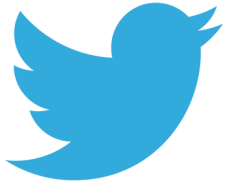


Forum: Women Poverty and Prejudice



juliegunn @radioARW Tonight u can feel what is possible!
All these wahine/women supporting each other cos we
know we're all in it together #povertyandprejudice

By Kate O'Malley

Over 120 women and up to a dozen men packed out Western Springs Community Hall to participate in the forum, *Women, Poverty and Prejudice: Feminism and the 2017 Election* in mid July, on the coldest night of the year so far.

While child poverty is a cause for national concern, with over 200,000 children officially living in poverty, there is much less public awareness about the life-threatening poverty faced by New Zealand women, AWC Manager Leonie Morris said.

"We know that the child poverty rate for children in single parent households is 47 per cent," Leonie said. *"Most of these parents are mums who also live in poverty, and are parenting while experiencing high levels of stress."*

"This is unfair and unacceptable in a country as wealthy as New Zealand."

Speakers Marama Davidson (Green), Anne Degia-Pala (NZ First), Tracey-Lee Repia (Mana) Carmel Sepuloni (Labour) and Cinnamon Whitlock (Māori) highlighted the causes of women's poverty, such as lack of parenting support, the amount of unpaid work women undertake, low benefit levels and a punitive approach to women on benefits, as well as the housing crisis. The National Party declined to send a speaker.

Speakers agreed that poverty was a key issue in the election, and that radical restructuring of tax and social welfare systems was needed. Audience participants raised the issue of introducing a Universal Basic Income, the need for income redistribution and substituting the minimum wage with the Living Wage.

The audience responded enthusiastically, speaking out and staying to discuss issues further. Responses afterwards included: *"I really enjoyed it" ... "loved the honesty ... and the resonance with the crowd"*.

An Onehunga whānau of four were inspired by the debate. Mum and auntie, Tracey: *"Voting in our house has always been extremely important. We talk politics at home. One of the reasons we came tonight was to educate ourselves."*

The younger generation were also inspired, with Gabriela, 13, calling it "an enlightening experience", and first-time voter and uni student Sabrina (18): "The honest insight was very helpful to me coming to vote as a young woman, a Polynesian."

Anatola, 24, a social work student summed it up: *"We are the up and coming generation. All these changes will affect us and our children, so it's extremely important."*



Above: "Enlightening" was the verdict on the forum of 13-year-old Gabriela (far left) from Onehunga, who, along with her cousin and sister and mother (Sabrina, 18, Anatola, 24, and Tracey), attended because of their whānau's passion for educating themselves about politics.