



Auckland Women's Centre

Ko Te Wāhi Wāhine o Tāmaki Makaurau

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Taking misogyny out of mainstream porn A difficult but not impossible task.

At AWC's "The Problem with Porn" Forum in early October, the four panellists were uncompromising when they explained why they agreed with the forum kaupapa.

"Our 'enemy' is not pornography per se, but the sexism, racism and misogyny that saturates much of the most easily accessible porn," said feminist psychologist Prof Nicola Gavey, in front of a large gender-mixed audience at the Freeman's Bay Community Hall.

"At this time in the 21st century, when we should be rewriting the traditional sexist script, big business pornography is helping to re-normalise and re-invigorate the old playbook of male sexual dominance and female sexual submission... I find it incomprehensible that we

can tolerate a genre that is so systematically patterned in a way that's denigrating to women and girls," she said, adding that such porn is "fundamentally incompatible with an egalitarian society."

Nicola's colleague, Dr Jade Le Grice (Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa), gave a moving kōrero about her own experiences and the effect of oppressive pornography on Māori rangatahi, drawing on her own research in the Hokianga and Kaitiāia. She left the audience with the question: what does it mean to be aroused by your own subjugation, or by the denial of your own dignity – or someone else's?

Jo Robertson, research and training lead for The Light Project (an information hub about porn and young people), picked up on a similar point. "Boys have said to me 'I have thought about hurting girls' and they're distressed. That's not a happy place for those kids."

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Forum leaders: Nicola Gavey, Jade Le Grice, Jo Robertson, Paula Penfold, Lizzie Marvelly

Taking misogyny out of mainstream porn A difficult but not impossible task *continued*

She is also concerned for the estimated 25% of New Zealand children who have seen porn before they are 12. She pointed out they've seen porn probably before they've held someone's hand, and maybe before they've had a conversation with their parents about sex. Porn will be their likely "anchoring bias", which means that all their other sexual and intimate experiences may be seen through the lens of their pornographic introduction to sex.

For young regular users, porn is shaping their beliefs about sex: (in one study, a young male user said "I now know how a woman enjoys herself"), and their beliefs about gender: they think girls are weak and passive; boys are dominant, powerful and in control. Porn use is associated with lower condom use and with initiating more coercive sex acts.

However, at the same time as recognising the extreme nature of the material, Nicola cautioned against feeding into the false normalising myths that "most teenagers regularly watch porn", or that "men and boys are 'hardwired' to want to watch porn", and that "lots of women simply enjoy watching it too" (the attitudes of women who watch porn are usually more complex than simple enjoyment). In her research, Nicola has worked with "many young men who support gender equality, and are uncomfortable with sexism and unethical online behaviour." At the same time, young men are strongly influenced by their peers about what "it means to be a man". So "by accepting it as a fait accompli that boys will watch and enjoy sexist pornography, we risk reinforcing that as a norm that boys are then expected to follow," said Nicola. "Conversely, by helping to interrupt this idea, and amplifying the voices of boys who reject sexism, we may be able to help support others who want to do the same."

Nicola does have some hope that porn norms will change, just as other once-acceptable cultural norms have now been rejected, such as the acceptability of cigarette smoking and "blackface" entertainment: "I do not accept the status quo as inevitable... Social change can and does happen."

So what are the solutions? Lizzie Marvelly (Ngāti Whakaue) favours New Zealand introducing compulsory sexuality education in schools. In the meantime, she offers "The REAL Sex Talk" (www.therealsextalk.com), a free, humorous and evidence-based webseries that includes an episode encouraging young people to think critically about porn.

Journalist Paula Penfold (the evening's fantastic moderator) asked whether offering more positive versions of sexuality would also be useful, but Jade responded that young people still need to be taught to critique pornography, as ethical alternatives will (at least at first) exist "in parallel" to misogynistic porn, rather than immediately replacing it. Jo pointed out that ethical,

feminist porn that aims to prioritise female pleasure, body diversity and sexual diversity already exists – but it's expensive.

While the UK is attempting to require porn site visitors to prove their age, Lizzie is sceptical about whether such "legislative censorship" really works ("teens know how to get around the internet"). Jo commented that "filtering is very effective for children up to the age of 13-14. Delay is important. Then the best strategy you've got at that point is conversation." Professionals such as school counsellors also need upskilling so they can "navigate the new porn landscape".

A teenager from the floor asked for advice about how to bring up these issues with her friends. Lizzie suggested she should wait for a good opportunity when, for example, the conversation is already veering towards topics such as sex, rather than bringing it up out of the blue.

"A good way to foster open discussions is to be as non-judgemental as possible. Ask questions."



Forum attendees

- **Around 90% of online porn videos are aggressive; around half show women being verbally abused.**
- **A 2018 study of a popular porn site found that Latina and Asian women were five times more likely to receive aggression than white women.**
- **Before they turn 12, one in four New Zealand children has seen porn at least once: most of them were not looking for porn when they came across it.**
- **Around 13% of 14-17 year old boys, and 3% of 14-17 year old girls in New Zealand watch porn at least weekly. "While these numbers are not insignificant... data like these suggest that most are not choosing to regularly view porn" – Prof Nicola Gavey. ■**

Sources: thelightproject.co.nz;
www.classificationoffice.govt.nz

Coming up: A kōrero with Tracey McIntosh

Auckland Women's Centre is very excited to announce our last, very special event for the year is a kōrero with the exceptional, wise and insightful Tracey McIntosh, University of Auckland Professor of Indigenous Studies, on Tues 19 November, about her work, life and ideas.



Professor Tracey McIntosh

"I always say I'm Tūhoe through my mother, and I'm Westfield freezing works through my father," Tracey told [E-Tangata](#) in 2016. Her mother ran her own business and "Dad was unusual, too, for a working class man of that time, in being attuned to feminism... My parents were extremely open to what we'd now call "gender expressions" and diverse sexualities. ... There were a lot of parties at our place."

Having grown up near Papakura, Tracey lived and worked in France, Burundi, (pre-genocide) Rwanda, Tonga and Fiji, before completing her MA in Auckland as a working single mother.

Over the course of 25 years or so, Tracey's sociological research has spanned death, religion, genocide, social justice and inequality. Most recently she has focussed on Māori incarceration, including empowering prisoners and former prisoners to tell their own stories via academic articles and poetry.

The number of women that New Zealand imprisons has increased alarmingly over the last 20 years. Tracey's research highlights that young incarcerated women are usually wāhine Māori; have nearly all been excluded from the compulsory education system by age 12 (one was excluded at 6 years old); and have commonly experienced or witnessed violence, state care, addiction and/or mental distress. They are less likely than male prisoners to have visitors, because, as Tracey points out, "women visit men".

For several years, Tracey has volunteered weekly at the women's prison at Wiri teaching creative writing. "These women are quite astonishing," she told [RNZ's](#) Wallace Chapman last year, calling our collective lack of nurture of their "incredible potential" an indictment.

Tracey is a respected and high-profile leader in both academia and government circles. Since completing her PhD at the University of Auckland in the early 2000s, she has had a stint as co-director of New Zealand's Centre of Māori Research Excellence, Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, and has served on several government advisory bodies, including two within the last year: the Welfare Expert Advisory Group and the Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group - Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora. In 2016, she won a national Kaupapa Māori Tertiary Teaching Excellence Award, and in 2017 she was awarded the Te Rangi Hiroa Medal – one of New Zealand's top research prizes – for "significantly advancing our understanding of the enduring social injustices that undermine Māori wellbeing."

She bases her research, teaching and service on the principles of āta (nurturing relationships) and manākitanga (generosity, care, respect and support).

In short, her kōrero will be warm, informative and fascinating – and we can't wait! ■

Save the Date

A kōrero with Prof Tracey McIntosh



Tracey McIntosh (Ngāi Tūhoe)

Professor of Indigenous Studies, UoA

Tracey's research focuses on incarceration, inequality, poverty and justice

Tues 19 Nov, 6-7.30pm, Venue TBC

The current Equal Pay Bill creates more problems than it solves

The most recent statistics show a small improvement in the gender pay equity gap. However, if the current Equal Pay Amendment Bill becomes law without amendment, the Auckland Women's Centre believes it will do little to facilitate narrowing the gap.

In August, Statistics New Zealand released figures showing the gender gap measured in average hourly earnings is 11.9%, an improvement from 13.9% last year. However, with the intersection of gender and ethnicity the earning-power imbalance becomes much more extreme.

The gender pay gap for a Māori woman is currently 22.1%! For an Asian woman it is 17.5%, and for a Pasifika woman it's 25.5%! (CEVEP ethnicity gaps). This is the extreme discrimination this Bill needs to be able to address.

In addition, the AWC believes that the current Equal Pay Amendment Bill is counter-productive to its stated aim of eliminating sexist discrimination in pay. In other words: it would be a step backwards for women's rights, including the likely end of sector-wide pay equity claims, such as the Kristine Bartlett care workers case (see box).

As promised in our Summer Quarterly, the Auckland Women's Centre - coordinating the Pay Equity Coalition Auckland (PECA) – spoke to the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Equal Pay Amendment Bill in late February. We are sorry to report that the Government has not (yet) changed the Bill, despite our concerns, and the concerns of other petitioners, even though PECA consists of 21 organisations representing thousands of Aucklanders.

However, PECA, alongside many other groups and individuals, continue to advocate, and in August, the Council of Trade Unions published [an open letter](#) to Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment has very recently requested opinions on the Bill. We have hope that the Government is now listening to the concerns of women and unions throughout the country - watch this space.



Going Backwards

As it stands, the Equal Pay Amendment Bill will introduce:

- 1. Processes that diminish women's right to easy access to the Employment Relations Authority to have the pay equity rate set**
- 2. Opportunities for employer foot-dragging and filibustering** (Fewer women will get their rights, if rights are only available via a nasty fight for years)
- 3. A prohibition on industry-wide pay-equity bargaining** (Unless the employers agree... yeah right)
- 4. A prohibition on some good comparisons** (Which roles should mine be compared to, to ensure equity? Not just those held by men in my "female-dominated" sector, but also those held by men and women in "mixed" sectors. But the current Bill only allows comparators in my sector.)

In addition, the Bill does not establish an office tasked with pay transparency, the promotion of pay equity, and oversight of equal pay settlements. Without this, individuals, particularly those who aren't union members, will not have access to the data required to make a successful claim; and unscrupulous employers could force their workers into "equal pay" agreements which are, in fact, not equal. ■

Auckland Women's Centre



Ko Te Wāhi Wāhine o Tāmaki Makaurau

Contact & Services

Contact us

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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
- + Support for High School Feminism