

Feminist Parenting Forum

Parenting against the patriarchy requires empathy, a series of inspiring speakers told Auckland Women's Centre's March Feminist Parenting Forum.

Lawyer, writer, poet, blogger and Samoan feminist single mother Sisilia Eteuati said her Samoan feminism placed family at the centre of children's upbringing.

"We don't hold to the Western view that the mother is everything. My Samoan feminism embraces that it takes a village to raise a child. I expect help. I don't feel any less for needing help, or for struggling if I'm just doing it on my own."

She was very happy to go back to work full-time after the births of each of her children, knowing they were well cared for and loved.

Sisilia said she had another single Samoan mother flatting with her and regarded that as an arrangement which could work well for other mothers. She had accordingly set up a Facebook page - Homeshare Aotearoa.

Tania Pouwhare (Ngāi Tūhoe) said she had not enjoyed being the primary caregiver for her daughter and had hated being pregnant. She and her partner had now flipped traditional gender roles, so that he was the stay-at-home parent.

"I go to work at a job that I love and that fulfils me and I come home a happy mummy."

Tania said she parented through a feminist, Māori, social justice prism. She had taught her six-year-old daughter about consent and was also teaching her that older people were responsible for looking after those younger than them.

"Empathy is the best gift I can give to my daughter. I want her to grow up knowing she



*Top: Speakers Tania Pouwhare, Emily Writes, Sisilia Eteuati
Above: The Audience. Photo by Leah Foxcroft*

has a role challenging injustice and inequality."

Emily Writes, who is the mother of two boys, said she worked every day as a mother to try and dismantle a system that harmed children.

She described herself and her husband as Bogans and said one of their sons had confounded them from day one, loving colour and being obsessed with weddings and tutus.

Her husband was the primary caregiver, so her children believed that fathers stayed at home and mothers worked outside the home. They also believed they had a powerful voice that could help others.

"We parent with radical empathy. This is taken specifically from the feminist movement... I combat every toxic message my boys receive with kindness."