



Welcome to Kaitlin!

Compulsory Gender and Sexuality Education
Needed to Reshape Gender Expectations

Bold leadership required to
prevent authorities' sexism

Welcome to Kaitlin! Our new Women Services Coordinator talks health psychology and cross-stitch

If you're in the neighbourhood, come and say hi to Kaitlin Henderson, the newest friendly face at Te Wāhi Wāhine o Tāmaki Makaurau (WWTM). Kaitlin is now looking after Women's Support (free advice, referral and information), and coordinating our community education programme. "I love that this job is all about the women!" she says. After a week of handover, outgoing coordinator Ellie Lim gives Kaitlin some of her highest praise: "she's super-smart, super-fast and ontoit!"



social determinants of health and on power structures, drawing from feminism and philosophy." For example, she was interested in the "self-surveillance" of her interview subjects – how much they had internalised external expectations and standards of "good" parenthood.

The red wine enthusiast and disco lover grew up in Titirangi, and is now lucky enough to live in Mt Roskill with her four best friends. "We have

Last year, Kaitlin worked as a Women's Health Action health promoter, including organising their big "Latch-On" event encouraging breastfeeding (online due to COVID), and surveying new mothers about their lockdown information needs.

Her earlier work as a baby teacher in early childhood education influenced her 2018 Masters research in critical health psychology: she interviewed mothers about how daycare centres could assist them to continue breastfeeding when they went back to work. Kaitlin explains critical health psychology as "focusing on the

a ton of house plants, I'm obsessed with them, it's a jungle in our house," says Kaitlin; no one is allowed to put their feet near her prized fittonia nerve plant on the coffee table. A "jill of all crafts", she does cross-stitch everyday ("sometimes with my flatmate while we watch really trashy reality tv"), and she finished stitching an adaptation of Klimt's The Kiss in the same week she started at WWTM. Her next stitching project is of an alien pretending to be a 1950s housewife. Some of us – or our grandmothers – may be able to relate. Kaitlin certainly sees feminism as inter-generational: "it's continuing the work towards equity of generations of women before me and advancing opportunities for the generations of women to come." ■

Compulsory Gender and Sexuality Education Needed to Reshape Gender Expectations

Recently, New Zealand's prevailing notions of gender were memorably and amusingly skewered by Michelle Duff at Stuff: "If New Zealand is a person," she wrote, "he's your Stubbies-wearing uncle from Eketāhuna who thinks he's enlightened because he once watched a women's rugby match and drank a glass of Prosecco by mistake."



The status imbalance between feminine and masculine is of course an embedded disaster, encouraging and enabling physical and psychological gender violence. Males are trained to expect to have power, and when they don't, their socialised outlet can be destructive rage.

As Michelle points out, in some ways, gender roles in New Zealand are more restrictive for males than females: it's more remarkable for cis-men to wear pink, be a fulltime caregiver or to knit than it is for cis-women to wear blue, to be the household breadwinner or to play sport.

These restrictions on males are a – sometimes unexpected – consequence of the patriarchy itself, which accords higher status to activities and appearances coded as “masculine” than those seen as “feminine”. So to patriarchal ways of thinking, it makes sense that women would lean-in and aspire to “masculine” success (such as the charismatic young heroine in the recent *Enola Holmes* movie disdaining girly needlework to become a detective like her big brother Sherlock), whereas men who choose lower-status feminine markers can bring into question the very aims and foundations of the entire gender hierarchy.

Michelle quotes an interviewee from the recent Stuff podcast on masculinity *He'll Be Right* who felt rage “over things as seemingly inconsequential as controlling what his children were eating”. He would shout abuse when he felt “angry and frustrated at life, at everything not going my way.”

The dominance of the Western gender binary also has racist consequences: it over-shadows different cultural understandings of gender as multiple and/or fluid. In *He'll Be Right*, Scout Barbour-Evans talks about the intrinsic link between their non-binary gender identity and their Ngāti Kahungunu tūpuna. Reading Elizabeth Kerekere's work on takatāpui, they realised “people who have not fit the Pākehā gender binary have been present in our whakapapa right across Aotearoa. That's when I began to understand that that's who I was.”

So, how does Uncle start accepting all his family, no matter what their body hair or gender expression, and start acknowledging his own penchant for quiche? (There really are blokes out there who avoid eating baked egg because it's supposedly ladies-only!). *Continued over page*

We call for compulsory, intersectional-feminist-informed gender and sexuality education for children and young people, to help replace negative stereotypes and behavioural straitjackets with positivity about variety and choice and acceptance.

We celebrate needlework, childcare and other “feminine” activities that the patriarchy attempts to teach us to sneer at. We urge the government to rapidly and dramatically increase their funding for primary violence prevention, especially the long, slow but exciting work of reshaping social expectations. ■



Green Party MP, Elizabeth Kerekere, has undertaken ground-breaking research on takatāpui identity

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Te Wāhi Wāhine o Tāmaki Makaurau
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Bold leadership required to prevent authorities' sexism

The Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment's attempt to combat modern slavery in New Zealand without considering forced prostitution is yet more evidence the Government urgently needs to mandate the use of a gender policy tool for all agencies, says Te Wāhi Wāhine o Tāmaki Makaurau manager Leonie Morris.

“It’s outrageous that MBIE has messed up its trafficking action plan so badly, by focussing almost solely on the forced labour and migration of men in industries such as fishing, even though in one year alone 130 women disclosed to Women’s Refuge that they had been forced to sell sex against their will by a partner,” says Leonie.

“Outrageous but – when you consider officialdom’s record over the last few months – not surprising.”

In other recent instances of sexism by government authorities, Treasury refused to consider the impact of the government’s COVID spend on women when asked to by then-Minister for Women Julie Anne Genter, while more recently, the Tenancy Tribunal was found to be holding women responsible for property damage caused by their violent abusers. To make

matters worse, Kāinga Ora (formerly Housing NZ) was among the landlords taking abused women to the tribunal for such damage.

Sexual exploitation and trafficking can be an extreme form of domestic violence.

“We urge the government to make the prevention of violence against women and children one of their core, key priorities across all decision-making,” says Leonie. “Without strong leadership, the oppression of women, particularly those in disadvantaged circumstances, will worsen in Aotearoa New Zealand.”

Leonie says as part of the solution, the government should require all its agencies to use “Bringing Gender In”, a Ministry for Women policy development tool highlighting intersectional gender impacts.

“Real agency culture change is required,” says Leonie. “The ‘Bringing Gender In’ tool can’t do that on its own, but it can help start some of the conversations so desperately required to achieve real safety for women.” ■



Contact

09 376 3227 x 0
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Centre Hours

Monday to Friday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Library Hours

Monday to Friday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Services

- Women’s Support: free support, info, advice and referral
- Community Education
- Community Events
- Counselling
- LGBTQ support
- Low Cost Massage
- Self Defence Classes
- Opportunities to talk and support feminism
- Diversity Forums
- Support Groups
- Support for High School Feminism

Designed by Toni Chase