



Auckland Women's Centre QUARTERLY

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Supporting Young Feminist Activists

We are excited to announce a new pilot project to support and nurture high school feminists. Our part-time Youth Coordinator position, funded from our financial reserves, will commence a two-year pilot this March.

This is the right time to invest in a new generation of feminist activists. Over the last five years, feminism has reached a level of ubiquity in popular culture. Feminist voices have found huge audiences online, young celebrities now regularly discuss the topic, and overseas polls have found that more people are identifying with the label.

This has been mirrored by a rise in interest in feminism in high schools in Aotearoa as young people have been outraged by rape culture and misogyny, such as in the 'Roastbusters' and Wellington College incidents. Social media is a place to witness sexism and aggression towards feminist voices, but it's also where feminists now share articles from a feminist perspective and develop a critical awareness of sexism.

In December 2017, 70 young people attended the inaugural Auckland Young Feminists' Hui. This Hui was aimed at high school students interested in feminism and to support the formation of a network of feminist clubs in high schools across Auckland.

Founded in 2017, Auckland Young Feminists (AYF) is working directly to support high school feminist clubs. AYF and the organising committee for the Hui comprise representatives from the YWCA Auckland, the National Council of Women, the Auckland Women's Centre, and the PPTA.

Hui workshops included; How to Activate Young Feminists in Your School, Gender Issues in Climate Change, Women in Urbanism, Gender Equal NZ, Women's Rights in Work, and Rape Myths and the Media.

Young feminist activists play a critical role in women's rights organisations and movements worldwide by bringing up new issues that feminists face today. Their strength, creativity and adaptability are vital to the sustainability of feminist organising.

At the same time, young feminists face impediments to their activism such as limited access to funding and support, and a lack of capacity-building opportunities. This creates a lack of visibility that makes their inclusion and effective participation within women's rights movements more difficult.

If you would like to support this new project please email youth@womenz.org.nz ■



Auckland Young Feminists Hui, December, 2017. Photo credit: YWCA Auckland

#TimesUp in 2018

As 2017 rolled on into 2018, #MeToo became #TimesUp as women showed we will not be satisfied until sexual harassment and sexual assault stop.



Tarana Burke founder, Me Too movement. Photo: justbeinc.com

The Me Too Movement was founded by African American activist, Tarana Burke, a decade ago and exploded virally late last year.

Women's sharing of stories brought us together, strengthened us and made it more difficult for male predators to hide and for the silence of others to

provide tacit support for their actions. Courageous women in Aotearoa are writing about sexual assault in the music industry, the goth world and elsewhere.

We already knew the two things #MeToo tells us, but it highlighted them in a stark and shocking way and made the broader community aware of them in ways that are impossible to ignore.

The first thing that #MeToo showed was that men sexually harass and sexually assault women every day, in every country, in every corner of every country.

Secondly, it highlighted that, irrespective of our skills, experience or qualifications, many men when they see a woman in the workplace simply see a collection of female sexual organs ripe for male exploitation.

And this same collection of attitudes, sexism, is the cause of pay discrimination and the failure to promote women.

We hoped that men and women worked together side by side as equals in the workplace, but in 2018 that's still simply not the case.

And women are not going to put up with it any longer.

So, on 1 January, #TimesUp was launched, to move actively to solve the problem and also to broaden the focus of attention away from white women in the entertainment industry.

#TimesUp aims to put an end to systemic sexual harassment in all industries through legal action and improving the representation of women in all sectors and at all levels. Fundraising has started

to collect US\$15 million to provide legal representation to sexual harassment victims. In the United States, #TimesUp is supported by America Ferrera, Rosario Dawson, Uzo Aduba, Kerry Washington, Tina Tchen, Rashida Jones and Ashley Judd.

And, of course, there is a backlash.

We shouldn't give it any oxygen: when, ever, have we not faced a backlash?

We are told that men are terrified they will be falsely accused of sexual harassment or assault and they will not be believed when they respond.

This is the tired old lie that is always trotted out to discredit women - in relation to rape, sexual harassment, paternity and everything else.

But, in fact, the problem we have is not men being falsely accused: it is women not being believed.

And if men truly are worried about not being believed when they speak, maybe they can spend 2018 reflecting



on the implications of that. It is exactly how women have been kept down for thousands of years.

We are also told that there is a “grey area” in relation to sex and that #MeToo doesn’t deal with this “murky” area. That’s simply not true.

Men understand consent in relation to sex perfectly well. It’s simply that many of them do not consider a woman’s consent to sex important if the man is determined to have sex.

Persisting and persisting when a woman says “no” to sex takes place against thousands of years of male violence against women.

So, when the woman finally stops protesting, both she and the man know she is not actually consenting.

She is simply trying to get out of the situation without being killed or beaten.

It’s really true as Margaret Atwood said, that men fear women will laugh at them, but we fear men will kill us. ■

Photos opposite page top to bottom: Glittery March for Consent, Auckland, 2018. Photo: Michael Craig, NZ Herald. #MeToo Survivors March in L.A. Photo: Gary Coronado/Los Angeles Times/TNS

Government Listens on Pay Equity

Recommendations from the reconvened Joint Working Group on Pay Equity Principles will be made by the end of February and new legislation is expected to be introduced to Parliament by the middle of 2018.

The incoming Government, as one of its first acts, withdrew from Parliament the pay equity bill drafted by the National-led Government and which had been widely criticised by women’s groups, unions and other pay equity experts.

The Joint Working Group has been reconvened under the leadership of Traci Houpapa (Chair, National Advisory Council for the Employment of Women) and will consider two key issues: how the merits of a pay equity claim are to be determined; and how to select appropriate male comparators when assessing the work subject to a pay equity claim. The group comprises tripartite partners, with union representatives being led by the New Zealand Council of Trade Union and employers by BusinessNZ and the Employers and Manufacturers Association. Minister for Women, Julie Anne Genter, and Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety, Iain Lees-Galloway, are heading the Government’s work on the issue.

Pay equity supporters will be looking for some key points in the new bill. First, Aotearoa has a complaints-based system for dealing with pay equity claims. This places the onus on the disadvantaged party to come forward and make a claim.

Many women are too fearful of the future impact on their employment to do this, and almost all women lack the financial and other resources needed to bring claims. Realistically, it is only when a woman is backed by a union that a claim will be brought.

This country should accordingly legislate for a positive duty on employers to close the pay gap between men and women (as Iceland has recently done). This would require employers to take proactive steps to assess their wage differentials and act to remedy them.

Secondly, transparency about pay is needed to eliminate the gender pay gap. A key reason that Māori, Pasifika,

women and disabled people are paid less is because of the traditional secrecy around pay rates. This allows discrimination to flourish – as illustrated by the outcries occurring in recent times when pay gaps between men and women doing exactly the same jobs are revealed. There needs to be a right for people to ask what their colleagues are paid.

In addition, we do not want to see opportunities for employers to slow down claims or a requirement to prove historical undervaluation, both of which were included in the earlier bill.

Nurses, teachers, mental health staff and social workers aim to progress pay equity claims in 2018. ■



Photos above: Minister Julie Anne Genter, Joint Working Group Chair Traci Houpapa and Minister Iain Lees-Galloway. Members of Auckland Feminist Action at Pay Equity Rally, August, 2017

Feminist Art for a Change

A treasure trove of artwork, film, publications, letters and ephemera celebrating women artists at the forefront of the second wave of feminism in Aotearoa is on display at Auckland Art Gallery/ Toi o Tamaki until June 2019.



Mere and Siulolovao, Otago Peninsula, Robin White, 1978

Collective Women: Feminist Art Archives from the 1970s to the 1990s is the gallery's first ever archives-only exhibition in the main gallery, lovingly curated over two years. It takes a timely look back at the process and achievements of feminist artists and networks in the lead-up to the celebration of 125 years of women's suffrage.

From the pre-digital era, the exhibition contains iconic materials such as the Women's Herstory diary

series, women's art journal *Spiral*, copies of *Broadsheet*, photos of women's protest, film of performance art inspired by Judy Chicago, posters of feminist art exhibitions, recorded interviews and minutes of a women's art collective.

"The proliferation of material during this period demonstrates the way in which feminist print culture both supported and sustained the women's movement," curators Catherine Hammond and Caroline McBride say. They emphasise the importance of preserving these "memory traces" for future generations, through systematic archiving, or what cultural theorist Kate Eichhorn describes as "outrage in order".

It's a hugely rich period – the era of the four United Women's Conventions, equal pay protests, action on women's rights to control our reproductive lives – and the material reflects the sense of change and possibility.

Whether you were there at the time (check out the photos!) or interested in women's art and feminist history, it's well worth a visit. It's free too!

<https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/whats-on/exhibition/collective-women-feminist-art-archives-from-the-1970s-to-the-1990s> ■

Women and Disability Forum - four wonderful Disability Rights Activists

We are thrilled that these amazing women will lead us in an exploration of the ways sexism interacts with disability, (as well as the effects of racism, homophobia and other types of marginalisation). We will discuss what this means for women with a disability and what policies we should pursue.

- » **Paula Tesoriero**, MNZM, Disability Rights Commissioner, New Zealand Paralympics racing cyclist
- » **Dr Huhuna Hickey** (Ngāti Tahinga, Tainui, Ngai Tai) human rights advocate for people from marginal backgrounds
- » **Pia Jane**, Filipino migrant and advocate for the deaf community

Our MC for the evening is **Nicola Owen**, advocate for the blind community and an audio describer. There will be time for audience questions and discussion and a chat over a cup of tea.

Save the Date: Tues 13 March – 7-9pm – Freemans Bay Community Hall – all genders welcome. ■



Auckland Women's Centre



Contact & Services

Contact us

09 376 3227 x 0
info@womensz.org.nz
www.awc.org.nz

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