the way I move through the world is seriously coloured by the social oppression my body was immediately wrapped in at birth. I have a disability - my physical body is not quite the same as most people's, and my muscles move differently, but perhaps the most profound social difference is the way I speak. Since my brain was hurt in such a way when I was born, my natural voice is limited to a few mostly indecipherable sounds. However, I have no difficulty with the sounds that spontaneously arise with laughter or tears. I speak by fingerspelling words or by typing on an electronic device of some sort or another. And oh yes, I dribble, noticeably so (I'm always surprised at how a bit of saliva can scare people off approaching me).

I know the picture I paint of myself isn't comfortable for most people to comprehend, let alone without feeling pity. However as I write this seemingly innocuous word - P-I-T-Y - I feel a visceral sense of revulsion hit me in the pit of my stomach. It never fails

to upset me. This feeling comes hand in hand with understanding just how privileged I am (think growing-up-on-the-north-shore, think white-Catholic-school-girl and one-who's-able-to-rely-on-extremely-supportive-family-and-friends - these kind of privileges). The very fact that I made it to a tertiary education institution is an overt sign of my privilege, particularly in light of the fact that most people with a severe physical limitation will not get properly educated. Seriously, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, only a quarter of people with disability finish high school in Australia, and that's a very significant drop from the 50% of the regular school-attending population. Having a communication impairment further decreases those statistics, so in essence, I am really fortunate that I am in the position I am to be writing this article.

**Some of my
privileges are
solidly linked to
my oppressions,
and it hurts
my mind trying
to reconcile
that fact.**

I guess this is why experiences of privilege and oppression always leave me somewhat stumped. Some of my privileges are solidly linked to my oppressions, and it hurts my mind trying to reconcile that fact. As I previously alluded to, I am often marginalised in situations, but I have been fortunate to be equipped with tools that allow me to push through that oppression, and neither be crippled by it, nor defined by it. My intellect has

always been, and possibly will always be, doubted by strangers. I am lucky that I can prove my capability through my academic work, not only to others, but also to myself. Ironically, it is here, where I come unstuck. I have been socialised (and privileged enough) to minimise the hardships my disability entails, in order to not be perceived as ungrateful or self-pitying. Yet, if I didn't have the buffer of privilege in other areas of my identity, my quality of life would possibly be too horrible to imagine. So, unsurprisingly, I rightly value my privileges. I am fortunate in that I see myself as more or less the equal to my peers who don't have disabilities. What's more revealing, is that I, not only deserve and desire the same quality of life as they do, but I wholeheartedly expect it. However, in doing so, I become partially blind to the systemic social exclusion of others. And so the small, but daily, prejudiced slights from the wider community - I'm often patronised, ignored, and sidelined - have become necessary reminders for me to claim my oppressions, as well as my privileges, as a means to give a voice to others who are not quite so fortunate.

I face other confounding discriminations and societal challenges based on how I identify, but the assumptions about my physicality are something I have to constantly and consistently negotiate. That makes my other encounters with prejudice outside of my disability literally pale in comparison because of my other social advantages. This is not to say that the other oppressions I am impacted by, are any less distressing, just that they aren't as blatant and all-encompassing, and of course they are mapped on to my body in different ways. It was a significant realisation in my social consciousness, to learn how similar privileges and even similar oppressions can appear and operate quite differently

depending on how they are embodied.

I think of this when I remember friends who have equally persistent disabilities that severely interfere with their studies, but are not readily visible and so they aren't eligible for as much academic support as me. In those incidences, I feel the manifestation of my disability is one of hidden privilege, as it affords me both financial and other types of support. Although that extra help assists me to live my life in the way I choose, it also underscores the social oppression I contend with. For instance, if employers were spontaneously willing to hire someone like me, I wouldn't need to rely on the government for the pension (or be terrified that it will be cut). But I guess, for now, my privileges balance out my oppressions just enough so that I don't feel too socially limited, and for that, I am endlessly grateful.

Other embodiments and other lived experiences have their own emotional weight, social impacts and, their own privileges as well as oppressions. So I try and not project my experiences on to other people's identities, or speak authoritatively about other minorities. I have learnt that the many different facets of my identity form the basis of my human experience, and to devalue any of them is to devalue a part of myself. The ground between my privileges and oppressions is uneasy, hard to stand on, and a place where I can really only talk from the ever-evolving understanding of my own journey. Privileges and oppressions are things which I am still trying to work out how to navigate, while making room to just celebrate what is, and celebrate what I have, due to the lottery of life and the chaos of the universe.

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Dear White Feminist

When you lament the gender pay gap of 17.5%, you continually forget that this statistic represents White wom*n – and that wom*n of colour, trans* wom*n and immigrant wom*n experience a gap of 30 – 40%.

When you exclaim how inconceivable beauty standards are for young wom*n everywhere, you forget that worldwide, beauty is held to a White standard that marginalises the skin colour, body hair, facial features and body shapes of non-white wom*n.

When you attack men of colour for sexist behaviour, and label their ethnicity, as though that information is an essential part of your experience, you use and perpetuate racial stereotypes that hurt all people of colour in Australia.

When you criticise our home countries as “backwards” and “oppressive” you forget all of Australia’s flaws, and tout your egotistical saviourism as if White feminism is the liberator of wom*n across the globe. Reality check: IT’S NOT.

Dear White feminist,

When you are outraged at the portrayal of wom*n in television and the media, you forget that wom*n of colour experience this sexism ON TOP of constantly being type-cast in supporting roles with ethnic stereotypes and jokes following them everywhere they go.

When you label me as loud, rude and lacking in manners you put White culture in the top of a hierarchy in which my method of communication, manner of eating food and embodiment of culture is

inferior – and YOU have the privilege of shutting down this conversation whenever YOU want, because I have spent so many decades being ashamed and embarrassed of my ethnicity that I feel voiceless and oppressed into silence.

When you call my mother ‘cute’ you are *patronising* a strong, resilient and intelligent wom*n who has struggled with a chronic illness, speaking a second-language, and racist fucks like you every day she’s lived in Australia – get the fuck out.

When you think my family is crazy, you forget that our parents had to sacrifice and fight for every opportunity we have had in this country, and that they may have come from nothing – you forget that you are so entirely privileged and ignorant that you measure their sanity and ours with a White measuring tape that humiliates and demeans all people of colour.

Dear White feminist

When you grow out your body hair or have the audacity to comment on how this affects ‘wom*n’ you completely forget and erase the experiences of wom*n of colour. You will never understand what it is like to be compared to a gorilla or told to shave your arms by your classmates and you have NO AUTHORITY on the subject of how it affects us. Do not try to compare or impose your blonde or fair haired/skinned experiences upon those who have been bullied and policed about their body hair since pre-school.

When all of your racist behaviour, microaggressions, ignorance and White privilege go unacknowledged, you are no more a feminist than Tony Abbott, because if you believed in equality for ALL wom*n, you would fucking educate yourself.

Dear White feminist,

It is possible for you to help

create an inclusive space for all wom*n to feel supported and heard, but you have to actively listen, learn and understand. You are still responsible for the oppression of people of colour until you actively change yourself. The key is, instead of starting with “But I’m not racist,” start with, “I experience White privilege and I have oppressed people of colour my entire life, but now I am taking responsibility of this and making a change today.

Bridget Harilaou

Dear Hacks

This morning I was walking to uni from Redfern station and a person with a campaign t-shirt approached a student walking in front of me and fell into step beside her. At first I assumed they were friends, such was the casual purpose with which the first girl had approached the second. But I soon realised that the campaigner had started up on her campaign spiel and the student was looking incredibly uncomfortable. She didn’t really have much option but to listen – a fact which the campaigner clearly knew and exploited. For one, the campaigner wasn’t pausing for breath, and even if she had, she was relying on the fact that the student would not want to seem rude by asking her to stop or, you know, go away.

This is not an isolated incident. During the past couple of weeks I’ve seen people in brightly coloured shirts sit down with people to interrupt their lunch, accost vague acquaintances on their way to class, and corner strangers while they’re trying to study.

Now, if you ask me, this type of harassment and intimidation doesn’t sit well with democratic notions of free and fair elections. But that’s for someone else to explore. Today I want to talk about my concern

that these practices perpetuate a disregard for the autonomy and agency of other people.

In the scenario discussed above the campaigner intentionally chose a ‘target’ who was unlikely to voice any objections to the harassment. The student was a young woman and was walking alone. People in our society, particularly women, often feel like they cannot say ‘no’ to things that they do not want or enjoy for fear their ‘no’ will be ignored, that they will be harassed until they change their mind or that they will seem ‘rude’ or like they’re ‘making a scene’. The campaigner knew that it was likely that the student would feel too uncomfortable to say anything and she exploited this knowledge.

As an alternative to this style of campaigning I would like to propose a campus politics that respects the autonomy of students and acknowledges consent as a necessary component of freedom. We know where you are (all the absurdly bright colours are hard to miss) and we’ll come to you if and when we want information.

But if you do feel the need to approach us please do so *without* the intention of making us feel isolated and unsafe. The best way of doing this would be by giving us a real option as to whether or not we want to engage, by giving a genuine opportunity to say ‘no’. For example: “Hi, I’m Amy and I’m running for SRC. I was wondering if you’re in a rush or whether you’d like to hear about some of my campaign policies.” By providing two options the other person gets to actually chose whether or not they want to hear about what I have to say.

Coercion, discomfort and harassment are not a good basis for any respectable politics. You all lament that students on campus are disengaged from the political process. I suggest that if you respect us enough to engage on our own terms then we just might do so.

Kind regards,

Amy Davis

To My Love of Metal

I’m a massive metal head. No, I don’t have a secret love of copper and steal – metal as in head banging, crowd surfing, male dominated (whoops, who said that?) metal. When I was 11, there was a cute guy that we knew and I really wanted to spend more time with him. So, instead of doing the logical thing and talking to him, I got my older sister to investigate. She comes back with the golden knowledge: “He’s into a band called Parkway Drive, but sorry you probably won’t like them...” When I first heard it, it reminded me of the really intense scene in ‘Shrek’ where Shrek is knocking out all these knights while Self’s version of ‘Bad Reputation’ is playing. I loved it – and I only had 5 songs!

So, here I am a good 7 years later and I still love the intensity and passion that is metal. As I am now 18 and have a job, I find myself going to more and more gigs thrashing around, feeling the music. When I mosh, however, I can feel all the people around me move away, not because I’m ‘fight dancing’ but because I’m a wom*n – like I am so delicate that if they whack into me one of my dainty limbs will fly straight off and fall into their manly beer.

Instead of feeling like I am part of the ‘metal’ family, I feel like an outsider occasionally invited in. One of the happiest moments of my life was when I had just broken up with my boyfriend, who I went to most concerts with, and I went to a metal gig alone. (dun dun duuuuun!!!) Not only did I come out with two friends who treated me as

one of their mates, a guy gave me a stinging high-five for my excellent fight dancing performance. I felt so incredibly liberated and not at all limited as a wom*n.

The message for today is confidence. If you stride into any kind of male-dominated arena with your head held high (imagining them as sesame street puppets sometimes helps), you can do, play or listen to anything you want. And the most important this is that you do this without feeling like you shouldn’t be there because it’s ‘unsafe’ or ‘not sexy’.

Georgia Readett

Dear Allies, Mackle-Less

Dear Allies,

I’m writing this open letter to you because every time we speak directly I come away feeling like a ‘bad queer’—an irony which I’m sure you will not appreciate at all. So from here on in I’m going to be as clear as I possibly can be.

Dear Allies,

Could you please just stop?

The more I experience of you the more I begin to realise that an Ally is a lot like an umbrella: everyone tells you they are good at protecting you, but whenever you use one you end up more drenched than you would have been in the first place, and left carrying around a cumbersome addendum which gets in everyone else’s way. I’ve never met an umbrella which didn’t turn inside out and give up at a good gust of wind—but I’ve also never seen an umbrella

ask to be rewarded because it stood against something it was impervious to.

Dear Allies,

You get raincoat skin. You get a car, a roof with no holes, a heart free of mildew, and a thousand safe dry places where you can wait out the storm that we can’t, walking home in drenched and hole-ridden shoes.

You can’t stand under my umbrella (*ella, ella*) because we were only given one to share between us, made of letters and labels that leave no room to breathe (*eh, eh, eh*). This shit doesn’t work like it did for Mary Poppins, the only energy I have goes in bags that are not infinite, and if being a queer doesn’t mean I can fly then you don’t get a spoonful of sugar with this medicine.

(A metal pole and a sheet of nylon isn’t enough to keep out the hatred, the snide comments and the sideways glances unless it’s something I’m using to hit you.)

Dear Allies,

I’ve had enough of this cognitive Cissonance, this Str8 out ignorance, these conversations that go nowhere and make me feel like nobody because I’m too busy trying to explain to you why I should be “allowed” to hate the people who have made their power out of hating me.

How about we stop giving a shit about the umbrellas and start doing something about *all this rain?*

Dear Allies,

If I hear one more word about how Macklemore was brave to write *Same Love*, I’m gonna get mad.

Dear Allies,

I’m already mad. I’ve got a lot to be mad about. I’ve got 19 years in this body, and only 2 of knowing why I hated it, felt like a visitor to my own life. I’ve got 15 years knowing what I’m supposed to want and 6 as an alien in my living room.

I’ve got just six months of knowing exactly who I am, and you get lifetimes, so now I’m taking some the fuck back. You’ve got your history. You’ve got books of it. Stop scribbling your name over the stories of people who were only ever margin additions and footnotes. Everyone knows your name, it’s time you learned ours.

Dear Allies,

I ate your fucking cookies.

Charlie O’Grady

Dear Interested People

Wom*n’s Collective meets every Wednesday at 1pm on the first level of Manning in the Wom*n’s Room every week.

Wom*n’s Collective aims to be an accessible, inclusive and respectful space to share and discuss our diverging experiences and facilitate activism stemming from these experiences. To get involved please email: usydwomencollective@gmail.com.

We would love to meet you!

Kind Regards,

Georgia Cranko, Julia Readett, Phoebe Moloney (SRC Wom*n’s Officers)

“Historical Accuracy” in *Game of Thrones*

Shayma Taweel *explores race and gender representations in the latest TV show obsession. *contains season four spoilers**

The objectification of women, excessive scenes of sexual violence, and the racial othering that make up a significant portion of the HBO show *Game of Thrones* are regularly dismissed by fans as historically accurate portrayals. Criticism of these aspects is therefore unnecessary, because ‘that’s just how it was back then’.

There are a couple of problems with this. For one: back when, exactly? *Game of Thrones* and *A Song of Ice and Fire*, with their dragons, demon-babies, and white walkers, are positively works of fiction. The author of the series, George R.R. Martin, has himself repeatedly expressed a dislike for analogies being drawn between his work and specific historical periods. The series is the work of his imagination – literally anything is possible in this fantastical world.

Of course, this doesn’t rule out the influence of historical events and cultures on his work. But distinction should be made between ‘the past’, and ‘how George R.R. Martin, David Benioff, and D.B. Weiss, as white American males, understand the past’. In other words, we need to critically examine why past societies are depicted a particular way in popular culture, and why these depictions so often rely on problematic tropes.

One of the most striking examples is the characterisation of the Dothraki in both the books and the show. They are a warmongering people, who rape women at weddings, and murder without restraint. These characteristics aren’t limited to ‘evil’ individuals as they are in Westeros, but are instead understood as inherent to their one-dimensional culture. Their perspective is never provided – they are not humanised characters. Rather, the Dothraki are the savage Other, common to the fantasy genre in general. Notably, the Dothraki are brown people. George R.R. Martin and fans alike have made the argument that the Dothraki are inspired by the Mongols, commonly seen as ‘barbarian hordes’.

Yet this popular understanding of Genghis Khan and the Mongols as the definition of savagery is misinformed at best, and racist at worst. Under Genghis Khan’s rule, women could own property, divorce at will, and hold positions of military and political authority. His daughters, not sons, inherited his empire. Chances are you’ve heard of the Wrestler Princess who would only accept the marriage proposal of a man who could defeat her in combat, and died unmarried with thousands of horses – prizes from her defeated suitors. She was the great-granddaughter of Genghis Khan. While this doesn’t mean life under Genghis Khan was particularly pleasant for women, there is clearly much more to medieval Mongolian societies than the dominant

narrative of brutality, yet this stereotype persists because it affirms Western notions of civilisation.

Even the Dornishmen of Westeros are not immune to orientalist interpretations in *Game of Thrones*. While the novels describe the Dornish as varying in skin colour between dark, olive, and fair depending on geographical location, the show has essentially ‘whitewashed’ this society. Both the main representative of Dorne (Oberyn Martell) and his posse are disproportionately fair. Yet they are still dressed in what can only be described as ‘eastern’ attire, including turbans and keffiyah-like headdresses. In addition to this, almost every scene of Oberyn’s has been set in a brothel or with naked women in the background. This strikes of exoticism and oversexualisation, with connotations of ‘Arabian harems’ – a very popular portrayal of the Middle East. Thus (inaccurate) imagery of the Other is maintained, while the actors portraying this culture are almost exclusively white. These casting and directing decisions are defended, however, because apparently there were little to no people of colour in medieval Europe. Frankly, this is a completely false assumption: the historical and archaeological records of European societies indicate a significant presence of people of colour from across the world.

The series is the work of his imagination – literally anything is possible in this fantastical world.

One last example touches on the sexual objectification and violence of *Game of Thrones*. The original character Ros appears to have been created solely to enable more brothel scenes in the show (although they certainly haven’t stopped with her death). In these scenes, women’s bodies are literally background set pieces to the conversations of the main characters. They add little to



the plot or character development. Despite this, these scenes are aggressively justified as realistically reflecting the sexism of medieval European, and therefore, Westerosi societies. This masks the more titillating motivations behind such scenes. Even with this in mind, misogynist male characters are still sympathised with by modern audiences, because clearly they can’t help their sexist ways. Take Jaime Lannister, who in the episode four, rapes his sister/lover Cersei. While this is a significant departure from the books, it sits quite well within the established sexual violence of the show. This alteration completely contradicts Jaime’s character development thus far – he lost his hand trying to prevent the gangrape of Brienne, and explicitly expressed that if he were a woman, he would rather be killed than raped, as well as the fact that he greatly respects his sister, viewing himself as her protector. Meanwhile Cersei Lannister, a character who arranged her husband’s death because he treated her brutally, is now apparently lacks just as much agency as the next woman. The scene thus foregoes consistency to repeatedly highlight the misogyny of Westeros. This boils down to the fact that rape is used for shock value in the show, with little regard for anything else. There is also an implication that because Jaime is currently undergoing a redemption arc, his violation of Cersei can be interpreted as a subversion of her ‘negative influence’, and therefore a step in the right direction – a sickening thought.

Ultimately, the claim of historical accuracy in depictions of racist and sexist landscapes is wrong in both senses: Westeros does not have a realistic counterpart in history because it is a work of fantasy; even if we are to accept the premise that *Game of Thrones* and *A Song of Ice and Fire* are grounded in medieval history, these portrayals are in fact very inaccurate. They heavily rely on stereotypes that reveal more about the attitudes of modern audiences than those of past societies. Above all, these portrayals – however fictional – matter because the assumptions that lie behind them are regularly applied to women and people of colour today. It seems that ‘historical accuracy’ simply acts as an excuse for the perpetuation of racism and misogyny.

Changing Domestic Violence Campaigns

Bernadette Anvia *reflects on how an incident on state transit has affected her approach to campaigns to eliminate domestic violence and violence against wom*n.*

On a peak hour train during the usual mid-week rush to university, the music playing softly from my earphones wasn’t loud enough to block out the numerous threats that a young man was shouting at his partner. The music wasn’t enough to drown out her pleas and sobs, or her attempts to cower down as far away from his considerably larger figure as she could in the limited space that the two-seater they were sitting on provided them with.

“Please, please just calm down. I didn’t do anything. I didn’t sleep with him, please PLEASE. Here take my phone, look at the messages, please just don’t touch me, just LEAVE ME ALONE.”

He spoke of her body in the vilest language, making suggestive remarks as if he owned her, owned her body- as if she was his property to own and handle as he pleased, not as a woman who could determine her own choices and what she did with her body.

And not one of us said a word.

To this day I am ashamed I, nor anybody else, stepped in. It saddens me more that I didn’t have the courage to tell him that what he was saying and threatening to do was unacceptable, whether or not she had been unfaithful to him. It angers me to think that our silence seemed to be a silent consent for him to keep doing what he was doing, whether it be to her, or any other woman.

Although we did not lay a finger on her, we nonetheless assisted in delivering those blows to her person.

Our society has a tendency to associate domestic violence with the private sphere- after all, what place is more domestic than the family home? - and as a result, we often hide behind the fact that domestic violence happens behind closed doors and therefore, is out of our control. So its occurrence on a train (or any other public place for that matter) is a shock to many of us. Whilst we may make a great show of saying that we are against domestic violence, stopping it as it happens in front of us is a different matter altogether.

Current anti-domestic violence and violence against women campaigns focus extensively on the shaming of the perpetrators, seeking to place a huge emphasis on the proper manner that men should treat women. It’s about time we realised that the prevention of violence against women is not predicated solely on the changing of the ways of violent men, but also of the ways of the rest of society.

As we are not the ones perpetrating the violence, we feel we have done enough of our duty to women by merely making a few empty phrases condemning the perpetrators.

But it’s *not enough*. We should be compelled to speak out, and not to turn a blind eye. We should be compelled to match our words with actions.

This article is my way of making a promise both to myself, and to her: a promise that next time I will say or do something, and not just sit by and watch a woman get physically or verbally abused.

Eleven recent shows that have empowered me personally

Aliza Chin

Of course, none of these shows are perfect and have their own individual problems, but they are a good start in my opinion. The trigger warnings (tw) are provisional; I still have some episodes to catch up on.

1. *Elementary* (TV series) tw: death, violence, gun violence, 2012-present
2. *Sleepy Hollow* (TV series) tw: death, gore, 2013-present
3. *Hannibal* (TV series) tw: death, gore, abuse, cannibalism, 2013-present
4. *Welcome to Nightvale* (podcast) 2013-present
5. *The Mindy Project* (TV series) 2012-present
6. *Call the Midwife* (TV series) tw: death, childbirth, abortion, 2012-present
7. *Brooklyn 99* (TV series) 2013-present
8. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (TV series) tw supernatural elements, horror, consent issues, death, violence, attempted rape (1997-2003)
9. *Scandal* (TV series) tw: rape, racism, infidelity, corruption (2012-Present)
10. *Firefly* (TV series) tw: ableism, violence, death, fatal disease (2002)
11. *Scandal* (TV series) tw rape, racism, infidelity, corruption (2012-Present)



Media doesn’t exist in a vacuum; it represents the world with all its issues, it’s positivity, and it’s population. So why is it that there’s so little representation out there for women, people of colour, people with disability, and the LGBTQIA community? Because, let’s face it, as awesome as the media that we consume is, there’s no denying that it can be a lot better.

This is where this list comes in: a starting point of podcasts, movies, books and TV shows that are taking issues of representation seriously and don’t make you want to rip your hair out. Please keep in mind that this list does not contain every single form of representative media (it is merely a starting point) and that the listed media themselves are not perfect and do have their issues.

Also, this does not mean that you cannot enjoy media that doesn’t do well with representation, because it’s alright to enjoy problematic things, as long as you acknowledge the problematic aspects and don’t try to defend them.

Sisterhood

*Is the conception of 'sisterhood' doing anything for intersectional feminism?
Astha Rajvanshi interrogates the pros and cons of this 'universalising' concept.*



The first time I ever bonded in solidarity with other women was when I began attending an all-girls high school. I remember my first day, sitting in a classroom full of only girls and glancing at the door during roll call, as if I was expecting the boys to enter any minute to have their names marked off. Of course, they were never going to come.

And there was something more – it was a kind of sisterhood, a connection formed in coming together to support each other simply because we were all women. Of course, it was never so simple, nor peaceful; women are much too passionate and diverse to simply bundle together.

Sisterhood, as an all-encompassing term for the collective experience, struggles, activism and feminism of women, presented a realm of doubts and complexities at the same time.

In 1970, Robin Morgan penned an anthology titled *Sisterhood is Powerful*. It was one of the earliest works to mark the women's liberation movement, still standing as one of the most influential books of the 20th century. Morgan, amongst others, sought to remind us of this natural affiliation to power – it was the power of personal relations, between women and women, and men and women, that was to bear against the politics of the patriarchy. The sisterhood is powerful because the personal is political.

Since the '70s, the notion of sisterhood has evolved and come to mean many things. Whilst some have lambasted it for being an ally to white, middle-class feminists at the cost of intersectional identities, others have made it their go-to term, because whilst

they do not want to take on feminism they still maintain an affiliation to the experience of being a woman.

At the core of sisterhood lies a camaraderie and commonality in the affirmation of being women. In this sense, to believe in a sisterhood is to be, on some level, a feminist. It exists as a consciousness-raising notion, a psychological space within the minds of women to come to know themselves through knowing one another.

However, rising female individualism and opportunity have given with one hand, only to take away from the other. In the past, sisterhood recognised that our strengths as women lay in what was similar amongst our differences. Embodying the premise that women, like men, can be discussed in the abstract, it has drawn much of its force from the assumption that womanhood is a universal condition – an assumption that is very far from the reality of women's lives. In a world divided by class, race and sexuality, sisterhood has not always provided for women of colour, migrants, queer or trans* women that exist outside the confines of a traditional, white middle-class society. Their oppression reminds us that feminism still fails to defend social and economic changes to ensure decent lives for all women. Sisters are still divided by a narrow margin between commitment to social transformation and unintended benefactors of implicit social systems.

If women are wise to reject a false sisterhood based on shallow notions of bonding, what is to be said of the solidarity and support that, at the core of it, is provided by being a woman? For one, sustained woman bonding can occur

only when these divisions are confronted.

At the same time, women are also taught that our relationships with one another diminish, rather than enrich our experience. We are taught that women are enemies and that solidarity will never exist between us. There exists, also, a women's legacy of woman-hating, of vicious, brutal, verbal tearing apart of one another because of our differences. Even *Mean Girls* served to remind us that the win or lose competitiveness, often associated with male interactions, is demonstrated by women in dialogue.

Equally within discussions of sisterhood, men are overlooked easily. After all, sisterhood began as a counter to the male-focused society that women lived in. Too many sociology studies analysing women's interactions have commented on how much time women spend talking about men – on how to understand them or how to refuse them. But womanhood is vacuous when it forgets that in society, men are put first in society by other men and by other women. Feminism has achieved so much because women have been willing to put each other, and their shared experiences, first.

Women do not need to eliminate difference to feel solidarity, or even share common oppression to fight it for that matter. We do not need anti-male sentiment to bond together. We can come together for a sisterhood in the diversity of our ideas and experiences.

I've since come to realize that on that first day of high school, somewhere in that classroom, was an invisibility of women that I had ignored because I was waiting for the men to arrive.



*"Complicity" by
Clare Angel-Auld*

The Aftermath Nicola Cayless

- I think about you most when I am in the supermarket.
Cans stretch from wall to wall, stark lights
beat an anthem behind my eyes.
I think I am one of those cans, neatly packaged for the juice inside.
Oh, to be you. How many choices you have.
How many meals you can eat.
- Do you rip into the meat; do you strip flesh from the bones?
Do you lick the sauce from your lips; do you wipe up the blood with bread?
- A boy I know once told me that it's not desecration if you've had the dish before.

When I tried to say that lambs aren't silent, they scream when you cut them,
he laughed and told me, you're biased, you see wolves
wherever you go.
- Secrets hide in the catacombs of my knees, shaking.
I couldn't stand to sit next to him.
I was too afraid to stand up.
- Men don't wait for the moon. They have claws, fangs, fur;
even the ones who love me, the ones who kiss me gently, and sit by me
while I burn beneath the moonlight.
- How do you tell a man they frighten you,
when all they've done is say hello?
- I know your name and that is why I cannot speak
to boys with kind eyes, boys whose only crime is being named.

I can't look at bald men without feeling sick. I can't walk home
beside tall men. I can't talk to shopkeepers with crinkled eyes.
- I wrap terror around me like a blanket.
- Avoidance is an instinct,
always running,
never fighting.
- I avoid carparks. I avoid the backseats of cars.

I avoid kissing men with stubble.
- I avoid making love with my eyes closed.
- There aren't any places that are safe for me anymore.

Not the supermarket. Not my home. Not my dreams.
- My dreams are horror movies that I can't turn off.
- What do you do when they joke about the loss of your childhood?
How do you run when their voices bolt your legs to the floor?
- The definition sticks in my throat when I try to tell people
why I'm angry, why I'm sad, why I am who I am.
- I am Frankenstein's monster, your creature, your plaything,
yours. You have pulled me from the flames.
I am forever running and coming back.
- I am sitting down to write a poem about you. I think I have done this
a hundred times, and every time I can feel you breathing down my neck.

I wonder if there will come a time I can write without shivering.

A Punter's Guide

Recently, I stumbled across the blog 'The Rules Revisited' which claims to provide advice (from a man) to women on how to better attract the opposite sex. The description reads 'I've dated countless women and it has always amazed me how little they know about men and how to attract them. If nothing else, this blog is an outlet for voicing my astonishment at the typical female's ignorance of the male mindset'. Well, if he has the right to write an (albeit incredibly patronizing) guide to how women should behave, surely I, as a sex worker, have the right to write a guide on how clients should behave?

Approximately 16% of Australian men will pay for sex at least once in their life; I am willing to hazard a guess though that the amount who have had a paid interaction with a sex worker in some sort of situation is higher because many are not willing to admit it and 'paid for sex' could be interpreted to exclude having an erotic massage with hand relief, which is given by a sex worker. Almost all of the clients who come to see me are university educated; many of them have been to the University of Sydney, specifically. Many of the current male students and staff at this university will see a sex worker at some point in their life, if they haven't already.

So to any future clients of sex workers, I direct this advice to you now:

1. Just because I am a sex worker does not mean I forfeit the rights over and possession of my own body.

My body is still my own, you may only touch what I say you can touch and the idea of consent does not vanish just because there is a monetary transaction. Every sex worker has different boundaries. I work at a massage parlour with a brothel licence. That means you can pay \$160 for a half hour with me, which includes being able to touch me above the waist and a hand job and anything else is legal but extra and up to me. No, you can't kiss me. No, I don't do anything with my mouth. You want to touch my pussy? That's an extra \$50. You want to touch inside my pussy? That's another \$50 on top of that. You want to lick my asshole? That's \$250 (and no, that doesn't mean you can lick my pussy too).

It is not hard to ask 'may I touch you here?' or 'do you do any extras?' before beginning the massage. It is not hard to ask if you can please suck on my tits before reaching for them and sucking them (for the record, if you ask I will say yes - if you just dive for them I will move away). Slipping a finger in my asshole unasked and unwanted is invasive and insulting to me as an individual. Pressuring me into giving a blowjob with no condom because 'all the other girls here do' is ridiculous; their rules are not my rules and one sex worker's consent does not speak for all sex workers. When asked the other



day if I do full service (industry word for sex) in an intro to a client I said no and his response was to spank me on the ass and say 'I could just get you so horny that you roll with it'. **Number one:** it is not appropriate to touch me like that when you haven't even booked me/paid for me yet, **number two:** you are deluded if you think I am going to change the service I offer because you have some special quality the other men I see don't, and number three: 'rolling with it' is not a particularly enthusiastic start to sex - do you really want to have sex with a girl that is



like 'oh dear this has already started so I just won't stop it, might as well let it keep going' - fuck that!

2) Pay good money.

Go to a licenced brothel for the sake of your sexual health and for the sake of the girls. Cheaper places, illegal places, mean the management is dodgy and the girls aren't treated well. Sure, you can pay \$80 for a massage and full service but how do you know how much of that the girl is actually getting? Many places take more than a 50% cut. The parlour I work at has a no drugs policy, girls are fired if they are caught giving natural services (meaning any service without a condom) and Asian workers are paid the same rates as girls of other races. Due to the fact there are a high number of Asian sex workers in Australia many establishments do not pay Asian workers equal wage. You may pay more, however, what you are paying for is the good and fair treatment of the girls, and not feeding the underground and unrestricted part of the industry that leads to the exploitation of many, many women.

Artwork by Elizabeth Mora:
Read My Lips

Almost all of the clients who come to see me are university educated; many of them have been to the University of Sydney specifically.

3) Be respectful.

If you say something crude to me like 'I'm as tall as an Eiffel tower right now and raring to go' and 'how about I teach you to ski [whilst gesturing to do a simultaneous double hand job to you and your nineteen year old son next to you]?' don't be surprised when I say 'I don't like your attitude' and turn and walk out. We are not a joke and we are not to be taken for granted - this is not a game of 'I've paid for this girl so let's see how much I can belittle her now I know that she's a sure thing'. 60% of the clients who I see are lovely men who it is a joy to massage and chat to. They enjoy their massage because I enjoy their company and it shows. I send them away knowing that I have made their day a little bit better by providing that service - spreading positivity! Of course, I realize that many of the clients inside are just a reflection of what they are outside. Those who say disgusting things to me and touch me without permission are the very same harassing women in clubs and on the street. Or perhaps they treat women in their public life well but don't view sex workers as deserving of the same respect. We are providing you a service that you want and like, surely in the business world that means that we should be afforded at least common politeness?

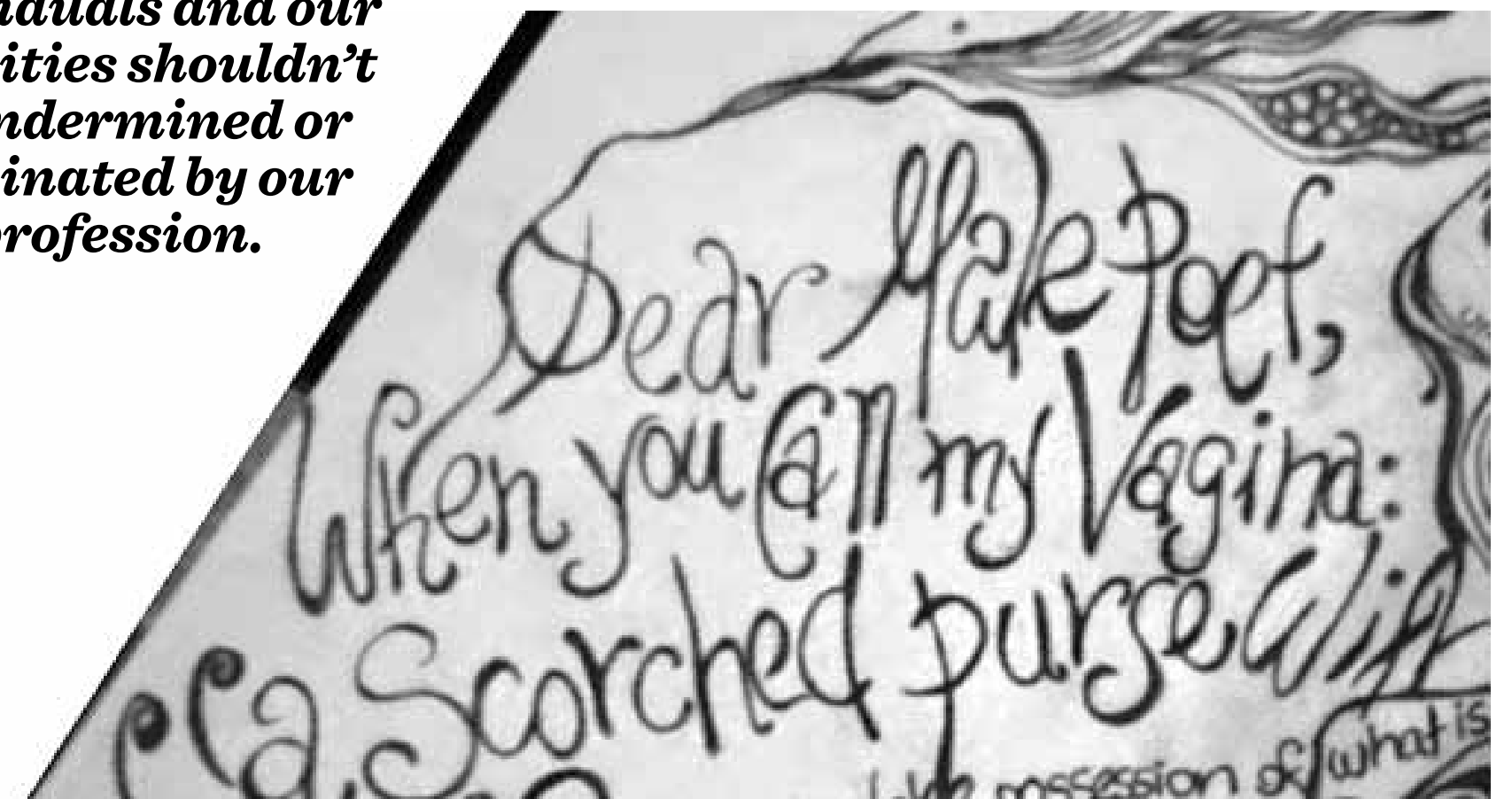
Every single one of these women deserves respect. We are all individuals and our identities shouldn't be undermined or eliminated by our profession.

I originally intended with this article to write what many sex workers have before me; a piece about how my body is my body and it is my choice what I do with it, I can sell my mind and I can sell my body and that does not mean I value either one more or less than the other, or one is somehow wrong. I can't believe that is still needing to be stated in 2014 though - of course it is the woman's choice. It is perfectly acceptable to want sex and it is perfectly acceptable to buy or sell sex. The debate of whether or not sex work is moral and should it be legal or not is irrelevant (it will continue regardless of what people decide on this front); what needs to be done today is an addressing of the problems within the sex industry. In Europe, this may involve an attempt to clamp down on sex trafficking, and discovering individual by individual which girls are there by choice and which have been coerced/forced into sex work. In Australia, there needs to be a clamping down on illegal brothels, where women are underpaid and mistreatment passes under the radar. The discrimination against Asian women (they are paid lower wages than women of other races across the board) needs to stop.

I am a firm believer in that many of the problems with the sex industry come from the clientele base, or at least can be changed with conscious change by clients. The harassment of streetwalkers comes from the clients and their attitudes towards women. Clients need to also be aware of what they are paying for and if the girls are well treated by their management. They also need to be conscious of their own treatment of the women they see, and if they are making the women feel uncomfortable in their job. I am very aware that as a white,

English-speaking, educated woman it is very easy for me to feel empowered by my choice to work in the sex industry as I have other options. I am also aware of the economic factors that partly contribute to me being here: I am living out of home, I have a single unemployed parent who can't support me financially. This is, all while, some of my friends sit in Paddington mansions and make comments such as "prostitution just seems a bit desperate."

The variety of women I work with is astounding. A nurse who was so over being sexually assaulted by patients she decided to take control over her sensuous body and wield her sexuality for monetary gain. Middle aged mothers who are paying for the legal fees for their divorces whilst they raise three children. A professional masseuse who got so sick of having male clients turn over with a hard on and try to grope her that she said 'I might as well be paid for this shit' and came to work at an erotic massage parlour. A Laotian woman whose husband divorced her when they moved to Australia because she wasn't 'sexually confident' enough and is now training to be a nail technician because her language skills don't offer her much else. The other day she announced to us that she is so happy to be working with all of us women because never before has she been able to talk about sex or her body parts without feeling ashamed. Every single one of these women deserves respect. We are all individuals and our identities shouldn't be undermined or eliminated by our profession.



#NoMakeUpSelfie

Vanessa Chevukwa Mukhebi and Clare Angel-Auld are on a mission to uncover the way in which sexism and discrimination can be conveniently hidden behind the guise of a 'good cause'.

It's no surprise to see a 'selfie' or five when scrolling through your newsfeed on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. However, the latest selfie trend has sparked a surprising amount of controversy, cynicism and debate. In recent months 'au naturel' faces of women across Australia and the UK have sought to counteract perceptions of the selfie with fresh-faced photos in the name of breast cancer awareness.

The #nomakeupselfie first emerged in the UK as an un-officiated move by individuals hoping to stand in alliance with breast cancer patients and survivors by demonstrating that the illness does not compromise their beauty in the eyes of society. While it has since surpassed £8 million for *Cancer Research UK* through text donations, many individuals took to social media lamenting that countless, if not most people had taken the time out for the selfie, but not the donation. It is worth asking ourselves whether these arguments around accuracy and also narcissism are warranted, and where we draw the line for the good of a campaign or cause.



Expert in behavioural psychology, Amanda Lacy says there is an aspect of self-gratification in these behaviours,

but the campaign has a genuine, emotional reach. "They want to support the sisterhood." She says there is a legitimate link between the concepts of no make-up and breast cancer. "Breast cancer is close to most women's hearts, it touches the very essence of image and I think how this correlates to no make-up is quite a profound synergy in many ways."

It is worth considering, though, that the 'raw' and 'exposed' image participants seek to emulate may not be a true symbol of solidarity with the experience of the illness. While both the true effects of cancer on women's bodies and wearing no make-up are not in compliance with the archetype of femininity, one is clearly more debilitating than the other.



Kim Stephens, journalist and breast cancer survivor wrote in the *Brisbane Times* that "By putting down their lip gloss, snapping a picture of their healthy faces and

blithely professing their bravery for posting it publicly, women everywhere are indirectly saying 'this is me at my least attractive'... to a woman at the height of a chemotherapy regime who barely recognizes the reflection that greets her in the mirror, these images are not unattractive at all."

The utilization of the selfie also sets a dangerous precedent to some. "It's possible that [the campaign] is perpetuating the binary of make-up as a negative and no make-up as a pure state of being" says Zsuzsanna Ihar, an Arts and Science student at Sydney Uni. The appearance of articles such as 'How to take the perfect no make-up selfie for cancer awareness' in UK online magazine *sofeminine*, may further indicate that 'the ideal image' has overtaken the breast cancer message. Dr. Heidi Hilton, a researcher in cell biology and breast cancer prevention at Westmead Hospital agrees that despite its widespread significance, the message could have been lost. "The campaign didn't really hit the mark for me."

But Anna Phillips, who partook in the selfie campaign and has been affected by the disease says the criticism surrounding the no make-up selfie campaign is largely unfounded. "I might look at some people and think 'why are they so narcissistic?' but it is problematic for me to think that because why should it matter if people post pictures of their face? It's self-expression. If they are feeling comfortable, are really happy in their appearance and they want to share that, then I don't think we should be cutting people down."



She also questions the voices of many commenting from behind computer screens. "No one can speak for every single person who has had to fight cancer. As someone

who grew up with it, I found it unsettling for someone to tell me that something was or wasn't working... and I question whether or not those people have lived through experiences of breast cancer, whether they really understand what is best."

Phillips says the selfies are simply about acknowledging that breast cancer is also an appearance-based issue. "This deadly illness creeps into all aspects of your everyday life. You start to lose your hair - you may have to get a wig. It's such a confrontational thing because of how it constructs femininity and what it means to be a woman."

The question of whether the selfies are to be deemed a violation of those who experience the cancer, or a liberating endeavor for collective understanding must also be accompanied by questions of the campaign's overall success.



Thomas Owens, a postdoctoral research associate specializing in breast cancer at Sydney Uni says the campaign is a huge achievement for researchers and anyone affected by breast cancer. "There have been lots of different campaigns over the years and they all have some sort of

impact, they are all reaching a certain group of people. The more variety of campaigns, the more variety of people that we can reach." He suggests the narcissism-altruism debate does not matter because it provides much needed support for researchers and those with the illness. "From my perspective as a researcher I feel very strongly that research is needed in order to improve treatments and cures for the future, and for research, we need funding."

Dr. Hilton says it's also about success in terms of awareness and prevention, that the campaign actually encourages women to do self-checks and get mammograms. Breast cancer survivor, Anne Migheli participated in the Facebook campaign after being 'nominated' by friends. "I think the fact that it raised awareness is great. For a long time if I had listened to my body I may have discovered it sooner as apparently I had had it a long time... Many mothers I know are so busy looking after everybody else they don't check or worry about their health." She credits the use of social media as a way of reaching audiences with these messages. "Through Facebook, I hear of breakthroughs, current research and what's happening in breast cancer survivor groups. The more we talk about this and other cancers the more we can help one another."

Perhaps the most interesting question is what the campaign reveals about society. It may simply be a contextual shift in the nature of technology and consumption. But it may also be that our behaviour, our needs and our motives are evolving.



Lacy believes that "people have a hunger to connect with others, to be heard and to be seen. We are social beings and are wired to connect. The internet and social media are new forms of being able to do that."

"[It is pleasing] to see so much energy, enthusiasm and debate taking place, and the acceptance of women whether one, two or none breasted increasing... I think we will see more campaigns like this about a vast range of topics and causes, simply because social media is made for this."

A Fall in the Dark

A short story scribed by Blythe Worthy as told by her mentee, an asylum seeker who has recently immigrated to Australia.

"It's hard for me to explain what happened" N exhales heavily and scratches behind her ear, invisible behind the delicate swaddling of her chador. "It was the last time we tried before we finally arrive here. We did it without my father."

She stops and screws her thin lips together awkwardly. Without growing up with a Hollywood TV nanny like most of us her expression of grief is less dramatic and more poetic than most. Her face breaks unevenly and without faltering, refreshingly honest.

Her emotions are entirely unlearned. She cries the way she's seen her mother cry and inevitably how her grandmother cried too.

"He left the refugee community after our second try at getting here. The men who tried to get us all into the boats tried hard to make sure it would work, you trust them, you have no choice."

N speaks simply yet profoundly about the people smugglers portrayed in Australia as both heroes for and pariahs on the vulnerable.

She's right. Asylum seekers do have no choice, and it's difficult being the eldest of seven in a fatherless family, devoid of status and home, adrift in Indonesia for ten years after a perilous journey from Afghanistan post 9/11.

N speaks of the frustrating limbo of forgetting the trials endured for a better life her family have been prevented from starting throughout their twelve year journey throughout the illegal and exceedingly obscure world of people smuggling and detention centres.

"He left after being there for so long. He did lots of things for us but he couldn't stand the

life we had to have. Travelling for so long and waiting in a detention centre for our life here. Who could do that happily? Why should we have to? He left and started life again somewhere else. Or he's not alive anymore."

N doesn't know how many people were in her boat, or exactly where they set off from, or why she still hoped this time, after two failed attempts, it would work.

"It was warm and windy. We all got seasick and there was nowhere to go to the bathroom or anything to eat unless we brought it with us. It lasted longer than the first few times though. Everyone was so sick and smelly but hopeful. Maybe this time we would be a story that was successful."

After some experience of rough weather off the coast of Australia, the passengers were showing symptoms of exposure and other illnesses. Two days later they were woken by man who was running the boat- Australia was in sight. A thump came a few hours later and N was pushed up into the starry night sky and over the side of the beaten vessel by her mother.

She fell. And fell.

A nauseating feeling of déjà vu enveloped her with the icy shock of the dark pacific ocean and she began clawing desperately at the side of the carbonated boat, her water-laden chador pulling her down and forcing her under.

Three times! She thought as the agony of desperation overtook her. Three times this happens! And no one to help us here!

Under the water she went again, the fabric

of her garments a cement web of suffocating inertia against her desperately gasping face, constricting her fiercely pedaling legs with a vice-like grip.

Then, with a shock that pulsed through her body, one of those desperately stomping feet was in agony. She had struck the spear-like top of a rock.

A rock! An Australian rock!

A rock from a country that could support her weight, maybe even support the weight of her whole family if it understood what she'd endured just to feel the excruciating pleasure of a solid Australian rock on her uncovered near-frozen foot.

N balanced herself on this strange place as she heard her 13 year old sister P splash into the water next to her and then, almost immediately, her twin R beside her too, both gasping and clutching her chador for support.

Soft lights from the boat flash on and illuminate the children being tossed from both sides of the boat into the shallow water of the Australian shoreline.

Such a short, dark fall she thought.

A free fall of thirteen years without stones beneath my feet not rattling or burning or constantly changing.

A short, dark fall ended it.

She smiles at the gently winking lights on the coastline ahead.

Because something has happened.

Because people are kind.

Briefly, On the Colour Pink

Patricia Arcilla explores the socialisation of the colour pink and how we can make it our own.

Since the rosy-fingered dawn of time, the colour pink has left little untouched. From fine strokes and flesh tones in Renaissance paintings, to Rococo and Madame de Pompadour in the French court, to Nazi armbands bound to accused homosexuals, to Elsa Schiaparelli's 'Shocking Pink', to the swelling tide of needlessly gendered products, the colour's history has undulated in ripples and cresting waves.

As young girls, we are taught that the only things intended for us are hued pink and trimmed with lace and glitter—an odd equivalency given that 13th century religious iconography saw the infant Jesus himself swathed in the same colours (minus, sadly, the glitter). Fitted with rose tinted glasses and with bellies full of food prepared in our kitchen play-set, with pastel building blocks,

we reinforce the wall spanning the gulf of the gender schism. From toys to stationery, the distinction is not substantial; toothbrushes and Bic pens marketed 'for her' have no additional capabilities, and Lego in pink boxes is just as painful when stepped on as that in blue and red; is it any wonder that so many brands of washing powder and stain remover are packaged in pink?

Perhaps it is the colour's connection to our childhood that links it to notions of puerility, and prompts our pubescent renunciation thereof in an attempt to distinguish ourselves from 'other girls'. Yet liking paradigmatically 'feminine' things (the colour pink, florals, glitter) — or enjoying and choosing to partake in conventionally 'female' tasks like cooking or needlecraft — does not render one inferior.

Choice in place of imposition is paramount: Nicki Minaj proof of the fact that you can succeed whilst pretty in pink. There's nothing wrong with a child wanting the pink princess backpack if they are aware of the option to have the green superhero one instead, no problem with them picking up the pink crayon once they know that the rainbow exists. So too should a woman be able to wear the colour pink without being subject to asinine imputations to her character as ditsy or immature, and a man do the same without fanfare. It's 2014 and if we as a race are capable of producing things like 'vegetarian pork' for the tinned goods aisle of the supermarket, I am optimistic of our ability to dismantled and reconstruct the gender canon. Beyond this, and in the words of Audrey Hepburn, 'I believe in the colour pink.' Forever and ever, amen.



Hairless

Eirinn Hayes takes us on a crash course on beards, burglars and body hair policing

'I reckon my friend has the creepiest burglar story!!', Emma of 96.1fm's breakfast radio program squealed. I reached to switch stations but, for some reason, refrained. 'So at 3am right, my friend, she heard noises down in the laundry so she decided, you know, she was gonna go down and investigate and she found ...'. Emma pauses suppressing her laughter, demonstrating the expertise only capable of a true professional. 'She found In the laundry a random woman shaving her face!!!!!!'. Their hysterics filled my unimpressed red Corolla. 'OMG Mike, I would rather have found a guy with a knife or something'.

Yes, you read that correctly. The prospect of physical violence for this radio presenter is more appealing than women growing hair in androgen receptive zones! Of course, not all women grow beards thick enough to shave like the intruder. Admittedly, it's confusing this random woman saw Emma's friend's laundry as an appropriate place to groom herself. But Emma's disgust and hate-filled reaction towards the bearded woman is reflective of something much more sinister. This is the apparent abnormality and deformity of hair on women in places other than legs, arms, underarms and the pubic region.

In real life, you only have to go so far as one of your local Laser Clinics Australia (they're everywhere) to upset whatever 'normal places' to grow hair means. Laser services cater to your nipples, neck, sides of face, snail trail, anus, back or really anywhere the technicians will let you. In particular groups, women usually have no qualms admitting to plucking hairs on their nipples or complaining about their hairy stomachs. Yet these conversations are often tinged with embarrassment or shame and our reactions often assume this definitely isn't normal. We awkwardly confess to our most trusted friends our inability to curb our bodily processes, as a woman should.

Lets' think of a dumb enough situation to liken this to. For lack of a better one, let's just say that women were - hypothetically - only allowed to urinate at the houses of blood relatives. Kind of Caesarean but bear with me here. In certain groups, you would potentially feel comfortable talking about urinating whenever nature called. However psychologically and emotionally, you would've internalised the abnormality of your need to urinate in many different places. At the end of the day, you would be measuring yourself

against an ideal that modelled only peeing at your cousin's house as a successful performance of femininity.

So why is it that hair is only allowed to grow in some places for females? Why is its presence in 'unsanctioned' zones such an intense threat to femininity?

This is a perfectly ridiculous situation but it is surprisingly the same with hair. Hair is an involuntary bodily process that develops in different androgen zones to differing degrees between individuals. This includes women. But men and women have been raised to believe

that hair on women is strictly acceptable in 'some places' framing its presence anywhere else as questionable and masculine. But believe it or not, hair is a completely natural process for humans. Once more, this includes women! In fact hair is integral to regulating body temperature and protects you from various external hazards. So why is it that hair is only allowed to grow in some places for females? Why is its presence in 'unsanctioned' zones such an intense threat to femininity? And why would people, even women, prefer the prospect of physical danger to a woman with facial hair?

Emma on 96.1fm is no example, but like the rest of us she has been subjected to ideologies that have naturalised hairless women. Obvious examples like mainstream porn, representations of women in most media and even presumably harmless sites like BuzzFeed idealise hairlessness and vilify anything that upsets this. I was scrolling BuzzFeed the other day and came across a 'light-hearted' series of images showing Disney Princesses with superimposed beards on their faces. It is hilarious that someone actually spent part of their day doing this. On a surface level, it trivialises medical conditions like female hirsutism and facial hair

that women with polycystic ovarian syndrome often develop. It also trivialises the facial hair trans* women grow or may to continue to grow if they're in the process of transitioning. Further, it reinforces a norm that is just not compatible with a lot of women's hairy realities! Take a minute to imagine how many girls laughed at those princesses after waxing or plucking their own moustaches.

To an extent, medicine has also placed a mandate of authenticity on hairlessness for women. Medical journals typically frame hair growth in 'unsanctioned' zones as 'excessive', deeply embarrassing and a process that shouldn't be happening. Some girls who grow 'more hair than usual' are sent to endocrinologists only to find out their hormones are factually fine. Whether or not hair is the result of a hormone imbalance or not, the language and associated emotions these journals employ place a scientific stamp on hairless women. As it stands, one of the biggest issues the medicalization of hairlessness has perpetuated is our obsession with trying to align genitals, bodily processes and gender. And the medical mandate on female hairlessness does exactly this: vagina equals female equals hair in exclusively four androgen zones. Go to the GP and test them out if you're hairy. It could turn out to be an interesting social experiment.

So if you're a woman who grows hair where it's definitely not allowed, or a guy who feels inadequate for not growing enough, it turns out that hair doesn't correlate with your prescribed gender: it's just our shitty cultural norms that say they do. As the bearer of your hair you can grow, wax, plait, shave or do something more artistic with your bodily canvas. Be creative. As for 96.1fm? I'll have to pursue my fix for nineties RnB hits elsewhere.



It's your hair, do whatever you want

Hair Peace

Sam Langford cuts it short and gets straight to the thick of it.

Last November, after considerably wimpy hesitation, I finally bit the bullet and cut my almost waist-length hair off. It's not a decision I regret in the least. For starters, it's cut my truly excessive shower time by half. It's also started numerous respectful, intellectual debates with my grandmother over whether or not I ought to invest in a hairbrush.

It's nice that we've been able to achieve such frank intergenerational discussion. When the inevitable extended family gathering rolls around, we no longer waste time mincing words and offering pleasant greetings. We don't need to. The sentiment of the occasion is better captured with a cursory glance at my gravity and style defying bed hair, followed by a perfunctory, "I don't like it. Have a scone." As I accept the offered baked good, I feel as though something truly meaningful has passed between us.

Sadly, it hasn't all been rainbows and butterflies. The decision to get the cut has drawn input and criticism from a myriad of observers; concerned friends, and random strangers encountered on Hillsbus services. Even in the lead-up to the cut, agitated spectators wanted to have their say. Mainstream media advised that I should compare my face to geometric shapes in order to ascertain the haircut that would truly express my soul, ignite my inner goddess and solve world crises. I polled my family on whether they thought I was more of a rhombus or a trapezium but they declined to comment, feeling that it had just been too long since they'd studied geometry to provide me with truly accurate feedback.

My friends, on the other hand, jumped at the chance to provide unsolicited opinions. One frenemy informed me that she had the gravest concerns about my ability to "pull it off", on account of the fact that my face looked "kind of like a potato, ya know?" Another friend expressed concern that I, as a queer female-presenting individual, was succumbing too much to the "lesbian aesthetic", as though that were a bad thing. Others kept their feedback simple: "just don't."

Deeply disillusioned with my choice of friends, I turned to my humble refuge; the Internet, which recommended the "chic", "sleek" and "femme" "pixie cut". Being neither chic, sleek, or femme, nor a mythical creature possessing intensely prominent cheekbones, I was disheartened.

Nevertheless, I eventually got the haircut. It was both anticlimactic (I did not become "chic", nor did any inner deity emerge) and a revelation (I, a mere mortal sans visible cheekbones, had short hair and the world had not ended). I felt briefly victorious. I also had much less neck strain, which was pleasant.

Less pleasant, however, are the continued unsolicited opinions. My grandmother, for one, remains vocally opposed. The frequency with which teenage boys yell queerphobic slurs from car windows as I walk home has increased exponentially. Well-meaning acquaintances ask things like, "don't you miss feeling beautiful?", as if beauty is a basic requirement for my continued existence as a human being. People I've never met identify me as a lesbian, forcing me to reassert my bisexuality frequently.

It is absurd to me that a simple, personal aesthetic choice is the subject of such unsolicited input, that short hair on male-presenting individuals goes unremarked, but on anyone else is so widely critiqued. It is, quite frankly, ridiculous. It is also damaging to suggest that short hair is incompatible with feeling or being perceived as beautiful and should not be done if an individual does not possess high cheekbones and a pointed, "pixie" chin. Furthermore, the implication that beauty is *necessary* for self-worth is utter shit.

The perks of short hair are many. It's fun, low maintenance and comfortable. There is no reason that access to this should be limited by gender, sexual orientation or the failure of a person's face to perfectly align with a particular geometric shape.

People on buses will continue commenting obnoxiously. Well-intentioned idiots will keep hurling backhanded compliments. My grandmother will keep coming over and voicing her disapproval. And I will keep accepting those scones, turning up to 9am lectures with unfortunate bed hair and trying to explain to random strangers just what's wrong with their reliance on societal norms and the gender binary. Maybe, eventually, society will wake up and remember that a haircut is a haircut - a temporary, purely aesthetic, purely *personal* choice. Then, maybe, we'll start to see some change.





Ask Peek-a-boo

Ordinarily, this column is hosted by Abe. However, as this is an autonomous wom*n's edition, this week's column will be hosted by Peek-a-Boo.

Disclaimer: This column can contain questions that are sent to us from current USYD students, however for this special women's edition they are not from real people. We have decided to write fictitious questions based on fictitious scenarios to provide a space for the questions that many find hard to ask.

Not So Healthy Relationships

Dear Peek-a-Boo,

My friend needs help. I think her partner stops her from doing assignments and going to uni. I don't really know what's happening but I think her partner is jealous that she has something interesting to do that doesn't include them. She's told me that when she's been studying or hanging out with her uni friends that her partner accuses her of cheating and lying about where she's been. I know that my friend loves her partner very much and tries hard to please, but something doesn't feel right to me. Is there anything I can do to help?

Worried Friend.

Dear Worried Friend,

Thank you for having the courage for saying something about your friend. Many people notice a friend in trouble and just hope it will get better, without wanting to interfere.

From what you have said, it sounds like her partner is trying to control her, which is a form of domestic violence. We know from research that it is likely that controlling behaviours will escalate if there isn't change in the relationship.

You can tell her that you've noticed that things can be difficult for her. Offer to help her with anything if she needs. It is likely that she will not take up your offer of help initially, but you being present in her life will be a great help. Be aware that if her partner is controlling, they may try to push you out of her life. Try to be patient with her and stay on her side.

There are community organisations that can give you more information. Talk to an SRC caseworker about getting some contact details or take a look at Reachout.com for information on healthy relationships.

Peek-a-Boo (in lieu of Abe)

Sexual Harrassment

Dear Peek-a-Boo,

I am in my second year of uni and trying really hard to do well. I've been asking lots of questions during and after class in order to get a good idea on what to write in assignments. My tutor encourages me in class and as far as everyone else can see I am doing quite well. However, I think my tutor has taken things too far. He invited me to his office and touched my leg while he talked to me. I am very shy and am scared about what people will say about me if I tell them. I didn't mean to confuse him about what I wanted and now I feel like I can't go back to his class. I've missed four classes already. I have to do this subject at some point because it is compulsory. I really don't know what to do.

HG

Dear HG,

I'm really sorry to hear that you are feeling confused and scared. Most people will feel threatened, foolish and embarrassed under these circumstances, however it is normal to feel uncomfortable in the situation that your tutor has created and he has a responsibility to make sure that you are not intimidated by him.

The University has very strict policies on sexual harassment, which includes a safety net to ensure that your marks will not be affected if you make a complaint. You absolutely have the right to be safe at university, and no one has the right to touch you inappropriately without your consent. You have options on how to move forward, and you should consider all of them and their possible impacts on your education, health and wellbeing when considering what you would like to do.

I highly recommend talking to someone regardless of whether you want to make

a complaint or not. You do not deserve to feel bad about what this person has done to you. The SRC has caseworkers you can talk to about the processes of making a sexual harassment complaint. They will explain how the university will go about investigating your allegation and what the possible outcomes are. There are also university staff members who can explain these processes. The SRC caseworkers can also suggest other courses of action you can consider. Remember, though, that it is ultimately your decision to take whatever action you choose. No woman deserves to be touched inappropriately or be made to feel uncomfortable or intimidated by another person, nor should any student experience threatening or intimidating behaviour from another person on campus. There are no excuses and no situations where it is ok.

The SRC Caseworkers are always happy to help and to discuss your options with you. You may also wish to seek the support of a women's health service. Go to www.whnsw.asn.au to find a service in your local area, or if you find it easier to access online services www.reachout.com provides information for people who have experienced sexual harassment.

Remember, you are not alone and there are services and people out there who can help you.

Peek-a-Boo.

Contact SRC Help for confidential professional and independent assistance with Harrassment or discrimination issues

9660 5222 | help@src.usyd.edu.au

Call to make an appointment with a caseworker or Drop-in (no appointment required): Tuesdays & Thursdays, between 1 and 3pm

In defence of unattractive feminism

"I shape my body in ways that make me comfortable" says Bec Eames

"I'm a feminist - but not one of those hairy, man-hating, lesbian feminists." How many times have we heard that phrase? I want to kill it with fire. It's harmful on a number of levels: it assumes that there is something wrong with being hairy, man-hating, and lesbian; it reinforces the problematic notion that 'true' feminism belongs to cis het white abled feminists; and it assumes that we must qualify our feminism in order to be palatable.

It is worth noting that this idea of threatening and aggressive feminism derives from two sources: the Straw Feminist, a variation of 'strawman argument' who does not actually exist, and the second-wave radical feminist, who is part of an outdated structure that is notably transphobic and racist. I do not shape my body with the thought of being attractive to strange men; I shape it in ways that make me comfortable.

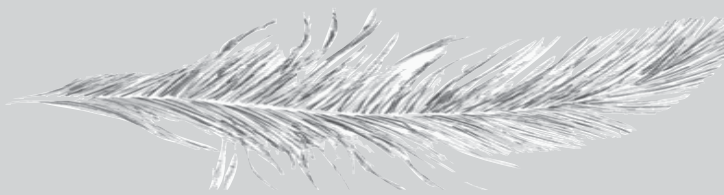
I am a queer feminist. I am attracted to my own kind as well as to those of different genders to my own. I do not excise cis men from my life. I derive comfort from surrounding myself with other, like-minded, queer people. I attempt to create a feminism that is inclusive of those with diverse sexualities and genders, a feminism that does not by nature exclude lesbians, or asexual people, or trans people, or gender diverse people.

I have even, at times, been a man-hating feminist. This is perhaps the most charged item on the list. The utterance is metonymic; when I say "I hate men" I do not mean "I hate all men who exist in the world", I mean "I hate the structure that gives men power over me",

i.e. patriarchy - just as when I say "I hate the government" I am understood to mean the structure and not the individuals that comprise it.

We all have men that we love in our lives - brothers and fathers and colleagues and lovers and friends. When we say "I hate men" we mean "I hate the men who have hurt me"; "I hate the men who have denied me job opportunities and equal pay"; "I hate the strange men in the street who believe they deserve my attention"; "I hate the men who rape, assault, and harass me". (Of course not all men are rapists - but statistically the overwhelming majority of rapists are men.) The phrase is delivered from a position of frustration and exhaustion, not from malice.

When I say "I hate men", paradoxically, I do not mean that I do not care about men. Men's issues are also feminist issues. Male rape victims deserve attention. Toxic masculinity must be addressed and confronted. Men should not be considered inept caregivers just because patriarchy enforces parenthood as feminine. There are plenty of problems with feminism, but being hairy, man-hating lesbians is not one of them.



An injury to one is an injury to all

Clo Schofield reflects on indelible experiences of body consciousness

Back in high school, maybe year eight or so, a friend of mine said "I hate it when girls wear undies that are too small for them."

"Huh?" I said. I didn't know it was a thing. "Why?"

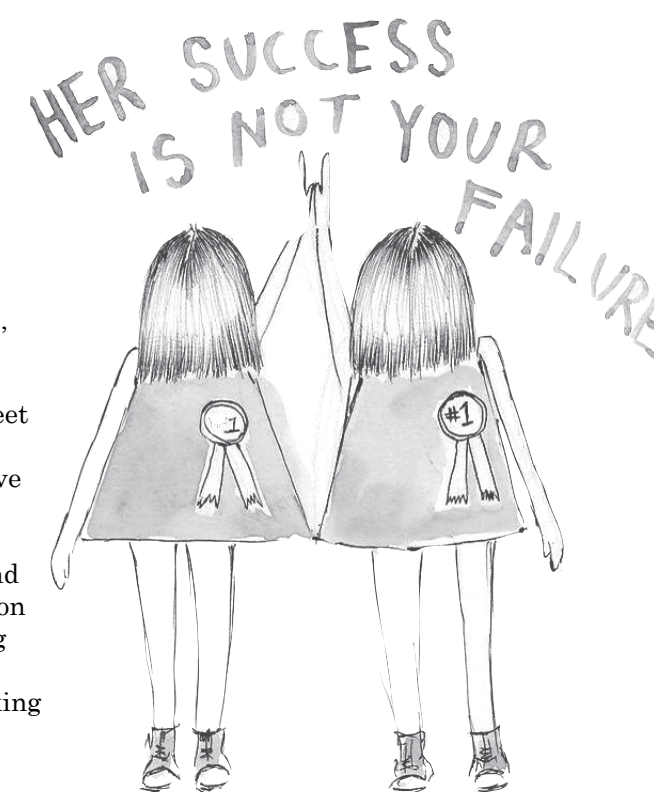
"Because then the fat on your hips and bum bulge out around the sides," she said. "Mia Chang from the grade below was wearing undies way too small, walking up the stairs in front of me and it was all I could see."

God, I thought. I'd had most of my undies since I was ten. After that, I started looking for the error on others, and feeling anxious about it myself.

My friend wasn't a bully, she was a sweet un-malicious person. I can't speak for anyone else, but I know that I must have made similar comments as a younger girl, and I probably continue to do so in less direct ways. I don't know that friend anymore, but I think of that conversation roughly once a month, when I'm getting to the point where I haven't done my laundry in ages and I have to start picking between nana knickers and the size eights. Will the fat on my sides and my belly bulge out under my clothes? Who's watching? What are they thinking? How can I mould myself into the prescribed shape?

It occurred to me over the summer that every time I criticise my own body, I'm criticising a million other women at the same time.

Every time I despair about my sagging breasts, I'm commenting on the breasts of others, those whose sit lower than mine. I'm naming them inadequate.



On Saturday night at a party I suddenly started getting pretty bad abdominal pain. While I was lying down I tried to figure out what was wrong; had I developed a sudden and severe allergy to hummus and Lebanese bread or even worse, red wine? I realised

the day after that the pain had come from the control brief stockings I'd been wearing to flatten the line of my stomach under my clothes, and ease my anxiety. I had injured myself out of fear of the critical gaze of others. I did that to myself, and I'm blessed to exist within supportive, feminist social circles where people who make body or fat shaming comments will get a swift slap on the wrist, or a lengthy sit down conversation. As a young, white, cisgender woman I'm privileged not to experience oppression and body hate from the white supremacist, industrialised patriarchy on the basis of my race or ability.

I'm thin, I guess. It's hard for me to say that, because every time I do I think of the aspects of my body I've been socialised to consider inaccuracies, flaws, flaps, bulges, bumps. But I think it's important to acknowledge. Every time I comment to someone else about my weight or the way my tummy sits, I'm reinforcing a social order that stigmatises the bodies of many other folk, a lot of whom experience more social disciplining, more stigmatisation, and more discursive violence resultant of ubiquitous body shaming.

I think self-love is an important part of undoing the hierarchy of bodies that holds the thin over the fat, those of white people over those of people of colour, those of the gender-conforming over those non-conforming, the abled over the disabled.

If anyone knows how to translate this theoretical recognition into something I can practice, please get in touch.

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RPAH Panel Discussion

*Towards A Violence Free Future, Elizabeth Mora on behalf of the USYD Wom*n's Collective. Readers are advised that this report will talk about sexual assault and gendered violence.*

On the 3rd of April, the University of Sydney Wom*n's Collective hosted a panel discussion to raise awareness about the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Sexual Assault and Counselling Service. The forum aimed to address sexual assault and violence against wom*n, as well as engage with topics such as defining sexual assault, intersectionality, effective advocacy, unpacking victim-blaming and dismantling rape culture.

Panellists included Rachel Moss from the RPAH (Royal Prince Alfred Hospital) Sexual Assault Service, Moo Baulch from Domestic Violence NSW, Carolyn Jones from Women's Legal Services NSW, Mel Harrison from People with Disability and Thea Deakin Greenwood from the Warringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Service.

The collective sentiment of the forum was aptly embraced by the slogan: Ask, Listen, Respect. Freshly printed across posters launched on the night to direct our awareness of the services provided by the RPAH. I felt these words provided a unique opportunity to address sexual assault as a 'real' experience, present in its making, and palpable to those willing to do just that: Ask, Listen, Respect.

Listen! We all have a Voice!

When we interact with people, and even when we talk about others, we presume that we see the world in roughly the same way and thus, that our individual and collective expression can be universally understood.

When it comes to sexual violence and abuse, false representations of prototypical perpetrator and prototypical victim still overwhelm socio-

legal discourses about how the causes and effects of sexual assault manifest themselves among victims, perpetrators and the wider community. The approach of a stranger-in-the-night attacking a naive young woman, "who should've known better," hardly bleeds into lived reality. The first panellist to speak on the night, Program Manager and Sexual Assault Counsellor at the RPAH Sexual Assault Service, Rachel Moss, was quick to point this out. According to her professional experience, most perpetrators are known to their victims. And, as Feminist commentator Clementine Ford asserted in her recent article, *What if we re-defined consent with 'Yes means Yes'*,

"They are brothers and husbands and friends and sons. And for many people, this is an uncomfortable reality, because it means they might know some of them."

The dilemma of current socio-legal narratives of sexual assault is further compounded by our tendency to ignore the myriad of contexts and identities by which sexual assault becomes a lived experience. For example, the use of pronouns, 'He' and 'She' to articulate the perpetrator-victim dichotomy silence the voice of gender diverse people. Narratives assume and privilege the experiences of able-bodied women, and the political and legal rhetoric of sexual assault undermines the significance of cultural, religious and historical values and discourses which shape the lives of victims and perpetrators alike.

Ask!

In the face of such challenges, it is understandable why few women choose to reach out for help. As the panellists of the

forum explained, asking for help can be an alienating experience. When sexual assault is treated like an empirical discourse which "affects women," serious issues around access, confidentiality and victim blaming not only manifest themselves in the routine of our everyday, but corrupt any credible attempt for personal and collective justice.

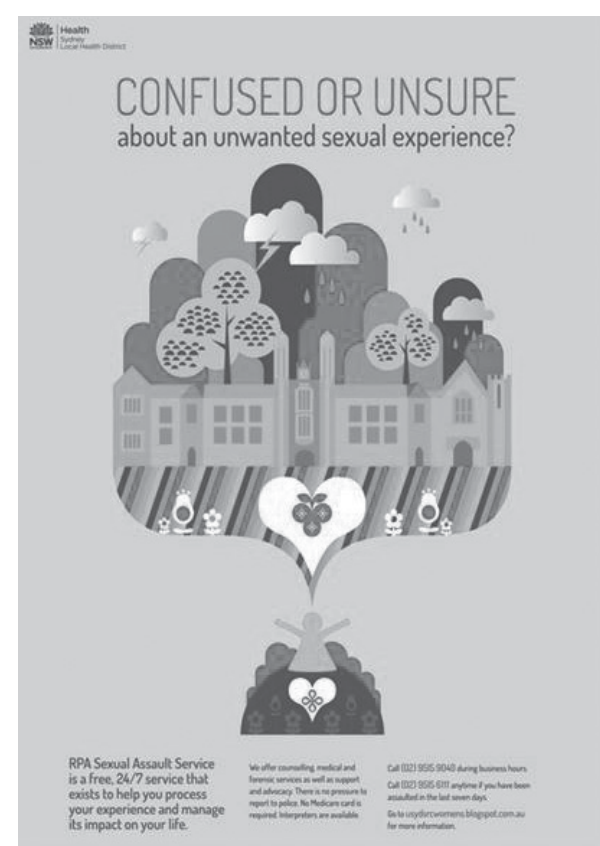
Respect! We shouldn't have to "Deal with it"

This is why initiatives such as the RPAH Sexual Assault Service are so important. Working against systems of oppression initiatives like these provide victims with personalised relief from the consequences, both emotional and legal, that may emerge from any unwanted sexual experience. The aim has been to create a space independent of the prejudice of the outside world and one where victims are encouraged to lead discussions by which their experiences of assault can be effectively addressed.

Thea Deakin Greenwood, solicitor at the Warringa Baiya Legal Centre, led the discussion about the collective responsibility we have to address the structural inadequacies which are currently compromising our approach to sexual violence. Forums like this, which make a conscious and informed attempt to understand and value the diverse experiences of all victims, is a good start.

Let's Listen before we Act. Lets Act with Respect. Let's see how far this will take us, counting on nothing greater than the unity of our will.

When we interact with people, and even when we talk about others, we presume that we see the world in roughly the same way and thus, that our individual and collective expression can be universally understood.



On Self-Defence

*Aliza Chin shares her opinion on Wom*n's Self Defence informed by her experience as a martial arts student and teacher.*

Note: This is about self-defence/martial arts being labelled as victim-blaming and not individuals. If you have experienced victim-blaming from anyone, I am sorry that it happened, and I want you to know that you are strong, brave, and above all, human.

As a martial arts instructor, one tends to experience a lot of things: the joy of being picked for grading, the applause of your peers when you break a board in two, the fierce competition in your friend-turned-temporary-rival's eyes as you attempt to outdo one another in exercises, the shared drinks and exhausted grins with friends, the mental and physical strain of learning a new pattern from scratch, the proud pull of a new belt around your waist, being accused of being a victim-blamer. Wait, that doesn't sound right!

Victim-blaming: essentially the victim of a crime/wrongful act (in this case, assault/sexual assault) being held responsible for what befell them, and wrongly so. So what does this have to do with self-defence?

I will admit, there are certain issues between the two, namely the focus on the victim's role and their actions, but is teaching martial arts/self-defence and providing a resource for people to learn martial arts/self-defence victim blaming in itself? In my opinion, no.

In my years as a martial arts student-turned-instructor, I have seen people come and go, joining for various reasons: fitness, self-interest, curiosity, desire to learn martial arts/self-defence, to make new friends, to join current friends, and to try something new, just to name a few. Because the thing about martial arts/self-defence classes is that it isn't just about self-defence/martial arts; it's also about the learning and strengthening of discipline, patience, respect and leadership skills, the

relationships that you make within that class, and the establishment of a place of support. Brushing off self-defence/martial arts classes as a victim blaming agenda therefore ignores the multitude of reasons as to why people undertake martial arts, which are often unrelated to self-defence.

This now begs the question, what exactly does martial arts/self-defence training consist of? In addition to standard self-defence tactics, exercises in strength, speed, agility, flexibility,

(muscle) memory, aim and endurance, patterns (kata) and sparring exercises are also common sites in martial arts/self-defence training centres. At the end of the day, martial arts/self-defence classes provide so much more than just self-defence; they provide a safe and supportive

environment to learn how to blow past your limits, they teach you the skills and values of martial arts, and most they encourage the making of new relationships. What's so victim blaming about that?

I'll repeat, what is victim-blaming about the provision of a resource which can be used in many different ways and which itself, has many different uses? About encouraging the strengthening and creation of new relationships? About teaching martial arts/self-defence and its values in a safe and supportive environment? About supporting people so that they can and will do their best? What's victim-blaming about that?

Victim-blaming: essentially the victim of a crime being held responsible for what befell them, and wrongly so.

Wom*n's Self Defence Classes At Usyd

Throughout this semester, non-cis-male students have been working together to put on Wom*n's Self-Defence classes that combine martial arts training with our amazing teacher Bridget Harilaou, an experience student in martial arts, along with a discussion and workshop that explored discursive components of self-defence. These included explorations and interrogations into violence against trans* wom*n, queer 101 workshops as well as 'Bring An Ally Day' where students could explore how everyone, especially cis-males, are implicated in violence against wom*n. Contact Wom*n's Collective for more details: usydwomenscollective@gmail.com

Shame

by Lily Cheng

Fear, here, you say pointing at your fragile shell,
You still struggle to mend those scars and cuts
How does one begin to describe a living hell?
You feel like a klutz,
The words are lost on your lips
It is the memory of his tight grip
That throws you back,
Back to the pain that is never ending
It happened so let's stop pretending...

Passive as always –
Isn't that what you always feared?
Years of repressed tormented shame -
Please, I beg, know that you are not to blame.
It was not your fault,
Stop locking the truth away in a time vault,
Don't bury yourself in the shame
Don't think of ever taking the blame...

Don't move, are you scared?
Only moments from unconsciousness now,
His breathing is short and shallow,
He stares into your delicate soul.
He sees in you, a fractured fine china doll,
Broken, bruised, battered.
"Cry only in the silence, he can't know!" you say
I forget that you are suffering in the light of day...

Don't look at me with those hungry eyes
Don't force me, I say with my muffled cries
Oww! My slender wrists!
He growls, "Don't resist, there's nothing to miss,"
Seconds from unconsciousness now
The blood in my mouth, bitter and sour...

This body was mine, or so I had believed
How naïve.
You said it would be fine,
You assumed your share,
You said it was only fair
You didn't ask first,
My silence, my curse.

I am paralysed by the sound
Of how you conquered me.
I am shattered into a sea of debris
I am gone,
Forgotten.
Just a name to your list,
Beyond that, I do not exist.

My innocence -
Some things once lost,
Can never be found.
I am gone,
Forgotten.

Marbles

Leigh Nicholson on women, cartoons and mental illness

Coming out as 'bipolar' to your close friends is difficult, so Ellen Forney just decided to get it all over and done with publicly. Her latest graphic novel, *Marbles*, is not only a coming out story, it is also her quest to analyse the links between creativity and mental illness. This entails her personally coming to terms with the fact that her natural ecstatic and manic highs and debilitating lows actually had a clinical diagnosis.

She admits, 'one of my biggest fears was that people that I knew would revisit things I had said or done in the past and dismiss them, thinking I was crazy'. Since hardly any of the people around her knew of this diagnosis prior to the launch of the book.

When she was diagnosed, Forney was thirty years old. The beginning of the graphic novel introduces you to the nature of her manic states - they are stressful, and loud, and unpredictable. It leaves you with the impression of how completely exhausting those euphoric highs are. But in bipolar disorder, those sleepless states of hyperactivity and over-stimulation are often countered by incapacitating lows - depressive episodes.

In Forney's case, during her depressive moods were so all-encompassing that her mum would congratulate her for moving from her bed to the couch in a day.



Graphic novels, Ferney says, 'are read in an emotional-abstract way, similar to the way music is', and thus it is perfect for depictions of mental illness. Ellen Forney recently interviewed Allie Brosh, a fellow cartoonist and prolific blogger at *Hyperbole and a Half*. She came out as having depression in 2011 and uses cartooning to make sense of her experience of mental illness.

Allie Brosh's cartoons, like Ellen Forney's graphic novel, use absurdist humour as a way to begin to talk about difficult and personal stories. Brosh recalls how during her darkest moments, she found happiness when she was lying on her kitchen floor and spotted a kernel of corn under the fridge. Just the mere existence of this shrivelled corn kernel, and how lonely it appeared, amused her.

Ellen Forney explains that her work complement Brosh's, she says 'she and I had similar goals in combining our sense of humour and a difficult, painful story. Humour in cartoons, as Forney points out, 'is disarming, and so it allows the readers to be a little more relaxed, a little deeper in'.

She was tentative to start medication, because that the stereotypical image of an 'artist with a mental illness' was seductive to her. In *Marbles*, she writes 'along with my romantic preconceptions about what being a crazy artist meant, were my terrifying preconceptions of what being a medicated artist meant'.

Through the course of the book, those romantic allusions are evidently extinguished. In the end, she praises the treatment she was given. Treatment took years to perfect, as it is a subjective process, which Forney documents in the book. One can conclude that the endurance needed to find the right combination of drugs is harrowing. Despite this, when asked if she wished she could never have experienced any of her mental illness, she was hesitant. 'To be able to make sense of my own experience and my own pain, and turn it around to something that feels really positive and that's helping other people, has given me an enormous sense of validation as a person'.

Readers, please mind the gap

Sinead Day interrogates gender and racial inequality in publishing today.

The case of women's success in the publishing industry has been one ruled primarily by exceptions. While authors like J. K. Rowling or Stephenie Meyer have become household names, the unfortunate truth is that female authors are more likely to face difficulty in every part of the publishing process than their male counterparts.

This is not to dismiss the effect of those women who have found great success—even E. L. James, of *Fifty Shades of Grey* fame (or infamy), has had an undeniably enormous effect on the publishing industry. In 2012, she was responsible for every last Random House employee, right down to the warehouse workers, taking home a \$5,000 bonus. However, we should not become complacent in the face of such highly publicised triumphs, as the actual breakdowns of female authorship present a very different picture.

This year's annual VIDA count, reviewing the percentages of men and women in US literary journals across 2013, found that major publications like the *London Review of Books* and the *New Yorker* all had over 75% male authorship. Things are little better here in Australia, as the Stella Count for 2012 reported

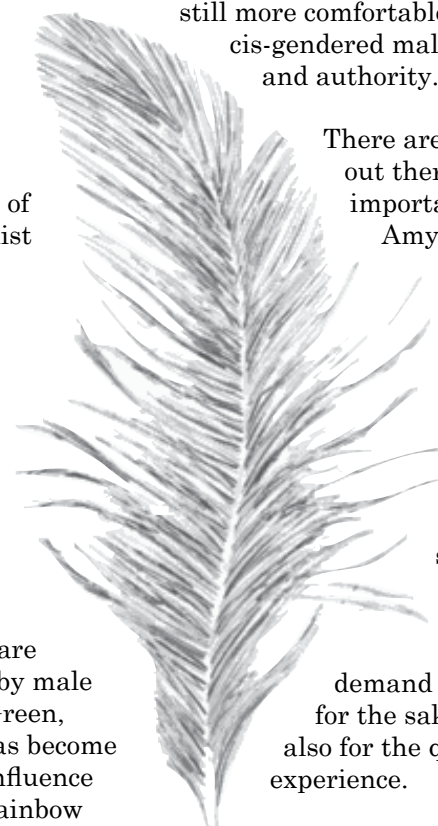
that major newspapers like the *Sydney Morning Herald* averaged around 40% female authorship, and others like the *Australian Financial Review* only 20%.

Where gender gaps are closing in some prizes like the National Book Award, these changes are put down to the progress of women, placing the onus for gender disparity on the skills of female authors rather than on the sexist attitudes of award panels.

Even in Young Adult fiction, a genre dominated by women, male writers are more likely to be lauded by the public, with an average of 7 men and only 3 women on the *New York Times* YA bestseller list. Books by women that tackle serious problems faced by adolescent girls, such as sexual assault, are more likely to face censorship, and while YA women are by no means few in number, they are becoming increasingly overshadowed by male giants of the genre like John Green. Green, whether intentionally or otherwise, has become the face of YA. He holds such public influence that his endorsements of books like *Rainbow*

Rowell's *Eleanor and Park* have curiously coincided with their sudden breakout success. Instances like this suggest that the public is still more comfortable in accepting the white cis-gendered male as the optimal standard and authority.

There are many female authors out there doing fantastic, important work—Zadie Smith, Amy Tan, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Marilynne Robinson and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to name a few. We have a responsibility to ensure their equality of opportunity doesn't fall solely on the publishing industry. As readers, it is also up to us to read critically and to demand gender parity, not only for the sake of these authors but also for the quality of our own reading experience.



Acknowledgement I, II & III

Poetry by Elena Zagoudis

I
There are specific things that may be acknowledged:
Growth is painful, learning to be alone is natural,
Youth is tortured, too silent, too much stimulation
The caffeine draining our minds of any rational thought
The hormonal cyclone of immaturity and desire for anything,
Everything, more, always

As I watch those around me grow into those I do and do not
Aspire to be, in a quiet intensity, so too I feel the fluid in veins,
Of 'Ginsy and Jack', as it flies through me in meaning, or in vain

I do not maintain a position of steadfast breathing, nor a statue
Of some other deity I aim to be;
In fact, I am flighty, I am never in one solid form, and perhaps I
Am held only in the palms of those in my midst, for my foresight
Is limited – I have neglected the good wishes of the eyes

II
There are such epiphanies to be had, in the growth (pain) of
New friendships and the floating conversations of strangers
(All things that float are irrelevant, for they do not adhere to
Substance)
And may the ground hold me down with a might unwavering, so that
I withhold the nausea of living

What a time to be alive – what a self-reflexive epiphany – so
Mindlessly suggested by those to whom I've granted wings in my eyes
And though thoughts may be spared, I am thankful of the little but
Boundless insight regarding everything in the past life
I vehemently try to revive

III
For don't you see it now, there is a revolution within our jaded minds,
A revolution in the cyclical sense, that the cogs in our hearts may
Turn faster than fast
And possessions fall apart or dissolve, as we value the eyes
Of our souls – what a sight to behold, the New Romantics or Old

Let us separate the lives of our parents and dive in the cold
Fall of a world melted tenfold
Our eyes be the witnesses to the fires of disgust, and the fires
Of resentment, of irreverence, and false sympathy

As I rip out the insincerity of daily, ordinary acceptance of life,
It is apparent that honesty is not the constellation I watch in
My night
Rather, she is an entity at times horrid, or bright for weary eyes

And may I aspire to pursue such a noble lady as honesty in
This lifetime,
May her challenge or power strip my eyes, from time to time
From this badly- imagined perception that is thrust in our minds
By some society so inept, that she rejects the cry of
Her own child

Let the child grow to become the forefront of love, the leading solution;
If society will not nurse the humanity at her feet, then let the
Role be inverted;
Such power as we have not seen lies at our feet,
Vacant and culminating –

And I will seize whatever finality I can grasp, for the world is
One burning phenomenon away from some Hell we've imagined
And I hope you will take my hand as one, even in too
Much silence, too much stimulation, and we will pinpoint the
Right constellation

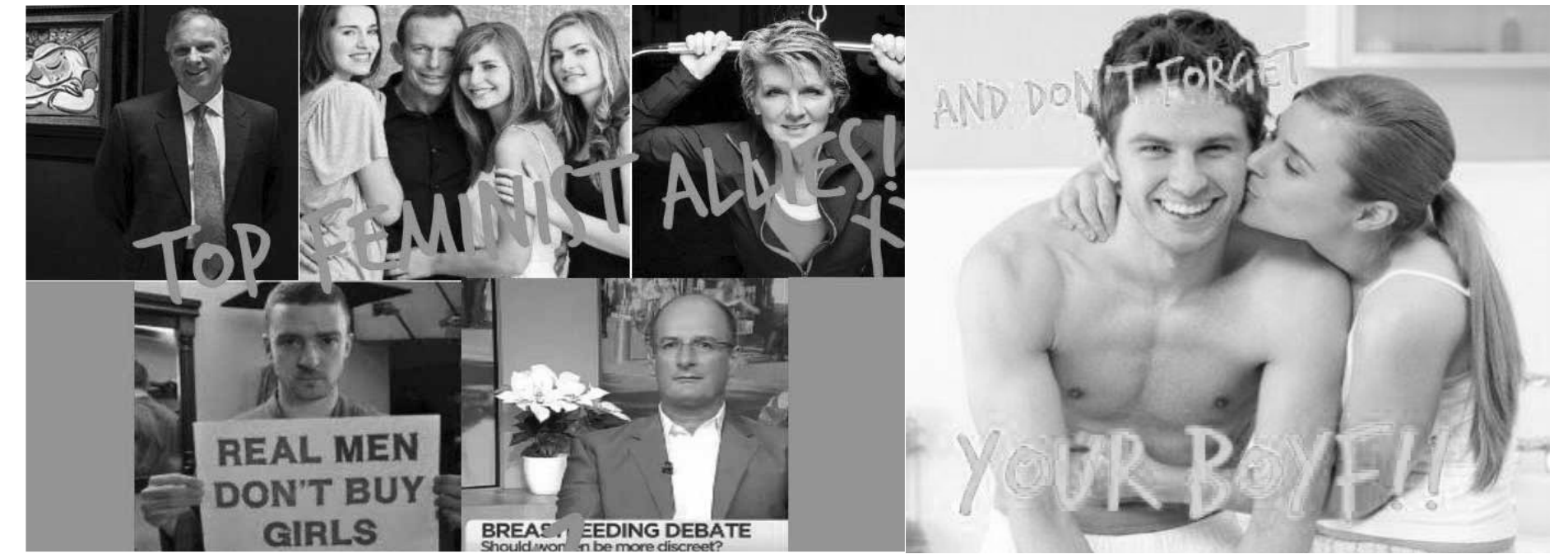
Harlotte

celebrity, sex + fashion for women



7 Ways To Make Your Man A Feminist:

1. Tell him you find feminist guys SEXY – did someone say <http://feministryangosling.tumblr.com/>? #sohot #yum
2. Play him some feminist tunes – don't forget to include Hard Out Here by Lily Allen and I Kissed A Girl by Katy Perry
3. Throw him and his mates a Judy Chicago feminist dinner party! Set the table with vulva-like flowers and make sure you serve oysters (apparently they're an aphrodisiac!).
4. Have a feminist film night; make him bring his sister and his mum. Movie ideas include: Bend It Like Beckham, Mean Girls, Clueless and Blue Is The Warmest Colour (for those of you looking for an arthouse fix!)
5. Have a feminist fitness day – Zumba, Yoga or mixed netball (don't worry – he doesn't have to wear a skirt!). If you're short for ideas, check out the Bondi Yoga Festival – great place to don a bindi, align your chakras and share a quinoa, acai berry and crushed chia seed smoothie.
6. Have a self-care day – shave his legs (make sure you use Gillette MEN razors), give him a manicure, read each others horoscopes and make a scrapbook of your relationship.
7. Invite him to come to non-autonomous campus events: encourage him to perform, speak and get involved – we always need a male perspective in wom*ns spaces to keep things balanced.



What Type of Feminist Are You?

Q: Summer hits. Two months and nothing on your calendar but lots of savings to spend. What do you do?

- a. Check out what World Vision, Save The Children, Poor People in Africa and White Savior Complex have on offer – become an ambassador and change your life for only \$2700.
- b. Stay in bed watching back-to-back seasons of the L word, who knew solidarity took so little?
- c. Commit yourself to producing a movie about feminist struggle. Make a few working groups on facebook for brainstorming, post on some autonomous collective wom*ns walls for interested parties.

Q: You open your old hotmail. Ticketek has spammed you with all their latest shows. But wait – one of them is Miley! She's doing a world tour – what do you do?

- a. Buy the best tickets you can get. \$400 is a small price for an unforgettable night. Head down to Bunnings, buy the materials for your own wrecking ball and start practicing your dance moves!
- b. Mobilise your closest and most militant radfems. Organise a snap action protest: Picket the ticketek office and the concert; release burning

bras from the top levels of Acer Arena as a reminder of the sacrifices our suffragette sisters made for us.

c. You can't afford it! You already bought your boyfriend and his best mate birthday tickets to Stereosonic. No worries – invite your fave ladies over for a #nostalgia fest watching Hannah Montana.

Q: It's 9am on a Monday, you decide to pump yourself up for the day by wearing the super cute Native American headdress you once made for a Pocahontas Halloween costume. A woman of colour "calls you out". What do you do?

- a. Tell her to stop being so PC. She is probably just jealous you rock her colours better than she does! Also that she could never make a quirky feathered ensemble as good as yours.
- b. Apologise sincerely. Commit to personal reflection, self-education and change, spending the rest of the day in Fisher watching youtube videos on calling out and cultural appropriation.
- c. Remove the headdress and save it for a party. There's a time and a place for showing off cultural appreciation and it's not in your ECOP1002 tutorial.

Q: You go home for the weekend and your little sister wants advice. She's 14 and her

boyfriend is pressuring her to have sex, what do you do?

- a. Recognise you're not qualified to give the answer. Refer her to Girlfriend, Dolly Doctor and Cosmo
- b. Send him an FB message with section 61HA of the Crimes Act - the legal definition of consent
- c. Write a song about why consent is important and her sexuality is her own. Perform it to her with your mum and hope that through the power of expression you have subliminally but non-threateningly empowered her to make the right choice.

Q: Your absolute bestie of years sits you down for a serious chat. Turns out she's a lesbian. What do you do?

- a. Isn't this quiz about feminism? Why are you talking about gay people?
- b. Tell her you will be her number one ally! Play Macklemore "Same Love" and twerk together in solidarity. Offer to go to gay clubs with her.
- c. Have an existential crisis. She's seen you naked. Maybe she has a crush on you? Decide it's better if she doesn't sleep over any more (in case she hits on you).

Mostly As, Bs, or Cs:

Riot grrrls, liberal bitches, sassy sluts and hairy rads (seriously have a shower) - what is the point of division? We are sisters and in feminism we stand. If you love your mum and hate being cat-called, you are one of us. If you wake up everyday feeling confined and misunderstood in your oh-so delectable body, you are one of us. Your menstrual blood is the calls of mothers and daughters past, uniting us in common destiny. WE ARE UNITED. And our empowerment will be the righting of the universe.

#youngogirl #womenhelpingwomenhelptemselves #germaine WE ARE UNITED. #youngogirl

The Queen Speaks

Subeta BREAKING NEWS: Queen Elizabeth II is a feminist! That's right, our very own constitutional monarch and grandmother of Baby George (how cute is he?! For pics click [here](#)) has just joined our best and brightest Beyonce, Germaine Greer and Judith Butler in announcing that she is a feminist!!!! Queen E let the news slip late yesterday afternoon. Lucky for you guys HARLOTTE was on the scene ASAP. Our reporters joined her Highness for tea at Buckingham Palace this morning to ask all the important questions.



Q: So Queen Elizabeth, what led you to realise the feminist path was the path for you?

A: Good question slut! Sorry, I'm really into reclaiming language ATM. This was definitely a difficult choice for me and one I put a lot of thought into. What really pushed me over the edge was Laci Green's latest video – "What is a feminist?" I never realized that believing in equality was all it took to be a feminist. I thought I'd have to stop shaving my legs and hook up with Kate Middleton in some funky political lesbian relationship, definitely not my style. But yes, when I learnt that I could preach the label without having to change any of my behaviour I thought: this is for me.

Q: Inspiring answer. Too many girls today think feminism is a political movement. You're right – it is just a label! So let's get practical – what kind of stuff can we expect from the Palace on this front?

A: I've also started putting in place some changes around the palace to fit with my new groove. For one, we've banned Blurred Lines from the official Buckingham soundtrack. We've also replaced the portrait of King George V with Margaret Thatcher (a great female leader!) and increased the pay of all the female help by 17%.

Q: How have the boys responded? Who's the next feminist in line?

A: Harry was the most enthusiastic. He's been trying to convince me to get on board with this "sex positive feminism" thing for a while; apparently his lovely ladies from the United States are ardent preachers. Charles has been a bit more apprehensive. It's okay though, we've started to develop a bit of banter to ease him into the whole thing. When he gets too patriarchal now I tell him to "check his privilege" and then we have a good chuckle. As for William, he bought Naomi Wolf's "Vagina" yesterday for more information; he really just wants to understand where I'm coming from.

Q: If you had one message for young girls to take away, what would it be?

A: I would tell them to be empowered by their choices. I feel empowered by my choice to be Queen and I think that if they work hard, one day they can be empowered in the same way. It breaks my heart to see aristocratic women stop at Duchess, Baroness or Countess; we really need to break down that solid gold ceiling. We can win this fight together and we fucking will bitches!

THIS

IS A

“WOMEN'S

ISSUE”